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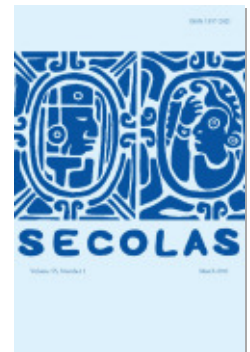
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NATIONAL APPROPRIATIONS: YAQUI AUTONOMY, THE CENTENNIAL OF THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION AND THE BICENTENNIAL OF THE MEXICAN NATION*

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Abstract

2010 marks the centennial of the Mexican Revolution and the bicentennial of the independent Mexican nation-state. As an opportunity to critique the role of national history and nationalism in producing mythologies that serve particular interests, this paper argues that certain historical flashpoints demonstrate how vehicles for national commemoration consolidate and suture the modernity embodied by the state on the one hand and the pre-modern objectification of the Yaqui on the other to foment state formation. In contrast, Yaqui enactments of historical memory consistently work against the Mexican state in multiple ways. To do so, the essay first, examines the ways in which Yaqui struggles for autonomy, pre and post revolution (1901-1910 and 1920-1935) were, and continue to be, written out of the history of the Mexican nation. Secondly, the essay examines the erasure of the violence enacted by the U.S., Mexican-American and Mexican state actors against the Yaqui peoples as part of multiple national projects that glorify mestizaje without a material attentiveness to histories of state violence (physical, epistemic and discursive). Thirdly, I examine how the state and transnational corporations deploy the image of the *Danzante del venado* (deer dancer) as both an object of nationalism and the site of epistemic violence. I demonstrate these points by presenting the counterpoint evidence of Yaqui struggles for autonomy.

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history of the Mexican nation. Secondly, the essay examines the erasure of the violence performed by the U.S., Mexican-American and Mexican state actors against Yaqui peoples as part of multiple national projects that glorify *mestizaje* without a material attentiveness to histories of state violence. Thirdly, it examines how the state and transnational corporations deploy the image of the *Danzante del venado* (deer dancer) as both an object of nationalism and the site of epistemic violence. I demonstrate these points by presenting the counterpoint evidence of Yaqui struggles for autonomy.

Since the nineteenth century was crucial to Mexican formations of national identity, given the French occupation, wars of reform, and US annexation of the now American Southwest (Beezley, viii), I historicize how the materials from this period were produced in a highly masculinist discourse. This reinforces the relationship between gendered forms of power and nationhood. Because gender dynamics elucidate national history and because such history further complicates a Chicano and Mexican nationalist depictions of the past that unproblematically claim indigenous origins and lionize indigeneity as a catch-all category for that which is not Spanish or Anglo-American, I center the celebratory nature of discourses of revolution and the bicentennial. They are read as a similar kind of discursive and epistemic violence because the celebration requires a forgetting: Yaqui participation in the revolution is obviated as are/were mass deportations, lynching and genocide directed at masculine subjects. What followed the revolution was a series of fights with the state over autonomy and land rights. Taken together, the erasure from national meta-narrative history and forgetting of state-sponsored violence is supposedly remedied through Sonorense and Mexican national usage of the image of the *danzante del venado*. It is precisely the masculinized and eroticized body of the *Danzante del venado* that is appealing as a site to cement national consolidation; it serves as a synecdoche of the parts that stand for the whole. As Sydney Hutchinson has argued, "state refashionings of the Deer dance have transformed it into the representation of the melancholy noble savage" and masculine athleticism instead of an ethnic-specific ritual history (212).

While the sweep of 120 years might seem unsatisfying to some historians, the essay connects several historical moments that create an arch of signification. That is, if we examine these flashpoints (the glimpses or flashes of history that capture the fleeting, elusive nature of memory)¹ in relation to each other in terms of state-formation, we see how discursive violence is at the core of nationalism and that nationalism is dependent upon a particular imagining of Yaqui Indians as objects and not as subjects of their own making. Ultimately, the lack of critical self-reflexivity contributes to a knowledge production that results in epistemic violence where the very idea of national histories as they are appropriated by Chicanos and Mexicans in nationalist rhetoric of *mestizaje*, nation, and revolution efface Indigenous subjects and history.

Flash Point 1: Pre-Revolutionary Yaqui History

A pre-revolutionary example of the multidimensional quality of state violence against the Yaqui highlights their uncanny ability to consistently battle, perplex and undermine the Mexican nation-state by enacting their own vision of nation. At the national historical level, there exists lack of a serious discussion of torture and lynching that were part of state policy to quell Yaqui rebellion. In an unnamed newspaper article from the U.S., a Yaqui lynching narrative was leaked from Sonora in 1906, tracking the gruesome details of the state's campaign:

strange fruit is seen on many of the trees in Sonora's beautiful and fertile fields, strange and horrible like the "acorns" in the reign of Louis XI in France. A single branch often holds two or three dead Yaqui Indians, rocking in the wind, with their heads fallen to one side and their beards on their chests, and always revolving around the tree and its horrible fruit is a buzzard, and sometimes a dozen of them. The dead Yaqui rocking in the breeze are warnings from the Mexican government for the rebellious natives in Sonora, who, nevertheless, forcefully and resolutely increase their desire for independence, month after month, while their reputed chief, John Dwyer, the American mining expert, waits, trusting in the political event that will follow the death of elderly President Díaz. The dead Yaqui suspended from the branches in Sonora are not the only admonition to the rebels. Each month, half a dozen of the tribe's brave warriors are marched by a military escort from the prison in Hermosillo to a field beyond the city, and there, as publicly as possible, they are militarily executed.
(AGES, Tomo 2138, 1906)

Several things are noteworthy about the lynching of disobedient Yaqui and their rebellion against the Mexican nation. As the article spends some time detailing the physical process of lynching, it also erases the structural power differentials about race, masculinity and nation that produced such moments of extreme violence because the lynched body is taken as a transparent truth. Further, the conspiracy theory that an American miner, John Dwyer was their political jefe, who wanted to use the Yaqui to annex Sonora and create a sovereign nation for them. Several reports from the Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores further articulate anxiety about Dwyer, because somehow having American funds, support, and mastermind Yaqui rebellion was doubly dangerous.² Mexico had already had two fiascos of ceded territory with the Mexican American war 1846-1848 and the Treaty of La Mesilla (touchstones for Mexican American/Chicano claims to indigenous land-rights). Suggesting that John Dwyer was using the Yaqui to annex Sonora reminded the Mexican government of its continuous failed colonization policies that lost more than half of its territory to the colonial power to

the north. Opening a wound of historical trauma with such a suggestion only reminded the Mexican government that not only were they unable to stop U.S. colonial powers but they were completely incapable of asserting their own colonial designs in places like Sonora. Further, suggesting that the Jefe militar of the Yaqui was a gringo is another effacement of Yaqui subjectivity, much like the lynchings themselves, a denial of their ability to rationally carry out warfare against a sovereign nation like Mexico. Given Mexico's failure to successfully carry out its own colonial projects within the borders of its own nation by stamping out Yaqui attempts at armed self determination because, as Jose Angel Hernández (2008) has demonstrated, the Porfiriato's sale of Yaqui lands to Mexican American colonists from Colorado in this second phase of state sponsored violence against indigenous peoples in Sonora shows, quite convincingly, how the Mexican nation-state depended upon Mexican Americans and US based venture capitalists to come in and colonize/civilize the Rio Yaqui. This shifted the work of the Yaqui campaign from strictly military warfare to lynching and deportation. As the passage references the strange fruit of the trees with a melancholic tone of mourning and loss, bearing dismembered Yaqui bodies, what this story elides is how Mexican Americans were actively colonizing Yaqui lands (Hernández 2008) to aid in the Mexican nation's project of borderlands modernity through Indian removal. State policies most notably included deportation, torture cases, and lynchings from 1901 until the beginning of the Mexican revolution in 1910.³ Dead Yaqui bodies hanging from the trees represent how Mexican fears and anxieties about Indian self-determination manifested in the almost unspeakable brutality of state-sponsored lynching. Essentially, the violence embodied in lynching, deportation to Yucatan, torture, colonization, private policing with Mexican private eyes in Arizona, venture capitalism, and national systems of government all worked in concert transnationally to inflect the way race, nation, citizenship and gender identities justified the state-sponsored violence.

Flashpoint 2: Post-Revolutionary Yaqui History

Historians such as Alfonso Cienfuegos (2006) and Javier Gamez Chavez (2004) have shown the extensive Yaqui participation in the Magonista movement during the revolution was fundamentally aligned with the anarchist critique of capitalist exploitation. After numerous Yaqui fought side by side with Magonistas during the revolutionary struggle in Northern Mexico between 1909 and 1914 to cement their claims to autonomy and hopefully have their families returned from their deportation to Yucatan from 1902-1909, negotiations with the Lázaro Cárdenas government demonstrate how enfranchisement was temporary and fragile at best and completely exclusionary at worst. The alliance with Magonistas was a parallel struggle against Porfiriismo and to recuperate and possess Yaqui land while centralizing claims to social and economic equality (Gamez-Chavez, 51-52). Maderistas did not resolve the Yaqui land disputes and

the Calles presidency reengaged hostility towards the Yaqui when they were assigned individual land holdings by the administration, triggering a second set of government-mandated imprisonments, including another armed struggle against the government in 1927-1928 and by maintaining a Central office of Yaqui registration that regulated their movements (Molina, 102-103). In other words, post-revolutionary agrarian reform was designed to stimulate development but did not consider Yaqui autonomy as part of these goals. Leading up to the 1937 decree by Cardenas, granting the Yaqui land rights to their territory, including water rights, it is evident that Yori⁴ capitalists did not respect Indigenous land rights in Northern Mexico.

In a series of communiqués to Lazaro Cardenas, Yaqui territorial Governor Lucero expressed a collective concretized sense of nationhood outside of that of the Mexican nation. Reminding President Cardenas of history. Lucero stated,

desde el año de 1533. Fecha en que los Españoles empenzó la guerra con el Yaqui, y despues en el año de 1838, principaron una guerra tenaz contra ésta tribu Yaqui, los Gobiernos de antaño muchas veces han hecho paz con la Tribu Yaqui para traicionarlo, es decir para acabar con el Yaqui, no es por que vivian tranquilos, no mas porque unos hombres blancos ambiciosos que estan radicados en el Yaqui esos hombres dan malas noticias al Gobierno, titulan de bandido al Yaqui, siendo ellos mismos son los promotores de todo, hasta la fecha todavia siguen con la misma idea que tienen contra esta Tribu Yaqui, según tenemos conocimiento que en la region del Yaqui todavia exsiten los Porfiristas del Gobierno pasado, quien tienen expropiados gran extensions de terrenos que pertenecen esta Tribu, por lo frecuentemente estamos en pleitos con el Gobierno antaño de Sonora. Los terrenos expropiados por los blancos que acontinuación expresamos, el campo denominado los Guarachis está ocupado por un señor de nacionalidad extranjero... en el campo que le dicen que tambien esta ocupado por unos blancos, así como tambien el Pueblo de Bacum y Cocorit, Son.,... actualmente ocupados por los yoris... los terrenos que tienen cultivados en aquel lugar [Cajeme y Ciudad Obregon] y que esta ocupados por los blancos, son propiedades de la Tribu Yaqui, ... los Gobernadores de los ocho pueblos así como todo el pueblo en general rogamus Ud. muy respetuosamente a fin de que los terrenos que nos fueron quitados en epocas pasadas por los hombres ambiciosos que nos sean devueltos de una manera definitiva para el progreso de la Tribu Yaqui (Lucero to Cardenas. 17 February 1937).

In addition to Yaqui autonomy, Governor Lucero also identifies a different discourse of race counter to Mexico's national mythology of mestizaje. Lucero is insistent that "hombres blancos ambicioscos" and Porfiristas are

synonymous. Here, whiteness not mestizonez becomes the marked difference between culture, land tenure, value, and citizenship. These diplomatic overtures on the part of the Yaqui nation are couched in the long-historical reach of Mexican imperialism and the struggle for autonomy. Clearly imagining themselves as a nation, Lucero's letter advocates the removal of remnants of the Porfirian empire and foreign venture capitalists vacating their rightful lands after a revolution that was supposed to take land from caciques and return it to the people. As Lucero's letter attests, the Yaqui imagined themselves as political subjects, in dialogue with the Mexican nation but clearly understanding that how the nation and its subjects viewed them was strikingly different. As "cualquier individuo de los blancos fabrican casas de adobe en los terrenos propiedad de la tribu Yaqui a venderlas a otras," Lucero marks a racialized capitalist system where Yoris acted as if Indian land autonomy meant nothing and that Yaqui land was seen as privatized terrain. In essence, the Yaqui tried to use the federal government to reterritorialize their region that had the multiple failed empires (Spain, Mexico and venture capitalists) that tried to deterritorialize the Yaqui peoples. This Yaqui reterritorialization must be read as a result of the constant revolt to control the means of production and Yaqui bodies, using land as a base to counteract the centuries-long disturbances that various empires caused to social, economic and religious life.

Flashpoint 3: Forgetting the past in Contemporary Landscapes of National Commemoration

The image that most crassly codifies national forgetting of violence against Yaqui peoples at Mexico's northern border is the deployment of the image of the *Danzante del venado* (Yaqui deer dancer or in Yaqui *Maso*). The most sacred of cultural practices, scholars such as Spicer (1980), Holden Kelly (1970), Delgado Shorter (2009) and Evers with Molina (1987) have shown that dancing is not only a ritual of commemoration but that ceremonial life has survived the long-term historical persecution of Yaqui peoples by the Mexican government, forming the backbone of cultural practice (Spicer, 1943, 28). Further scholars such as Spicer (1940, "Pascua"), Rodriguez, and Fortier (2007) have noted that the Yaqui are often very reluctant to talk about ceremonial and religious life with anyone, especially given their history with the Mexican government. Given this history of violence and lack of state retribution, and Yaqui protection of their sacred rituals, why then, does the image of the Yaqui deer dancer appear as national patrimony all over Sonora and Greater Mexico?

Existing as a cultural practice before the Spanish and Jesuits arrived, la danza del venado was originally a hunting ritual and a means of securing the appropriate relationship with the animal. The ceremony takes place within the context where three *Pascolas* (*Pahko'ola*) who play the water drum, flute, and rasp. The iconic costume, often reproduced by the state, and so central to the ritual, features the stuffed head of a male deer worn on the head of the dancer. Resting on a white kerchief, which covers the

dancers head and the eyes, red ribbons flow from the antlers. Wearing necklaces of shell crosses, representing the 4 worlds, the coyote belt made from the hoofs of deer or other animals wrap the ankles. The legs also are covered with *teneboihm*, a string of moth cocoons with pebbles or several large grains, acting as rattles. With gourd rattles in hand, the dancer imitates the steps of a deer. A site for the production of masculinity, ethnic identity, and spatial claims to land, the dance relies upon the merging of Catholic Easter traditions and ancient cultural beliefs to cement collective historical memory.⁵ The dance also marks the merging of the natural world and the world of Christian belief (Spicer, 1980, 60). The Pascua Yaqui tribe, for example, has used the *danza del venado* to commemorate those massacred at the battle of Mazacoba by the Mexican Army in 1900.⁶ As active production of collective memory of loss, state-sponsored violence, Yaqui survival, and cultural retention, the dance is very specific to the Yaqui of Sonora.

There are several important studies whose main task has been to provide such cultural anthropological descriptions of the *danza del venado*, and mine is not one of them (see Spicer 1980, Delgado-Shorter 2009, and Evers and Molina 1987). Rather, I am most interested in how the ironic gesture of the Mexican state using the *danzante del venado* image turns the Yaqui and Yaqui history into a commodity and vehicle for nationalism. That is, the Yaqui and their history are turned into objects of consumption by the Sonorense state, transnationally based corporations, and the Mexican state commemoration of the bicentennial in Mexico City as a stand in for an authentic history, justifying a *norteño* place in the Mexican nation as well as a localized form of national pride.

One of the late 20th century deployments of the image of the *danzante del venado* occurred between 1999-2001 when the image appeared on the state of Sonora license plate in green (Image 1 “Green Yaqui Sonora license plate” Photo by Benjamin Alonso Rascón)

From 2001 to 2005, there was *el tomatazo*, the *danzante del venado*, illuminated in red that many compared to an exploding tomato (“Las Placas de Sonora”). (Image 2 “El Tomatazo” Photo by Benjamin Alonso Rascón). As one critic argued, “the new plates obeyed the governmental requirements for images, but in turn provide an image that clearly identifies our state (“Las Placas de Sonora”). But even within this discussion, no mention is made of the sustained presence of the *danzante del venado* as cultural referent or cultural artifact, let alone a reference to living Indians in Sonora. Changed because of their lack of legibility, the exploding tomato was replaced with a much cleaner image, both functional (with a barcode for computer tracking of vehicles) and recognizable as “Sonora,” the figure of the *danzante del venado*. From 2005- 2009, another revamped license plate emerged, this time in orange, with a much more visible image of the *danzante del venado*. (image 3, “Red *Danzante del Venado*” photo by Benjamin Alonso Rascón). In late 2009, the plates with the *danzante del venado* were slowly being replaced with a basic orange and white plate. In

**Image 1. “Green Yaqui Sonora license plate” used in the early 1990’s.
Photo by Benjamin Alonso Rascón 2010**



**Image 2. “El Tomatazo” used in the late 1990’s. Photo by Benjamin
Alonso Rascón 2010**



Materializing the Nation, Robert J. Foster argues that the “idea of nation materializes in the form of media images and consumer goods” (3). Sonora is at the margins of the larger Mexican ruling class because of its geographical distance from the center of culture and politics in Mexico City. It seems strange that the state has produced the most Mexican presidents in the history of the nation. But this has produced a sort of complex that has influenced how Sonora markets and represents itself in relationship to the rest of Mexico. The major producer of wheat and beef, Sonora is an

**Image 3. “Red Danzante del Venado” used in the early to late 2000’s.
Photo by Benjamin Alonso Rascón 2010**



economic powerhouse. However, it is dismissed by centralized Mexicans as a cultural center or a place of culture in larger national discourse.

It seems that one strategy to represent Sonora as a place of culture beyond vaqueros, pickup trucks, ranchos, and wheat would be to hearken back to a culture that is as “authentic” and local as it gets, that of “lo indio,” the Yaqui and the figure of the *danzante del venado*. The use of this image does several things at once. When a state institutionalizes an image by making it part of its identity, this is no small gesture. Perhaps well meaning at first, there are several things that are problematic in with the use the *danzante* by the state. First, the frozen image of the *danzante* is static. It is a codified image of the state: Sonora is the *danzante del venado* and the *danzante del venado* is Sonorense. Second, the image doesn’t show a face or an individual, rather it is the silhouette *danzante del venado* that we see on all the license plates that distinguish Sonora from Sinaloa’s red tomato, Jalisco’s green agave, or Chihuahua’s running Tarahumaras. While Sinaloa *equals* agriculture and Jalisco *equals* tequila, they represent what they produce, we too could argue that the *placa Sonorense*, as does the Chihuahuense features a product as well. That is, it produces the most desirable representation of the region by featuring their largest Indigenous populations as state patrimony.

Because the image is a generic image of the *danzante*, it becomes objectified for consumption and removes the Yaqui from the history of nation. The Yaqui are used by the nation to consolidate its identity but exist outside of the national order except as imaginary figures of the past. In other words, it is the folkloric, *danzante del venado* of the past who is passive and *pacified*, superstitious, and iconic. This is “the” Yaqui Indian that the state desires to reproduce itself. But negation of actual histories of

violence is also dependent upon iterative visibility. The tens of thousands of reproduced license plates inevitably mark a lingering presence of the Yaqui, but a Yaqui that has to be recoded. Thus, again, ironically this is the bind of erasure. The production of a masculine nation state with the masculinized but passive warrior, *danzante del venado*, achieves all of this. As numerous scholars argue, images of Indians in the nineteenth century show the desire for the primitive, picturesque "Indian" in the singular on the one hand (Hoelscher, 2008 and Bernardin, Graulich, MacFarlane and Tonkovich 2003). On the other hand, Laurie Lawlor (5) argues that images produced by Edward Curtis, for example, worked with photographic subjects in the "we" as a collaborative project, to picture subjects of their own making. But other readings of Curtis critique the staged, and posed nature of the images to the extent that the photographs represent ethnic types and assumptions of early Anthropology (Lawlor, 5-6). These critiques of Curtis suggest that the gaze of multiple white hegemonies produce the Indians in the images and the Sonora license plate is no different.

The license plate "assumes a natural form in the images" because it fixes the image of the Deer dancer and by extension Yaqui peoples have naturally coexisted and thrived in Sonora (Foster, 10). Such a projection could be farther from the truth. As the abovementioned historical evidence demonstrates, the relationship between Yaqui peoples and the Mexican state has been violent and tenuous. The naturalizing effects of the license plate ultimately displace actual history of violence with a picturesque dehistoricized image that bleeds Yaqui cultural practice of its specificity and sacredness. Further, the naturalization makes the Yaqui image and thus the Yaqui tribe "named, recognizable and comprehensible" as national discourse (Candlin and Guns, 2). This packaged, static, frozen image of the Yaqui tribe is the one most favorable because it is devoid of historical context in the distribution and consumption of the image. Instead of showing that the *danzante del venado* represents storytelling in Yaqui communities, which demonstrate "their feelings about the cruelty and treachery of Mexicans, or the superiority of the Yaqui," the license plate negates that there is any story behind the image at all (Warner-Giddings, 13). How ironic then, that a dance used as a way of honoring Yaqui warriors massacred by the Mexican state, for example, is the same ceremonial image that appears as state patrimony. It is the ironic state gesture of appropriating the sacred subject of history that produces severe incongruity and historical dissonance, an opposite effect of the state's intended masculinized honoring of the athletic *danzante del venado* and the re-production of colonial violence.⁷

This is an image that "entails the colonization of the object by the subject and the social," according to Candlin and Guns (4). As the *danzante del venado* reproduces a simulacrum of state history, it moves farther and farther away from its intended meaning as a sacred ceremony of Indigenous cultural and religious expression and becomes a colonized object. That is, "lo indio" is something produced by the state in its acceptable forms and

that lacks voice, subjectivity, and ultimately remains in the past. As the object is Indian and the subjects are those represented by the state (legible citizen-subjects with rights and claims to the nation), we see how the fetisization of the object is the very thing that produces the subjectivity for those with access to state power. The generic Indian-object is made into a “thing,” not a window through which interpretation is meaningful, but rather, as Bill Brown argues, “the story of a changed relation to the human subject and this is the story of how the thing really names less an object than a particular subject-object relation” (140). While the license plate signifies Sonora, the thing/plate obfuscates the ways in which the Mexican state has consistently made Indians, and in particular the Yaqui into objects of death, genocide, and in this case regional patrimony.

But there have been continuous contestations of the static representations of the Yaqui presented by the state. For example, the Yaqui have narrated the peace reached at Pithaya January 9, 1909, as a moment of fear, not identification, with the state. Meeting with General Yzabal and the brothers Luis and Lorenzo Torres at the Pithaya, the Yaqui were surrounded by 60,000 soldiers and there were only 90 of them present. As the peace meeting escalated into a battle, two Yaqui warriors died attempting to put bayonets in the chests of Mexican generals. But the part of the Yaqui narrative that is most interesting is as follows “Yzabal died of fright in some state of Europe after soiling his pants during the peace at Pithaya. This is very positive in our history” (Qtd. in Warner-Giddings, 90). So while the state commemorates the static image of a dead object in the *Danzante del venado* on the license plate, this story recounted in 1909 resurrects a counter-narrative where the Yaqui kill the state by shaming its actors into fear. That oral history suggests that Yzabal died of his own traumatic and violent relationship trying to exterminate the Yaqui while he was the governor of Sonora, represents a keen sense of humor and resiliency for Yaqui peoples as a means of creating historical memory. This narrative also suggests that the Yaqui do not imagine themselves as objects to be mourned but active participants in state formation with their own disruptive take on national history.

Flashpoint 4: From Placas to Cement

There are several other ways in which the image of the *danzante del venado* is being used to fortify capitalism and that is through several products that bear the Yoeme image. One of the more blatant appropriations is in the CEMEX advertisement (Image 4 “*Como La Danza del Venado*” photo by Nicole Guidotti-Hernández 2009). In November of 2009, around the same time that the New York Museum of Natural history repatriated the remains of Yaqui warriors taken from the Mazacoba battlesite in 1900 to the tribe,⁸ CEMEX had billboards throughout Sonora that read “*Como ‘la Danza del Venado’: Somos Parte de tú Historia.*”⁹ Aside from being a blatant insult to Yaqui social and religious practices, these billboards publicly conflate the static image of the “dead Indian object” in

order to sell and celebrate the herencia of Mexican monopoly capitalism that functions like an empire.

Founded in 1906 in Monterrey Nuevo Leon, CEMEX provided cement to such famous builders as Frank Lloyd Wright in creating the Guggenheim for example. After acquiring numerous companies throughout Mexico, they began to amass acquisitions abroad in such nations including Spain, Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, Columbia, the Philippines, the U.S., Nicaragua, Puerto Rico, Australia, and England. To quote their website, "Over the past century, we have grown from a local player to one of the top global companies in our industry. We have the people, the culture, and the opportunities to continue on our path of disciplined growth" ("CEMEX: This is Our Story"). CEMEX names itself in terms of resources (people, culture, and opportunity). It is through the culture of transnational business relations and the image of the *Danzante del venado* that, much like during the Spanish Conquest, according to Serge Grutzinski, that empire shaped the rhythm of styles, politics, reactions and oppositions through a set of images (3). With a different form of conquest, the CEMEX advertisement presents a transnational business imaginary that relies on circuits of empire to magically do the work of cultural patrimony. In this case, the conquest is quite never complete because the *Danzante* is not of the Colonial Aztec past or mestizo he is the Indigenous present. So how

Image 4. "Como La Danza del Venado" CEMEX Bilboard in Central Hermosillo, Sonora Mexico. Photo by Nicole Guidotti-Hernández 2009



does this all connect to the Yaqui image in the CEMEX advertisement in Sonora? Quite simply, this is a perfect example of empire and economic imperialism in the contemporary period.

Suturing, in the Lacanian sense, represents “a conjunction of the imaginary and the symbolic” (Lacan, 118). This conjoining is most evinced in the disjuncture between tradition (*el danzante de venado*) and modernity (cement). Cement symbolically represents modernity yet the *danzante* represents the primitive, a clear-cut dichotomy. As if continuing the Porfirian era project of modernizing Mexico in the nineteenth century, but this time with concrete, the image literally cements or fixes a rupture between capitalism and history. The CEMEX image invents tradition, that is making the primitive signal the modern so that the state, and by extension, monopoly capitalism can reproduce themselves. It further addresses an anonymous Sonorense—the use of the personal pronoun *tú* here commits to the prototypical imaginary Sonorense (*Yori*) to a history that includes indigenous people yet absolves him/her of responsibility for violence against these very same Indians. It further evokes a Sonorense subjectivity that is both intimate and distant.¹⁰ The phrase requires that the reading public negotiate the historical suturing with each billboard encounter. The artifact produced by CEMEX harkens back to Mexican muralism and anthropology of the 1930’s, the kind of “exploitative standardization of the Indian as living relic in [] representational nationalism” practiced by the likes of David Alfaro Siqueiros, for example (Segre, 192). So while CEMEX was founded in Nuevo Leon in 1906, the company depends on the iconic link between the *Danzante del venado* and its actual cementera Yaqui in Sonora, which opened in 2006 in Hermosillo “to [create] some shared, autonomous and inherited life-world in terms of the reanimation of ‘tradition’” figured as authenticity (Mufti, 100). But the thing that links the Yaqui tribe with CEMEX is not a continuous tradition, but the synthetic suturing of modernity and the primitive, where capitalism *equals* nationalism. This pursuit of legitimacy in the state of Sonora by CEMEX corporation is predicated on the most “authentic” object that can be found: Yaqui Indians. Monopoly capitalism and modernity both legitimate themselves by working against cultural inauthenticity with the image of the *danzante del venado*.

Further, the image and text anticipate a kind of knowing on the part of the viewer: One must know the Yaqui to know they are from Sonora and one must know Sonora to know the Yaqui live there. It reflects what Erica Seagre has called “commemorative . . . preexisting anthropological literacy,” a kind of familiarity with the object of study and the object of nation (191). The reader’s literacy is assumed as having knowledge of the anthropological subject, that the reader can make the link between Indigenous tradition and capitalist tradition embodied in CEMEX. The billboard also assumes a shared space in Sonora, one where Indians and Mexicans cohabitate and make nation through the consumption of products like cement. However, this split between Indigenous tradition and Mexican Identity (whiteness and citizenship) are pronounced in the

suturing of modernity and the primitive. The *danzante del venado* is clearly not mestizo, he is Indian and gendered male, carrying a different history of racialized and thus disenfranchised masculinity with him. In effect, as the CEMEX advertisement claims a shared space and shared cultural tradition in Sonora, it also disavows it because of the fact that the *danzante del venado* can never be mestizo. Historian Anne Doremus argues that the Mexican state government stepped up its attempts to integrate Indians in the nation during the 1940's and 1950's, which included Mexico's sponsoring of the first Congreso Indigenista Interamericana in 1940. She further argues that it was hoped that this national project of mestizaje or racial mixing would improve the economic circumstances of Mexicans and Indians alike (375). As a part of the Cardenas post revolutionary project of modernity through agriculture, they continued to preach pride in Mexico's indigenous past but signal mestizaje as Mexico's political and economic future (Doremus, 377). But what we see in the CEMEX image is not mestizaje but clearly, indigeneity, and an image completely at odds with racial projects of mestizaje in the Mexican nation. This is why the *danzante del venado* must exist as a folkloric object of capitalist consumption indicating history and patrimony precisely because it is not a mestizo citizen-subject but a primitive object upon which the idea of nation is staked and produced.

We can also take the CEMEX advertisement as a sign of neo-colonial aggression. While on the one hand demonstrating a surprising site of convergence, the image shows how economically driven representations of culture reaffirm CEMEX as modernity and non-Indigenous. For what could be more modern than the concrete used to construct skyscrapers, irrigation canals (which Yaqui struggle to maintain control of in the Rio), highways, bridges, prison industrial complexes, and homes. On the other hand, it is highly unlikely that CEMEX consulted the Yaqui peoples about naming their Hermosillo plant *Cementera Yaqui* or if they sought permission to show the deer dancer as part of the advertisement. It is my sense that neither the state of Sonora, in making the license plate or CEMEX, in creating these billboards sought permission from the Yaqui to use a sacred symbol. The aggressive nature of merging capitalist future with an image of indigenous traditional past displaces Yaqui subjects from circuits of consumption (i.e. they don't buy cement and thus are not consumers) and instead locates them as socially and economically displaced vehicle for marketing. This representation beautifully illustrates structural and social inequality. As CEMEX celebrates itself as "una compañía global de soluciones para la industria de la construcción en constante crecimiento que ofrece productos de alta calidad y servicios confiables a clientes y comunidades en más de 50 países del mundo" ("CEMEX Anuncia Ampliación de planta Yaqui"), it also has a poor environmental record for a company of its size.¹¹ In June of 2010, the Colombian Secretary of the Environment announced that it would sanction three companies, including CEMEX, for air quality violations in the Rio Tunjelo region near

Bogotá (Galvis). In effect, the image enacts its own kind of discursive violence and imperial designs at multiple levels: the shoddy and abusive environmental record is masked over, the lack of consent on the part of Yaqui peoples for the use of their image is naturalized, the disjuncture between primitive and modern and Indigenous and mestizo *equals* whiteness is erased.¹²

The redemptive nature of modernity literally paves over, with cement, the extremely violent past, and most arguably the structurally violent present. While it would seem that the CEMEX Corporation is redistributing wealth in the public domain and particularly into Indigenous communities precisely because of the image that sutures the connection between the two, the exact opposite is true. The corporation estimated a 10% return to local communities through employment in the region, it remains unclear how much of this has actually been returned to Sonora's Indigenous communities or the Rio Yaqui region ("CEMEX anuncia ampliación de planta Yaqui"). We get a distracting representation of collaboration between commerce and Indigenous peoples that operates as self-reflexive outwardly in the sense that the invasive technology of capitalism is exposed in the distinct contrast between cement and Indians. Even though we are talking about a privately held company, the name CEMEX (Mexican cement) has a "national resonance [that] is epistemological, an effect of the expansion of practices and discourses of possessive individualism through capitalist markets" (Foster, 6). What this knowledge formation propagates, then, is a distinctive split between colonial knowledge and the image of the colonized subject frozen in the past to propagate a capitalist future.

This double gaze at once values the colonized object as reflective of tradition and ancient Mexican cultures and doubly devalues it by turning it into an object. What the CEMEX *danzante del venado* fails to recall is, according to Delgado-Shorter, how Yaqui oral traditions, dances, and processions provide a way of understanding Indigenous historic events and the manifestation of historical consciousness (25). Instead of reading the dancer as a carrier of Yaqui not Mexican history, CEMEX misappropriates the narrative function of the *danzante del venado*. For example, a ceremony at Pascua Yaqui on June, 8 2010 as part of a tribal health conference also commemorated the massacre at Mazacoba over 100 years earlier, further demonstrating that Yaqui ceremonies are self-made, anti-colonial texts grounded in collective history and not commercial ventures. That ceremony, much like the *danza del venado*, is religious and thus needs to be understood in this context. The other thing the *danza del venado* reminds of is the ways in which religion has consistently been articulated as the reasons why the Yaqui were able to survive 300 plus years of war with the Spanish and Mexicans, in addition to their deportation to Yucatan Peninsula in the early 1900's. The CEMEX ad, in effect, narrates Yaqui culture as Mexican tradition and not as a larger part of a culturally and ethnically specific web of lifeways. Thus the *danzante del venado* is understood as "some underlying 'spiritual' essence, but [not] as a

dynamic process, inscribing histories in specific places and valuing actions and texts within relations of power" (Delgado-Shorter, 21). The *danzante del venado* is produced as local Sonorense exoticism, national capitalist patrimony, and not a claim to ancestral lands, Indigenous sovereignty, or anti-colonial practice. Nor does the billboard register the individual and collective trauma of the colonial relations between the Yaqui and Mexicans in the state of Sonora.

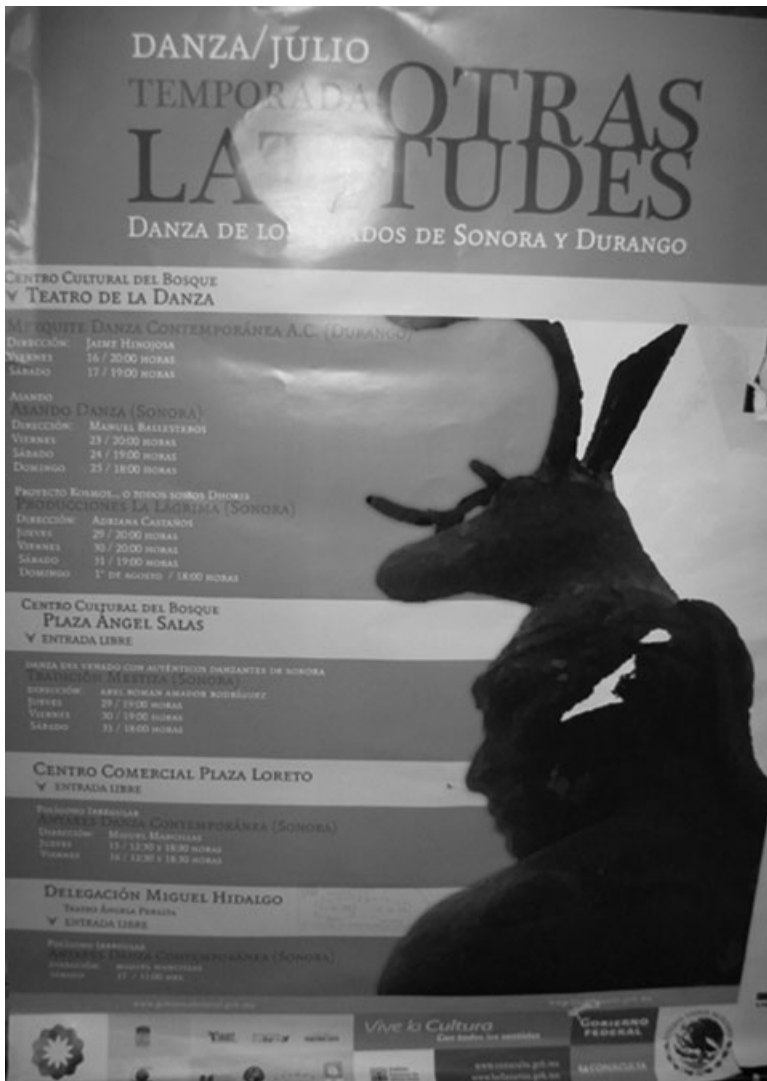
Flash Point 5: Mexico 2010, Otros Latitudes

The Bicentennial of the Mexican nation and the Centennial of the Revolution have sparked a tremendous amount of interest in the regional cultures of states outside of Distrito Federal. CONACULTA (Consejo Nacional para la cultura y las artes), the federal agency of art and culture and Palacio Bellas Artes have put together a tremendous set of Concursos Conmemorativos to reflect the diverse regional and ethnic histories that make up the Mexican nation. For the *norteño* segment of programming the "Otros Latitudes" contemporary dance program (July 5-30, 2010) is of most interest because, in addition to featuring dance companies from Sonora and Durango, the advertising utilizes the image of the *danzante del venado* to make a particular set of claims about nation, authenticity, race and culture. (image 5 "Otros Latitudes" photo by Nicole Guidotti-Hernández 2010).

Of the five dance companies featured, two embark on representation that is "Sonorense." *Compañía Asando Danza* from Hermosillo takes one of the most important cultural practices of Sonora and turns it into movement: *la carne asada*. With a combination of *música norteña*, "el vaquero coqueto, la mujer sumisa, el macho golpeador, su borrachera y el baile con el erotismo en todo su esplendor" the company interprets quotidian life in Sonora ("Danza Julio/Temporada"). *Carne Asada* is such an important part of the Sonorense imaginary that people repeat, with pride and irony the adage uttered by José Vasconcelos, the father of *mestizaje* (eugenics) as state policy, "Donde termina el guiso y empieza la carne asada, comienza la barbarie." (*La Cultura de Carne Asada*). It is the barbarie of *Carne Asada* that made the Sonorense economy thrive in the twentieth century. In some ways, the dance ode to *Carne Asada* is a fitting representation of the production, consumption, the eros of nation, and cultural reverberations of the cattle industry in Sonora. One cannot be imagined without the other.

The other dance company, *Tradición Mestiza*, from La Universidad de Sonora, included the participation of Mayo and Yaqui community members as part of the program. Their program "*Danza del Venado con Auténticos Danzantes de Sonora*," relies on the problematic discourse of authenticity and functions with the charge of preserving Mexican popular dance and music.¹³ The company stages dance and music from both Yaqui and Mayo communities, which is unusual given that most dance companies provide a popularized form of the *danza del venado*.¹⁴ Featuring

Image 5. “Otros Latitudes” poster commemorating the Bicentenario in Mexico City. Photo by Nicole Guidotti-Hernández. Taken at Chilpancingo Metro stop. 2010



four sets with Yaqui musical and dance practices at their core (“Danza de pascola y venado”, “Danza de matachines,” “Flor de capomo,” and “La Yaquecita”), the performance is authenticated by the presence of tribal members. Instead of an appropriation of the dances for profit, it seems that some sort of consent has occurred in these productions. Authenticity and cultural essentialism should not be the basis of staging; rather, I am



suggesting that informed consent for the usage of images and practices of Indigenous people need to be respected. Still, this is not the most curious feature of the program. It is the advertisement itself that is odd. Why is it that the headdress of the *danzante del venado*, which could be Yaqui or Mayo given that both tribes have a segment in one of the dance shows, is the representative image that adorns the publicity? I'd like to suggest that this is another example by which CONACULTA, Bellas Artes and therefore the centralized Mexican state iconographically inscribe Sonora as universally authentic through the presence of the surviving Indigenous groups. The slippage between the two distinct tribal groups Yaqui or Mayo and the ambiguity of the image signifies *norteño* culture and say nothing of the processes by which two once despised indigenous groups have become the stand in for national consolidation. Most concretely, the state uses the figure of the *danzante del venado* to construct Mexicanidad and yet, if history has taught us anything, Indigenous groups like the Yaqui, Mayo, and Seris of Sonora are some of the most impoverished and disenfranchised locales in the nation. At the same time; however, we need to be mindful of the fact that Yaqui communities on both sides of the US/Mexico border depend on the ritual of the *danza del venado* to record and produce their history as subjects of their own making, not subjects circumscribed exclusively by the state.

Conclusion

While one might read the license plates and CEMEX advertisements as a kind of mourning of a lost object,¹⁵ the plate and advertisements represent a severe ironic disjuncture between actual living conditions and the Yaqui relationship to the state and patrimony. As Freud wrote in 1938, mourning "has a very distinct psychic task to perform, namely to detach the memories and expectations from the dead" (Freud, 1950, 96). If the license plate operates as public mourning, then two things can be assumed: the state considers the representation of the Yaqui on the plate a dead object, and, secondly, the state does not want to complete the psychic task of mourning, for mourning would require separation. The image is a literal disjunction: it kills the object, making the Yaqui a dead part of national history and further the disjunction is enacted by the reproduction of state ideology which is dependent on killing Indians both literally and figuratively.

As of June of 2010, the Mexican state's practices of death in relationship to the Yaqui stopped that process of "mourning of the dead object" so to speak when the traditional *ocho pueblos* in Sonora began a lawsuit, along with the help of University of Arizona law professor James Hopkins and the Pascua Yaqui tribe in Tucson Arizona, reminding the state that Yaqui claims to subjectivity and self-determination are not dead but very much alive. Filing the claim with the Inter-American court of Human Rights, the main issue to be addressed is that the community land and water decree issued by President Lázaro Cárdenas in 1937 has not been respected.

According to the Instituto Sonora/Arizona, in the Yaqui Territory allotted by Cardenas, the estimated population amounts to 40,290 inhabitants, among Yaqui Indians and other settlers; 31 % of the inhabitants speak some Indian language and Spanish. There is a social and economic lag which is reflected by the level of education up to 5th grade (elementary school); 40 % of the population not having any social security benefits; and an average income of less than 6000 pesos a month ("Water Rights, Usage, and Management in the Yaqui Territory"). Statistically, the benign neglect on behalf of the Sonorense government and the Mexican federal government is its own kind of enactment of death of a social, political and economic sort, placing the Rio Yaqui region and its inhabitants among some of Mexico's poorest inhabitants. The numerous violations of Indigenous land rights include the use of pesticides without the permission or acknowledgement of the inhabitants. Similar to the case filed by the Awas Tingni of Nicaragua in 2001 and settled in 2008 to secure legal rights to its traditional lands and resources, the Yaqui suit will depend on the precedent of this case.

This lawsuit demonstrates how Yaqui claims against the state and its legitimate citizens have fallen upon deaf ears. In sum total, the various flashpoints of this essay show how the national fantasies of *mestizaje* and national commemoration are highly problematic in light of the 2010 Centennial of the revolution and the bicentennial of the nation. The flashpoints show a different narrative of the Mexican revolution and Mexican nationhood. Instead of a nationalism that celebrates *mestizo* independence as a national rhetoric, the Yaqui case shows how dissatisfying the revolution and its promises of equality were. In the larger history of resistance and revolution, we need to take into account the questions of race, gender, and the nation's violent history towards indigenous peoples as lynching reports and Yaqui communiqués to Cardenas indicate. While most Mexican Indian groups like the O'odham were granted land through communally owned *ejidos*, the Yaqui accord with the Cardenas administration should have guaranteed them exclusive land rights in 1937. The Yaqui nation's continuous struggle for autonomy serves as a perfect example of how forgetting at the national level is necessary to foment celebrations, be they revolutionary, nationalist, or social. At the same time, the evidence suggest that the Mexican state and its individuated citizen-subjects literally tried to make it too painful for Yaqui Indians to self-govern through accepted practices like lynching and land displacement. If we look at the broader sweep of commemoration of the revolution and independence that includes narratives about the Villas, the Zapatas, the Carranzas, Morelos and the Hídalgo, we see that revolutionary and independence histories take an individuated approach as a means for explaining the collective, a collective that does not readily include Indians who participated in the revolution or that shaped Mexican national policy for which *mestizaje* was such an important post-revolutionary imperative.

These case studies show how armed struggle in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, official government to government

correspondence from a Yaqui nation that imagined itself as autonomous, and recent ceremonies at both Pascua and the Ocho Pueblos commemorating the repatriation of the remains of warriors and the state massacres mark Yaqui subjectivity. While 2010 marks the centennial of the Mexican Revolution and the bicentennial of the independent Mexican nation-state, Sonora-based images, for example, show a broad array of commodified contemporary images of the Yaqui which provide further examples of how national history and nationalism produce mythologies that serve particular interests. On the one hand, the Yaqui are written out of the history of the Mexican nation and its revolution but as the *danzante del venado* is used in Sonora and even by CONACULTA and Bellas Artes to mobilize regional and national identity. The resistance/assimilation/revolution/national history paradigm's limitations are put into sharp relief when we view how Yaqui peoples were punished by nations (imagined and real) re-consolidating themselves through the acts of their citizens and discursive formations, at once excluding Indians from that formation except when it was and is convenient to fomenting an "authentic," vision of the folkloric past that is really a displaced present. By deconstructing nationalist master narratives (be they Mexican, Sonorense, or Chicana/o), I raise these issues and evidence as a way to provoke consideration for Yaqui versions of memory of the Mexican nation and that relationship to colonialism and discursive violence as part of the project of social memory and commemoration of nations and revolution.

Endnotes

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¹ David Kazanjin *The Colonizing Trick: National Culture and Imperial Citizenship in Early America*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003. 27. Following Walter Benjamin, Kazanjin argues that the flashpoint is a means of seizing hold of memory as it flashes up. He argues that "writing history does not mean passively recognizing a smooth and even sequence of events; rather, it means catching glimpses of those flashes, as if they were individual frames of a film moving too slow to be sutured into a moving image."

² For more on the Mexican government's preoccupation with the John Dwyer conspiracy theory, see SRE LE 2250, pages 1-21.

³ I provide a much more detailed account of the politics of lynching in my book *Unspeakable Violence*. Duke University Press 2011.

⁴ Yori is a Yaqui word for white person and often was derogatorily used by the Yaqui to refer to what they called white Mexicans and other foreigners who occupied their land and made war against them in the nineteenth century.

⁵ Spicer actually argues that the Yaqui refer to their religious practices as Catholic, where the Deer dancer is seen part of this Christian tradition,

including the idea that Jesus's suffering took place in Yaqui country. *The Yaquis: A Cultural History*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1980. 59.

⁶ Pascua Yaqui Public Health Conference Evening Program. June 8, 2010. The conference, which included speakers who talked about the historical trauma of Yaqui deportations and massacres in the early 20th century as factors that determine contemporary health issues of the tribe. As part of the Tuesday evening program, which included a dinner and a ceremony to honor fallen warriors from the battle, the tribe also showed a taped ceremony, including the deer dance, from when Yaqui warriors whose remains were robbed from the Mazacoba battlesite in 1900 by US anthropologists and later given to the Museum of Natural History in New York City. After years of fighting for the repatriation of the remains, the Museum agreed to return the remains in 2009. On October 29, 2009, along with 15 delegates from the tribe, the remains were taken on a pilgrimage through various Yaqui pueblos including Pascua, Guadalupe and traditional Ocho pueblos in Sonora. The conference on June 8th suggest, according to Vice-Chairman Robert Valencia, that tribal government is actively trying to get its members to actively make connections between contemporary issues such as mental illness, domestic violence and poverty as directly related to historical trauma and violence.

⁷ Barbara Babcock has argued that images of Pueblo women with pottery on their heads in the US southwest signal how "the reproduction of Pueblo Culture in the bodies of women and clay vessels [shifts] from historical reality to aesthetic object to mythic vessel of desire" (1994, 53). The desire for the gendered Indigenous body, across multiple colonial contexts, is not new. In fact, the docile Pueblo woman's body, much like the frozen *danzante del venado*, is feminized yet athletic, regional yet national, a counterpoint to the masculinized nation state that continues to inflict multiple forms of violence against Yaqui populations.

⁸ For more information on this event, see the INAH website http://dti.inah.gob.mx/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3816&Itemid=512.

⁹ This billboard was part of a campaign to promote the opening of the Cememtería Yaqui in 2009 in Sonora, which positioned the company as a local player worthy of the same respect of a local friend of Sonora, an imagined regional distinctiveness. Other billboards featured *The Cierro de la Campaña*.

¹⁰ Guillermo Nuñez-Noriega has argued that this distinctive anonymous Sonorense emerged as a social construction with the advent of the Mexican Revolution in the north. See "La Invencion de Sonora: region, regionalismo y formacion del estado en Mexico postcolonial del siglo XIX." *Revista de El Colegio de Sonora*, no.9, 1995, especially pages 154-155.

¹¹ In 2007, the EPA sued CEMEX for air pollution violations at its Victorville plant on the outskirts of Santa Clarita in California. See Judy Rorke. "EPA Sues CEMEX Over Air Quality Victorville Plant Controls Cited." *Daily News: Los Angeles*. March 1, 2007.

¹² I equate mestizo with whiteness because of the discursive tract by Governor Lucero from 1937 where he calls Mexicans in the Rio Yaqui "hombres blancos."

¹³ Sydney Hitchinson argues that "the ideology of mestizaje and the proliferation of national folk dance companies were both critical in the nation-building process of the post-colonial period" ("The Ballet Folklórico de México and the Construction of the Mexican Nation Through Dance." In *Dancing Across Borders*. Nájera Ramírez, Olga and Cantú, Norma Eds. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009. 210

¹⁴ The most commonly known danza del venado comes from Ballet Folklórico de Amalia Hernández, for example. As part of national theatre, this dance company features dances from 10 regions as part of its program including a pop culture version of the Yaqui deer dance. See <http://balletamalia.com/> for more information.

¹⁵ Freud describes Mourning as "the reaction to the loss of a loved" and I would also add hated "person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal and so in." "Mourning and Melcholia". *SE*, 14: 243.

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