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Identities on the Margin:

Perspectives on Cisneros, Conde, Crosthwaite and Morales

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by

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Introduction

In 1988 I was given the opportunity, via an exaggerated recommendation by Dr. Gustavo Segade, to teach at the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California in the School of Humanities which was at that time in Tijuana, Mexico. While teaching courses on United States literature and culture I was able to meet and become acquainted with this border town. I found that just beyond the glimmering neon lights of *Avenida Revolución* there was an incredible variety of cultural events in which I could participate. It was, and is, a world where close contact with writers, actors, artists and intellectuals was possible. Having met and gotten to know Rosina Conde, as well as a host of others, was a turning point for me. It was the year that I spent traveling between Tijuana and San Diego that this dissertation was born.

I began to study what was called "Literatura fronteriza," Border literature. My Master's thesis was a first attempt at a scholarly analysis of the literary production in Tijuana, focusing specifically on Rosina Conde's El agente secreto which I translated, as well. In the beginning of this dissertation, after having finished my graduate courses at UCLA, the idea was to examine the specifics of the Mexican side of the border, focusing on the relationship between Mexico City and Tijuana, between center and margin. However, it became apparent that to talk about just one side of the border would mean to ignore half of its reality. After discussing this dilemma with both Dr. Héctor Calderón and Dr. José Monleón, it seemed necessary to round out the study by including Chicano literature.

This decision changed completely the composure of my investigation and has had a noted impact on the end results. After some deliberation I decided to focus on four books written by men and women on both sides of the border. Chapter One, "The Negotiation and Presentation of Marginalized Identity: El Gran Preténder," covers El Gran Preténder by the Tijuana writer Luis Humberto Crosthwaite. This novella presents marginalized identity by looking at a Cholo community in Tijuana, Mexico. After having chosen this text, Dr. Calderón introduced me to Caras viejas, vino nuevo by the Chicano writer Alejandro Morales. This novel became the center piece for Chapter two, "Consuming Cities and Consuming Identities: Caras viejas, vino nuevo," of my dissertation because it too examines youth culture, but this time in a non-site specific barrio somewhere in the United States, most probably East Los Angeles. These two texts form the bases for discussing the construction of marginalized identity when considering male writing and class. Chapter three, "Alternative Presentations of Female Identity: Arrieras somos . . .," marks the division between male and female discourse in my dissertation and discusses Rosina Conde's Arrieras somos I had wanted to continue writing about Conde who discusses woman's issues in the modern day urban setting. I chose her collection of short stories Arrieras somos . . . because it was her most recent production at the time and because it dealt with similar themes as her previous work. Again, having studied The House on Mango Street with Dr. Calderón which also discusses feminist issues, I decided to include Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories as Chapter four, "The Development of the Chicana Subject in Sandra Cisneros' Woman Hollering Creek."

In general Crosthwaite writes about life in Tijuana in what could be called social realism. However, he breaks away from his previous writings in El Gran Preténder by using a non-standard narrative technique. The stories presented provide for greater insight into and understanding of the affirmation of marginalized identity. Crosthwaite's language was very real, demonstrating intimate knowledge of barrio language. The pastiche narrative structure wove together the anecdotal episodes in such a way that you became a part of the story, became a part of the community. The style, a fictionalized nostalgia, pointed towards the necessity of understanding the history of the Cholo community, which furthered the development of their identity as based on previously established values. The presentation of these values and the importance of and longing for an "order" was the key to understanding both the actions of the protagonists as well as the text which in itself is the representation of identity on the margin. The story presented through the Cholo community exposed the relationship between notions of center and margin, discussing the negotiation of ideological borders and dealing specifically with the marginalized position of the characters that inhabit the stories.

It was by choosing Crosthwaite that I was lead to Alejandro Morales' Caras viejas, vino nuevo. Dr. Calderón had mentioned the thematic similarities between the two narratives. These two authors discuss the same marginalized group, the Cholos, and use similar narrative strategies, yet, the formation of identity is extremely different. For Crosthwaite the past is a refuge, the basis for his fictionalized nostalgia. For Morales, the past is important as well, but instead of idealizing the past, he looks to the roots of the

community to better understand its oppressed position. Caras has been called an experimental novel primarily due to its violent language, surreal episodes, urban setting and reverse chronological narrative structure. I had studied Chicano prose previously but was surprised by this novel's departure from traditional Chicano literature/ideology. It stands out because it does not idealize the Chicano experience nor does he glamorize barrio life. Instead, Morales analyzes the roots of the Chicano nation. Caras viejas y vino nuevo is a complex novel that presents the chaotic, violent and repressive life of a barrio and the story of the struggles of the community that inhabits it. The narrative strategy works in conjunction with thematic concerns to present a world that is unjust and unyielding a place where a cycle of repression both internal and external, related to the past and present, dominates the existence of those who live and work in the barrio. The tension that exists between the barrio and the "other side," the Anglo world with its values and ideology, is one of the primary concerns of the novel.

The barrio is friend and foe, exploited and exploiter. For the characters, it is a place of solace and comfort but at the same time it is the barrio that keeps them in an oppressed position. It is the modern, consuming city, not simply in an economic sense but rather in terms of the way it devours the lives of the inhabitants.

To date Alejandro Morales has published five novels, the first three in Spanish and the last two in English. His later works are historical novels that focus on the founding of Mexican barrios around a brick factory. These foundations are the basis for the presentation of the Chicano social context of his first novel in 1975, Caras viejas y vino

nuevo. By calling it an “experimental novel” the connotation was that there was no connection between novel and social context. Yet, there is an emphasis on historical context and antecedents that connects Caras... with those novels that follow it. The apparently convoluted historical backdrop for this novel, the foundation of a migrant labor town around a brick factor, are what become the raw material for Morales’ later writings. The modern day barrio, with its gangs and violence, is the direct result of fortune seeking Anglo businessmen who exploited Mexican migrant laborers by usurping land and creating neo-feudal labor camps. In these small, company towns Mexicans embarked on a process of acculturation which lead to their loss of identity as a social force.

There is an intentionality behind Morales’ narrative experimentation in the production of Caras... which combines with thematic concerns to create a new expression of the Chicano experience. It is the presentation marginalized identity. Morales’ confused and disordered world does not idealize the barrio, but rather challenges it. The novel is a social documentary that manifests the tension which exists between the Chicano and the Anglo world. Through the novel Morales is exploring the historical past of the barrio in order to better understand the social dynamics of the present moment.

Hidden within the labyrinth of the text there is a definable didactic intentionality. Morales, in a sense, is throwing up a red flag, a caution, to those who are lost in the consuming world of the barrio. The lines of culpability for the nature of the barrio are not clear, instead Morales explores the complex relationship between historical oppression, exploitation, dependency and the internalization of social values as related to the

formation of identity. The text serves as a means to better understand the barrio's position within US society and put into evidence the cause and effect of its economic and cultural imperialism.

I knew that I wanted to continue my work on Rosina Conde who had at the time just published Arrieras somos. . .. Conde is one of the first women writers from Tijuana to gain national attention, both in her earlier works and by winning the National Gilberto Owen award for Arrieras somos. She writes short stories, essays, poems, translates, and has founded several cultural magazines in Tijuana. This collection of stories in many ways continues in the same vein as her previous works. The focal point of her discourse revolves around the experiences of womanhood within the context of the modern, urban setting. Her female protagonists battle against both internal and external forces on the road to self-realization. Along the path of this personal journey they are able, at times, to better understand their social surroundings leading them to a cathartic moment that further permits them insight into the female condition under patriarchy. In this collection of short stories I saw a the representation of male/female relationships within the context of the border zone but at the same time Conde broke away from these constraints, broadening her thematic and narrative concerns and demonstrated a strong commitment to woman's issues under patriarchy. Yet, it is Conde herself who is able to provide, through both the textual thematic anecdotes and the structural elements of the narrative, a critique of the patriarchal system that envelops both her and the fictional world she portrays. A key component to her writing is that she challenges male language. Realizing that as a woman

the act of writing places herself within the realm of male power. As a result she explores ways of subverting language. Conde utilizes an introspective discourse with an elevated degree of orality that highlights the (re)telling of specific cathartic moments of the female protagonists lives as well as the cumulative experiences that lead to them. She explores the idea of solitude, women alone in the process of writing as well as within patriarchy. Her stories are filled with flashbacks that serve to subvert masculine linear time. She places emphasis on women's experiences by using artifacts of womanhood, themes that are generally not addressed by men. The process of enlightenment for her protagonists is the result of an adjustment of pre-existing ideologies or socialized values. For Conde, writing is an exploration into the different facets of womanhood on a thematic and linguistic level. It is through the appropriation of these elements that she creates the edifice of the text and a new space for female writing. Her stories were not just for border women, but for all women.

Having established the necessity of examining both sides of the border, starting with Conde and Crosthwaite and then Morales the dissertation had become a transborder entity in that I began to see relationships not of national identity but rather questions of class and gender. By coupling Crosthwaite and Morales, Conde needed to be linked with a Chicano text in order to discuss woman's writing on both sides of the border. Having studied The House on Mango Street with Dr. Calderón, I decided to investigate Sandra Cisneros' Woman Hollering Creek and other Stories. What was most readily apparent was the presentation of stories that dealt with male/female relationships as well as issues of

womanhood. My first approach to this collection was focused on these issues, yet I soon found that Woman Hollering Creek and other stories is an investigation into the Chicano/a experience, as well. The stories are a unified tale that serves as a coherent, progressive development from adolescence to adulthood of Chicanos and Chicanas. Within this presentation, there is special emphasis placed of the creation of a Chicano identity with its specific Mexican/ Chicano cultural values. The individual stories themselves serve to better illuminate several anecdotal episodes of the Chicano/a experience.

Cisneros examines identity not just as woman but also as a Chicana. Within the discussion of Chicano/a identity there is emphasis placed on further understanding the Mexican side of the Chicano experience. In many instances the protagonists travel to Mexico and discuss their perceptions of this part of their being. In others, the protagonists come in contact with the Mexican tradition within the United States and discuss their varying degree of Anglo values. These geographic and social sojourns serve as a defining element in Chicano identity by establishing a view of its "other" that is intimately linked to the way Chicanos define themselves. The differences and reactions of both Mexicans and Chicanos when confronting each other are significant because they shed light on Cisneros's presentation of Chicano identity. She is challenging what it means to be a Chicana through these confrontations.

Cisneros discusses the influence of popular culture on both sides of the border through Hispanic *telenovelas* and movies, the Virgin Mary cult, La Llorona, Aztec and

Mayan motifs, popular music as well as Anglo New Age spirituality, mass media and Barbies. In addition, Cisneros deals with the concept of solitude, and discusses male/female relationships that including the protagonists' ideas of love and perceptions of men. This conscious transformation of social referents is a means of empowerment that allows Cisneros to redefine herself as Chicana.

The dissertation I have been doing is an exploration into questions of identity, not necessarily in terms of nationality, emphasis is not specifically placed on a comparative analysis of what it means to be Mexican or Chicano, but rather my study takes a look at the way in which these different writers approach their place within dominant ideology. My entrance into their texts is largely through thematic and narratological concerns and revolves specifically around issues of gender and class. These are the driving forces at play in my dissertation. I hope that by studying identities on the margin that a better understanding of the power structures that oppress due to class, race and gender are revealed. The literary space that is the United States/ Mexican border is a challenging one and offers the possibility for conceiving literature and its study as a transnational phenomenon.

Chapter One

The Negotiation and Presentation of Marginalized Identity

El Gran Preténder

Beginning with the publication of Fuera del cardumen. Antología de la nueva narrativa bajacaliforniana¹ in 1982, Luis Humberto Crosthwaite's early work was called "la punta de lanza de una lista creciente de escritores, principalmente jóvenes, que a partir de entonces [the publication of Fuera...] enriquecen paulatinamente la prosa narrativa que se escribe en el Estado [Baja California]" (Berumen 15). In Crosthwaite, as well as in those writers of his generation, there is a dedication to the craft of writing. He is the product of a university education that presented canonical writers from both Mexico and Latin America, including those from the Boom --Julio Cortázar, Mario Vargas Llosa, Carlos Fuentes and Gabriel García Márquez. And yet, he is very much a result of the literary ambiance of Baja California, influenced by colleagues from his own generation² as well as foreign writers.³ All create a wide variety of literary and cultural influences on his narrative. In addition, Crosthwaite is connected to other writers in diverse provinces of Mexico, participating in conferences, colloquia, and round table discussions; his name is known on a national level. He is well versed in contemporary narrative strategies and the language used by him reflects its social context, emulating popular speech, including linguistic and lexical derivative from English as well as idiomatic expressions that originate

¹An anthology produced by a state funded literary workshop lead by Ignacio Bentacourt, of which Crosthwaite was a member. The other members included Jorge Raúl López Hidalgo, Virginia Corona, Jesús Guerra, Héctor Daniel Gómez Nieves.

²Crosthwaite specifically mentions Chávez Cataneda, Clavel, and Paleu.

³Including writers like R. Coover, R. Braughtigan, Barthelme, T. Carraghan Boyle and T. Robbins

from the North of Mexico. The setting is primarily urban, serving as the referential framework without dominating the narrative scene.

As an introduction to Luis Humberto Crosthwaite's El Gran Preténder (1992), it is useful to discuss the literary ambiance of Baja California before the production of this work. In "La narrativa en Baja California: breve recuento", Humberto Félix Berumen presents the literature of the early twentieth century as one that lacked ambition, whose literary models are those of 19th century realism. The story lines are not dramatically complex, presenting superficial character portrayals. As a result, the anecdote supersedes the style and content over form. In the 1950s, detectivesque fiction published primarily in newspapers and journals "junto al recuento puntual de los principales crímenes de la época" (Berumen 13) dominated the literary scene. The 1960s will bring about a slight change in the literature of Baja California. The authors, despite their lack of cohesion as a "generación," share "afinidades y experiencias más o menos comunes" (Berumen 13). The writers of this era are, indeed, producing literary works; and yet, due to their lack of communication with the rest of Mexico, primarily Mexico City, their development is hindered. This is combined with a lack of support for writers in terms of state and private forums of publication as well as a relatively insignificant audience. When discussing the literature of the 1970s, Gabriel Trujillo Muñoz in his article "De cánticos y clamores: la literatura de Baja California" writes that the young authors were a dissident group that did not look for the approval of Baja Californian society. In terms of their models and influences, he comments: "Sus puntos de orientación eran la narrativa de la onda, la poesía surrealista, las letras de canciones de rock y toda la literatura que pusiera en entredicho los valores del mundo que habitaban, ya fueran estos valores la familia, el orden, la armonía o el progreso" (Trujillo 7). Noteworthy as well is the expansion of the creative and cultural base for literary production as well as its new found connection to national literature. This

means that they, too, much like the rest of Latin America, experience a literary "explosion" that translates into the production of magazines, books, anthologies, readings, conferences and a vitalization of the literary cultural scene. This contributed to the formation of Baja California as new center for publication, a region that produces, publishes and supports cultural activity with a high degree of autonomy. In addition, is the insurgence of new contacts with the US side of the border that includes academic and literary exchanges, forming the basis for a focus on the border region, providing for even further cultural development.⁴ The writers themselves have taken pains to promote literature through cultural journalism, editorial production and other promotional activities. They are the ones who have founded cultural magazines and journals and have participated in, together with public and private institutions, conferences and symposia that promote literary activities. When discussing this literary transition Trujillo writes, "El cambio atañe lo mismo a la concepción del quehacer narrativo, que a la búsqueda de nuevas formas expresivas y a una mayor preocupación por cuestiones tales como técnica narrativa, estilo, lenguaje, recreación de atmósfera, punto de vista de narrador, etc." (Trujillo 14). Crosthwaite is writing during a time in Baja California when there is a great deal of attention placed on the literary production of the border region.

In considering the texts by Crosthwaite-- Marcela y el Rey al fin juntos (1988), Mujeres con traje de baño caminan solitarias por las playas de su llanto (1990), El Gran Preténder (1992), La luna siempre será un amor fiel (1994)-- it becomes clear his work is a continuing presentation of life in Tijuana, a border town. The stories take place in the

⁴ Trujillo mentions: "el Primer festival de literatura fronteriza (San Diego-Tijuana, 1981), El Festival de poesía bajacaliforniana (Mexicali, 1984), El Encuentro poético de las californias (Tijuana, 1984), el Coloquio de literatura: La frontera y su ámbito (Mexicali, 1985), el Primer encuentro de escritores de las californias (Mexicali, 1987), el Encuentro de literatura de la Frontera (Tijuana, 1988), el Encuentro internacional de literatura de la frontera (Mexicali-Calexico, 1990), así como los tres coloquios de Mujer y literatura mexicana y chicana (Tijuana, 1987, 1988, 1989)" (8).

urban setting and present a specific social class which in turn has an established system of values. What seems to be most evident is the urban setting and the way the characters behave within it, establishing certain codes of conduct based on class, which becomes even more predominant when considering their placement on the border.

Crosthwaite breaks away from his previous writings in El Gran Preténder by using a non-linear, non-chronological narrative, minimalist setting, and ambiguity when presenting time. Of note in this presentation is the temporal perspective, he writes his text in the nineties, one of the narrative voice comes from the eighties and discusses the late sixties-early seventies, the latter generation reflects back to that of the fifties. The text is a chronicle of the lower-class Cholos⁵ who are on the margin of the status quo of Baja Californian society. The general tone is one of fictionalized nostalgia that reflects, within the story, an idealization of the social order of previous generations. The discourse presented through the Cholo community exposes the relationship between center and margin, discussing the negotiation of ideological borders, dealing specifically with the marginalized position of the characters that inhabit the text and drawing attention to the meta-textual devices used by Crosthwaite when discussing them.

The series of interpolated stories presented could be discussed individually, and yet, when viewed as a collective whole, provide for even greater insight into and understanding of the narrative as the affirmation of marginalized identity. Along with broader thematic concerns, of great interest is the way in which these fragments are woven

⁵ The term "Cholo" refers specifically to a social group that is a contemporary extension of the "pachucho" an international cultural phenomenon. According to Octavio Paz in The Labyrinth of Solitude the Pachucho was found both in East Los Angeles as well as Mexico City and was the manifestation of a Latino "counter culture". This included a particular style of clothing, language and music and is understood as the presentation of an alternative identity to that of the *status quo*. A Cholo speaks specifically to the affirmation of an identity based on communal beliefs that unify diverse, typically lower class individuals, into enclaves. They too have specific means of expressing their individuality through dress, language, material artifacts and music.

together through the narrative structure. The text, divided into 42 small chapters with an unmarked prologue and epilogue, can be categorized as social realism while the structure reflects a complex narrative strategy that makes use of a fragmented structure.

Crosthwaite uses a variety of narrative voices in El Gran Preténder. It is a mosaic approach without a singular unifying narrator that might provide for more concrete, logical cohesion. The narrative fragmentation with interpolated story lines, as presented by multiple voices and the non-linear discourse, is an attempt to textually represent extra-textual fragmentation. The technique of using a multiplicity of narrative voices provides for an understanding of the plurality of the community and yet, at the same time the community can speak as one, which it does with a fair amount of frequency, acting as a reflective chorus or, to the contrary, as a singular voice that furthers the various plots, providing a seemingly contradictory appearance of a homogeneous identity. In addition, the text relies heavily on a conversational style in an attempt to present an oral chronicle and allows for the reader to enter even further into this fictional world.

By means of the protagonists' actions and values, the presentation of how identity is manifest in a marginalized group becomes evident. To better comprehend these dynamics it is also necessary to understand the distance between Baja California and Mexico City, the ideological and economic power center in Mexico. Within this geographic framework it is possible to establish a dialectic of ideological borders⁶ connected multi-dimensionally from a "center." The Cholos presented in the text are at the outer extreme of this model of marginalization in relation to the various center in several ways.

⁶ By placing the discussion of Crosthwaite's work beyond geographic boundaries, that is, focusing specifically on Tijuana, Baja California, and within the framework of a "dialectic of ideological borders"; here understood as a place where identity itself is negotiated in relationship to self and other, El Gran Preténder resonates at many different levels.

Mexico city is the economic and ideological power center in Mexico, it, too, has its own paradigm within itself as center, that is, its own class, gender and other distinctions. The next ideological border would be that of Baja California, because it is one of many provincial states denied access to the centralized power within Mexico, this is, of course, a geographic, historical, economic and ideological marginalization. The next "border" would include Tijuana, in relationship to Mexico City and due to the growth of the city as such, Tijuana has become its own center. Within the confines of that space, which in reality is a indefinite number of dialectic relationships⁷ within Tijuana's social and economic paradigm, would be distinction of social class. The Cholos originate from the lower class and as a result, as previously mentioned, are among the groups farthest from center because of their class distinctions. However, through El Gran Preténder, the reader finds that the text serves to represent the negotiation of identity on the border, which questions binary⁸ oppositions of center and margin. The issues of patriarchy and this decentered⁹ ideological negotiations, must be considered as well in terms of the marginalizing effect this ideology has on women. At all points within these fragmented

⁷ Karl Marx basis dialects on the Hegelian terms thesis, antithesis, synthesis; applying them to the course of human history. Things that seem utterly separate because opposed to each other very often define one another and interpenetrate. Negation is a factor which separates old from new: an emergent quality negates that which it replaces, and will itself be negated and replaces in the course of time. The term is used here to specifically signal the variety of social forces that are at play in Tijuana; the rapid development of the city as an economic force in Mexico, based on light industry ("maquiladores") and tourism. This, in addition to its proximity to the United States, has resulted in a dynamic socio-political arena influenced on several levels.

⁸ Based on Jacques Derrida, originator of Deconstructionism, deconstructive literary criticism defy logocentric structural elements of language, called binary oppositions, such as: speech/writing, nature/culture, truth/ lie, male/ female. El Gran Preténder as text addresses the formation of identity within centralist Mexico. Inherent in it is the dismantling of binary relationships.

⁹ Decentered is used throughout to denote Poststructuralist antifoundationalism that undermines traditional claims for the existence of self-evident foundations that guarantee the validity of knowledge and truth. Here specifically, when discussed in relation to "binary oppositions"

models, women, due to the patriarchal social system in Mexico, and most of the Western Christian world for that matter, must negotiate ideological borders to an even greater degree because of their oppressed position within patriarchy.

Without a doubt, the Cholos are on the fringes of society, they are the outcasts characterized as "social deviants." As a result, they have united to create their own values, code of conduct and sense of justice that is in a constant process of negotiation within the dialectic of imposed ideologies.¹⁰

The setting for El Gran Preténder is Barrio 17, a neighborhood inhabited by Cholos, in Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico. Crosthwaite, writing in the 90s, through a fragmented narrative structure, presents various temporal moments: the 80s, which offers narration from a "present" moment; the late 60s and early 70s, when the principal action of the story occurs; and the 50s, a point in time only referred to by the main characters from the 1960s. Each temporal moment, whether through direct or indirect discourse, presents a generational cycle in which each new generation expresses a longing for the former's social order. This nostalgia points towards the necessity of understanding the history of the Cholo community, which furthers the development of their identity as based on previously established values. The presentation of these values and the importance of and longing for an "order" is noteworthy because it is the key to understanding both the

¹⁰Ideology understood here as socialized values. See Ortega y Gasset's The Dehumanization of Art. Additionally, Terry Eagleton in Ideology: An Introduction suggests six broad definitions of the term: (i) 'the general material process of production of ideas, beliefs and values in social life'; (ii) 'ideas and beliefs (whether true or false) which symbolize the conditions and life-experiences of a specific, socially significant group or class'; (iii) 'the promotion and legitimization of interests of such groups in the face of opposing interests'; (iv) such promotion and legitimization when carried out by a 'dominant social power'; (v) 'ideas and beliefs which help to legitimate the interests of a ruling group or class specifically by distortion and dissimulation'; (vi) similar false and deceptive beliefs which arise 'not from the interests of a dominant class but from the material structure of society as a whole' (1991, 28-30)

actions of the protagonists as well as the text which in itself is the representation of identity on the margin.

The most significant time period is that from the late 60s when most of the action of the story occurs. Crosthwaite presents this Cholo community and its system of masculine values as well as the establishment of specific codes of conduct for the characters from this community. The narration, a modern-day, nostalgic, chronicle of Cholo life, is the presentation of the relationship between issues of class, gender and masculine values.

The impetus for the action in the story is the date rape of a young, non-conformist Chola, Cristina, who has been seeing Johnny, an upper class, young man from San Diego whose father is a politician "era un yunior pesado, hijo de no sé quien, de un político, de un ruco gruexo" (Crosthwaite 85)¹¹. By dating Johnny, she has broken away from the masculine values established by the community, challenging what it means to be a Chola. Her very non-conformity is threatening to the members of the community that attempts to maintain specific parameters that shut off the negotiations of identity. The male members of the community react to the rape by beating Johnny, which is an attempt to reestablish the ideological uniformity of the community. They feel obliged to avenge the smudged honor of Cristina, who in turn represents the community. Upon dating Johnny, she has engaged the dialectics of ideological borders, crossing them and opening up the community for outside intervention. The outcome is the symbolic rape of the community. The result of the male members of the community's vigilante justice is an authoritarian repression by local police, encouraged by the political elite of San Diego, that disrupts the stability of the community. Several key members of the barrio are "disappeared" by local

¹¹ Pagination from this point refers to El Gran Preténder (1992).

police. It becomes clear that the values of patriarchy, that exist in Mexican culture, can permeate through the walls of the community and yet, the specific values and actions of the Cholos are not accepted outside the sphere of the community. The distance between these values and their resultant clash, as seen by the authoritarian repression, is in essence, what emphasizes the tension between classes.

Keeping in mind this presentation of Crosthwaite's fictional world, it becomes obvious that the formation of the Cholos' identity is linked to the masculine values of patriarchy and a reaction to its lack of acceptance, isolation and marginalized position. They are in the process of negotiating their identity and defining themselves in terms of self and other. For this reason, Crosthwaite takes great pains in describing the customs and values of the Cholos. The values expressed above by El Saico are those of patriarchal Mexico and the US, but more specifically those of a marginalized group. In this way, the Barrio's values are a synthesis of multiple cultural referents that are blended together to create a new identity.

Noteworthy as well within this fictional world is the position of women within the community. In El Gran Preténder, the text reflects the social context in which it was written by presenting a male dominated world. This is, of course, a world in which women are subordinate to men, whether they be husbands, boyfriends or fathers. This is not surprising considering the dominance of patriarchy throughout the history of Mexico. Women have been given certain roles within society and any deviance can have serious repercussions. In Crosthwaite's chronicle of Cholo life, the Barrio is the setting for this patriarchal hierarchy. As a result the alternatives for women are limited, both in terms of autonomy: their sense of self and social mobility, which is to say the ability to go beyond the confines of the Barrio into new areas both geographically and ideologically. Due to the communal nature of the Barrio, where everyone knows everyone, they also experience

fewer opportunities to differentiate themselves and develop who they are, not in terms of the way the Barrio has defined through its self established, male code of conduct them but rather on an individual level. The text offers up little solutions to this subjugated role of women. The women of the text are archetypal, presenting the different roles that woman may occupy within the social structure of the barrio. These women come from the lower social class, they are Cholas, as such they are even further limited. They are both on the fringes of society in terms of gender and class.

The vast majority of the chapters are narrated by a communal voice,¹² representing three generations of Cholos, which serves to present the dominant ideologies of the Barrio. It is through this voice that the reader becomes familiar with the main character of the text, as well as the specifics of the daily concerns of the community in addition to the story line. When discussing the idea the community, the Barrio, and its strong sense of identity, the first lines of the text, a non-marked foreword, stand out: "El Barrio es el Barrio, socio, y el Barrio se respeta. Y el que no lo respeta hasta allí llegó. Si es cholo se quemó con la raza, si no es cholo lo madreamos macizo" (9). The function here is to alert the reader that s/he is entering a different fictional world and presents the emergence of the Barrio's values which serve to reinforce the idea of "community" as a means of establishing an identity that is in a process of constructing itself in opposition to its former selves, past generations of Cholos, and by its other, that vacillates between Mexican and US ideology. In this world there is a specific code of conduct that allows for no middle ground. It is important to keep in mind, however, that the chapter structure of the text is non-linear, as a result the comments of this chorus may at times be non-chronological. Through this use of complex narrative strategy, it is the very chronological

¹² The communal voice is a mix of known and unknown narrators who comment on, through direct and indirect speech, the happenings of the barrio.

displacement that serves to both provide tension within the discourse and emulate meta-textual fragmentation.¹³ Similarly, the communal voice serves as a chorus, emphasizing both thematic concerns and the values of the community, while at the same time guiding the reader through labyrinth of the fictional world.

At the end of the chapter, the Barrio's voice discusses el Saico, the central protagonist, and his reputation within the community through direct dialogue that is incorporated into the prose without punctuation marks. In this way the reader is included in the everyday conversations of the Barrio and is given privileged information on a textual level, while at the same time, from a meta-narrative perspective drawn further into the fictional world. The pronoun "tú" is an element of the conversational style of the narrative that serves to include the reader in the discourse. The communal voice alludes to an implied familiarity of the setting and characters of the text:

Tú ibas al Taller El Pocho, donde jalaba [el Saico], y si tenías algún problema: que si buscabas un toque, que si querías chingarte a un bato, que si te urgía una feria, era el mero Saico, El Saico de Tijuana, quien te hacía el paro. (11)

Not only is it supposed that the reader knows where the "Taller El Pocho" is but also that it is there that s/he can find El Saico who can help solve all problems. In this way the setting for the story is implicit.

The communal voice speaks to reinforce the Barrio's ideology and presents its values. Through an oral narrative, the voices provide a commentary on the events that occur within its social context. Inherent in this is a male value judgment and the creation

¹³ This refers specifically to the notion that the text reveals, through its fragmented narrative structure, the chaotic, fragmented reality of the modern city. See Marshal Burman's, All that is solid melts into air, that elaborates on this presentation of modernity.

of ideological borders. When it is discovered that Cristina, a non-conformist Chola, has been raped by Johnny from San Diego, from the other side of the border the narration shows its very conversational style as the Barrio discusses the event:

Luego resulta que el bato [Johnny] no era cholo.

Nel. Un bato crema, de escuelita, yunior, tú sabes. Siempre de
tacuche, muy perfumado, ranfla del año, tú sabes. [t/o]

Un mamón.

Así es.

¿Qué andaba haciendo con una chola?

Por piruja.

Simón. (27)

The fact that Johnny is not from the Barrio is viewed poorly, both because he does not share its moral values and because Cristina would associate with him. Johnny and Cristina have ventured out beyond the limits of the constructed ideological borders. This provides for greater ridicule of the rapist and scorn for Cristina. There is mockery for anyone who is not a Cholo. The idea of being a "crema" or softy and a "yunior" or mama's boy combined with going to the "escuelita" or little school and being well perfumed and having a new truck all indicate values that are in opposition to those of the Barrio. This serves as a division between barrios and social classes, the one from which the rapist and Cristina originate. Johnny comes from an influential family in San Diego while Cristina does not. All of which reaffirm the question of her judgment and attempts to leave the Barrio "¿Qué andaba haciendo [Johnny] con una chola?/ Por piruja [Christina]./ Simón" (27).

The communal voice presents the social order of the Barrio as well as the role of the Barrio within the social order of Tijuana. In this way the Barrio is aware of its position in the social infrastructure of Baja California. Inherent in this presentation is their

position as members of the lower class as well as their uniqueness as Cholos. "En el Barrio no hay jefes" (37), there is no one singular person that makes decisions for the Barrio, rather decisions are made as a group. Nevertheless, a person's reputation speaks for itself "el Saico es el más felón y eso se conoce. Nadie lo comenta, me cae, pero se sabe" (37). To further this notion, in chapter 13, the stage is set for a meeting of the members of the Barrio to discuss what actions will be taken as a result of Cristina's rape. An anonymous voice speaks: "Es que ta cabrón lo que hicieron con la Cristina, socio, me cae. Será pirujona y lo que usted quiera, pero está cabrón./ La raza de acuerdo" (37). The last line, "the raza agrees," reaffirms a communal decision. There is a common emotion felt by all which furthers the idea of uniformity within the barrio. They come from the same place and share the same ideals, they have all assimilated the values of the Barrio, "Los cholos están ahí reunidos... y se siente algo que arde. El calor que se levanta con chispas que truenan como leña vieja, y las chispas se elevan al cielo hasta desaparecer" (37). The honor of the Chola¹⁴ must be defended, a decision, some kind of response, is necessary. El Saico is there, yet silent: "Tiene su verbo y lo usa cuando es necesario" (37). It is understood, because of his reputation, that when he does speak his decision will have some impact because he is the "más felón."

When the Barrio does take action and takes revenge on Johnny in chapter 34 there is no one leader, but rather the community works as a single unit. In the scuffle Johnny pulls out a pistol and shoots el Mueras. After this shooting the action becomes that of the community. "[L]os cholos se bajan.... El Johnny golpeado. ¿Está muerto? Me vale. Golpes golpes. El Saico dice que ya es hora de irse" (79). The question arises, who is at fault? It is hard to tell. This is the deliverance of justice in the Barrio.

¹⁴Yet, it is not necessarily her honor that is at stake, but rather, that of the male members of the barrio.

The position of the Barrio within the infrastructure of Baja California is that of the oppressed class that highlights the distance between them and those around them. The repression, both ideological and physical, is a poignant reminder of the limitations of the social order and is specifically rooted in the dialectic of the negotiation of identity in the transitional border space. In chapters 9 and 15, which are chronologically displaced and discuss the repercussions of the events described above in chapter 34, the consequences of the barrios actions become evident:

La chota no supo diferenciar. Se llevaron a raza de éste y otros barrios. A los felones, a los gandillos, a los calmados. Los cholos siempre pagan, culpables o no.... Todomundo al bote, todomundo tiene que soltar una feria porque si no ya saben que les va mal, se los chingan. (29)

The communal voice expresses a sense of futility, disbelief and confusion when trying to understand the far reaching significance of their position as the exploited class. The voice is used to present a predominant attitude of resignation or acceptance when confronting the dominant social class. The tone used expresses a complaint and at the same time acceptance of their position and of the logical consequences of certain actions, as if the Barrio knows the score and has for quite some time. The voice of the Barrio emerges to speak of the results of what will take place later on in the discourse, the repression by the police/establishment.

The reality is that the "chota no supo diferenciar" (29). They did not or do not know any different, which indicates the authorities' lack of understanding of the symbols and codes used within the Barrio. When the police raided the Barrio they took away the guilty and the innocent, "A los felones, a los gandallas, a los calmados" (29). The Cholos pay for the ills of society, they are always blamed even if they are innocent "Los cholos siempre pagan, culpables o no" (29). All are the same in the eyes of the law, "Un cholo

más, un cholo menos, dice la chota" (29). The narrator presents a scenario in which the authorities take advantage of the rage of the status quo and forcefully repress any and all dissidence. In fact, it is mentioned that they even enjoy doing so, "les gusta entrar a los barrios cuando están bien respaldados y traen sus fuscotas y viene con la juda con ellos" (29).

In addition, there is the recognition of the social reality in which they live, "Así es el pedo: si se muere un cholo nadie la hace de tos./ Si se muere otro bato, un riquillo, un influyente, entonces sí, ¿verdad? entonces chinguense a los cholos, los cholos son culpables, acaben con los cholos" (41). Yet, they do not seem to explicitly understand why, "¿por qué tanto pedo contra la raza, contra los cholos, contra todos los barrios?" (89). The Cholos are the oppressed and receive the indiscriminate punishment from the authorities. Their existence does not have value, or at least not for the "chota." This idea is always present, on one level or another, throughout the story. The Barrio speaks to evoke the fictional world that has been entered in which these are the rules of the game. This is the Cholo's reality and they are the oppressed class.

It is this random enforcement of the "law," and the abuse thereof, that does not allow the Cholos to live in peace: "Es la repre, me cae, la pinchi repre que no deja vivir" (41). This repression is referred to from the very beginning in chapter one, "Dicen los batos de entonces que ya están viejos para esas ondas, que ya no le hacen al desmother, pero la neta es que estuvo dura la repre" (11). This alerts the reader to what the past generations used to do before the "repre," the repression, when the police came down hard on the Barrio, which foreshadows the events that will later occur. In addition, the repression of the Cholos by law enforcement agencies serves as a point of rupture between generations increasing the tension within the discourse and, consequently creating a nostalgic tone throughout the text. Through the outcome of the repression a better

awareness of the negotiation of identity on the ideological border is achieved because the perception of the past becomes glorified by the members of the community, which creates a longing for the apparent social order of previous generations.

It cannot be forgotten that the Cholos are a marginalized group. As a result of their class and the formation of their values, they are alienated by those who do not come from the community and in turn reject those who do not come from the same. The most significant character, El Saico, formerly known as José Arnulfo, and his wife, La China, clearly embody the overriding male values of the community. They successfully demonstrate the community's marginalized position and serve to close ranks around the border identity. Chapter two, dedicated to an in-depth description of El Saico, shows that he is a product of his social and geographic context:

Sólo bebe cerveza Tecate, en caguama. Considera que todas las demás son agua de jícama.

Sólo come atún cuando el bote señala con claridad que fue procesado en Ensenada o en El Sauzal de Rodríguez, Baja California. (13)

The use of these cultural referents places him in Baja California, signaling his dedication to the state. This same kind of dedication applies to his support of the values established within the Barrio. The narration continues: "No es alcohólico pero se encuentra en los bordes del alcoholismo como en Tijuana todomundo se encuentra en el borde deste nuestro país tricolor" (13). Inherent in these lines is a tension between Baja California and the rest of Mexico that firmly establishes Tijuana's marginalized position within Mexico. By extension, the Cholos, due to issues of class, are even further marginalized. Due to its proximity to the United States and heavy dependency on tourism the nationalist fidelity¹⁵

of Baja California, and Tijuana specifically, has been questioned by the centralist powers of Mexico as well as by residents of the United States. The emphasis on his inclusion within Mexico reflects concerns of the nationality of those who inhabit the border. To firmly establish a separation from the United States and a dislike for those who reinforce the negative stereotype of Baja Californians one narrator comments:

No saluda a Emigrados Piojos. Esto es: "batos que jalan legalmente en Estados Unidos y que vienen a presumir su feria, sus ranflas último modelo, compradas a crédito, y luego se mochan con las cervezas."

Odia a los chilangos que se estacionan sobre las banquetas, los que pasan los altos, los que presumen que son chilangos hablándole en inglés.

Odia a los chofers de la Coca Cola desde que uno pasó por la calle y, sin ninguna consideración, pisó el acelerador estando a punto de atropellarlo. (13)

El Saico/the Barrio dislikes of immigrant workers who are not from Baja California. In addition, he attacks "Chilangos,"¹⁶ who typically come to the border to take advantage of its rapid economic growth while at the same time mock it, claiming that those who live in Tijuana are not true Mexicans but rather a hybrid of US and Mexican cultural forces. Moreover, he rejects the connotations of the loss of the Mexican identity of those who inhabit the borderlands by attacking US commercial imperialism embodied by drivers for Coca Cola. All of which indicates the displacement and marginalization of Baja California from the rest of Mexico as well as their posture towards the US.¹⁷

¹⁵ It is a common belief that Tijuana is "not really Mexico." Those from the capital see the inhabitants of Tijuana as "pochos" while the US sees Tijuana as an isolated tourist attraction that does not truly represent Mexico.

¹⁶ A pejorative term associated with people from Mexico City.

Although the community does not have a leader, per se, El Saico clearly embodies the overriding values of the community. When discussing El Saico, he is able to play a role for the members of the community. Being El Saico, a name spelled phonetically referring to the psycho, the crazy one, the "bato loco," he has many roles to fulfill, within traditional male Mexican values and the Cholo community where appearances are part of identity. Without a doubt El Saico fulfills many roles and wears many masks in the community. He reinforces the barrio's construction of identity as multi-faceted, which is forged from a variety of sources that synthesize into one.

He is a Don Juanesque macho who as a semi-skilled mechanic forms a part of the lower class. His credo is "El que no pitea anda mal, al que no le gustan las viejas anda mal, el que no escucha Los Platters anda mal" (14). There is something intriguing about him in relation to the Platters. He is "el *Great Pretender*" (17) and is presented as a stoic, solitary hero. This cultural referent is even furthered when el Saico is described as being an aficionado of Oldies Music: "su erudición musical de *Oldies but Goodies* es tal que su fama se extiende por toda la ciudad y por algunos barrios californianos. Es autor (a la sorda) de los primeros volúmenes de 'Barrio Music'" (14). There are even references made that compare him to the French actor Belmondo, the Mexican actor/singer Pedro Armendáriz and the US actor Michael Douglas. The use of different cultural referents, the media and culture industry within Baja California goes beyond a more traditional definition that limits it exclusively under the dominion of US cultural imperialism into a more international scene. Their definition of self in relationship to other dismantles traditional dynamics of the binary power structure of centralist Mexico and includes a variety of cultural referents.

¹⁷ When discussing the function of Crosthwaite's *El Gran Preténder* that dismantles binary oppositions between center and margin through its decentering narrative strategy, within the negotiation of marginalized identity, the clash between these various cultural forces within the story become significant.

It is mentioned above that el Saico was like a "service to the community". He is the enforcer of the moral code of conduct of the Barrio. The term "rifo konsafos" is used at various times throughout the text and makes specific reference to the idea that he is a hired thug, not necessarily in a negative way, but rather as a form of vigilantism. In chapter 17, a young girl goes to el Saico because she has been wronged by her boyfriend. The honor of the girl must be defended and el Saico is paid to do it. "Su vieja quiere que me lo chingue, socio, por cabrón" (45), el Saico says before he beats the wrongdoer. In this way he maintains balance in the Barrio.

There is a parallel drawn between el Saico and his father, a war veteran. El Pancho, the writer/ intellectual of the barrio, tells El Saico more about his father: "Regresó a su chante y luego luego la raza lo acusó de locochón, eran gringos, eran racistas, él era un machín, acabó con el pueblo, con la policía, con la gente gacha del pueblo. Era un gran tipo tu jefe..." (32). His father was a war hero who returned to the Barrio and el Saico, too, is a barrio hero. They both serve to make the barrio a better place.

El Saico, as the principle representative of the barrio, successfully conveys its isolationist tendencies. He is a line of defense against invading ideologies that might cross the figurative borders of the barrio. He maintains law on the border. Yet, he is not alone in this task. La China, El Saico's wife, also reinforces these beliefs and also maintains order. Including La China within the confines of the masculine values of the barrio demonstrates the transgender impact of patriarchy in the dialectic of the negotiations of identity along the ideological border.

In chapter 5, a series of descriptive words provide an eclectic, male perspective of women in her role as wife in the Barrio. The portrait is at times contradictory, both endearing and affronting. This duality fits well into the often predominant view of women shared by those who identify with the values of patriarchy. The definition of woman as

wife is the sum of impossible configurations, that is to say, she is both freed and incarcerated. The narration depicts the wife as mother, the protective role of women, and the little girl, who needs protection. She is the place where men are most comfortable and at the same time the very thing that holds them back:

La China: su esposa, su guaifa, su jaina, su esquina.

Su morra, su nicho, su queso, su allá voy, su de aquí soy, su torta, su estribo, su tierna melcocha, su media naranja, su castitgo, su misión en la tierra, su rancho, su ajúa, su acá, su bien terrenal, su gestión, su obra, su casa grande, su cobija eléctrica, su cachorra al sol, su requinto tristón, su rolita oldi, su mejilla sudada, su cementerio, su beibi, su primera dama, su necesidad, su urgencia, su carestía, su ya no, su otra vez, su no jodas, su pensión, su fin, su cárcel, su no sé que.

La China: su esposa, su guaifa, su jaina, su esquina. (19)

The descriptive words used can be categorized to better classify meaning.

1) The wife is the base/mother/place of origin: su nicho, su de aquí soy, su rancho, su acá, su bien terrenal, su casa grande, su cobija eléctrica, su cachorra al sol, su primera dama, su necesidad, su urgencia, su pensión, su fin. In all of these terms the wife is placed on a pedestal, a revered person who provides support, protection and encouragement. She is the good mother/wife, someone to be respected. She is mother of the children, but what is more important, mother to the husband. She is the girl who, as the property of her father, is passed from him to a husband and then becomes his property. She then lives in his home serving the husband.

2) The wife as the one who holds the man back: su allá voy, su estribo, su tierna melcocha, su castigo, su misión en la tierra, su gestión, su obra, su requinto tristón, su cementario, su carestía, su ya no, su no jodas, su cárcel. In this way, the woman is at fault

for the downfalls of the man. She does not allow him to fulfill his potential. She demands his attention and his presence in the home. She is to blame for man's inability to achieve self-fulfillment.

3) The wife as object: su queso, su torta, su media naranja, su rolita oldi, su mejilla sudada, su beibi. She is both without identity and a sexual object.

At no time is she presented as an equal. Her voice and opinions are not of value, except when in the role of mother. All demonstrate the patriarchal view of women in the text. Throughout the discourse these notions of women recur and provide guidelines of conduct, inhibiting the female character's growth and development. Again, there are few solutions offered that might lead to an equal relationship that would engage the dynamics of defining identity within the confines of the ideological borders under patriarchy.

In chapter 19 a narrator discusses la China's past, "De repente la familia decidió irse al norte" (49). As a result, la China is disoriented in her new surroundings in the north, "sin saber que onda" (49). After time she sees that the Cholas are better off than other girls in the Barrio because "Había más respeto, ... dignidad en ese rollo que andar sin razón en la vida" (49). They were treated better by the boys and invited to parties. Becoming a Chola offered them an identity, a sense of community, a goal, and yet, the inherent restrictions for women are harsh. Women, above and beyond obeying the Barrio's male code of conduct, are even greater victims due to their sex. This, combined with ideas of class that further alienate the women, in addition to the self-monitoring policy of the women of the barrio, create a subtly hostile environment for the women characters. There are certain advantages to being a Chola, member of this lower-class barrio life, and yet restrictions, related to class and sex are present as well. The patriarchal code of conduct of the Barrio that disfavors women is not only enforced within the barrio

by both men and women, but outside the barrio the women face prejudices based on class as well.

In the process of piecing together the different threads of the narration, in chapter 21 the communal voice gives notice as to the China's whereabouts, "Dicen que trabajó un tiempo en una maquila, luego se fue pal Otro Saite, después se arrano con un emigrado. Ahora anda jalando por allá y nunca regresa al Barrio" (53). Again, due to the fragmented narrative structures it is unclear why or exactly when she leaves the Barrio. Yet, the ambiguity does nothing to fortify a possibly more positive presentation of the women in the text.

Within the framework of the fictional world presented, the social forces at play, and a process of singularization that focuses on the Cholo community it becomes evident that Crosthwaite is exploring marginality, in terms of identity for this community and its representation.¹⁸ To better understand this position it is necessary to see that he uses the community, more specifically El Saico and La China who embody their values, as a representative of marginality. Cristina functions as an agent that challenges the established male values of the community, while Fabricia and El Pancho de Tecate as those who function both within the confines of the community's identity and yet, participate in accepted activities outside the barrio. Approaching the text from this angle affords for a broader analysis of the dynamics of the border, in this instance specifically Tijuana, BC. To address the text in this way provides for a better understanding of the manifestations of constructed marginalized identities within the dialectic of ideological borders and will afford a more complete commentary on the use of the diverse narrative strategies and their relationship to textual and meta-textual concerns.

¹⁸ The representation of marginalized identity can be seen through the narration and the use of El Gran Preténder as a textual model for alternative interpretations of marginality.

In direct opposition to the presentation of La China, and by extension El Saico, is that of Cristina. If the former serve to reinforce the values of the barrio the latter challenges the same. The main conflict of the novel revolves around Cristina's rape. It is from this beginning that the text portrays another aspect of the Cholo women of the Barrio. The reasons Cristina is treated by the members of the barrio, their attitudes and actions, are significant when considering the role of women in this patriarchal society. Again, because the fragmented style is a series of interpolated stories, the narrative thread that deals with Cristina and the Barrio's reactions to the rape is shown in a non-linear fashion. As a result, it is necessary to reconstruct the events to better understand the underlying significance and the more subtle message that is divulged.

Cristina is a younger Chola who has, unlike la China, la Fabricia and other women, tried to step beyond the boundaries, both ideologically and literally, of the Barrio. The fact that she was raped is, in the eyes of the members of the Barrio, a peculiarly "just" punishment for her actions. Nevertheless, she is still considered a member of the Barrio, a Chola, and the community decides that a vengeful response is necessary. Even though she has tried to disenfranchise herself from them, she is still seen as the property of the Barrio. She still is a representative of their unity, their identity, and as such her honor is worthy of their defense and is necessary if they are to maintain their image.

The communal voice begins to discuss the rape in chapter 8. After which, chapters 24, 29 and 41 supply information that allows for further analysis of the reasons behind the barrio's reaction and Cristina's non-conformist attitude that, according to the patriarchal values of the Barrio, lead to her demise, all of which reflect the community's inability to comprehend her deviance from the established code of conduct. She, as mentioned above, is the only female character that attempts to go beyond the confines of the Barrio. The way that she is treated sheds light on prevailing attitudes within the barrio:

Violaron la Cristina.

Luego la madrearon todita.

Después la amenazaron.

Le rompieron su vestido.

La dejaron moreteada. (27)

The Barrio expresses its solidarity with Cristina, who is also a member. Even though it is known that there was only one rapist "ellos" is used to create a dimension of us versus them. This is the Barrio as it creates a unified front against those who would attack it. As mentioned previously, this is one of the more appealing aspects of Cholo life and one of the reasons why la China became a Chola.

Nevertheless, this attitude of solidarity quickly changes when the members of the barrio discuss the circumstances that surround the rape, "La Cristina./ Por piruja. Por andar de piruja" (27). The last lines of the chapter, when the Barrio asks itself how it is possible that a Chola could be raped by an outsider, emphasize their negative view of Cristina, "¿Qué andaba haciendo [el Johnny] con una chola?/ Por Piruja [Cristina]" (27). This firmly establishes that Cristina broke the Barrio's code of conduct. Because she dates someone who is not from the Barrio, her actions become suspect. Worst of all, he is not even a Cholo, increasing the shame of her actions "Luego resulta quel bato no era cholo./ Nel, un bato crema, de escuelita, yunior, tú sabes" (27). As if to say had the rapist been a Cholo their reaction might have been different.

Chapter 24 furnishes further evidence of Cristina's deviance from the established social order:

Se sabía que la Cristina andaba con batos que no eran de la colonia. Se veían los carros finos entrando al barrio y los cholos nada más guachaban a

la Cristina subirse perfumada, besar al bato como queriendo que la raza se diera cuenta, luego largarse y no volver hasta medianoche. (59)

The tone of this section, as well as the entire chapter, is gossipy. What this shows is that the barrio keeps vigil on its members and there is a high degree of accountability for the members of the barrio. The line, "los cholos nada más guachaban" indicates that the community plays a key role in accounting for the actions of those from the community to assure conformity. Furthermore, when Cristina arrives home later and later after leaving the Barrio, "se oían los gritos de sus jefes: qué pensaba ella, que si quería vivir sola, que si ya se creía muy grandecita" (59). Even though her parents and the entire barrio are against her and her actions, she still maintains an attitude of resistance. She is looking for alternatives to the life that remaining in the barrio offers her. In response to her parent's complaints she enumerates her reasons for her non-conformist behavior, "La Cristina también gritaba que la dejaran en paz, que buscaba una mejor vida, que si ellos querían verla de chola, de vaga, sin futuro..." (59). She also begins to leave her Chola friends behind, spending her time elsewhere. This, too, will potentially cause her trouble later on in the text. "Al rato, ya les dejaba de hablar a la China y a las demás cholas. No las conocía cuando llegaban algunas amigas del trabajo a visitarla" (59). The consequence of her shunning the barrio, its values and its members, especially the Cholas, is that they plan to punish her for her actions. "Habían decidido [the Cholas] que tarde o temprano se la iban a chingar, pero nunca tuvieron tiempo para ello" (59). It is important to mention, when discussing the role of women in the barrio, that it is the women themselves that have decided that eventually they would have to punish her for her disrespect. This kind of monitoring and behavior modification by the female members of the barrio shows the level to which the women have assimilated its patriarchal values.

Chapter 29 gives details and background on the way in which Cristina attempts to escape the Barrio. "Cristina nunca se sintió a gusto con la cholada. Al principio como que sí, la jugaba a ser chola y era compa de la China y toda la raza" (69). Then later she finds work in a bank outside the Barrio and shows her transformation in her clothing and preferences "comenzó a vestirse crema: se perfumaba, usaba zapatos de tacón" (69). Yet, the decision to leave behind what she knows for another lifestyle is a difficult one, as a result "Agarraba esa onda [that of being a 'crema'] pero luego regresaba con la cholas" (69). However, the distinction between being a Chola or not is clear for the barrio. Her intermediary position is unacceptable, "O eres chola o no lo eres, la onda es sencilla" (69). This line is reminiscent of the first lines of the text.¹⁹ The social order is clear and any deviance is inadmissible. The seriousness of her actions is even further augmented by the fact that she is a woman. She is watched by all members of the barrio and by the other women, because she is a woman.

Cristina wants something else, something that for her offers a better existence. The upshot is that she is labeled "piruja," prostitute, and is, in the eyes of the male dominated barrio society, asking for trouble. This scenario is reminiscent of nineteenth century naturalist literature, where female deviance is answered with punishment and social scorn.

Not only is Cristina punished but also when the members of the barrio, in the most chauvinistic sense of the phrase, "defend her honor" by beating Johnny, they too are punished. The authorities take away many of the key members of the community and the barrio never seems to recuperate, thus providing one of the main narrative threads of the

¹⁹ "El Barrio es el Barrio, socio, y el Barrio se respeta. Y el que no lo respeta hasta allí llegó. Si es cholo se quemó con la raza, si no es cholo lo madreamos macizo" (9).

discourse. This sense of guilt and responsibility pushes Cristina in chapter 41 to deny her attachment to the Barrio, saying, "Yo no soy chola" (93).

Within the negotiation of identity along the border, if El Saico and La China represent those who maintain order and Cristina challenges the same, it is Fabricia and El Pancho who tend to straddle the border ideology. Without a doubt they are Cholos, they remain a part of the Barrio and its values while at the same time traverse the border space. Unfortunately for Fabricia, because she inhabits the male dominated space of the border, her ideological transgressions that take her outside the confines of the ideology of the barrio are met with resistance. Because of her beauty she is unattainable to the male members of the community but not outside the control of the women who take steps to punish her with the intent of reestablishing order within the barrio.

Fabricia an untouchable, elevated beauty who, because of her looks, is beyond the reach of most of the male members of the barrio. It is because of this very characteristic, her aloofness, that she is even more desired by men. She is the most beautiful, most desired woman of the Barrio. "Es que Fabricia se acerca, con su greña larga, negota, y susurra palabras que sólo tu entiendes, como en otra lengua, como en idioma inventado, como te diré..." (35). This "tú" is designated for all the males of the Barrio. Her beauty is such that it is almost indescribable and draws attention from the male members of the barrio. Yet, she does not take notice of them instead she dates Cholos from other barrios.²⁰

²⁰It is significant that, unlike Cristina, Fabricia dates Cholos. She does go outside the confines of the barrio, but only to venture into other barrios that are in line with the values and codes of hers. Fabricia draws scorn from the women of the barrio, not because she dates other Cholos, but rather because she is desired by the Cholas' partners. The text mentions: "Fabricia es apretada, a nadie le habla, con nadie se mete, sus compas son raza de otros barrios" (51; emphasis added).

She is also the recipient of el Saico's admiration, and yet, it is an impossible love. "El Saico está clavado en la Fabricia, piensa en ella por la mañana por la tarde por la noche. Pero el miércoles, cuando va con el Floyd para que le haga un tatú en el pecho, ... el nombre que solicita es el de la "China", con sus cinco letras y en el punto de la i una gotita de sangre" (35). It is significant that even el Saico is caught under her spell. He is a key player in the Barrio who is known to be somewhat of a "Don Juan" type and as such is considered with respect. It is the combination of her sexuality, youth and the impossibility of possessing her that she is coveted.

The text mentions: "Es que Fabricia es como un motor bien afinado" (35). The use of an engine to describe a woman tells a lot about the social context and masculine referents used to the narrator. Moreover, it gives a clue about the possible symbolic meanings of her name; Fabricia=> Fabricada=>Fabricated. She a fabricated object, as much fabricated by man as fabricated in the fantasies of men. To possess her would be to attain the impossible. The repetition of "Es que Fabricia..." at the beginning and end of the chapter reinforces the notion of this being a part of a misogynist communal discourse.

In chapter 20 the narration reinforces the image of her ideal beauty and the notion of her objectification. "Cuando Fabricia camina, no hay ninguna otra cosa que los cholos prefieren mirar" (51). She attracts a great deal of attention from the Cholos and is the source of their sexual fantasies:

desean llevársela a un lugar oscuro y prometerle asuntos que de seguro no le cumplirían pero la tendrían tan contenta que ella, por supuesto, abriría las piernas y soltaría lo suyo que debe ser tibio y sabroso, pues, sabroso.

(51)

She is a sexual object to be conquered at any cost and then abandoned. The Cholos even though they admire her can only summon up the courage to shout cat-calls, "Los cholos

no pierden tiempo y de volada le hablan de amor: mamacita, preciosa, uf uf, aquí estoy, mi reina" (51), and keep their distance, "Los cholos no se acercan, guardan su distancia" (51). Except el Saico: "El único atrevido es el Saico" (51). Like Cristina, Fabricia sees men who are not from the Barrio, nevertheless, in the eyes of the barrio this is acceptable because, unlike in the case of Cristina, the men are of the "raza" and as a result she has not broken the barrios established code of conduct.

This kind of admiration, as sexist as it may be, would not be as significant had it not been for the Cholas' reaction to all the attention that Fabricia received. "Y por supuesto las demás cholas no la pelan, les cae de madre porque todos sus batos quieren con la Fabricia" (51). It is precisely because el Saico, la China's husband and the one who embodies the barrio's values, has taken an interest in Fabricia that will lead to conflict. As mentioned previously, the women of the barrio are organized and can at times join together to violently maintain their vision of justice in the Barrio, much in the same way their male counterparts do. It must be emphasized, however, that they mobilize to maintain a patriarchal order, thus, demonstrating the degree to which they have assimilated the patriarchal values of the barrio. Fabricia's "crime" lies in the fact that she is beautiful and has attracted el Saico's attention. There is no specific reference in the text to validate rumors that el Saico was unfaithful, nor that Fabricia did anything wrong.

Chapter 14 offers direct dialogue between la Carlota, China's cousin, and la China in which it is rumored that Fabricia and el Saico are together:

-- Es que no sé cómo decírtelo, manita.

Simón, sí se lo dice, a la brava, ella es su prima y es como su carnala y no anda con rodeos: pos que la Surfis miró al Saico con la vieja esa, la Fabricia, me cae, por Diosito, que ella me dijo, me cae, y pos yo no quería decírtelo, manita, pero así es la onda. Lo miró frente a su casa: el

cabrón muy descarado, le valió madre, sabía que la Surfis lo guachaba, sabía que miba decir, sabía que yo tiba decir y así está el pedo. (39-40)

What stands out, above and beyond the "comadre" style conversation that places the discourse within the realm of the women, is the way the Barrio serves as a network of information. The women are organized and can communicate in order to mobilize. In addition, it is el Saico who has done the greater wrong. He makes advances toward Fabricia in front of the other members of the Barrio, and yet Fabricia will suffer the consequences of his actions. This triangular relationship, the man with a wife and a lover, is not uncommon in patriarchal Mexican society.

In chapter 26 the Cholas get together to discuss what to do about Fabricia. China wants to vent her frustration, resultant from being humiliated, on Fabricia. The first lines of the chapter point toward a sense of obligation, la China as the wife who has been wronged, has the right to take revenge. "La China: su esposa, su guaifa, su jaina, se esquina" (63). There is obvious inter-textuality between this line and chapter 6, which discusses the role of the wife in the Barrio.

Because Fabricia is the object of several men's desires it is not difficult to get enough Cholas together to beat her up. "No es difícil, Fabricia no es muy querida (por culera, presumida, pirujota), así que las rucas se reúnen sin dificultad. Se corre la voz: la China quiere chingársela" (63). It is not explicitly mentioned exactly when or how the women will take revenge on Fabricia but it is obvious that some kind of action will be taken. Much in the same way that they wanted to "tarde o temprano" take revenge on Cristina for her non-conformist actions. As a symbolic act of unity the women paint their nails black. "Se pintan las uñas negras" (63).

This narrative thread is left to one side in the fragmented structure of the text until mentioned again in the very brief chapter 32 "Alguien sopló a la Fabricia. Se sabe porque

ella nomás miró a las rucas y se echó a correr" (75). The action is completed in chapter 36, when Fabricia is beaten. The narration begins almost immediately where it left off in chapter 32 "Las rucas no tardaron en alcanzarla" (83). The retribution, punishment for her deviance is swift. The organized women rough her up enough so that she will know that she has stepped out of line. "La jalan de la greña, la golpearon, la estrujan. la patean.... La rompieron la blusan, le sacaron sangre, la dejaron moreteada" (83). She is left alone and no one that witnesses the beating comes near her. The women have delivered their sentence and the barrio's own form of justice, the balance of social order and the negotiation of identity, has been accomplished.

In terms of the role of women the text presents a view that is laden with the patriarchal values of the barrio. As previously mentioned the women of the text are given very few alternatives in regards to developing a sense of self and going beyond the boundaries of the Barrio. Their choices are limited. The text presents specific roles for women, that of the wife, the ideal beautiful woman and the prostitute (piruja). As the text progresses the reader is presented with these three archetypes and becomes aware of how each functions within the Barrio society as well as how the other members of the barrio, both men and women, react to them. In this way, its patriarchal values have been assimilated by most of the women who live in it and, as a result, they enforce them, creating a repetitive cycle of repression.

This class distinction within the general social setting of Baja California serves to further marginalize them from the dominant class, the power center. In all three instances the text offers up details that provide information about the reception of these women as they play out their different roles, inherent in these responses is a class distinction, showing class related responses from outside the barrio and from within.

The Cholas have developed certain ways of dealing with their marginalized position. They are organized and vigilant. In the assimilation of the male dominant code of conduct they, too, can be violent and act a single voice within the community. In addition, the text presents a view of the "comadre" style conversation of women that is a form of communication through which the women protect each other and at the same time address issues that serve to reinforce patriarchal social order and values. The negotiation of ideological borders functions as well in regards to the position of women within the barrio and the broader social order of Baja California.

El Pancho de Tecate presents one of the other voices within the community. He is identified as that of a poet, a writer who spends a great deal of time watching foreign films. Pancho comes to represent the role of the writer/intellectual in the Barrio and Baja California. As a writer, his function in society is to provide a means of understanding the community, defining its identity. He uses cultural symbols from various sources at his disposal to make sense of the community's ideology. He creates a fictional world that favors the members of the community. Inherent in his position, as insider and outsider along the transitional ideological border, is the opportunity to make use of a wide variety of cultural symbols that are taken from outside the community and yet are used in such a way that they are redefined and applied to the context of the barrio. It is not by chance that El Gran Preténder, Crosthwaite's text, functions much in the same way, yet there are crucial differences.

El Pancho is described in chapter ten, "Pancho de Tecate tiene cincuenta años y recorre la ciudad tomando notas que apunta en una libreta pequeña" (31). Yet, the setting for the first reference to Pancho is a party at Chemo's house in chapter four, one of the unnamed narrators is describing el Saico: "El Saico no se mueve. Enciende uno de sus Faros como si fuera Belmondo en Sin aliento, de esta forma lo explica el Pancho de

Tecate porque es poeta, es escritor, y le pasa mucho el cine. Así dice las cosas, hablando del cine" (17). In this way Pancho has a specific role within the group. He has a privileged position because he is mentioned and recognized by others and is allowed to be a Cholo and at the same time presents ideas that do not come from the barrio. Above and beyond this mention of Pancho's character, the lines that follow indicate a more far reaching element of the relationship between writer and public: "El Saico nunca ha visto a Belmondo, sólo sabe de Pedro Armendáriz" (17). In other words, there is a great deal of distance on a referential level between the two. El Saico, who in this example represents the general public of Tijuana, has no idea about what Pancho is talking about. His cultural referents are strictly from Mexico while Pancho goes beyond these limits. He provides a critical analysis of the setting while Saico is simply an agent therein.

Later, Pancho comments to El Saico, "Ves esa muchacha, loco, ella es poesía. Ves ese perro corriendo, ahí va un cuento" (31). El Saico's reaction is one of complacency, "Si cualquier otro se lo dijera, me cae que recibiría un cadenazo a través de la cara como suele sucederle a la gente que sabe más que él" (31). This furthers the idea of distance between writer and object, and sheds light on the distance between the same in Tijuana. Nevertheless, Pancho is there, and he, too, has assimilated the values of the Barrio. This integration and acceptance is furthered in chapter 10 in which el Saico and el Pancho are drinking beer in La Estrella, a local working class cantina just off Avenida Revolución. "[Pancho] Es una de las pocas gentes a quien visita el Saico de Tijuana" (31). The fact that Pancho is the only one that Saico will visit gives him an important position within the discourse. More on this comes in chapter 11: "Los cholos las estacionan [las ranflas] en las orillas del barrio, junto a la casa de Pancho. Los cholos ahí pasan la noche, pisteando, cotorreando" (33). Pancho's home serves as a meeting place

for the members of the community signaling his importance as a central figure in the Barrio.

The remainder of chapter 10 shows Pancho's narration of the interpolated story of el Saico's father. According to el Pancho, he was a decorated soldier in the war who, upon returning to the Barrio, wanted to live peacefully but circumstances forced him to defend himself. The description is very idealized and filled with heroic deeds and references to films. In truth, he prefaces his narration by saying "¿Ya guachaste la película que están pasado en el Variedades" (32). El Saico has and yet thinks it was not a good movie. Pancho continues:

Pues tu jefe peleó en la guerra, loco, ¿me entiendes? Mató a muchos, fue un machín, recibió condecoraciones. Tímido y callado, fortachón, prudente, manejaba el arco y la flecha como si fuera un indio de Hollywood. Experto en explosivos. (32)

El Saico does not understand, first the reference to the movie playing at the theater and second, the depth, or quite possibly the fictionalization of event, that does not coincide with his contextual reality. He simply responds, "Yo siempre creí que mi jefe había sido albañil" (32).

The narration is significant because it favorably represents the barrio, because of this el Saico accepts Pancho. It is his ability to tell a story that allows Pancho into the group. Even though his referents are not from the barrio, their usage reinforces its identity. El Pancho as a narrative voice serves to validate the existence of the barrio. It is then possible to say that he also validates the barrio as text and allows for the acceptance of El Gran Preténder.

The technique of referring to movies is used again in chapter 18. The opening line immediately identifies Pancho as the narrator, "Esto lo cuenta el Pancho" (47). Again,

Pancho is significant because he has been called the poet/writer/intellectual, the one who makes reference to movies and César Vallejo. It is not surprising to find reference to the movie Epartaco. Pancho makes a comparison between Kirk Douglas and el Saico. Douglas was a "gladiador rebelde que formó un ejército contra los romanos" (47). The "judiciales" presented within the frame story are, of course, the Romans and the rest of the "clica" are the gladiators. This is a clear presentation of good versus bad.

El Pancho retells the scene in Spartacus when "Douglas y Curtis se pelean a espadas porque saben que el sobreviviente será capturado y sufrirá el terrible suplicio de la crucifixión" (48). The parallel is made between the characters and those from the movie. The fictional reality of the text then merges with that of the movie when "los romanos (gandallos) capturaron a los gladiadores rebeledes (que eran un chingo), los amontonaron en un cerro y le preguntaron: / -¿Quién de ustedes es Espartaco?" (48). The relationship is then drawn between the "judiciales" who have just asked the mechanics present at the Taller El Pancho where el Saico works who is the one who is the thug for hire, "¿Quién de ustedes es el que rifa konzafos?"²¹ (47). El Saico, reenacting the events that took place in the movie, steps forward and claims responsibility, then so does el Chemo, el Mueras y el Pocho. The point-counter-point comparative narration stops and the blending of narrative worlds begins, "Kirk Douglas, Tony Curtis, el Mueras, el Chemo y el Saico se suben al carro nuevo, sin placas, y son llevados a declarar" (48). This shows both the above mentioned fictional blending as well as the sense of community, how they all take responsibility for each other. It is through el Pancho's narration that the events become significant. He is the one who ascribes value and furthers the affirmation of

²¹ A phrase used to mean that a person is a hired gun and will beat anyone for money.

identity and establishes intertextuality between the two fictional worlds, the text and the movie.

The act of creation and remembrance are significant in Pancho's modification of identity. His house is a meeting place. In part, it is because "el refri del Pancho está repleto de frondosos botes y caguamas de cerveza Tecate" (73) but what is more important because he conveys the collective memory of the group:

El Pancho les cuenta de otros tiempos, de pachucos (los buenos tiempos cuando la raza sí era gruesa y no se andaba con pendejadas, lo único importante era tu beibi y tu ranfla, loco, lo demás podía pasar y a ti no te importaba, no era tu onda) les habla del buen cine y del viejito-Vallejo-peruano-años-en-la-cárcel-buen-poeta. (73)

His intellectual slant permits him to intertwine films and other more intellectual questions with the codes and concerns of the Cholos. He also plays the Platters and knows of "Los Cinco Latinos" which are "como Los Platters pero en español y con voz vieja" (74).

Whether explicit or implicit a sense of nostalgia for the past, the former social order of the Barrio, and the relative freedom that it was privileged to, is present throughout the entire book. Without a doubt this nostalgia transgresses temporal generations within the Barrio society, that is to say it is present in the different generations that form the basis for the narrative voices. The nostalgia continually points toward a longing for a previous social order, a time when life was apparently more orderly, when the chaos of the present is dispelled. It provides for an understanding of the progressive development of the barrio's identity, from the Pachucos to the Cholos to present day.

The communal voice furthers this notion of nostalgia:

El Nicté-Ha el mero lugar. Donde se hacía lo de uno. Donde se pasaba un buen rato. Luego fue una pista de patinaje. Luego fue una maquiladora.

Ahora está cerrado. No dejan entrar. Está cerrado. Ahora quién sabe qué es. (81)

El Nichte-Ha was "el mero lugar. "Donde se hacía lo de uno" (81). Yet, due to the heavy-handed repression by the authorities, this is no longer possible, "Por eso los morros [the youth] se juntan en la esquina frente a Licores El Cacto, y hablan de aquellos tiempos. No volverá a suceder" (15). This voice, that makes reference to "los morros," seems to refer to the youth of the present day generation (from the 1980s) within the schematics of the generational structure. The reference to "aquellos tiempos" goes back to the former generation, that of el Saico and his "clica," the ones that form the main discursive thread of the novel: "Se sabe: la raza de hoy ya no es tan desmadrosa, la raza ya no se divierte, la raza no la pasa bien como antes" (11). This voice can be defined as the one that reflects a chronological proximity to the aftermath of the authoritarian repression of the "chota". It reflects on what life is like now that el Saico and his "clica" are no longer around. The following lines also reflect this: "El Barrio como que si ya no es el Barrio, tú sabes, se acabó el desmadre. Se acabó el pedo. Se apagó" (53). It is from this that a sense of loss is established in the text. The next generational narrative voice comments on the occurrences and repercussions of the "repre" that el Saico's generation experienced. It is the most immediate and dominant voice in the discourse and appears with a high degree of frequency commenting on the actual events that surround Cristina's rape and its aftermath.

Finally, nostalgia that transcends generational boundaries is seen when el Saico's generation is told by el Pancho of those who came before them, "El Pancho les cuenta [to Saico and others who have arrived] de otros tiempos, de pachucos los buenos tiempos cuando la raza sí era gruesa y no se andaba con pendejadas, lo único importante era tu beibi y tu ranfla" (73). To understand the temporal aspect of this text it is necessary to

view the time references within the text from back to front. That is, searching for references like this one that discusses the Pachucos, a social group within Mexico, from the 1940s and 50s. It is from this that the temporal framework and the generational nostalgia felt by the members of the community of the text becomes clear. Nevertheless, a disparity arises between the writing of El Gran Preténder and its content. Crosthwaite's concerns are purely fictional, while ironically enough, Pancho has more at stake in terms of his commitment to the barrio's ideology. This can be seen through the use of nostalgia within the story because it functions primarily within the confines of the text. There is a distance between Crosthwaite and the text that does not transcend the narration.

What has to be explored at this point is the role of the writer and its relationship to an authorial attempt to affirm the existence of the text, El Gran Preténder. The relationship between story and the function of the text become apparent when a connection is made between notions of a presentation of a community in the process of negotiating identity within the context of an ideological border and the role of representation when discussing these events. The content and form as well as the content of the form are intimately linked. In this way, Crosthwaite, much like El Pancho de Tecate, through the presentation of a fictional world creates identity through the edifice of the text. Pancho does this through the fictionalization of the protagonists' actions within the story while Crosthwaite does so on a meta-textual level through different narrative strategies. Pancho, as writer within the narration, by using diverse cultural referents that come from outside the barrio, and yet are transposed onto it, is recuperating past identity. His fictional portrayal is, as opposed to that of Crosthwaite, is static and linear. His placement within the confines of the barrio does not allow him the perspective that Crosthwaite enjoys. By alluding to the past he freezes identity within a temporal

framework. This increases the static presentation of identity and reinforces the former social order and at the same time extends it to his present moment.

In considering El Gran Preténder, because the text is a non-linear, non-chronological modern chronicle of the Cholo community that is on the fringes of society, the presentation is one that reflects the dynamics of the negotiation of identity on an ideological border. The Cholos are in a process of self-definition that reveals itself through the creation of an oppositional interior/ exterior space. This is a geographic and ideological phenomenon. The members of the barrio close ranks to encircle the community, those who inhabit the barrio, which serves a dual purpose; maintain order from within and to keep foreigners out. Through El Gran Preténder, Crosthwaite uses cultural referents from multiple sources that originate from within the barrio or penetrate it from outside as a way of constructing Cholo identity. Their sense of self is established as a result of these referents and is fortified by a sense of continuity and/or rupture from these referents. The use of various narrative voices allows for a better understanding of the diverse elements of this social class because the text embodies diversity, while at the same time providing a view of the strength and inherent sense of identity of the Barrio. The novel El Gran Pretender in itself, because of the specific narrative strategies and thematic concerns, challenges binary relationships of power by decentering the concerns of center and margin. It presents a world that is in constant negotiation of its ideological borders. Considered in this light, the narration demonstrates this aspect of a specific social context and El Gran Preténder as text reflects these concerns. His specific narrative strategies, the use of various narrative voices and non-chronological narrative structure, allow for a better understanding of the diverse elements of this social class because the text incarnates a diversity, while at the same time it provides a view of the strength and inherent sense of identity of the Barrio. The communal voice is a varied approach to

narration that is without a dominant unifying narrator that might provide for cohesion. The narrative fragmentation with interpolated story lines, presented through different voices and the non-linear story is an attempt to textually represent meta-textual fragmentation that draws attention to the very function of the text as a model for the transitional nature of mediating identity. The technique of using a multiplicity of narrative voices provides for an understanding of the plurality of the community and its relationship to other identities. This focus on a marginalized class within the infrastructure of Baja California can be transposed onto the broader concept of the latter as a marginalized group within Mexico, not to mention all marginalized identities. The novel El Gran Pretender in itself, because of the specific narrative strategies and thematic concerns, challenges binary relationships of power by decentering concerns of center and margin. It presents a world that is in constant negotiation of its ideological borders. The discourse presented through the Cholo community exposes the relationship between a diversity of centers and their margins, discussing the negotiation of ideological borders, dealing specifically with the marginalized position of both the characters that inhabit the text and drawing attention to the meta-textual devices used by Crosthwaite when discussing them.

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