

CONQUEST FOREVER?
MEXICO AND THE CIRCULARITY OF DESTRUCTION IN CONTEMPORARY
MEXICAN AND BORDERLAND TEXTS

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INTRODUCTION

Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* (1992) opens with a "Five Hundred Year Map" of what has taken place in the Americas over the last 500-years since Christopher Columbus' arrival [see Figure 1]. Amongst these, the estimated death of sixty million Native Americans between 1500 and 1600 and the division of land by the United States-Mexico border. Silko writes that the *Almanac of the Dead* foretells the future of all the Americas, which lies in the ancient symbols and narratives of ancient tribal texts. Put differently, it is integral to return to the past because the future of the Americas is embedded in native beliefs and knowledge. Silko adds that ancient prophecies foretold the arrival of Europeans, but also the disappearance of "all things European"—suggesting a future that returns to a period of pre-conquest in the Americas. In the key to the map, titled "The Indian Connection", she makes clear that colonization and destruction of native peoples and land did not end at conquest. Native people and lands are being controlled through the same structure of colonialism, but now, by different nations like the United States and through the imposition of the U.S.-Mexico border—a new manifestation of domination. The "Five Hundred Year Map" then, exemplifies the continuity of colonization and structures of colonialism, or coloniality.¹ The "Five Hundred Year Map" offer readers an entrance into her novel and other contemporary texts about the past, present, and future of Mexico and Greater Mexico. Two of those texts are Hugo Hiriart's *La destrucción de todas las cosas* (1992) and Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Enrique Chagoya, and Felicia Rice's *Codex Espangliensis: From Columbus to the Border Patrol*

¹ See Quijano (533-580) for further explanation of coloniality.

(2000).

La destrucción and *Codex Espangliensis* are two texts that offer alternative retellings and rewritings of Mexican history. Although *La destrucción* is a text that focuses mainly on what occurs in Mexico City and *Codex Espangliensis*, a borderlands text, focuses on what has happened in Greater Mexico (i.e. northern, central, and southern Mexico as well as the U.S. southwest)², they compare in their use of cyclical time—an alternative temporality. Cyclical time has roots in Aztec belief and culture. Rather than progressing in a linear manner, such that events differ from each another as time passes, cyclical time repeats the past in the present and future. However, cyclical time is not an exact repetition of the past; it is the re-appearance of the past in the present and future through variations or new manifestations of the initial experience. Although *La destrucción* and *Codex Espangliensis* mimic Aztec notions of time, they manifest cyclical time differently. This difference can be traced in their contrastive use of the Spanish conquest of Mexico. *La destrucción* is a novel set in the future and is narrated by Esteban Lima, who witnesses the conquest of Mexico by extraterrestrial aliens. Through parallelisms in key figures, events, and setting, it is clear that the Spanish conquest is re-inscribed into the future and re-experienced by Mexican natives. In contrast, *Codex Espangliensis*, a multi-genre text, incorporates the Spanish conquest into the present by placing visual representations of the conquest next to images and text about present-day United States cultural imperialism. As opposed to separating these historical eras in chronological and sequential order, *Codex Espangliensis* comingles and synchronizes representations of the past and present. In “Alternative Temporalities” I contend that both texts, through their use of cyclical time, demonstrate the continuous appearance of conquest and

² See Paredes (129) for more on his concept of “Greater Mexico”.

domination in Mexico across time.

Further, in “Apocalyptic Narratives and Perpetual Destruction”, using Lois Parkinson-Zamora’s explanation, I assert that *La destrucción* and *Codex Espangliensis* are apocalyptic narratives. In this section, I prove that although both texts are apocalyptic, they do not give into biblical visions of the “end-of-the-world”. *La destrucción* and *Codex Espangliensis* neither show a progressive, modern, and utopic Mexico or a completely destroyed and extinct Mexico. Instead, they show a Mexico that has been, continues, and will continue to be dominated by outside powers. This section cements *La destrucción* and *Codex Espangliensis* as texts that highlight Mexico’s continuous experience of destruction that is, a circularity of destruction.

Ultimately, *La destrucción* and *Codex Espangliensis* are texts that show Mexico’s reality as a country that perpetually experiences destruction because it is continuously subjugated by different outside powers.

ALTERNATIVE TEMPORALITIES

Time as we know it follows a linear and chronological order; time is conceived as past, present, or future. In conventional narratives, this order translates to beginning, middle, and end. Narratives that do not follow linear time, however, are not “a-temporal”; *La destrucción* and *Codex Espangliensis* are texts with different, alternative temporalities.

Although Hiriart’s novel is based on a conquest of Mexico that is set in the future, in the year 2010, the extraterrestrial conquest parallels in setting, events, and characters to the non-fictional conquest of Mexico by Spain. In *La destrucción*, the past is projected onto a fictitious future. In contrast, Gómez-Peña, Chagoya, and Rice’s multi-genre text, *Codex Espangliensis* synchronizes events and periods in Mexican history, from the Spanish conquest to U.S. cultural imperialization of Mexico. In fact, rather than titling their work, *Codex Espangliensis*: “From the 16th to 21st century”, suggesting a focus on the chronological order of the events, the authors mention entities like Columbus and the Border Patrol. The title can be seen as one that highlights the shift “from geographical imperialism to cultural imperialism” as Damian Baca writes (574), or “from pre-Columbian times to present-day Mexico” as Rice states in the multi-authored introduction to the text. History, traditionally told in chronological and linear order, conceptualizes the Spanish conquest of Mexico as a period that occurred in the past. These texts, however, challenge linear retellings of history. Hiriart plays out a new manifestation of the past in the future. Gomez-Peña, Chagoya, and Rice create a synchronic present, where no boundary exists between the past, present, or future.

The narratives of *La destrucción* and *Codex Espangliensis* mimic Aztec notions of time. There is a clear connection between each text and the Aztec civilization. *La destrucción*, for example, takes place in Mexico City, where the old Tenochtitlán, capital of the Aztec Empire once stood. The setting of the novel is the old capital of the Aztec empire, thus *La destrucción*

has roots in the Aztec past. *Codex Espangliensis* incorporates indigenous pictographs that, while not necessarily Aztec, allude to a Mesoamerican past and culture. Aztecs believed time was cyclical, especially in regards to the primordial creation of life. Aztec cosmology held it was necessary to destroy all of that which had deteriorated with the passing of time before starting anew and returning to “primordial creation,” as Mexican historian Enrique Florescano explains (41). A cycle was composed by the primordial creation, decay, destruction, and return to primordial creation. While the cycle lended itself to the passing of time, and rather than being in a state of perpetual repetition, it ultimately circled back to the beginning. In some ways, it is better explained as a movie that is running, stopped, rewinded, and started over again—always circling back to the beginning and creating a cyclical notion of time. However, “In cyclical perspectives, time is seen as changing in real but endlessly repetitive ways...The past, present, and future may differ from each other somewhat, but they nevertheless repeat the same essential patterns found at other times” (Hassig 3). If we follow Hassig’s description of time, cyclical time is not an exact repetition of the past; it is the re-appearance of the past in the present and future as a variation of the initial experience.

By understanding cyclical notions of time, one can better analyze the texts’ evocation of the period of the conquest.³ Hassig writes, “In linear time, change is directional and continuous, with the past differing from the present, which, in turn, differs from the future...To be recognized as linear, time must change in relation to something else,” (Hassig 2). These texts weave the Spanish conquest of Mexico into their narratives because it is the

³ It should be noted that Ross Hassig, a scholar of Aztec belief and culture, claims that other scholars have misused this alternative understanding of time. He writes “cyclical time promised the researcher a hidden dynamic that could be studied in a microcosm and then projected onto the macrocosm. A linear notion of time would not permit this intuitive leap” (163). This led researchers to make analyses that were far too broad. Simply applying a cyclical notion of time as experienced in one place (microcosm) on to other spaces (macrocosms), is too liberal. A linear succession of time would not lend itself to such applicability because linear time distinguishes between the past, present, and future, thus a projection of something taking place in the present (microcosm) on to the past (macrocosm) would not be a logical “intuitive leap”.

first major era of domination in Mexico and because they do not follow a linear, directional convention of time. Instead, the texts show cyclical time at work because they continue to interact with the past.

The Past is Where?

To better see the texts' alternative temporalities, I will trace the appearance of the Spanish conquest, an event that is commonly associated with the "past", in Hiriart's futuristic novel. For *Codex Espangliensis*, I examine the inclusion of multiple images and languages to show the synchronicity of time.

La destrucción

In *La destrucción* the past is seen in the future. Hiriart's novel presents itself as a conventional book; the pages are tightly stitched to the spine, the text is paginated in chronological order, the text is syllabic, and reads from left to right. Based on its conventional appearance, it is easy to assume the narrative sequence will follow chronological and linear progression of time. Yet, the novel follows the narrator's first-person account of the experiences before and during the extraterrestrial aliens conquest of Mexico. Esteban Lima, the narrator, is a Mexican civilian in active hiding from extraterrestrial conquerors. The events he bears witness to during the futuristic conquest are a clear allusion to the 16th-century Spanish conquest of Mexico.

The science fiction genre provides a better lens for analyzing *La destrucción*, for the novel takes place in the author's imagined future and involves an extraterrestrial conquest on Earth. Science fiction is a genre that grants its writers the ability to manipulate reality through

their imaginations and, simultaneously, comment on a reality. In, “Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary Mexican Science Fiction,” Samuel Manickman, discusses the importance of the apocalyptic in science fiction as a way of critiquing contemporary Mexican issues. Unlike U.S. or European science fiction, Manickman writes that Mexican science fiction is specific to the historical, political, and social contexts of Mexico (96). He claims that even the theme of the apocalyptic in science fiction is ingrained in the history of Mexico: “[Mexico] was born as a result of an apocalyptic event—the abrupt destruction of the Aztec empire by Spanish conquerors that proceeded to found a radically alien society for Mexico’s native inhabitants” (97). In Hiriart’s novel, the conquest by extraterrestrial aliens is like the “alien society” that was forced on indigenous civilizations by Spanish colonizers in the sixteenth century. Manickman also states that writers fabricate apocalyptic scenarios, such as the invasion of Earth by extraterrestrial aliens, because it allows them to present a society that is radically different from its present state. In *La destrucción*, Mexican society has been corrupted by the concentration of power and wealth in the hands of few Mexican elites. Mexico’s corrupt present is radically changed only through the coming and conquest of the aliens, which Hiriart’s narrator resents, “The other day, tired of the repulsive spectacle, I found myself thinking: ‘thank goodness these bastards are being taken away by [el carajo]’. But, we are all a part of those bastards. Fuck, [me lleva la chingada] all of what I’ve known” (200).⁴ As opposed to creating a future where Mexico has progressed to become a utopian society, Hiriart’s extraterrestrial conquest resembles the past, violent conquest of Mexico by the Spanish.

Commentary on present society in *La destrucción* is contingent on the text’s alternative

⁴ All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

temporality. Rather than creating a future where Mexico is modern and free of conquest, Hiriart uses the future to repeat Mexico's past history of conquest. Through another conquest, the elite are wiped away and are no longer in control of the nation. Esteban claims that injustice, more than any other issue plaguing Mexico, is the root and the cause of the conquest; "Perhaps if Mexico had not been a country so unjust, the Others would not have been able to conquer us...The same would not have happened if Mexico had been poor, even poorer, but more just" (61). While Esteban acknowledges that poverty is an issue affecting Mexico, if all the power and information had not stayed amongst the select few of society, Mexico would not have fallen prey to the "Others", the aliens. However, even though the conquest takes the power away from the elite, Mexico is now under the control of extraterrestrial aliens. Thus, Hiriart does not repeat the new conquest as liberating, but as one that exposes the domination of Mexico by one dominant group to the next.

Hiriart's novel makes clear parallels between the Spanish conquest and the extraterrestrial conquest. To start, when the extraterrestrials arrive in Mexico, they find that the group in power already has enemies within its society. This is reminiscent of the tribes the Spaniards found upon arrival and thought of the Aztec empire as their enemy. In *La destrucción*, those who opposed the Mexican government are later seen visiting "the offices of the hotel [where the aliens resided]... [they were] full from dusk to dawn, bankers, industrials, resentful politicians, graduate intellectuals, militaries, syndicates, discontented peasants, the parade was endless. Each one was carefully treated and more subtly questioned," (99). Members of the middle and working classes independently submitted themselves to the aliens' plan to get rid of the current Mexico government (though they did not know the aliens had plans to destroy all of Mexican society). The stark semblance of the aliens' arrival to the

Spanish arrival is only one of the parallelisms between the 16th-century conquest and Hiriart's 21st-century conquest.

Even in times of conquest, injustice permeates the nation. Epidemics and violence are fast spreading; yet across Mexico, people are being inspected upon entering wealthy communities:

In the beginning, we attempted to contain the epidemics by isolating the homes of those who were sick and by burning bodies, beds, sheets and other things in the street. Then we isolated entire towns. Passports were needed in order to go from one side of the city to the other, especially to enter the towns of the wealthy, which took longer to become infected by the epidemics. (125)

In Esteban's description, there is desire amongst those who have survived to migrate into safe towns. There is a clear correlation between a town's health and wealth—those that have not been affected by disease are the wealthiest. To make the socioeconomic distinction even clearer, legal documentation is required to go from one place to another, which is a way of policing who comes into safe neighborhoods. Rather than using physical examinations to secure the exclusion of ill people, passport checkpoints are put in place to filter the entrances into towns. Even in times of mass destruction, socioeconomic divisions envelop Mexico.

Parallelisms between the extraterrestrial and Spanish conquest lay in the re- appearance of key figures associated with the past conquest in *La destrucción*, albeit disguised as characters with different names. The Spanish conquistadors are the extraterrestrial aliens; the indigenous communities conquered are the modern-day Mexican natives. In addition, Hernán Cortés, who led the destructions of the Aztec empire and killed Moctezuma, ruler of the Aztec

empire, is evoked in Oó, the leader of the extraterrestrial invaders. Like Cortés, Oó murders President Comezón (Itch), the president of Mexico (141). In both conquests, the betraying indigenous female appears, too. La Malinche was the name given to Tonantzin, an indigenous woman in the 16th century. In the novel, La Malinche reappears as La Jitomata. Both native women of Mexico become interpreters for the conquistadors and eventually bear the first mixed, native children. According to popular myth, La Malinche gives birth to the first “mestizo” children, that is, the first indigenous and European children of Mexico. Likewise, La Jitomata gives birth to the first “impures” with Oó (142-143). Lastly, the narrator of the novel, Esteban, who witnesses and records the aliens’ invasion and its aftermath, bears semblance to Bartolomé de las Casas, the Spanish Dominican friar who witnessed the atrocities against indigenous people in the Americas during the Spanish conquest and whose work was titled, *Brevísima relación de La destrucción de todas las Indias*. The title of the novel, *La destrucción de todas las cosas* is a clear echo of de las Casas’s text.

Additionally, there are parallelisms in setting and events between the extraterrestrial conquest and the Spanish conquest. In the 16th century, Spanish conquistadors took over Tenochtitlán, the capital of the Aztec empire. Fast-forward five-centuries and Tenochtitlán has become Mexico City, the aliens’ destination: “Shortly after the city was closed, no one could enter or exit. This marked the beginning of the final assault of the enormous city, the ancient and heroic Tenochtitlán” (180). Events that occurred in the Spanish conquest re-occur in the extraterrestrial conquest. For example, major epidemic outbreaks like the smallpox, which expedited the conquest of the Aztec empire, are seen again in Hiriart’s novel. Preposterous diseases, which either shrink or make people talk or dance excessively to the point of death, kill many. Even the special treatment given to the conquerors by indigenous people happens

again when the extraterrestrials are met with the most extravagant welcome in Mexico: “They set up in the Hacienda de Cebollón hotel, spacious and luxurious, with big gardens...gold, truly” (98). This depiction of the aliens residing in the most beautiful and expensive hotel in Mexico City summons the belief by some indigenous people that the conquistadors were the “white Gods” of Aztec mythology. To greet these Gods, they were given gold, lodging, and food. Simply through the novel’s characters, setting, and events it is easy to locate the past in the future; the parallelisms throughout the text draw explicit connections between the two.

Furthermore, even word-for-word repetition in the text is evidence of Hiriart’s use of an alternative temporality. Towards the middle of the novel, the narrator is recounting to his friends the time he asked his wife, Ester, to be his girlfriend. During this reminiscence, the conversation that Esteban recounts is repeated verbatim (86-87). His recount of the past is first seen on pages 84 and 85 and seen again in pages 87 to 87. His friends even ask, “A repetition. Didn’t you feel it?” as if the repetition of things could be felt (88), and as if the present time (when Esteban is telling his friends the story) could cause things in the past (when he is first asking her to date him) to repeat. This repetition shows that the novel’s larger allusion to the past, is minimally represented in the literal repetition of conversations in the text.

Codex Espangliensis

In contrast, in *Codex Espangliensis*, representations of the past are placed besides representations of the present. Rather than putting representations of the Spanish conquest only in the “first” pages of the codex, images and references to the Spanish conquest of Mexico appear throughout the entirety of *Codex Espangliensis* and alongside present-day figures and icons. I write “first” pages of the codex in quotation marks because the format of *Codex*

Espangliensis contrasts greatly to a conventional 8-inch by 5-inch book. *Codex Espangliensis* is composed of a series of rectangular 7-inch by 9-inch panels, with visual art and syllabic text⁵, it reads from left to right, and is not paginated or bound to a spine. Gómez-Peña, Chagoya, and Rice not only recall the Spanish conquest of indigenous peoples, but also hark back to indigenous Mesoamerican codices. As the title of the work suggests, *Codex Espangliensis* takes the form of Mesoamerican codices, which Indigenous peoples used to document events, stories, rituals and medicinal practices (Sanchez Tranquilino 3). In doing so, *Codex Espangliensis* is un-paginated, like traditional codices. Thus, it is difficult to write about *Codex Espangliensis*’ “beginning”, “middle”, or “end” because it is not in the nature of the text to offer those sequential markers. Throughout my discussion of *Codex Espangliensis* as a text that has an alternative temporality, I will simply describe the panel that I am referring to as opposed to imposing a pagination system.

Codex Espangliensis synchronizes different time periods and eras as seen through its use of various forms of communication, array of famous icons, and languages, which depict the multiple cultural influences in Mexico. An example of such mixtures are evidenced in one of the excerpts from Gómez-Peña’s performances:

Ca-Gan-Do

Sobre La

Costra Cultural

De

Gringolandia

Sin

⁵ In other words, rather than communicating messages solely through the arrangement of alphabetical letters to make words, codices use images (i.e. icons, symbols, figural representations) to help create messages that carry “thought, ideas, [and] imagery” (Baca 569).

Translation

Pues, Sin

Papers, Digo

to Role &

Finally

New York.⁶

Here, Gómez-Peña exemplifies the languages Anzaldúa identified as “standard English, working class and slang English, standard Spanish, standard Mexican Spanish, North American Spanish dialect, Chicano Spanish (Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California have regional variations), Tex-Mex, and Pachuco (called *cálo*)” (Anzaldúa 77). The language mixed within individual words (e.x. “Gringolandia”) is an example of Gómez-Peña playing with the Chicana/o and Mexican term “gringo”, meaning a white man, and English and Spanish with “-landia” where the English “land” is accompanied by the Spanish suffix “-ia”. Even the title of the text, *Codex Espangliensis* appears to be a play of “codes,” *Espangliensis*, showcases the commingling of various languages—“Esp” stands for español, “angli” for Anglosaxon as well as the “gli” in English, and “-ensis”, the Latin suffix for “originating in”. Decoded, *Codex Espangliensis* is itself a title that has roots in a multitude of languages. As Gómez-Peña’s excerpt above demonstrates, the text is full of mixtures of languages and periods of Mexican history.

Codex Espangliensis synchronizes representations of the Spanish conquest and representations of the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with Canada and the United States. One of the most significant aspects of NAFTA is that it “opened the

⁶ I do not offer a direct translation of this excerpt in the body of the paragraph because I am analyzing, precisely, the use of multiple linguistic influences in Gómez-Peña’s excerpt.

borders” to the free movement of markets. However, “the terms were said to be more advantageous for the U.S. thus encouraging further exploitation of Mexico and its people” (Armas 5). As U.S. markets entered the Mexican economy, many small, independent businesses in Mexico began competing with large, U.S. corporations. One of the consequences of this trade agreement included the mass migration of poor Mexican people to the United States. The U.S. Border Patrol, which guards the entrance of undocumented migration at the U.S.-Mexico border, prevented the free movement of people. Thus, while NAFTA seemed to “open the borders”, there were laws aimed at keeping Mexicans in Mexico as the exportation of U.S. markets into Mexico led to the importation of U.S. commercialism and popular culture (Baca 579). Gómez-Peña, Chagoya, and Rice show U.S. cultural imperialism in Mexico through the inclusion of iconic superheroes like Superman, Wonder Woman, and Mickey Mouse.

In the subject matter of one panel, Chagoya, Gómez-Peña, and Rice synchronize the past, through the image of the Spanish conquistadors arriving, with the present as seen through the man drinking a bottle of Coca-Cola, a clear depiction of 21st century globalization [see Figure 6]. In the middle, Gómez-Peña writes his version of “A Brief History” which, like Hiriart’s *La destrucción*, resembles de Las Casas’ *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*. In summary, Gómez-Peña establishes the history of “NAFTART,” his imagined free trade art agreement, which satirizes NAFTA. Figure 6., compares the arrival of Spanish colonizers with the arrival of imperialist businesses as a result of NAFTA. As Daniela Loria writes in “Painted (Hi)Stories”:

This reenactment of the past in the present is further reinforced by the subtitle of the book, *From Columbus to the Border Patrol*,

which seems to suggest that history repeats itself and that a subtler, more sophisticated version of the colonial violence perpetrated by the Spanish colonizers now afflicts post-colonial Latin America.”

(Loria 59)

The past is equally a part of the present and it is evidenced through the presence of past and contemporary events and objects in the same panel.

In fact, the unpredictable physical placement of things on the panels in *Codex Espangliensis* is reflected in the sporadic location of people and events in Gómez-Peña’s “The End of the Century Newscast,” another of his performance excerpts. In this excerpt, Gómez-Peña brings together people and groups of the 20th century and gives updates on their whereabouts and conditions:

‘The End Of The Newscast

good evening estimados radioobedientes* this is your noticiero de fin de siglo*...ex-president Bush has been diagnosed with down syndrome*...the Dalai Lama relocates to El Salvador* the Eastern block goes West...for shopping* Gorbáchov confesses he was just kidding*...Panama invades Washington in search of Oliver North* Saddam is seen naked with Margaret Thatcher in Saint Tropez*...the re-discovery and re-colonization of the Americas*...A live performance version of ‘Radio Nuevo Orden.’⁷ [See Figure 3]

The erratic placements resemble Chagoya’s juxtaposition of distinct icons and images. Gómez-

⁷ The format of this excerpt mirrors the way it is formatted in *Codex Espangliensis*. Gómez-Peña chooses to use asterisks and they are included in this citation, too.

Peña's newscast relocates entities across geopolitical and geohemispheric boundaries. For example, those in the east move to the west such as "the Eastern block" and the Dalai Lama. Those in the south go north, such as Panama in the United States. Gómez-Peña's newscast is a wreck, but it is in order, in his order, which is made clear in the title of the newscast, "Radio Nuevo Orden". Gómez-Peña's new order then, is the disorder of people and spaces based on politics and history. The newscast is not simply sporadically re-placing, but a re-ordering of things that, at first sight, come across as un-orderly. Even in a newscast in 20th century people and events, the ending resurfaces the conquest of the Americas—what supposedly belongs in the past is brought into the present. Perhaps Gómez-Peña is speaking about the 20th century reconquest and recolonization caused by NAFTA.

APOCALYPTIC NARRATIVES AND PERPETUAL DESTRUCTION

In her book, *Writing the Apocalypse: Historical Vision in Contemporary U.S. and Latin American Fiction*, Parkinson Zamora writes about apocalyptic narratives. She determines that apocalyptic narratives incorporate representations of destruction that are commonly associated with the biblical apocalypse. These can include, images of war, famine, and eradication, for example. Additionally, she makes clear that apocalyptic narratives make social and political commentary. Parkinson Zamora iterates the history of apocalyptic thought and literature, which came as a result of “the Hebrew prophetic tradition in response to a worsening political situation” (10). Further, “in the historical development of apocalyptic thought one sees the direct relation of the myth of apocalypse to its sociological and political context...apocalyptic modes of thought and expression is a predictable reaction to social disruption and temporary uncertainty” (11). Apocalyptic narratives then, are narratives that include representations of the apocalyptic in literature, such as through images of destruction, and that simultaneously, critique present political and historical realities.

This section is divided into two parts. The first subsection, “Representations of Destruction”, will show and examine the texts’ representations of destruction, as a result of conquest. In *La destrucción* and *Codex Espangliensis*, representations of destruction are seen in the physical and epistemic forms of violence, for example. The second subsection, “Critiquing the Historical Reality of Mexico”, will show the way in which the texts critique the present historical state of Mexico. Ultimately, this section will show that the texts reveal Mexico’s perpetual subjugation through its domination by extraneous powers like Spain, the U.S. and extraterrestrial aliens.

Representations of Destruction

There are various definitions and understandings of “apocalypse”. Etymologically, “apocalypse” derives from the Greek word “apokalyptein” meaning to uncover, disclose, or reveal. In the Book of Revelation of the Christian Bible, the apocalypse is an end-of-the-world story, where “the end of time will soon overtake the present” (Parkinson Zamora 11). In the Book of Revelation, John, an apostle, writes the vision that God revealed to him about Jesus Christ’s second coming. In it, John “provides us with some of the most familiar biblical images...[of] Earthquakes, floods, falling stars, extinguished sun and moon” and delineates the seven seals of revelation, which include war, famine, and pestilence, for example (Parkinson Zamora 11). Once the events prophesized occur, the complete destruction of the world, or apocalypse, will ensue. Hollywood has also offered representations of apocalypse through movies such as *War of the Worlds* and *Apocalypto*—which depict the “end of the world as we know it” for all of human kind and Mesoamerican tribes, respectively. [in this section I will examine the texts’ various representations of violence, both physical and epistemic??] For this analysis, I will use Lois Parkinson Zamora’s understanding of “apocalyptic narratives” and contend that *La destrucción* and *Codex Espangliensis* reveal images of destruction and suggest “endings” that critique the past and current historical context of Mexico. [at the end of section, maybe end with, for outsiders to gain control or subjugate Mexico, they needed to use various forms of violence, which we see in the reps of destruction, which are apocalyptic narratives.]

La destrucción

Scholars such as Manickman have bridged conquest and the apocalyptic—the Spanish conquest brought about the end for many indigenous peoples, cultures, and land. Several

people and communities survived the Spanish conquest, echoing the few survivors in the Biblical apocalypse. *La destrucción* is a testimony that is written by Esteban, the narrator of the novel. He is a Mexican native who is fleeing the extraterrestrial aliens and who bears witness to countless atrocities perpetrated by them. Throughout his account, Esteban makes claims about what he is writing about and why he writes. Amongst these, he claims that he is not writing a step-by-step recollection about the conquest of Mexico, “I am not interested in the process of the conquest, I don’t want to explain anything. What then interests me? What people lived. That is what I want to remember” (123). Esteban makes it clear that he writes about his and other Mexicans lived experience during the conquest. Furthermore, because the aliens prohibit the use of languages spoken in Mexico, Esteban’s writing is, too, a subversive text, “now I write here in the old prohibited alphabet, in the outlawed language...like our old narrations, our histories and novellas that way before, which we made so often and even bored us” (46). *La destrucción* is a text that is written during the time of conquest and which gives insight into the destruction caused during this time.

In *La destrucción*, Esteban refers to the extraterrestrial aliens, as “the others”, “they”, or the “bigheads”. It is this group of outsiders who perpetrate various forms of violence to ensure the perishing of native Mexicans. Like the image Spanish conquistadors had of themselves as “saviors” of the “savage” natives, the aliens see themselves as saviors of the Mexican people vis-à-vis, the destruction of all Mexican culture and society. Esteban writes, “the Others presented themselves to us as nothing less than as our saviors. The destruction of all things was presented as their salvation” (119). Similar to the way in which Spanish conquistadors perceived natives of Mexico as beasts and savages, “the bigheads looked at us, the Strangers, as if we were savage...primitive, elemental” (206). This power hierarchy is of

the utmost importance; it supposes that the aliens only had two options: to kill or convert the “savage” natives.

Once settled and dispersed throughout México City, the aliens place the Mexican people into enclosed and militarized spaces. Men, women, and children are separated into different communities and are not allowed to speak, read, or write in Spanish or else they are murdered in front of other victims. Further, the aliens question Mexican way of life, the use of the Spanish language, Mexican quotidian lifestyle, and banal objects. For example, they do not understand the division of time into seven days, the alphabet, the decimal system, the bicycle, umbrella, glasses, cars, and mezcal (207). From the aliens’ perspective, the people and culture of Mexico must be destroyed because they are “primitive” and pointless. This perspective helps the aliens justify their conquest of Mexico—the Mexicans were in need and they came to “help”.

Yet, Esteban’s account reveals the horrific plans they had to kill all Mexicans. Amongst these plans was a scorched Earth strategy. When Esteban and his wife, Ester, are lost in Mexico City they ask other survivors for directions to safe towns, but they are met with the reality that plagues all of Mexico: “well, sir, that town has been burned and many people were killed. The rest are being cooped and locked up” (147). Aliens destroy entire towns and murder hundreds of people. Further, the stranger’s response makes clear that, for people who are alive and fleeing the violence, there is no safe town—during times of conquest, murder and displacement are widespread.

Images of massacre and exterminations saturate the novel, for example. After the aliens have spent some time in Mexico, they begin to open-fire and kill Mexican civilians. In one instance, there is a massacre at el Palacio de las Bellas Artes, one of Mexico City’s most

important landmarks. As a response, the Mexican government officially declares a war against the aliens and it leads to the deaths of many Mexicans across the country. Esteban narrates the despairing fate of children during this time:

‘The extermination of children caused me unrest, but I saw the sorrow and bitterness the enemy caused and I decided that they should be killed’, said soldier Marquez, who was at the service of the Others. I realized that the children that the old man dragged had already died, of hunger maybe or from a disease prior to the killings. We didn’t do anything, the man kept dragging the little car. I do not know where he took them away. (179)

If not already killed by famine or another massacre, Mexican children are exterminated. Even more cynically, however, is Esteban’s description of what he has witnessed—a Mexican soldier who is working for the aliens and who thinks the best thing to do, after all he has seen the aliens carry out, is to exterminate his own people. Neither the soldier nor him do anything about the extermination of the children; Esteban simply accepts this reality. Esteban’s nonchalant tone exemplifies even the normalization of violence during the conquest.

Those who are not massacred are incarcerated, or displaced and seeking refuge, like Esteban and Ester. Throughout the novel, Esteban writes about other Mexican people who walk without knowing where they are going since, the extraterrestrial conquest cause many Mexicans to leave their homes in search of places to hide and avoid becoming infected by disease. But, since many leave their homes empty-handed, fleeing survivors are not aware of the time of day or which places are safe and which are not. Regarding his own experience as a survivor facing displacement, Esteban writes,

As for us...of what remains of us, without city, without language, left without time, of that soft expectation that articulates existence, they also took away our space. What is left of us ? They broke us like the tip of a pencil, plic and we are nothing more than ghosts, less than ghosts, barely a heartbeat, smoke from the great fire that raised the city and slowly dissolved into thin air, almost invisible. I have nothing against suicide. (191)

Displacement from his own city, alongside other losses, including the prohibition of the Spanish language and unawareness of time, makes him desire to be dead. Though still alive, one can gather a sense of despair in Esteban's own consideration of suicide and his profound sense of non-existence. His description captures the paradoxical feeling of many survivors: he is a survivor who feels even deader than a ghost. Others in the midst of seeking shelter, walk into prisons and camps where aliens detain Mexicans: "processions of survivors after the take...walked into jails, new constructions, tall, very tall and very strange...that's what they were, prisons. Many became crazy in that architecture, inside that horror" (116). Even displacement and incarceration lead many to feel dead inside.

Mexicans are also dying at fast rates due to the spread of various diseases. "Totofadía", for example, is a disease that leads to excessive amounts of dancing. Yet the diseases widespread in *La destrucción* are comical. Other diseases shrink individuals to tiny sizes until they die, and yet others lead to excessive amounts of talking (123, 125). In the novel, these farcical diseases are directly linked to the arrival of the aliens; they are "epidemics that the Others brought to defeat us" speculates Esteban (123). By satirizing the epidemics that are costing the lives of many Mexicans; Hiriart alleviates readers of Mexico's fatal past. During

the Spanish conquest, diseases took an enormous toll on indigenous lives. Here, Hiriart satirizes diseases to parallel events that took place in his futuristic conquest and those of the Spanish conquest, but replaces symptoms of fever and coughing, with dancing and talking. These are humorous ways of dying and even absurd in contrast to the malign and distressing diseases. Nonetheless, they take a toll on the Mexican population.

La destrucción is an apocalyptic narrative. It demonstrates the destruction caused by the extraterrestrial conquest. Like *La destrucción*, *Codex Espangliensis* is also an apocalyptic narrative. Although *Codex Espangliensis* does not rewrite the conquest, much of the destruction is seen in the inclusion of images by Theodor de Bry, blood that permeates all of its panels, and epistemic violence forms of violence, to name a few.

Codex Espangliensis

In 1598, almost four decades after De las Casas' *Breve relacion de La destrucción de las indias* was published, de Bry, a Belgian engraver and publisher, created visual depictions of De las Casas' text, several of which appear in *Codex Espangliensis*. As one may recall, during the period of conquest, Spanish conquistadors amputated the hands of those who did not bring enough gold ("Narratio Regionum Indicarum" 1). Taken from *Codex Espangliensis*, in Figure 4., a naked man is on the brink of having a hand amputated by a Spanish man. Behind the Spanish man, who holds a hatch, lays a woman and many other Indians who are missing their hands. The bloodshed caused by hundreds of amputations is highlighted by the red river—a river of blood. In fact all throughout *Codex Espangliensis* there are blobs of red paint. In several of these, one can see impressions of fingerprints and footprints.

In the same Figure 4., Mickey Mouse is seen grinning, facing neither the violence nor

the reader. He leaves a trail of red footprints as he walks across the panel. Loria writes that blood is a braiding device,

In this diachronic view of history, colonial and neo-colonial violence are constantly juxtaposed by using blood both as a literal inscription of violence and also as a braiding device...In *Codex Espangliensis*, the authors have made the deliberate decision to steep the text in blood: every screen, without exception, features carefully placed drops of blood... ‘motific repetition’ helps readers achieve closure in non-sequential, alternative texts such as *Codex Espangliensis*...blood, in the text, acts as a catalyst for memory and acknowledge its recurrence in modern day Latin America.

(Loria 62)

The inclusion of red marks (or blood) helps tie together a text like *Codex Espangliensis*, which has a potpourri of images and text from different point in history. Blood is a braiding device that connects Mexico across centuries of domination by Spain and the United States. The trickling of red paint and fingerprints could be seen as a record or documentation of a violence—a violence depicted not only in a de Bry drawing from the 16th century, but tracing up to Mickey Mouse, a representation of U.S. cultural imperialism. However, since the blood is in every panel, the text is un-paginated, and there is no fixed beginning to the text, it is difficult to find a “point of origin” for the blood. In the matter of one panel, Figure 4., shows a long-standing history of violence and bloodshed.

Amputations are only one form of violence depicted in *Codex Espangliensis*. In Figure 5., a woman is shown hanging from a tree. In a shack nearby, the windows show flames and

fragmented body parts. Although Chagoya simply includes this de Bry image in the panel, the drawing is a depiction of de las Casas' witness account of a conquistador who, "[...] by lying, forced the elderly to enter the straw house. Once inside, he ordered to set the house on fire and burned them alive. All of them were speared...lady Anacoana...was hanged" (Martinez 4). Although this image exposes the brutal and inhumane deaths of many indigenous people, the description of the image provides insight into the cynical behavior and acts by the Spanish. Their goal was to kill thousands of Indians and this image shows two additional ways in which the Spanish were able to do so—through fires and lynchings.

Figure 6. displays two men dressed in armor murdering two royal indigenous people. On the top right side of the panel lie two fragmented body parts, pieces of arms. At the center, blood is skewing out of the eyes of one of the indigenous person, who has been stabbed by a Spanish man. Above these, the other indigenous person has been decapitated and has blood oozing out of their neck and chest. On the left side of the panel, Superman stands heroically facing the reader, with his back to the atrocities happening behind him. On the bottom right is a man dressed in a jaguar costume. Presumably, this jaguar is a representation of a nahualli. In several Mesoamerican groups, particularly in the Aztec and Mayan, it was believed that certain people could transform into a nahualli, an animal such as a jaguar, dog, or bird (Nutini 43). In this panel, the nahualli has a look of concern as blood rolls down its face. This panel in *Codex Espangliensis* depicts the magnitude of the violence experienced by indigenous people. Even the spiritual identities of indigenous royalty were injured.

Although not a panel in *Codex Espangliensis*, the introduction of the text explains that epistemic violence was another form of subjugation. As stated earlier, mass suicides took place as a result of the immolation of indigenous libraries. Destruction and violence experienced

during the Spanish conquest is also evident in epistemic forms of violence. Bonfires destroyed almost all Mesoamerican codices; today, only twenty-two pre-Hispanic codices remain (Chagoya, Introduction). In his introduction to *Codex Espangliensis*, Chagoya writes:

[V]ery few books survived the bonfires of the conquistadors...The most tragic story is told by Fernando de Alba Ixtlilxochitl, a baptized Aztec noble, in which he describes the destruction of the Texcoco library built by King Nezahualcoyotl, the poet/architect king who opposed human sacrifice. King Neza built the library in the second half of the fifteenth century, a few decades before Columbus arrived in the Caribbean islands. The library of Texcoco was housed in a very large building with dozens of rooms filled with thousands of books of religious, poetic/artistic, medical, calendarial, and historic information as well as accounts of yearly, monthly and daily events in the lives of the Aztec people and surrounding culture. When the Spanish priests and soldiers piled all of these books up and burnt them in huge bonfires, there was a massive indigenous suicide [hangings and jumpings off pyramids and cliffs] (Introduction).

The destruction of intellectual and cultural artifacts, which were vital to Mesoamerican cultural knowledge and history, was detrimental to many indigenous people. Put together, with the murder of indigenous peoples, it is not difficult to see that conquest was apocalyptic in that the conquest marked the end for entire peoples and cultures.

In Figure 7., a question is posed, “Threatened, Endangered or Extinct?” This question is made in reference to the adjacent panel, which contextualizes the question, “*Please place the following species in the appropriate category (A) a threatened species is likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future; (B) an endangered species is in danger of extinction; (C) an extinct species no longer exists.* SAN DIEGO NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM”. On the same panel are eight semi-naked people consuming the body parts of a fragmented body that lies dispersed in three pots. Behind them, a list of ten groups with boxes beside them. Based on the choices given, A, B, or C, the reader is supposed to assign a category to each group. The groups are, “Aztec...[] Apache...[] Seminole...[] Taino...[] Siboney...[] Lacandon...[] Chicano...[] Garifuna...[] Anglo Saxon...[] Marxist...[]”. Figure 7., then, enlarges the three options aforementioned and adds a question mark at the end. What may appear to be a question for readers to ponder on upon first reading, “Threatened, Endangered or Extinct?” is a questioning of the three options given by the museum of natural history. While this panel may not show an image of murder or war, it incorporates the institutional extinction of indigenous people; museums have assisted in the perpetuation of American Indians as nonexistent in the present day. Oftentimes, existential rhetoric is used when speaking of indigenous peoples; this panel questions those labels. Additionally, this panel insinuates the uncertain future of most of the groups listed, which are predominantly indigenous groups except for “Anglo Saxon” and “Marxist”. The inclusion of the latter is used for comic relief, since, Anglo Saxons were the main perpetrators of the conquests of indigenous groups and since Marxism is a political ideology. Ultimately, the three choices given and enlarged in this panel forces the reader to decide which category best captures the destruction of various indigenous groups after centuries of conquest, colonization, and cultural

imperialism. None leave room for a positive and vibrant future for these communities.

Critiquing the Historical Reality of Mexico

Parkinson Zamora writes, “Novelists who use apocalyptic elements, like the biblical apocalyptists, are often critical of present political, social, spiritual practices, and their fiction entertains the means to oppose and overcome them” (3). Further, she reiterates that, “Apocalypse is inextricably tied to political realities; it both responds to and imaginatively embodies social and political upheaval” (45). The apocalypse in literature, as seen in apocalyptic narratives, can be used to comment on a society’s present political, social, and historical realities. Through an unfinished conclusion (*La destrucción*) and several of Gómez-Peña performance excerpts (*Codex Espagnliensis*), both texts offer critiques on Mexico’s re-experiencing of destruction.

La destrucción

Towards the final scenes in the novel, violence, epidemics, war, and death ultimately culminate in a flood. On top of all of the destruction the extraterrestrials have brought upon Mexican people, culture, and land, they accidentally damage the sewage system and occasion yet, another disaster:

the water came brutally and ricocheted wildly. It moved and dragged all chairs, cadavers, and empty cages: city, this is as far as you’ll go. What did we do, God? What did we do?...The flood, motherfuckers, it’s coming for all of you. God has no compassion: the oppressed cannot escape. (227)

The image of a Mexico City being wiped away by a flood seems to have religious connotations, especially when the narrator asks God what they have done to deserve this. But, what is most significant about this is, as Parkinson Zamora makes clear about the apocalypse and its imagery, “The lurid immediacy of apocalyptic imagery...is meant by the apocalyptist to convey the power of God’s retributive justice. It also conveys, less intentionally, but no less clearly, the desperate longing of the narrator for vengeance on his oppressors” (11). In *La destrucción*—although Esteban questions God about what they have done to deserve the flood—in reality, it is the extraterrestrial aliens whose desire to control Mexico and carelessness that cause the flood. Thus, Esteban’s account acknowledges the severity of the destruction, but also that he thinks that this is an act a dominant other or a higher power has the capability to occasion and stop. The flood the aliens have occasioned suggests the divinity of the aliens; they hold dominion over Mexico and have control over what takes place. Although the flood was accidentally caused, this passage shows the complete take of Mexico by the extraterrestrial aliens. Hiriart successfully presents a future point in Mexico’s history, where it is re-conquered and destroyed by yet another extraneous group; this time, extraterrestrial aliens.

Beyond the clear parallelisms that *La destrucción* creates between the Spanish conquest and the extraterrestrial conquest, the last pages of the novel highlight my argument about Mexico perpetually returning and re-experiencing its past. Even closer to the end of the text, Esteban describes a Mexico that returns to its very beginning—all the way back to when Mexico City and Tenochtitlán had not yet existed and the space was only a lagoon. The ending of *La destrucción* reads:

all of the lights shut off and there was great silence in the entire place. A silence of nothing, of death, of complete desolation.

Mexico was again, a lagoon over the darkness. In the darkness,
nothing. Not even fine rain. Darkness and nothing, no one, nothing.

(228)

Esteban's account describes a return to the bare space the Aztec civilization was built on and that later became Mexico City—nothing but a lagoon. To help understand this image, in his book review, Reinhard Teichmann says that, “human relations [in *La destrucción*] have been corrupted and this systematic corruption is synonymous and a symbol of the situation in the country. Events repeat in a cycle without end, provoking a sense of paralysis” (3). According to Teichmann, by reverting back to a point in time when Tenochtitlan/Mexico City was just a lagoon, Hiriart cements the notion of repetition in his text. Even in *La destrucción*, which is set in the future, Esteban's final images suggest a Mexico that goes back to the beginning, pre-societies and pre-conquests. Readers can take this description and either see it as a return to the very beginning and which will undergo the same history of conquest again or as a return to bare land, before anything happened and anyone ever inhabited the space. I contend that Hiriart, because his entire text is an allusion to the past; he has simply taken readers back to the very beginning, where everything, societies and conquests, are bound to repeated again.

In the very last words of the text, Esteban barely completes a sentence. He writes, “The destruction of all things had been accomplished. And in the Zocalo, the main square, heart of the city and the country, with its Cathedral and National Palace no longer ” (228).⁸ After stating that the destruction was complete and successful, the very last phrase, which is an completed sentence as evidenced by the lack of a period, ends the entire novel in ambiguity. One wonders, what happened? Could this be an editorial mistake?

⁸ The empty space mimics the space following the texts' unfinished sentence.

The open-ended conclusion of the text has led scholars to offer a multiplicity of readings. In her article about *La destrucción* “H.Hiriart: un (Nuevo) apocalipsis mexicano”, Mara Imbrogno argues that Esteban is unable to finish his sentence because the aliens have finally captured Esteban (Imbrogno 433, Manickman 103) and thus, is unable complete his account. While that may be the case, the page prior describes a flood that has wiped away cadavers, objects, other people, and even, the aliens. One can conclude, instead, that Esteban has also been wiped away by the flood. Another reading of the conclusion is that since all things were destroyed, even language ceased to exist, which would explain the lack of punctuation and the sudden halt. This reading would truly cement the title of the text, *La destrucción de todas las cosas*, *The Destruction of All Things*, that has even taken away language. Regardless of the reading adopted, Hiriart has already made his point clear. He has shown his vision and understanding of what happens in Mexico—it will always go back to its past and re-experience its history.

Codex Espangliensis

Through the different eras, icons, and languages manifested in *Codex Espangliensis*, the authors show a present that is overwhelmed by the simultaneity of abusive pasts and presents. *Codex Espangliensis* offers a cumulative look into the different powers and nations that have impacted Mexican people, culture, and land. The only difference between representations of the past and those of the present is that Mexico is controlled by different nations. Images of the past show the Spanish killing indigenous people. Images of the present show the U.S.’ presence in Mexico through the inclusion of famous superheroes. Thus, Mexico has been and continues to be dominated by outside powers, but they manifest

themselves differently because the Spanish conquered Mexico and the U.S. is imperializing Mexico. Although apocalypse is clear in the destruction of indigenous peoples and cultures, it is also manifested through the fragmentation of indigenous/Mexican lands. Gómez-Peña writes, “Many burning questions remain/ I travel across a different America. My America is a continent (not a country) which is not described by the outlines on any of the standard maps...My America includes different peoples, cities, border, & nations” (*Codex Espangliensis*). Gómez-Peña himself a defiant and crosser of the U.S.-Mexico border is only one of many people who migrated into the United States. The U.S.-Mexico border, like the apocalyptic images seen in *La destrucción*, caused the rupture of many borderland communities and families. As a result of NAFTA, many were forced to cross the border without legal documentation thus, leading to displacement of Mexicans in the U.S. and even more ruptured families. “As this overview of the current state of immigration policies shows, rather than moving away from the colonial fears and cultural clashes that characterized the conquest of the Americas, America has entered another stage in the recurring cycle of colonial violence,” says Loria (68). This excerpt makes clear the way in which those in power yet again divide land. The U.S. shows this through its imposition of borders. Beyond images that show Mexico being conquered by the Spanish (i.e. the inclusion of de Bry’s work), *Codex Espangliensis* shows the present-day domination of Mexico through constant referencing of NAFTA and the inclusion of U.S. superheroes.

In *Codex Espangliensis*, syllabic text and visual images lay next to one another without the syllabic overpowering or narrating the visual. In doing so, the text is critiquing the hundreds of year of subjugation of indigenous and Mexican cultural production. Rather than accepting conventional book formatting and only the use of syllabic text, *Codex Espangliensis*

resists the epistemic violence against indigenous cultural production. The text, instead, adopts indigenous conceptions of time (cyclical time) and forms of communication (the pictographic in codices and the codex format). *Codex Espangliensis* pushes against the idea that only Western writing conventions are worthy of existence and are legitimate forms of communication. According to Baca, this is a result of “the larger backdrop of colonial subjugation and resistance”, which “disowned” and “suppressed” Mexican intellect (561). Centuries of colonization engrained the belief that Western alphabetic conventions of writing were superior to Mesoamerican pictography. Only written text (that which is constructed with letters of the alphabet) has been accepted as the pedagogical standard for the communication of ideas and thoughts. Furthermore, Baca argues that contemporary codices, like *Codex Espangliensis*, through their inclusion of Mesoamerican pictography and their rhetoric of resistance, address the subjugation of Mesoamerican knowledge production. *Codex Espangliensis* pushes against the erasure and subjugation of indigenous forms of communicating; it is a text that does not give into “temporal colonization [which] is already inherent in the colonialist project...the colonized other is ‘primitive,’ exists in a past state opposed to the European present,” (7). Instead, this text pushes against the idea that all things and people indigenous belong in the past and that they are unworthy. *Codex Espangliensis* not only brings “archaic” and “primitive” forms into the present, it is simultaneously critiquing the idea of modernity and showing that the “past” can be a part of the “present”, or the “modern”.

Lastly, Gómez-Peña literally counters the history of colonialism by writing an imagined history of the discovery of Europe. According to John Reider in “Visions of Catastrophe”: “the antithetical relation of colonial or imperial triumphalism to sciencefictional catastrophes is in some instances a straightforward matter of the fiction’s reversing the

positions of colonizer and colonized, master and slave, core and periphery” (123). In an excerpt from “Califas”, Gómez- Peña writes:

In 1492, an
AZTEC SAILOR NAMED NOCTLI
EUROPZIN TEZPOCA
DEPARTED FROM THE
PORT OF MINATITLAN
with a small flotilla
of wooden rafts, 3 months later
HE DISCOVERED A NEW
CONTINENT AND NAMED IT
EUROPZIN AFTER HIMSELF.
In November 1512, the
OMNI-POTENT AZTECS
BEGAN THE CONQUEST OF
EUROPZIN IN THE NAME OF
THY FATHER
TEZCATLIPOCA, LORD OF CROSS-
CULTURAL MISUNDERSTANDINGS
y entonces el desmadre
se comenzo a multiplicar
logo-rhythmically and logo-aritmicamente.

The humor in the excerpt above is a result of Gómez-Peña’s inversion of conquest, where the

discoverers and discovered, conqueror and conquered, are reversed; an Aztec sailor discovers a new continent and names it after himself, Europzin. An Aztec leader discovers Europe. Humor can be found in the use of a “flotilla”, for example, which takes the image of a floating-tortilla upon which Noctli Europzin arrives in Europezin, or Europe. The years of this supposed discovery and conquest are the same years Christopher Columbus “discovered” America in 1492 and the year when conquistadors arrived in Mexico in 1512. That this Aztec-discovery of Europe would happen in the same years as the ones when the Americas were being conquered is in itself a witty and entertaining example of the use of reverse positions. Gómez-Peña critiques the history of Mexico by critiquing and challenging the history of conquest.

The domination and violence in Mexican and indigenous people, culture, and land that are visually and textually incorporated in *Codex Espangliensis* make it difficult not to close the codex without a feeling of pessimism. Though I argue that *Codex Espangliensis* and *La destrucción* are apocalyptic narratives, they do not imply biblical visions of apocalypse, or doom. Rather, they highlight, through their alternative temporalities that Mexico has been, is, and will continue to be dominated by outside powers. In other words, Mexico is not completely destroyed by each conquest or imperialization; it is a country whose “doomed apocalypse” is the repeated experience conquest and imperialism.

La destrucción de todas las cosas and *Codex Espangliensis: From Columbus to the Border Patrol* are not just apocalyptic because they respond to the historical context of Mexico but also because they do not give a black or white “ending”. They neither show a utopic, modern, oppression-free, domination-free Mexico nor a completely destroyed and extinct Mexico. As Parkinson-Zamora makes clear,

when the vision is merely optimistic *or* pessimistic, we do not have

apocalyptic literature but fantasy. Hence my distinction between mere visions of doom, to which the word apocalypse is commonly misapplied, and the more complex history envisioned in the myth itself. Apocalyptic literature is fundamentally concerned with our human relation to the changing forms of temporal reality, not with static simplifications. (13)

Even when *La destrucción* and *Codex Espangliensis* engage the past in the future and present, they do not merely repeat the past. Instead, in *La destrucción*, one sees a new version of conquest and in *Codex Espangliensis* one sees the different manifestations of the domination of Mexico across time. Rather than being texts that simply re-incorporate and re-write the Spanish conquest of Mexico into the present and future verbatim, these texts present, through their apocalyptic narratives, that Mexico's doom is its continual experiencing of domination. Through their inclusion of extraterrestrial aliens and the U.S., the texts make clear that Mexico is subjugated by different powers and that is done so through various forms of destruction, including physical and epistemic violence. These texts show that Mexico's doom is its circling back to destruction.

CONCLUSION

It is commonly understood that with the passing of time, nations get closer and closer to modernity. Although the concept of modernity is widely associated with “ideas of newness, the advanced, the rational-scientific,” (Quijano 543), the construction of “modernity” is much more complex. In “Coloniality at Large”, Walter Mignolo writes that “coloniality [is] the construction of the modern world in the exercise of the coloniality of power,” and that “the imaginary of the modern/colonial world arose from the complex articulation of forces, of voices heard or silenced” (28). According to Mignolo, modernity depends on the continuation of colonial difference, which came as a result of conquests and colonization. Another scholar, Maria Lugones writes,

Europe was mythologically understood to pre-exist this pattern of power as a world capitalist center that colonized the rest of the world and as such the most advanced moment in the linear, unidirectional, continuous path of the species...Europe came to be mythically conceived as preexisting colonial, global, capitalism and as having achieved a very advanced level in the continuous, linear, unidirectional path. (4)

Lugones makes clear that Europe was seen as the place that with time, had progress, and modernity. Indigenous communities and Latin American countries cannot be deemed modern because they are not European. *La destrucción* and *Codex Espangliensis* make clear that a country like Mexico is not only a nation that has been conquered, but continues to experience colonial and modern day versions of domination, such as through imperialism. Countries like Spain, the United States, and even extraterrestrial groups are “modern” because they have achieved power through the conquest of other countries. In contrast, because *La destrucción* and

Codex Espangliensis do not follow western notions of the progress of modernity, they ultimately, suggest that Mexico is not modern, but instead continuously subjugated.

Codex Espangliensis: From Columbus to the Border Patrol and *La destrucción de todas las cosas* are unconventional texts with unconventional iterations of the past in the present and future. While both find common inspiration in the Spanish conquest and colonization of Mexico in the 16th century, they have different manifestations of the same temporality. *Codex Espangliensis* looks at the Spanish conquest and U.S. imperialism without distinction of when they took place. The constructed future in *La destrucción* is an allusion to events that have already taken place before. We see, then, that the authors of the texts are not only revisiting the past in the present but also projecting the past into the future (particularly in Hiriart's novel). In so doing, the authors neither demonstrate utopic presents or futures, nor biblical visions of doom. *La destrucción* and *Codex Espangliensis* show only the circularity of destruction that keeps happening in Mexico.