

The goal of both *Aztlán* dossiers on the Latin@ speculative arts has been to recover and critically assess this growing body of work. In her essay in the first dossier, Daoine Bachran (2015) explicates important contradictions in the gendered and racialized signifying practices in Ernest Hogan's otherwise visionary speculative novel *Smoking Mirror Blues* (2001). Her trenchant analysis invites further candid interrogations of the ideologies being performed by specific Latin@ speculative artists and texts. In this essay I offer additional contrapuntal readings of the signifying practices of select Latin@ speculative film and fiction works that propose radical critiques of power and alternative theories of praxis. I believe that they are successful in only a very few cases. I am especially concerned with the ideological differences undergirding various models of the utopian vis-à-vis historical materialist ideas that inform Latin@ SFF.

Pursuant to a preliminary reassessment of the ideologies of Latin@ SFF, I will map the theories of labor, status of the machine and technology, and theories of revolutionary praxis in two Latin@ dystopian/utopian texts: Peruvian American filmmaker Alex Rivera's feature film *Sleep Dealer* (2008), and Chicana authors Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita's jointly authored novella *Lamar Braceros, 2125–2148* (2009). *Sleep Dealer* is set in a not-too-distant future along the US-Mexico border and focuses on a trio of Latina and Latino border dwellers who attempt to escape from the dystopian carceral web. In this new world, technology has fused with biology to enable the weaponizing of people's bodies and minds, the mining of memory, and the teleporting of bodily energy as profit-producing labor in remote sites. Similarly, *Lamar Braceros* narrativizes the climax in the consolidation of global capitalism, when monopolies have formed confederations that supersede the power of the nation-state. A small band of revolutionaries seeks to subvert this power and challenge their exploitation through direct action on the moon and on earth. The rebellion, which temporarily fails, is facilitated through the dissemination of underground information across place, space, and time via nanochips, a future form of miniature computer flash drives.

These texts offer stunning visual special effects and clever narrative devices that render cyborgs believable, carceral states familiar, and teleportation and moon travel mundane. The texts also introduce meta-narratives in the form of interactive websites and nanochips that add to the postmodernist aura of the narratives in which time, place, and space are continually presented and navigated out of sequence. Yet these texts resist the nihilist impulse of most postmodernist narratives. Fredric Jameson (1992) has argued that postmodernist disjunctions and transtemporal conjunctions,

Contrapuntal Cyborgs? The Ideological Limits and Revolutionary Potential of Latin@ Science Fiction

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Not all new art is revolutionary, nor is it really new. . . . The Russian Futurists have affiliated with communism; the Italian Futurists have affiliated with Fascism.

—José Carlos Mariátegui, "Art, Revolution, and Decadence"

The speculative arts have always been part of the fabric of Latin@ literature and popular culture, as demonstrated in the scholarship on Latin@ science fiction and fantasy (SFF) genres in the two *Aztlán* dossiers dedicated to this topic. Catherine S. Ramírez's testimonial reflections on being a science fiction "nerd" (2002) and her groundbreaking theoretical interventions to recentier writing by women of color, especially Gloria Anzaldúa, in the genealogy of SFF were an invitation for more speculative "coming outs," dialogues, and research into the revolutionary potential of this multi-genre category (Ramírez 2002, 2004, 2008). The scholarly excitement following Ramírez's interventions led to the discovery, recovery, and celebration of Latin@ SFF, which on the surface appeared to pose revolutionary alternatives to the hegemonic exercise of power. But is it accurate to assume that all Latin@ SFF is counterhegemonic? Do the Latin@ speculative arts break from the colonialist and xenophobic genealogy of SFF and from the equally troubling colonialist nostalgias, salient chauvinisms, and ideological contradictions undergirding much of Latin@ literature and film? How "revolutionary" is the growing body of Latin@ speculative work, and exactly what constitutes "revolution" in these texts? Is it a Trotskyite vision of armed autonomous workers' councils, the privileged peasant revolutionaries of the Maoists, anarchist communitarian affinity groups, neo-Luddite anti-technology paradigms, mystical spiritualisms, combinations of these, or something else altogether?

which he proposes as the governing cultural logic of late capitalism, also involve the fragmentation of the subject and the flattening of identity into schizophrenic superficiality. These flattened subjects are unmoored from the mechanics of alienation or even simple anomie, making the development of an oppositional consciousness, as well as rebellion and outright revolution, all the more difficult. The postmodern subject, Jameson argues, has not kept up with the technological mutations of the object, such as architecture, which houses subjects in vessels that fuse past and present, old and new, in confusing assemblages. The mystifying power of the technologically enhanced simulacrum, he suggests, is so overbearing that it even threatens our ability to theorize the present. Yet Jameson cuts through the mystifying haze of the form of postmodernism by noting:

I want to avoid the implication that technology is in any way the “ultimately determining instance” either of our present-day social life or of our cultural production: such a thesis is, of course, ultimately at one with the post-Marxist notion of a postindustrial society. (1992, 37)

Jameson’s critique of the postmodern fetish on and fear of technology, which is co-terminal with the purported death of the subject heralded in postmodern theory, reminds us of the salient but still radically undertheorized archetype of the Latin@ cyborg (and cyborgesque Latin@) and particularly of its relationship to the means of production. This topos animates both *Sleep Dealer* and *Lunar Bracers*. That is, despite their postmodern trappings, in which dystopic forces appear to overwhelm increasingly fragmented subjects, these two texts offer deliberate didactic discourses on the science of revolutionary resistance to capitalism and its multiple forms of alienation. But it is their postmodern trappings—and particularly the truncations of subjectivity and agency effected by technology—that ultimately distinguish these two texts in ways that illuminate the problem of ideology in the Latin@ speculative arts. One offers a theory of revolutionary praxis predicated upon a naive neo-Luddite philosophy; the other seeks to narrativize a historical materialist revolutionary theory of praxis that accounts for, without fetishizing, fearing, or dismissing, the value of machines and technology.

All Cyborgs Are Not Created Equal: Political Dissensus in Latin@ Cyborg Paradigms

Donna Haraway’s (1991) pioneering work on the socialist potential of feminist cyborgs is intertwined with a reductive postmodernist reading of

Latina interstitial subjectivities as irreparably fragmented, an interpretation that Paula L. M. Moya (2002) has soundly critiqued. In contrast, Latin@ artists have refashioned the Latin@ cyborg (and less technologically mediated cyborgesque subjects) into potent symbolic forces in speculative film, television programming, and literature. From space operas (*Battlestar Galactica*) to quasi-steampunk (*El Mariachi*, 1992) to dystopian futurism (*Elysium*, 2013) to fantasy (*Spy Kids*, 2001), Latin@ mestizaje is synthesized into post-apocalyptic, technologically mediated cyborgs and quasi-cyborgs. Significantly, they lead the way out of the dystopian postmodern morass by either becoming machines or mastering them, albeit in a multiplicity of ideological directions that offer as many frustrations as utopian possibilities.

The ideological indeterminacy of the Latin@ cyborg is present from its inception. The first Chican@ cyborg appears in what may be considered the earliest Chican@ science fiction film, *Los Vendidos* (The Sellouts). The film is based on Teatro Campesino’s agitprop satirical play by the same name (Valdez 1990), first performed in 1967 and recast as a filmed stage performance in 1973. The protagonist is a purportedly “vendido” robot, Eric Garcia, who in reality is a subversive mechanical Chicano cipher who betrays the Hispanic buyer who sought to exploit him as a “brown face in the crowd” for a political function with former California Governor Ronald Reagan. This first Chicano cyborg thus afforded audience members the opportunity to meditate on Chican@ identity and ideology, the overdetermination of archetypes, and urgent local political struggles of the era, as well as metaphysical interrogations of the species-being. As a result, the cyborg in *Los Vendidos* certainly is contrapuntal, but he still exists within a civil rights framework in which Chican@s were militating for inclusion within US settler colonialist and capitalist society. That is, the first iteration of a Chican@ cyborg is a medium for the unwitting performance of ideological ambivalence disguised as counterhegemonic critique and revolutionary agency.

Other prominent Latin@ cyborgs similarly fail to actualize an alternative political praxis that poses a material (and materialist) challenge to the capitalist regimens of exploitation they illuminate. For instance, Robert Rodriguez’s neo-picaresque motorcycle-wandering eponymous protagonist in *El Mariachi* (1992)—who later morphs into a swashbuckling hero in prequels and sequels—is a cyborg permutation of the tired trope of the tragic mestizo. After his Pyrrhic victory against evil drug lords, he is reduced to pursuing his dream of making music with a mechanical strumming hand. In Eric Hobsbawm’s (1965) topography, El Mariachi is

skepticism of the Latin@ speculative arts, particularly as regards the theories of power and counterpower that undergird the myriad texts that fall into this category. As Peruvian Marxist theorist José Carlos Mariátegui (2011) warns in the epigraph to this essay, the speculative arts—especially various “futurisms”—must be appraised based on their intertwined aesthetics, poetics, and political affinities lest we be deluded into thinking that all “new” art is actually new and revolutionary.

Specters of the Machine in Alex Rivera's *Sleep Dealer*: Revolutionary Ruptures or Neo-Luddite Spectacle?

Alex Rivera's rendering of the Latin@ cyborg in his speculative film *Sleep Dealer* affords and demands an interrogation of the ideological subtexts of the Latin@ speculative arts. *Sleep Dealer* is set in the near future when the United States has completely sealed the US-Mexico border, thereby preventing what Americans call “illegal” immigration. As a solution to the paradox of a bigoted, anti-immigrant society that still relies on Latin@ immigrant labor for its economic vitality, technological innovations now enable emigrants to teleport to distant job sites through special electrical nodes implanted in their forearms and backs. These cyber-bracers, or cyber-workers, also are known as “sleep dealers,” and their trance-like pantomimed work exacts a potentially lethal toll on their bodies and minds (figs. 1, 2).

The brilliant plot revolves around three intersecting storylines. Memo Cruz works as a sleep dealer in a Tijuana cyber-factory after fleeing his rural town in Oaxaca, Mexico, which was reduced to a desert by a multinational corporation that has monopolized all water in the area. Chicano Rudy Ramirez is a newly minted drone pilot for this same multinational corporation. His first mission was to destroy the small home where Memo, a ham radio operator, had been regularly hacking into drone communications; Memo's father died in the inferno. Waitress Luz Martinez sells her memories through a memory-dealing website, “True Node.” Luz tells her new friend Memo how to contact a “coyotek” (or virtual coyote/smuggler) to get cheap black market implants necessary for work in this new cyber-labor world. The already exploitative maquiladoras of old are now much more lethal, as these nodes enable factories to literally suck energy out of the workers. These three Latin@ cyborgs (and quasi-cyborgs, whose integration into machines varies in type and intensity) come together to fight the militarized multinational corporations whose power has supplanted all national governments. I submit that the film illuminates the complexities and potential

merely an individual (and individualist) rebel who never even becomes a social bandit, much less a revolutionary who poses a coordinated challenge to power. An even more politically problematic Latin@ cyborg appears in Reyes Cárdenas's 1975 speculative serialized novella, *Los Pachucos y La Flying Saucer*, which intersects with a prominent strain of Latin@ speculative fiction that involves soft porn signifying of exoticized, racialized female Others. This story features two pachucos who “enter” into a cyborg female spaceship they use to travel across time as they wage war with a series of villains, with interspersed episodes in which the two pachucos suckle at the female spaceship's huge mechanical breasts. This masculinist iteration of Latin@ cyborg and cyborgesque paradigms also is evident in Hogan's fetish for Asian American sexbots and Mexican American lesbians and bisexual women in *Smoking Mirror Blues*, a scopophilic rendering that Bachran notes “simultaneously erodes women's claims to authorial agency and relegates women to accoutrements of men's art” (2014, 231). This scopophilia serves as a backdrop for the equally problematic expression of a proto-Luddite expression of Chican@ ambivalence to the specter of the postmodern machine, particularly computers and the Internet. The narrative revolves around a Chican@ computer game designer who conjures a malevolent Aztec god who seeks to control the world until thwarted by the gamer, who retakes control of the computer hyper-demon he helped create.

Ramírez poses alternatives to these masculinist speculative discourses by redefining the category of “cyborg” as a counterhegemonic woman-of-color praxis for black women and Chicana authors:

Through the figure of the cyborg, [Gloria] Anzaldúa and [Judith] Butler also theorize a woman-of-color feminism. . . . Indeed, their subjects are cyborgs because they interrogate the stability of social categories, such as “woman,” “American,” and “human,” and because they exemplify the construction of coalitions based on position and affinity, as opposed to identity and essence. However, Butler's black heroines and Anzaldúa's queer *mesriza* subject differ from a more generic cyborg because they also emphasize very particular New World histories (African American and Chicana, respectively). (2002, 394)

While these iterations of Latin@ cyborgs are by no means exhaustive, they illuminate important differences and a profound dissensus with respect to the definition, function, and political resonance of the Latin@ cyborg. By explicating the radically different cyborgian discourses in *Sleep Dealer* and *Lunar Bracers*, I propose to illuminate the need for a greater critical

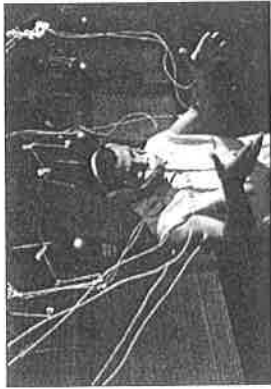


Figure 1. Scene from *Sleep Dealer* (2008) by Alex Rivera. Courtesy of Alex Rivera and Starlight Film.

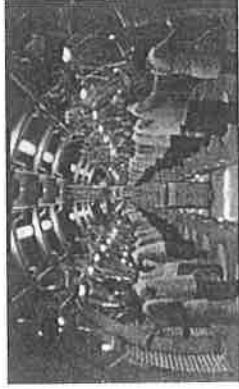


Figure 2. Scene from *Sleep Dealer* (2008) by Alex Rivera. Courtesy of Alex Rivera and Starlight Film.

ideological contradictions of Latin@ SFF by presenting victory, liberation, and dis-alienation as being accessible only through the complete rejection of modern machines and postmodern technologies.

Ramírez's claim that "good science fiction re-presents the past or present, albeit with a twist" (2008, 185–86) is inversely true in this film. Written and produced at the height of the war on terror, the film is a chilling manifestation of the simulacrum effect that Jean Baudrillard (1994, 1995) identified in the First Gulf War. In the never-ending war on terror, US soldiering is overdetermined as a technologically mediated subjectivity and activity that involves remote-controlled drones, flexible body armor, specialized optics that increase vision beyond 20/20, and instrumentation that responds to bodily functions such as eye movements, making the weapon an extension of the human bearer. That is, the differences between the past human and future cyborg are indiscernible in the present. These transtemporal depictions of the technologically mediated soldier body raise serious questions about whether the machine is inherently violent, and whether it can be reclaimed and transformed into something other than violence. This is a particularly urgent inquiry since the cyborg has become more than a metaphor: it is a very real subject of history who embodies a unique materiality as a violently mediated interspecies techno-subject. Rivera's film, which responds to the incessant US xenophobia and war on terror that continually lead to new technological innovations, proposes to synthesize a way out of this dystopian morass. However, I believe the

film does so in ways that may not necessarily offer a liberatory materialist synthesis of the evils of multinational monopoly capitalism that it so successfully explicates and indicts.

In Rivera's film the machine is not just a medium for exploitation; it is the actual manifestation of evil, and this ultimately hampers its potential use in counterhegemonic interventions. The exploitation of sleep dealers illuminates the multiple levels of labor alienation, which for cyber-bracers involves bioelectric fusions with machines that physically deplete them and can even lead to sudden death through reverse power surges. Technology also invades deep into the species-being: Luz's nodes, for instance, enable her memories to be bought and consumed in a rapacious manner that leaves her emotionally and physically exhausted after each memory upload session. It is a form of psychological exploitation and alienation, since the panoptic software can discern when an uploader is inventing memories or, alternatively, withholding true memories about real experiences. It thus constantly pushes her to open up the cyber-bracero equivalent of a pornographic money shot (fig. 3).



Figure 3. Scene from *Sleep Dealer* (2008) by Alex Rivera. Courtesy of Alex Rivera and Starlight Film.

All of these Latin@ cyborg characters are brought together when the cyber-pilot Rudy Ramirez sees the scenes of his own inaugural drone bombing flight while trolling the True Node website, where Luz had been uploading memories of her new friend Memo. Rudy subsequently commissions Luz to find out more about the family of the man he killed, and this inevitably brings him into contact with Memo in a tense scene that eventually leads to rapprochement. In the film's denouement, the three Latin@ cyborgs plot to enable cyber-soldado *razo* Rudy Ramirez to both use and rid himself of his cyborg self by destroying the dam he once protected for its corporate owner. This will release the life-giving water to the destitute farmers of Memo's home village and strike a devastating blow against the multinational corporation that Rudy resents for turning him into a killer of innocent civilians in defense of corporate profit. The film ends with the

two males parting ways; Luz disappears following a devastating argument with Memo, who remains distrustful of her because he realizes she had been plugging his mind for memories to sell to the man who killed his father. While Memo and Luz apparently have satisfying, intense cybersex because of the nodes (showing how technology brings people together), and Rudy is able to blow up the dam because of his cybernetically weaponized body and his training as a drone pilot, the film nonetheless betrays a fear of the postmodern machine-human, or cyborg. The male-centered, dystopian, and neo-Luddite vision is consolidated in two final scenes that take the film into the realm of steampunk fusions of old and new technologies and, ultimately, toward a complete rejection of all machines. Despite the fact that Memo's village is restored to life by water flowing freely after the dam has been destroyed, he remains in Tijuana to tend his garden, watering maize seedlings with a tin coffee can punched with holes out of which the sacred liquid drips to give life. The Edenic agrarian trope is paired with a now-redundant lesson offered by Rudy Ramirez, the *ex-soldado razo* who went native in a replay of Daniel Cano's (1990) "shifting loyalties": after Ramirez's defiant act of sabotage, he is pictured boarding a rickety bus that takes him "south," to an undisclosed place in Mexico or beyond, off the grid, and far away from the reaches of the militarized multinational corporation and industrialized postmodern society.¹ Both Memo's and Rudy's post-cyborg lives thus offer a semi-pacifist neo-Luddite antithesis to discourses that celebrate cyber-technology as the always already present future (yet another important strain in SFF).

It is true that this film provides a "twist" in its rendering of the past and future, as Ramirez expects "good science fiction" to do, but more important, the ideological tenor of the speculative twist in *Sleep Dealer* is not revolutionary: it does not involve the transformation of society or even the intimation of the need to destroy the ruling capitalist class beyond one act of revenge. While the film presents a visually luscious and prescient rendering of the alienation of labor through its exposé on the psychological and physical dimensions of cyber-estrangement, it leaves no room for harnessing technology as part of a coordinated revolutionary struggle; after all, the three friends go their own ways. The film's denouement suggests that we should simply smash the machine, the same response advocated by the early nineteenth-century English textile artisans known as Luddites, who protested the introduction of mechanization that threatened their livelihood at the dawn of the Industrial Revolution. In *Sleep Dealer*, the protagonists' anti-technology rebellion involves their destruction of the

hydroelectric dam and their refusal to plug into the networks that would reactivate their de facto cyborg subjectivities (since their nodes remain implanted). The solution to the alienating and mystifying power of the simulacrum effect is simply to reject it, with the only alternatives being a return to the land to grow corn in isolation, an escape ever further south, or a decision simply to disappear into the Tijuana lumpenproletariat, as does Luz. The film emphasizes an anti-technology agrarian society that at best models a primitive communitarianism where water is freely shared. No attention is paid to the fact that this nostalgic individualist paradigm might be possible only after the world system completely collapses, bringing about devastation that would likely result in the extinction of all human beings. That is, the vision in *Sleep Dealer* is not just utopian and unscientific, as Marx notes in juxtaposing historical materialism and utopianism, but also fundamentally dystopian, defeatist, and naive. No coordinated rebellion is possible within its neo-Luddite paradigm; the only option is mere survival as individuals. Everyone is left to fend for themselves. At best, they may engage in acts of sabotage that Hobsbawm (1965) would correctly call primitive rebellion, with no hope of effecting the type of systemic change that would eliminate the base cause of oppression: capitalism.

Towards a XicanIndi@ Communist Glocalactic Synthesis in Sánchez and Pita's *Lunar Braceros*, 2125–2148

In contrast to the persistent scophophilia, nostalgic indigenist discourses, and ideologically inchoate cyborg paradigms in the Latin@ speculative arts, Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita's 2009 novella, *Lunar Braceros*, 2125–2148, offers a more cogent, theoretically sophisticated, and ideologically consistent Marxist speculative intervention predicated on a cyborg proletarian revolution. *Lunar Braceros* is set in the mid-twenty-second century, when the earth has undergone a hegemonic realignment that began with a power grab by the New Imperial Order—made up of the ten dominant multinational consortia—which allied with US fascists to execute a coup in the United States. The new world power of the Cali-Texas Confederation is based in North America and several parts of the Pacific, all of Africa, and Chinese "colonies." The narrative focuses on multiple groups of multiracial rebels who are resisting this extreme yet logical evolution of international capitalism. A liberated indigenous zone in the Amazon region of South America temporarily provides refuge to other rebels who

were once industrial cyborg moon workers, or lunar braceros, and dwellers of lumpenproletarian reservations on earth resembling concentration camps.

Within this dystopian geopolitical landscape, Sánchez and Pita introduce a subaltern, queer, cholo-inflected, indigenus-centered, and collectivist synthesis of the Latin@ speculative project: they repackage popular culture and genre fiction that breaks down complex politico-economic theories of labor alienation vis-à-vis new technologies in the cyber age. More important, they offer a theory of praxis for revolutionary struggle that is historically informed, scientific, and pragmatically unrestrained. That is, *Lunar Braceros* recasts cyborgs—who range from astronauts to nanochip recordings of now-dead people to a multiracial cast of characters who take control of space ships, weapons, and other technology—as an always already complexly racialized and gendered revolutionary cadre. This cadre has not disavowed technology or any mechanisms or means, including armed struggle, for effecting a structural transformation of the world, which necessarily involves the working class taking power and using it.

Sánchez and Pita's speculative synthesis of a revolutionary, multiracial, anti-capitalist insurgency has an important locus in the majority-indigenous commune of Chinganaza, which is organized along ancient and simultaneously modern principles of communalism. In this twenty-second-century dystopian future, in which multinational capitalist fascist monopolies have taken over the world, Chinganaza serves as a utopian agrarian refuge and way station for earth-based peasant and lumpen revolutionaries as well as for space proletarian rebels. This place, which corresponds to an actual location in the southeastern part of present-day Ecuador, is described in one dialogue among characters:

Strictly speaking, the Commons in Chinganaza does not follow the Incan model. All the land here is held in common and all those dwelling here contribute to the subsistence and maintenance of the commons in some way. All of us have duties and each one of us, both men and women, has to spend part of the day working in the fields. (Sánchez and Pita 2009, 20)

In Chinganaza, no class, or racialized gendered class segment, is privileged; all coalesce as a subaltern counterhegemonic workforce that is also a coordinated fighting force.

Their enemy is the New Imperial Order, which controls much of the world and the moon. Within this dystopian universe, a competing Russo-Chinese Confederation is an ally to the globally dominant Cali-Texas Confederation; this makes resistance even more difficult, as power truly has

become a postnational global and intragalactic phenomenon. There also are nonaligned Amerindian confederations, such as the Southern Confederation of South American countries and the Andean Confederation, both of which are less rapacious and imperialist than the other confederations but also distinct from the communist liberated zone of Chinganaza, with which they engage in small-scale trade.

The New Imperial Order also operates the reservations, which contain a surplus labor pool of homeless and unemployed (13). Their only opportunities to leave the reservations are as bodies used for experiments by biolabs seeking to create artificial organs (14), or as “tecos,” also known as lunar braceros, or moon laborers. Tecos sign work contracts for moon tours to run the robotics for mining operations, or to work as waste disposal laborers who handle dangerous toxic detritus since the over-polluted earth can no longer accommodate its own refuse. “Reslifers,” as reservation dwellers are called, can escape their carceral life if a family member deposits a sufficient amount of money in a bank account to buy their freedom. This is an almost impossible prospect, since it requires years of work under bleak and often lethal conditions, provided one can even obtain a job in this high-tech world that requires educational resources usually beyond the reach of reservation dwellers. In an allusion to the surplus labor pool of large segments of the Chicana@ population, the Fresno Reservation is located in the agricultural community of present-day Fresno, California.

The novella's plot focuses on eighteen-year-old Pedro's attempt to reconstruct the insurgent lives of his parents using nanotexts, which his biological mother Lydia left for him before disappearing into the underground. We learn through these nanotexts that Pedro's biological father Gabriel was assassinated by agents of the multinationals he was fighting, with his body unceremoniously dumped on a roadside in Brazil. We also learn that Lydia previously had been a reslifer born on the Fresno Reservation and eventually joined her brother Ricardo in the resistance movement. Faced with a literal prisoner's dilemma after having been incarcerated for their subversive activities, Lydia took a job on a lunar waste disposal unit in exchange for early release. Using their nanotexts, in addition to information added by his uncle Ricardo and other rebels, Pedro essentially travels through time and space in a dialogue with his now-dead father and disappeared mother. It is through one nanotext that Pedro discovers the socially symbolic truth about his birth and rearing. His parents fertilized and froze Pedro's embryo before they became sterile as a result of their nuclear disposal work on the moon. The quasi-cyborg fertilized egg was later brought to term by his

parents' trusted friends and fellow rebels: Leticia bore Pedro and raised him with her lesbian partner, Maggie, and a host of other revolutionaries, many of whom help fill in the dialogic narrative. In this dystopian world where the protagonists are fighting for a materialist egalitarian resolution, collective parenting removes the primacy of biology in the construction of family, which underscores the revolutionary collectivist paradigm operative in the book.

Like its model of parenting and child rearing, the jointly authored novella is itself a collective dialogic enterprise, in which the idea of a protagonist also is collectivized through the cybernetic polyphony enabled by nanochips. Chinganaza becomes a metonym for a collectivist revolutionary paradigm that fuses an agrarian utopia with hyper-technological realities. In a rejection of the naive utopian discourses and Luddite impulses that define much of dystopian SFF, the narrative in *Lunar Braceros* includes one nanochip description of Chinganaza as a "commune, where we work together; here the land belongs to those who work it; everything is shared and there are no bosses," with the added proviso: "but we're not fooling ourselves; we are a tiny bubble in a turbulent world" (119). As Gabriela Nuñez notes in her essay in this anthology, food scarcity, and the low quality of food available on the reservations, becomes a site of struggle: the rebels engage in alternative collectivized organic food production not just for sustenance, but as indigenous-centered egalitarian political praxis. The didacticism of this description of communal living is complemented in other scenes where the authors describe Pedro's rearing and socialization as a socialist, which also serves to underscore the authors' own socialist realist aesthetic. Indeed, *Lunar Braceros* is imbedded with didactic Marxist discourses delivered through nanochips, which become veritable protagonists themselves. In yet another symbolically significant and highly didactic nanotext passage, for instance, the rebel parents offer their yet-to-be-born son a lesson about the complex and ever-evolving nature of place, space, and subjectivity:

Space is formative, and when you grow up and become an astronomer, Pedro, you will need to remember this alternative space in which you were born and recall always that space is a product of social relations. Right, you're right, I am talking about a different kind of space. Here, not outer space. You'll undoubtedly be involved in the production of new spatial relations, maybe—hopefully—even in outer space, on another planet, but I want you never to forget this particular place, our commons, and that it represents a rejection of everything that is hegemonic and dominated by capital relations. (25)

The authors, who are Marxist theorists and veteran activists, responsibly temper the socialist realist romanticism of this passage by noting that Chinganaza later is invaded and the inhabitants scattered throughout the world. Pedro relocates to Mexico as he tries to reconnect with other rebels to continue what essentially is defined as a permutation of Mao Tse Tung's paradigm of "permanent revolution." That is, like the open-ended nature of testimonio that serves as a clarion call to readers to join in the struggle at hand, this narrative refuses to deliver an easy nostalgic or romantic resolution to the fight against capitalism's incessant, exploitative onslaught against people, earth, and the cosmos.

The main conflict in the plot (conveyed through nanochips) arises when Lydia and other lunar braceros discover a shipping container with the bodies of tecos they replaced, ominously signaling the fate planned for them. Some of them naively had believed that work would set them free. The tecos subsequently plot a rebellion and take over a spaceship, forcing the pilots at gunpoint to take them back to earth, where they escape their lethal labor bondage and join other rebels. This armed insurrection becomes linked to other coordinated actions against capitalists and their agents; the rebellion is designed not just to escape the alienating servitude of moon labor, but as a class war waged by subalterns against the forces buttressing capitalism. In contrast to the neo-Luddite rebels in *Sleep Dealer*, the protagonists in *Lunar Braceros* are revolutionaries who engage in theorizing and actualizing armed revolutionary insurrection pursuant to a strategic equilibrium in which the state is fought to a stalemate that eventually will lead to set-piece final battles that in turn result in a new order, not just in the liberation of individuals to tend private gardens, as it were.

A unique dimension of the theory of revolutionary praxis narrativized in *Lunar Braceros* is its synthesis of a Marxist XicanIndi@ paradigm that resists naive agrarian utopias bequeathed to SFF by Thomas More's (2003) paradigmatic 1516 tract, *Utopia*. *Lunar Braceros* instead is informed by current social movements and insurgent populations, particularly indigenous people in the Americas and the southern hemisphere, while simultaneously accounting for the future in its reclamation of technology, the machine, and a revolutionary cyborg. Indeed, the authors add an intergalactic extension to the productive neologism "glocal," which has been used to explicate how the local and glocal are intertwined: *Lunar Braceros* takes place in a local, global, and intergalactic—or glocalactic—space. The cover art and images interspersed throughout the novella by muralist Mario A. Chacon reiterate this new synthesis of seemingly incompatible Maoist and Trotskyite

paradigms of revolution, packaged in a neo-cholo aesthetic characteristic of popular Chican@ mural art that is set both on earth and in outer space. The cover and interspersed drawings serve as a supplemental plot map that features key scenes and underscores the subaltern racialized hybrid cholo indigeneity of the space proletarian tecos. This hybridity is foregrounded in the cover image, in which oxygen tubes flow out of a teco's spacesuit helmet like a regal headdress made of the turquoise green, blue, and yellow feathers of the revered Quetzal bird, albeit without the feudal overtones; this particular teco also wears work gloves and space boots adorned with indigenous imagery. Significantly, his left fist is raised in a defiant gesture of counterpower, while his open right hand hails the viewer as if in a call for solidarity. Despite being an alienated worker reduced to a *calavera*, or skeletal frame, the teco is not defeated (fig. 4).



Figure 4. Cover art for *Lunar Braceros*, 2125–2148 (Calaca Press, 2008). Reprinted courtesy of authors Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita and artist Mario A. Chacón.

Lunar Braceros is not just a XicanIndi@ futurist tale, but a XicanIndi@ revolutionist allegory about the technologically saturated present and the changing nature of human—or rather cyborg—subjectivity. It illustrates how social relations continue to be shaped by one's relationship to production in new, yet fundamentally familiar, contexts of labor exploitation. The authors, as Marxists, center the machine and industrialization alongside agriculture and the human disposition to collectivities by historicizing the uses and misuses of technology and human labor. In the authors' exposé of rapacious moon mining, labor alienation in cyberspace, intragalactic space, and genetic engineering on earth, the nanochip serves as a synecdoche:

it locates the story simultaneously in the future⁶ and the present, in a transtemporal space where technology assumes a greater role in human society to the point that the machine almost eclipses—and at times even embodies—this new subject and society. In an unpublished interview, the authors note:

We think that the interspecies/cyborgs of the future will necessarily need to be included in any transformative project. We've been thinking along these lines⁷ for *LB2* [*Lunar Braceros 2*] since Lydia and Pedro will be involved in genetic manipulation and the market for "choice genes."⁸

The authors thus introduce a radical alternative and Marxist challenge to cultural workers engaged in the Latin@ speculative arts: Cyborgs of the world, unite!

Notes

1. An important subplot in Daniel Cano's 1990 novel *Shifting Loyalties* focuses on rumors that a Chicano draftee defected from the US army and joined the Viet Cong out of potential ideological sympathies with subaltern anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist revolutionaries.
2. Interview by author, November 18, 2013.

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