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The Trials of Displacement: Transnationalism and Interdisciplinary Feminisms in Demetria Martínez's *The Block Captain's Daughter*

By Elena Avilés

Navajo, Pueblo, and Apache tribes flourish in North America by the 1500; Juan de Onate establishes a European frontier for Spain in 1598; the Spanish inquisition reaches New Spain's frontier borders in 1626; the Pueblo Revolt takes place in 1680; Mexico declares independence from Spain while the Santa Fe Trail accesses international trade in 1821; the railroad fosters trade and migration from the East Coast and Midwest to the Rocky Mountain areas in 1878; New Mexico gains statehood in 1912; the first atomic bomb tested in southeast New Mexico in 1945; New Mexico ranks among the top three in poverty nationally in 2008; unaccompanied Central American minors arrive and cross the U.S.-Mexico border in 2014 (Somerset Publishers 2001; Page-Reeves 2014; Krogstad 2016). These are more than inconsequential historical facts for Demetria Martínez. For the long-time resident of Albuquerque, historical events since the age of discovery and settlement correspond to journeys shaping modern North American history.

From the fifteenth century to the twenty-first century, the interaction between dispossession and displacement are central questions Martínez channels in writing. Her work represents the struggle of contemporary feminist interventions on issues of international migration within the annals of the New Mexican borderlands. The power to generate reflexivity about gendered displacement begins to remap vision of identity in print that brings the reader to wage the multiple values of American society. Innovations to the experiences of women of multiethnic backgrounds are perhaps one of the strengths of her latest narrative.

Albuquerque is a backdrop where shifts and dislocations of the past shape the verdicts of lived experiences in an effort to inform the present moment. Through the lenses of transnationalism and interdisciplinary feminist analysis, this essay seeks to address the following questions: How are dispossession and displacement represented in *The Block Captain's Daughter*? How does Martínez's attention to displacement address and transform central questions in feminist theory? In particular, how does the narrative advance feminist approaches to larger questions of space, place, and subjectivity? The overarching goal of this essay explores the trials of displacement as a dialogue between the strings of displacement and dispossession in Demetria Martínez's *The Block Captain's Daughter* (2012).

The first section of this essay focuses on the history of dispossession and displacement in New Mexico. Although desert terrains surround the contemporary image of a city known for immigration, drugs, and violence as a result of an American crime television series known as *Breaking Bad*, the historical appeal of the nature and people also make it the land of enchantment. Martínez entices readers to understand the intricacies of the largest minority group in the United States in the 21st century by exploring the structures of Chicana/o history through the everyday interactions, relationships, and culture of people.

Chicana feminist principles enables the author to represent another written image of Albuquerque and it's populous as a global example of decolonial crossings. She generates a collective parallel between the attitudes and values of the characters in the text with issues facing the country in jury rooms, in communal spaces, and in the intimate settings of people's homes. From Latinx issues to the threat of the legality of a woman's right to have an abortion under Roe

vs. Wade, women's and gender studies are represented in the narrative as the most pressing issues of our modern times. The transnational and interdisciplinary deliberation of quotidian life and daily challenges for women in *The Block Captain's Daughter* is for the author a feminist struggle.

The second section of this essay focuses on the cultural representations of displacement in the text. The author's pursuit to advance the Chicana/o principle of *raza*, or that we are all one people, which too draws from indigenous philosophies, enable her to represent the interconnectivity among individuals across local, regional, and global contexts. What it means for people of indigenous, indo-Hispanic, Hispanic, European, Mexican and Mexican Americans growing up in the United States to co-exist in shared space is what makes the Duke City a place where individuals figure out how to transgress displacement.

Albuquerque nurtured a strong sense of identity in the writer as a result of the global history that defines the city's culture. Martínez grew up in a family value system that advocated for the empowerment of Mexican American peoples via the Chicano movement for civil rights. In an interview with Ellen McCracken she states:

I grew up in Albuquerque. My father was the first Chicano elected to the Albuquerque School Board. He did that for two terms, so that was 12 years. So an important part of growing up was exposure to the political world, being taken to Board meetings, watching things being thrashed out. My mother was an elementary school kindergarten teacher. She always took us to the library, every Saturday to Ernie Pyle library, and so reading was a huge part of growing up. My grandmother was involved in politics, so I can remember election nights, gathering at her house and seeing if she won in various elections. She held a number of posts including county clerk, country commissioner. So there were those two strong streams in my life growing up, and obviously Mom and Dad were both college educated (quoted in Del Castillo).

With a history of activism that was home grown, she learned from an early age that women had power. The feminist movement in tandem with the rise of Chicana politics in New Mexico influenced the writer's interdisciplinary and transnational feminist pedagogy.

For this reason, the narrative is not shy of feminist thought that examines neoliberalism, capitalist development, colonization, and slavery as projects that create unequal treatment of people based on colonial perspectives on gender, sex, and sexuality. The cultural representations of displacement encourage readers to interrogate Western forms of thinking about space, place, and subjectivity. By introducing us to people and their lived social, economic and political conditions, the writer voices a strong critique about the power of displacement in one of the nation's poorest states.

Simultaneously, she delineates a process of disrupting displacement by narrating the resilience people have developed as modes of survival given discrimination and oppression. Referencing the idea that the "Desert is no lady," Martínez offers a tale that circumvents the global apparatus of the capitalist economy that exploits the people of New Mexico as much as its land by being innovative in the face of displacement (Norwood and Monk 1987). As a feminist mediation of today's global Western struggle for social justice unfolding in our backyards, the text's oppositional politics allows for new visions of the American public to surface. The narrative, thus, taps into the hidden power of humanity.

The essay concludes with an examination of *The Block Captain's Daughter* as a narrative that translates displacement through the resistance of language characteristic of Chicana and feminist theory. In this essay, I propose the idea that the international and global concern that characterizes Martínez's writing is a window into the mirror of transferential positions that through a feminist lens works in opposition as a means to react to displacement within American society. By writing on the short and long term effects of displacement as a system of coloniality, she brings the reader to think about the links between historical and present day injustices. The author succeeds in transferring visions about gender inequality and dislocation into new outlooks meant to heal transtemporal/transhistorical wounds.

Reading dispossession and displacement

In Demetria Martínez's *The Block Captain's Daughter* (2012), dispossession and displacement is something you read as well as experience as you enter into the imaginative environment of the space and place of Albuquerque, New Mexico. The text is multifaceted in viewpoint, representation, and voice. Six storylines of characters are intertwined among and across chapters. Interspersed between storyline is an additional storyline. The reader is witness to a mother-daughter relationship established across the act of letter writing. While at times it may be hard for readers to follow the fragmented histories and incomplete narratives of the characters, Martínez purposefully uses postmodern and decolonial forms of storytelling to bring the average American reader into a simulacrum of living along the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. Historian John R. Chávez writes in *The Lost Land: The Chicano Image of the Southwest* (1984), "Life in the borderlands was by no means luxurious, for difficulties between the Indians and colonialists were continual, and starvation and disease were always a threat" (19). These conditions continue today.

The multiple stories of the characters become the material through which the author is able to discuss the long and short-term impact of international migration across the frontier zones of the American West. According to Chávez, "Chicanos view the Southwest as an extension of Mexico and Latin America, a Mexican region spreading beyond what is regarded as an artificial international boundary. Geographically, in fact, the Southwest does resemble the Mexican desert and highlands [... and] to this familiar southwestern terrain the cultural influence of Mexico City has radiated from over three hundred years (2-3). In the narrative, Martínez explores the present-day impact of conquest and colonization of Native American, Mexican and Hispanic populations and later the bearings to imperialist and neoliberal control since the nineteenth and twentieth century as a result of Manifest Destiny.

The representations of life along the Southwest for residents in New Mexico mirrors cross-temporal engagements with displacement and dispossession due to the fact that the land in which Albuquerque sits has always been a contested terrain as an incessant frontier zone. Martínez writes about the lessons learned about displacement in an attempt to demonstrate how historical drama is always unfolding into the present. The text meditates on the struggle for social justice around the world since the mid-twentieth century and as Chávez notes:

The nationalist movement of such peoples as the Vietnamese and the Cubans inspired a significant number of Mexican-Americans to reexamine their own conditions through history and concluded that they too had been victims of U.S. imperialism. As a result, the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century image of the Southwest as lost and of themselves as disposed reemerged from the collective

unconscious of the region's Mexicans. As we have seen, the image has persisted, largely because of the intense Mexican nationalism that radiated across the border, but in the 1960s it was reasserted and reshaped under the influence of contemporary ideas (131).

The frames of reference about displacement in *The Block Captain's Daughter* educate readers on the intellectual history of Chicanos, as long-term residents of New Mexico and as new immigrants. The novella reveals that identity politics are complicated in the Southwest.

The book commences with the character of Lupe. She is an immigrant from Mexico, and is pregnant with her first child. Marcos is a Central American refugee who migrated to the United States. He is also Lupe's partner and the future dad of Destiny. Another male character is Peter. He too becomes a father when Cory informs him that she is pregnant. Marisa and Flor represent a union at center stage in national debates, the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ communities. "Americans are familiar with the challenges of illegal Mexican immigration into the U.S., but are much less accustomed to learning about the experiences of such immigrants after they're in the country. [...] Demetria Martínez introduces us to six characters and the relationships they share, describing each and their environments through the others' eyes and voices," writes Lauren Kramer (2012).

Each character's journey in life serve as a motif to the trials dispossession and displacement that mirror real experiences of inhabitants in the city of Albuquerque. Trials of displacement, in this case, refers to historical dates, events, and cases that crystalize into moments and dilemmas that structure the memories of belonging and what that comes to signify in the context of displacement. Displacement invokes the physical reality of movement be it of objects or people. Displacement can mean the departure or relocation of people from what they refer to as home or their homeland. Significant events such as war, persecution, or natural disasters cause people to become displaced. All of these contexts are not foreign to the terrains that border the parameters of New Mexico.

The text explores the way historical records traverse different global forms of order and in this text, the manner in which memories designate an individual's relationship to land. In New Mexico, writing about the memory of land reflects in its history. From the rule by kingdom, country, land, dominion, and nation, the lands we call New Mexico are interwoven with tales of migrants, immigrants, emigrants, refugees, and internally displaced persons. As a Central American, Marcos represents the shifts in international migration across the global North. He also invokes the Sanctuary Movement, an international struggle to assist Central American refugees in the United States.

In fact, the writer's involvement with the Sanctuary Movement led to an experience with internal displacement. In an interview, Martínez touches upon this when she answers the question of *What brought you to writing?*:

My first novel, *Mother Tongue* (Ballantine), came out of the Central American struggle of the late 70s and early 80s; it's about a Chicana who falls in love with a Salvadoran refugee living in Albuquerque. A few years before writing the book, I had been charged with conspiracy against the United States government and faced a potential 25 years in prison. This was for allegedly transporting refugees as part of the Sanctuary Movement, a movement where U.S. citizens aided those fleeing Central America and its death squads largely funded by the U.S. government. I had

been covering the movement as a reporter; therefore, the jury acquitted me on First Amendment grounds (ForeWord).

Marcos symbolizes one reason why people become displaced. Lupe represents another. With Peter and Cory the author makes the reader aware of the distinction between the reasons people migrate that lead to displacement. Unlike the search for economic opportunity or political asylum, Peter and Flor represent historical displacement as a result of religious persecution.

In the novella, the writer exposes this fact using humor. Reflecting on who will be Destiny's godparent, Lupe writes her a letter about why each individual will lead her toward a path of holiness:

Flor? She's Jewish, this I know, but Jesus was too, so no contradictions there. She will teach you to pray Friday night Sabbath prayers in Hebrew, and thus you shall honor your ancestors, many of whom practiced Judaism in secret during the dreadful times of the Inquisition (30).

When speaking about Cory, the writer inserts the history of Sephardic Jews and its ties to New Mexico. This is a clear example of how she explores the multifaceted engagements with religious displacement as she weaves the geography and the social-systems that define Albuquerque as a community. In comparison, when Lupe thinks about Peter serving as a godparent she states:

Peter? He's a Quaker. Should you ever convert to another path, it would not break my heart to see you go the way of the Quakers. Peter took me to one of their worship services. Unlike Catholics they sit in silence, contemplating Our Lord, not wasting His time worrying over what He said about women priests, gayness, birth control and the like. So if you find God in all that silence, you shall hear no protest from me (30).

Peter represents the contemporary image of the Quakers. Peter is the living spirit of Quaker survival in the United States. He symbolizes religious continuity rather than a fossilized subject we read in history books in U.S. schools or a fixed image found on oatmeal packages. Quakers value an educational path based on "testimonies," that regard people as interconnected. Martínez creates a confluence between Quaker values—simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equality and stewardship—and Chicana feminist methodologies that stress the importance of testimonies for radical change as in the title of the book, *Telling to Live: Latina Feminist Testimonios* (Acevedo et al. 2001).

Through storytelling, Martínez also incorporates Native American practices and beliefs as everlasting roots in New Mexico. Through the figure of Maria, Martínez presents an unexamined perspective in mainstream America; survival and continuation of indigenous religious practices in the face of some of the most severe forms of displacement in U.S. territories. Maria is a curandera, a healer. While colonial and imperial order criminalizes non-Western religious and cultural practices, Maria symbolizes the displacement of indigenous peoples and at the same time the survival of dispossessed traditions.

For example, when Maritza visits Maria as a result of dreams that "are always trying to tell us something," Maria knows she goes to her because Maritza is unconsciously dealing with patriarchal teachings about the guilt women are made to feel when they choose to have an abortion

(41). The following scene illustrates how transnational and international feminist perspectives reverse engendered forms of displacements for women:

Maria lowers her head and closes her eyes. Then she looks up at Our Lady of Guadalupe, who wears the Aztec sash symbolizing pregnancy. Or maybe she's looking at the serpent-skirted Coatlicue, mother of the Aztec god Huitzilopochtli, who sprang full grown from his mother's womb and dressed as a warrior. Maria takes your hand. "If you're looking for me for forgiveness," she says, "forget about it. Now I want you to listen closely. What we're going to do now is a process of elimination, theologically speaking (44).

In this scene, the displaced body is interpreted through non-Western perspectives that reference the decolonial storytelling that emerges from experiences with displacement. The writer focuses on the history of women, the control over women's biology, and the education of women via Western theology that leads to the criminalization of abortion. The narrative continues:

Sensing that you are about to enter a labyrinth you squeeze her hand, determined not to get separated.

"First step, science, science came along, tool kit in hand," Maria begins. "Before we knew what hit us—the human race—we had pictures. Pictures of the moon. Pictures of the earth from space. Pictures of embryos. All very advanced. And thus it was that science informed us that abortion stops a beating heart. No contradictions there.

"But long before science there were stories. Beliefs, we'll call them, about when God breathed a soul into flesh. Different religions gave us different opinions: The soul swoops down at quickening, at birth, at 130 days after birth, and on and on endless unto this day. Throughout history our own Catholic Church has changed its almighty opinion as to when this ensoulment business happens. You can look it up in the library. It's declassified, as they say (44).

The voice of Maria begins to reframe Maritza's dreams into a powerful message about reclaiming female notions of power and knowledge. She gives name to Maritza's psychology in different terms and employing modernity's language to reverse displacement of young woman's mind, body, and soul.

The survival of indigenous practices, thoughts, and values in the history of North America such as in the scene above illustrates the intent by the writer to offer counter-hegemonic tales. Furthermore, the multiple mention of The Virgin of Guadalupe inscribe a Chicana feminist theology and decolonial reading of the Goddess of the Americas as a sacred image of feminine power. References to and images of the Virgin erase borderlines; and paint the image of female spirituality as a hemispheric reality able to empower women to face and overcome the trials of displacement. Martínez reminds readers that in Chicana feminist contexts, The Virgin of Guadalupe signifies subjectivity.

Maria, Maritza, Cory, Lupe and Destiny continue to find a solution to feeling displaced through the spiritual belief in Guadalupe. In the novella, Guadalupe enables a deep spiritual

meditation as part of humanity by women. The result is women synthesizing self-empowerment through self-determined action and education. Critical feminist ideas on the role and representation of Guadalupe to empowerment of Chicana feminism is the focus of Ana Castillo's, *Goddess of the Americas/La diosa de las Américas: Writings on the Virgin of Guadalupe* (1996). For instance, Lupe's legal name is Guadalupe Gabriela Anaya. Lupe is an abbreviation of Guadalupe, a popular name for women and men across North America. Lupe represents the secular representation of the religious icon as a young, pregnant protagonist.

Through the unraveling of gender-specific concepts within Chicana and U.S. Latina thought, Destiny enters as an undergrad student proud of her heritage and with Guadalupe at her side. In the closing letter of the novella, Destiny writes to her mother, "Dear Mama, It is two in the morning and I'm here at my dorm room desk writing this letter by candlelight—a flame dancing inside a tall glass bearing the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe" (93). With this example, the Virgin of Guadalupe is framed as a transnational protector. She helps women tap into their indigenous voice, and affirms the syncretism of religious, cultural and social imagery in Chicano culture.

As a Chicana with Mexican-Central American roots, Destiny represents the new image of miscegenation and the movement of people across time and space. Martínez addresses and transforms central questions in feminist theory in this desert space by bringing attention to how people have developed cultural traditions, which despite displacement, dispossession, and invisibility have evolved into new methods to counter experiences or tales of displacement.

Cultural representations of displacement

Displacement also can refer to conscious or cognitive states that fall outside the laws of physics. Chicana feminist expressions of spirituality are one example. Another is the friendship women establish across social strata. In regard to questions of subjectivity, the description of cultural experiences of people of color who range from those of the poor to those of the privileged, the expression of reproductive rights through art and popular culture, and the support of women in roles of power and influence in civic life illustrate the multifaceted ways the text explores notions of displacement within cultural specificities.

In *Key Concepts in Literary Theory*, displacement is defined as a, "Freudian term for psychic process whereby one psychic figure is relocated in another manifestation or image. Lacan likens the work of metonymy to displacement" (Wolfreys, Robbins, and Womack 2006, 34). According to Freudian psychoanalytic theory, displacement is when a person shifts his/her impulses from an unacceptable target to a more acceptable or less threatening target (AlleyDog 1998). As a coping mechanism, displacement usually operates unconsciously to allow for the transference of emotions, thoughts, and states of mind in order to deal with life.

In the introduction to *Jacques Lacan: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, David Macey writes, "In 1957, Jacques Lacan, inspired by an article by linguist Roman Jakobson on metaphor and metonymy, argued that the unconscious has the structure of a language, linking displacement to the poetic function of metonymy, and condensation to that of metaphor" (Lacan and Miller 1994, xxviii). For the award-winning Chicana author and activist, 'linking displacement to the poetic function of metonymy,' enables the author to turn to creative writing to craft the other side of displacement. *The Block Captain's Daughter* is a reflection of that other side of displacement where inscriptions of culture enables the creative writer to use words to decolonize culture in Albuquerque in order to address the gender-specific misconceptions that negatively impact women.

As a metonymy, *The Block Captain's Daughter* crystallizes the national struggle of Chicana feminist politics. By showing the national and transnational dilemmas that are historical and contemporary along border zones, the character who bears the name of the title of the book is also a metonym that advances the transnational and interdisciplinary feminist struggles that structure Martínez's visions of the world: the block captain's daughter, or Destiny. Destiny is a metonym for the dream work that motivates Chicana feminist struggles. The block captain's daughter is a figure of speech in which the subject (character) and concept (Chicana feminism) is called not by its own name, in this case Destiny, but rather by the name of something associated in meaning with that thing or concept (being the daughter of block captains).

In this case, the block captain is a woman. This offsets the dominance of patriarchal memory in history that has made into an unquestionable tradition that leadership roles are reserved for men, independent of whether men possess leadership skills. As the block captain, Lupe is a woman in culture and society that is breaking into new feminist ground through self-generated leadership and activism. Through public interest, Lupe challenges stereotypes of migrants as job snatchers, as lazy people, as a strain to the welfare system, and as bodies unable to contribute to society in meaningful ways. She also challenges stereotypes on pregnancy and of reproductive rights.

The interest to strengthen her barrio neighborhood while pregnant transforms Lupe into a radical model of empowerment for women in contemporary society. This parallels a new movement in understanding motherhood and the role of working mothers. Through Lupe's story, however, Martínez reminds young women in barrio communities about the trails of displacement Chicana and other working class women have faced across history. One reality is that women have always worked independently of being mothers or not. This invokes the criticism fellow Chicana poet, Lorna Dee Cervantes, captures in the poem titled, "Poem for the Young White Man Who Asked Me How I, An Intelligent, Well-Read Person, Could Believe in the War Between Races." The poem starts with the following words, "In my land there are no distinctions./The barbed wire politics of oppression/have been torn down long ago. The only reminder of past battles, lost or won, is a slight/rutting in the fertile fields" (Anzaldúa 1990, 4-5). Like Martínez, Dee Cervantes stresses the importance of land for Chicano and indigenous peoples and the history of dislocation people of color endured across centuries in the history of the American North.

Dee Cervantes then connects ideas of land to the female body by writing, "I'm marked by the color of my skin./The bullets are discrete and designated to kill slowly./They are aiming at my children./These are facts./Let me show you my wounds: my stumbling mind, my "excuse me" tongue, and this/nagging preoccupation with the feeling of not being good enough./These bullets bury deeper than logic" (Anzaldúa 1990, 4-5). Dee Cervantes offers a vision of barrio life women of color face: the attack on their subjectivity and the embodiment of self that is historically tied to colonial projects. Martínez focuses on the same concerns.

The novella represents women's desires to improve cultural conditions in sites predominantly inhabited by Spanish-speaking people and who face social disparities that are socio-economic, class based, or the result of racial and ethnic oppression. Similar to Dee Cervantes's closing verses, Martínez writes about what really happens in barrio communities in order to humanize immigrant lived experiences. Martínez's text engages with the principles of the Chicano movement – self-affirmation, self-determination, and cultural pride – to instill honor in the traditions maintained along the Southwestern borderlands.

By humanizing dispossessed peoples in barrio communities, the Albuquerque native breaks the neo-conservative gaze of the immigrant as an object, as exploitable, and as expendable

labor. In contrast, she constructs representations of immigrants as subjects deserving of basic human rights because their presence makes them a part of the fabric of American culture. Lupe and Marcos represent the Mexican and Central American immigrant experience of today. Through the figures of Peter, Cory, Marisa, and Flor, the author offers models of civic engagement that fosters a new vision of social justice among birthright citizens. But with each story, we see a history and genealogy of displacement.

As a totality, the text inscribes an international feminist and transnational interpretation that decolonizes the discourse structuring the language of *jus sanguinis* and *jus soli*. The text explores engendered understandings of birthing rights and birthright citizenship and how this affects barrio communities the most because they are traditionally known for having the highest rate of immigrant populations. For example, should Cory's baby have the right to birthright citizen but not Lupe's baby? If Destiny were denied birthright citizenship, would she have attended college at a prestigious institution in the East Coast as we come to find out at the end of the book? Would she have been sent to a holding facility or a private prison as have experienced unaccompanied Central American minors crossing into New Mexico since 2014? Would she have been a victim of rape as reports show over the high rates of violence against women along the U.S.-Mexico border? Would she be facing the uncertainty of place, space, and belonging that Dreamers and DACA students face daily? Through this example, Martínez demonstrates the impact international policy and domestic affairs have on barrio communities.

Moreover, Martínez focuses on positive representations of home culture within the U.S.-Mexico borderlands in order to teach readers that home and homelands should not be a war zone. To that end, the author initiates dialogue about the automatic framing of urban zones as war zones and the need to question why American society does not have a problem perpetuating negative stereotypes about displaced peoples across cultural contexts. She addresses the feminist criticism Dee Cervantes offers as part of the closing lines of her poem. The verses read, "Every day I am deluged with reminders/ that this is not/my land/ and this is my land/I do not believe in the war between races/but in this country/there is a war" (Anzaldúa 1990, 4-5). By telling the lives of neighborhood women, she practices a form of Chicana/Latina feminism of "theorizing through process" (Acevedo et al. 2001, 8).

In *Telling to Live: Latina Feminist Testimonies*, the Latina Feminism Group propose that the evaluation of knowledge and theory from common political views is possible through testimony (*testimonio*). Testimony functions as a means to theorize feminist *latinidades* where women are able to oppose systemic violence and the erasure of women's voices (Acevedo et al. 2001, 1-24). Thus, in telling female-centered stories *The Block Captain's Daughter* teaches society at large about important philosophies structuring barrio communities. The expression of New Mexican popular culture in literature transforms into an act of countering the displacements of narratives by multi-ethnic populations in American Literature. Bringing the reader closer to the cultural sensibilities of Albuquerque residents educates readers on the folklore and myths that in New Mexican culture operates to counter displacement. Narratives about The Virgin of Guadalupe, Doña Sebastiana, and La Llorona represent transnational and hemispheric literary exchanges stemming from colonial and Pre-Colombian times. By explaining folk tales, the writer erases the lines between what is low and high culture. In addition, the inclusions of cultural representations of Native America also show a transcendence of space, place and subjectivity. From Navajo to Aztec culture, indigenous populations in contemporary society are reinserted into literature.

“Perhaps what most distinguishes Demetria Martínez from other Chicana authors is her need to internationalize Chicana and Chicano literature, her ability to globalize injustice, and her representation of Chicana spirituality in a new and unique ‘shopping bazaar’ style,” writes Gabriella Gutiérrez y Muhs (Oboler and González 2005, 77). The criticism of the role of women in society and the oppression of women elevated the need for dream work in feminist storytelling. Born in 1960, Martínez grew up during the unfolding of the civil rights movements. From feminist developments to the Chicano movement, Martínez was a child of the 60s, a teen of the 70s, and an adult in the 80s and so forth. The intersectional approach to women's oppression that shapes third world feminism struggles and Chicana feminist praxis influenced Martínez to regard creative writing as a radical expression of dream work able to emancipate images displaced by the vestiges of colonization and imperialism in North America. The humanistic value that shapes New Mexican culture guides the narrative discourse of the novella. With a strong foundation in feminist pedagogies, the narrative recounts the storylines of six characters with seemingly disparate genealogical histories.

The author focuses on the culture of U.S. immigration and migrant communities like Albuquerque to highlight New Mexico's Hispanic culture as well as to complicate it. For Martínez, stories about people's relationships to themselves and to each other are not divorced from their relationship to the natural world. This perspective is reminiscent of the contemporary writer, Egyptian writer Naguib Mahfouz (1911-2006). Recipient of the 1988 Nobel Prize for Literature, one of his well-known quotes reads, “Home is not where you are born; home is where all your attempts to escape cease” (Good Reads np). The characters in the novella mirror transnational and transhistorical moments shaping the sites of commonality and difference of the city's cultural landscape. Their diverse experiences with dispossession and displacement, however, serve as common ground from which they build a home in the Mahfouz sense for the word home. In this way, the narrative presents an alternative perspective that dismantles displacement through the notion that every individual is a citizen of the world that simultaneously contributes to local culture.

Lupe, for instance, won the seat as the block captain with the following slogan, “God helps those who help themselves” (5). The narrative demonstrates the use of literary devices by the writer to generate a language of resistance by translating displacement through dream work. The narrative maps a dream world where cultural representations of women—active, introspective, free thinking women—lead toward the advancement of women's struggles, rather than the oppression of them. The constant dialogue Lupe has between culture and faith reflects the reforms and modern developments of feminist positionalities. Her critiques leave footprints of today's culture for the architecture of a better future.

Visibility of these storylines in America, which too is similar to Cristina Henríquez's novel titled, *The Book of Unknown Americans* (2014), presses readers for the need of a new model of citizenship to meet the needs of our global realities. Against the backdrop of personal and political transformations, displacement is an issue that unites people in border zones. Regional landscapes present a culture where hemispheric dialogues, transnational dialogues, and the search for peace in the borderlands can emerge to offset modern capitalist forms of exploitation and colonization.

Disrupting Displacement

The voices of subaltern, oppressed, and minority protagonists break cycles of racial, ethnic, and gendered colonial oppression that criminalizes migration and movement as a natural human

act. By rethinking the role of place and belonging, ‘transferential displacement’ in *The Block Captain’s Daughter* remedies invisibility and dispossession that affects women and children more. A better understanding of this author’s power of poetics to bring consciousness to, disrupt, and critique gendered forms of displacements is contingent upon interdisciplinary feminist analysis; a message Martínez weaves across her storylines to incite social justice. At the heart of Martínez’s cultural work is writing about issues close to her.

To this end, writing about notions of place and belonging illuminates the power of creative writing vis-a-vis feminist storytelling as a site of healing. Her re-imagination of the history of dispossession along the American Southwest enables her to counter-narrate dominant views on displacement, what Emma Pérez has termed the “decolonial imagination” that writes Chicanas into history (1999). Through dream work, the author transfers the lessons learned about immigration and emigration and the resilience of people into a positive model of self-affirmation and self-determination, which yields a vision of hope for the future. The act of telling transforms obstacles into objects and moments of meditation, which illustrates the power of writing as a practice of transferential displacement for healing.

In literary theory, dream work is defined as the “The psychic process that translates the latent content of the unconscious into the manifest content comprised of dream images. Two processes by which dream work occurs are condensation and displacement” (Wolfreys, Robbins, and Womack 2006, 35). After being exposed to a myriad of characters across global scales that move in and out of colonial/decolonial spaces and places, the role of language and how Martínez uses it to expand culture cannot be ignored. Her writing underscores how Chicano/a writers continue to trespass territories and unbind boundaries to reveal the dynamic borderlands culture of the Southwest through language. Spanish is a medium of communication special to New Mexico as one of the oldest Spanish speaking populations in North America. Although she is not known as a writer of Spanish literature, her high use of Spanish, the lack of translations of some words, the absence of a glossary, the refusal to italicize words meant to signify a sense of “foreignness” in written contexts reveals Martínez’s Chicana-style rebellion to the ways language conventions have displaced hybrid cultures in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. Left out accent marks inks a print protest.

For instance, the author references a strong historical consciousness of Spanish as a heritage language in Albuquerque when she interconnects Spanish words, phrases, sentences and ideologies across all the tongues of her characters. The diversity of thought and expression, as well as the frustration with the language, shows how Martínez offers a new language politics. Transactions in Spanish occur not as one wants it to be or project it to be, but as it is. This need to accept one’s language is seen in the following scene:

Enough bitching about not speaking Spanish, Cory,” says your husband Peter, an Anglo fluent in four languages. He sits down at the computer. “I’m going online.” A day later a package arrives, flash cards for Latinos who grew up hearing the language but not speaking it; the tongue-tied who ace classes but can’t ask for directions to the nearest Laundromat; the guilt-ridden for whom Spanish is a pre-existing condition that flares up when ordering food at a Mexican restaurant, then recedes when the margaritas wear off (33).

The use of language arts for social change by means of transgressing language rules adheres to Chicana feminist politics on language. This is perhaps the most powerful way the author responds to contemporary colonialism. She responds political attacks at a linguistic level, offering

decolonial forms of speak by “breaking bread” and “breaking bad” in code switching. She cultivates empowerment by celebrating the purpose and place of each character’s own unique multicultural voice.

In sum, through language use she creates the contexts for us to think about the critical issues of engendered forms of displacement. The presence of Spanish demonstrates the strength of a collective and shifting cultural phenomena, the reality that Spanish is culturally always present and also the ways in which Spanish has culturally defined Albuquerque culture because of the specificities of its gendered structure. As a language in use for over four hundred years, she challenges the ways Spanish was used to displace people during the colonization of the land and later during U.S. imperial takeover of lands in the Southwest. The voices of shifting demographics of Hispanic, Chicano and Latino populations in the twenty-first century come to life in the text as a means to dismantle and reclaim the trauma of linguistic erasure and punishment.

As the author juxtaposes contemporary changes amidst what seems to remain unchanged in the Duke city, the language of her novella reveals the contemporary shifts within Albuquerque’s Hispanic and Chicano pueblo to a dynamic transnational metropolis. She achieves this by giving voice to local dialects that are specific in tone, style and word choice. Transgressing language rules synthesizes a Chicana mestiza borderlands language and reflects cultural representations meant to dismantle contemporary forms of displacement. The text illustrates the writer’s investing in making visible the trials of displacement a thing of the past by postulating transnationalism and interdisciplinary feminism as sets of knowledge through which social justice moves beyond dream work. Through cultural representations that dialogue between the strings of displacement and dispossession the novella takes readers on a voyage across the trails of displacement that mark the identity politics of New Mexicans. With this, the narrative’s interpretive transnational and interdisciplinary lens advances feminist approaches to larger questions of space, place and subjectivity that grounds us in Chela Sandoval’s method of oppositional consciousness (1991).

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