

**Transnational Translations:  
Five Poems from *Tonalamatl*, *dream notes***

Steven Alvarez

**Migrations Between Disciplines: Opening Sources of Transnational Latin@ Studies Across Fields**

In *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization*, Walter D. Mignolo argues that European forms of literacy subordinated Amerindian epistemologies and were at the heart of the “invention” of the New World and its conquest. For Mignolo, the coloniality of literacies resulted in geopolitical difference through the exercise of European colonial power. Mignolo’s interdisciplinary study of decoloniality draws from sources ranging from historiography, cartography, semiotics, literature, and history. This transnational hemispheric approach to decolonizing literacies influenced Damian Baca’s and Victor Villanueva’s groundbreaking edited collection *Rhetorics of the Americas*. Baca and Villanueva’s text demonstrates the contributions of hemispheric writing studies broadly conceived and offers multidisciplinary work in transnational Latin@ Studies across fields. Though Baca’s and Villanueva’s collection rightfully deserves credit for advancing Mignolo’s groundbreaking hemispheric studies of transnational literacy practices, more cross-field collaboration is necessary between the larger Latin@ Studies in transnational contexts project at the intersections of writing systems, literacies, languages, and rhetorics of the Americas. Transnational Latin@ lives encounter diverse contexts of border crossing, evading discipline and opening guerrilla spaces of dissent, or loci of enunciation. Transnational Latin@ Studies is always historical insofar as accounting for narratives of movement, directionalities, positions, social fields, or networks.

**#spanglish**

Transnational Spanglish and its marked rumba with Standard English is a legitimate expression for various cultural guises including literature,

music, education, films, and marketing. The experience of hybridity in the Americas, from Latin@s in the United States and Canada to the Quechua in Peru and Brazil, is always the negotiation of cultural spaces that crisscross national boundaries. The transnationalism of hybridity has a long history in Latin America.

Hybridity in Latin America is a theoretical elaboration of the *mestizaje* racial formulaic. While nationalism was indeed a rallying call for ethnic difference for the former Spanish colonies of the nineteenth century, today ethnic difference in the postcolonial and global timeframe is a marketed subjective categorization in a world market that standardizes US dominance. The *latinidad* of the Americas of this century are modes of cultural production and consumption and how the intersections of national borders implicate an increasingly hegemonic English-language global village. Such distinctions mark transnational Latin@ conceptions of assimilation, social mobility, identity that both conform and resist neocolonial models of domination. Though English dominates, transnational Latin American *mestizaje* finds its way past national borders. La verdad: el Espanglish sirve, and it marks difference as well la mezcla de subjectivity. Spanglish is a linguistic hybrid, a transnational mixture that challenges the geopolitical dominance of hegemonic English

Linguistic hybridity in this way of thinking is what Ilan Stavans describes as the dance of rhythm and thought entre *la flexibilidad y el dogmatismo* of Standard English in the fusion of Inglés and Spanish in the US. Stavans celebrates hybridity to the chagrin of linguistic purists with hegemonic pretenses who don't enjoy la *danza* of difference comingling. Converse to the dance of two discernable languages battling heads, the "en Inglés" of the above emphasizes how Spanish flavor is sprinkled on to the dominant language English and how this hybridity is an intra-ethnic vehicle of communication en the "Unaited Esteits." The order of linguistic distinction and symbolic power hierarchically arranged produces linguistic distinctions.

### **Trans- : Poetics & Immediacy**

My Transnational Latin@ verse translates its own audiences with challenges to its interpretations. Language hybridization in my work situates my voice within a Latin@ Studies transnational network, theorized

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broadly and creatively. My poetry challenges symbolic relations between various Englishes, Spanish, and Spanglish as vehicles of cultural identities bound within social orders and nation states, and international markets. I celebrate cultural collisions of migrants/immigrants in new surroundings, forms of social inequality and cultural capital with the themes of international and national migration and in their neoliberal guises and the symbolic and “real” complexities this entails. I conceptualize language and identity, conquest, labor, race, gender, social justice, bilingualism, literacy, educational opportunity, and the reproduction of social inequity in my poems through images, symbols, and echoes of language rhythms.

### **postXican@**

The poems from *Tonalamatl, dream notes* speak to the contemporary postXican@ civil rights experience, resurfaced amid current immigration debates that touch millions of lives in the United States beyond the Southwest borderlands. I grew up in southern Arizona — referred to as *AZtlán* in my poems — and my aesthetic reflects the synergy that composes my imagined mythological roots with my twenty-first century hyphenated American identity, splashed with Spanish adopting the rhythms of English, and English inheriting the multiculturalism of Latin America. My poetry narrates border crossing both literally through my characters, but also figuratively across the limits of genres, forms, and languages. *Mis maestr@s* — Gloria Anzaldúa, Eduardo Corral, Carlos Fuentes, Rolando Hinojosa, Ada Limón, James Joyce, Charles Olson, and Alberto Baltazar Urista Heredia (Alurista) — have inspired me to affirm my existence as I negotiate identity and embrace hybridity. I have authored two novels in verse, *The Pocho Codex* and *The Xicano Genome*, both published by Editorial Paroxismo. The five poems in this sample come from my latest manuscript *Tonalamatl, dream notes*:

### **Tonalamatl**

Consequently seventeen point two-five percent of rail mileage  
mineral railroad owned leased pri-vah-tized . . .  
Amurkan capital assumes complete control  
of Meskin railroads / oil / agriculture / & mining

Steven Alvarez

& biggest share of financial structuring  
of telegraphs / telephones / & urban transport  
O Mexico / passed into network webbed of Amurkan economic interests  
conquering world markets & so far from dios & so  
close / just yonder along that fence yes &  
uye / & vayan con dios cabrones b/c Amurkans don't espeak Spanish  
“. . . large numbers of foreign companies / most of them Amurkan  
“entered Messico as lows extrahnhayroes became interested in industry  
“/ los Messacains gradually withdrew / . . . ” jumpin borders indeed  
our United States of Amurka  
for:  
from 1900-1910  
USA slid into Mexica  
100% red/white/blue Amurkan  
chorizo  
& left next morn w/ more  
than one-quarter  
of that neighbor's national wealth  
yea that's freedom / for some  
1880-1910  
swaths of land expropriations during Diaz dictatorship  
occurred along or on planned railroad routes  
powder in big wind  
& Sr. Holy Ford: *figate: I was sent from highest heaven  
endowed w/ special knowledge of industry / I use  
good grammar / I stand up straight / & I believe  
I do mankind most good making cars  
that's my business / & you know what else  
that's beautiful b/c industry is culture / b/c  
culture is practice / & that's beautiful . . .  
everything shd be a thing of beauty—  
well thought out & well methodical . . .*

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¿Aye?

indeed: sd one Zukofsky: *railways & highways have tied  
blood of farmland & town  
& the chains  
speed wheat to machine*  
& so if ye can't win them  
run to them & join them  
go Messkins git on up 'ere to 'murka but don't get too comfy beaner  
ye're allowed a bit but not too much don't be stingy now  
hey there's their tierra over there  
otra tierra mahs aya  
trickle trickle picked wind  
& off roars & gray & more gray  
nopales fat w/ life paddles & paddles of it  
& sigh & stomp  
rain / sweet come w/ me  
waves & night & branching  
see there's world there—more—over there  
there's world there—more world—move there

### **Tula**

land of red daylight—on rim of some great sea—& his face reflected in  
ocean—  
& sporting blue guayabera—his reflection clothed in garments  
of silversheen foil—& his ¡youth!—& his reflection—wanders onto  
that beach—w/ a bonfire—intowhich it hurls itself—¿himself? —  
& it/he burns—ashes & smoke rising . . .  
cries of birds    ¡ATENCIÓN!                    ¡ATENCIÓN!  
¡ATENCIÓN!  
   cacatúa    cacatúa  
   ¡ATENCIÓN!                    ¡ATENCIÓN!  
¡ATENCIÓN!

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& riot of bright gold— circular until fire dies—& Chaley in boat ¿what the fuck?

—& Chaley's reflection's heart rises—still pumping hard—¡yikes!

transforms into a star . . . & his body into light—

& Chaley—in flowerstrewn hall folks weep on jade staircases . . . bunches

of emeralds quetzal plumes green again—red quacamaya . . . heavy sky raining stars—stars fell on AZtlán—arches of sky crack—Pleiades striking

dumb—yes Chaley—let yr cock glide forward in radiance—yes—

sky answers back pink radiance—godly gold clouds—splashing stars—

odor of Death precedes his body . . . ¿is there anyone who wd weep

for me? asks Chaley—La Pelona wd weep for me—O—tears

12 cubits long—smell coriander & ambergris—& he thinks if ye love

me take me w/ both hands—bless me who blesses—

suffer—destroy—& be certain . . . to merge my image w/ blossoms—open—

& dark under surfaces of clouds— / for whereas Yorope

conquered these Amurkas La Llorona: to good Xochitl: malignant

Chaley: to badness & bed La Pelona: reader sd never experienced in July:

Chaley:

toward Pancho-Frank (Segundo): weight of Amurkan pressures / Xochitl:

O groaning

refuses to buy that: guilt & more—¿O no? no no no yr heat: ¿jade? ¿flowers

of cacao? ¿fragrant lilies? ¿blooming? ¿a ohuaya? ¿ye come—mmm—smiling

flowers? ¿lay on mat of flowers? ¿us? ¿intertwined rootless flowers? ¿from within yr

flowerplumes sing? ¿ahua yyao ayya iye? OK: that's good OK órale

### McTlán

& when he arrived this güerita La Muerte hooves clacking on tilefloor grabbed him by his left arm & prophesied some strange space: *for when arrived at país / Nueva Yorrr*

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w/ his Tio's ashes in tinbox & w/ highest aims in this world / to feel co-ways to alleviate

legs of fatigue for eleven days of walking hours I am 174 cm tall . . .

si afresco you w/ massage I will darte so you obtain sentirte papi disfrutalo

I am warm woman beautiful yr hearth for firing well & good sweet & yammy  
& into his palm she pressed this bit before she patted his cheek repeating  
stonecactus fruit Chaley stonecactus tall gamecock who won multiple pits / but  
w/ this Pocho

he met one fierce cockerel who pecked his comb sure enough she asked him  
¿who ye be?

& he sd to her I am Chaley Chastitellez adjusting his calzones / shifting  
weight

from huarache to huarache beyond them narrow trail w/ barbed wire &  
nopal thickets there

quiet / serene early morning mountain slope darkness cool / air fresh after  
long night rain

& to that broad valley below eight barrios each w/ its own chapel & saint  
so forget yr harina tortillas & beans comparable to plucking a handful of  
eyelashes & rubbermeat & get yr ham & whitebread—hahm 'n' ecks—  
olé—

for here in McTlán / a place completely w/o consequence en serio

faraway lands of tlapatl / datura stamonium nanacatl / teonanacatl / godflesh  
bitter mushrooms which give fleshy visions bitter sight / washed down w/  
a cold pulqazo

w/o consequence / Death already / then w/o will McTlán being

complete w/ all modern lucksuries including plastics / oils / slaves  
whipped / jornaleros / Japanese internment camps / KKKs &c & fine  
panLatinAmurkan hospitalities

gold overestimated here claro yes but Chaley Chastitellez : puro storyteller  
& La Muerte / La Pelona can do nothing but him embrace & she rubs her  
baldhead

on his shoulders & there are great rejoicings & sports for the next eight  
days / & visions

& vision & then they went down to the shit set shit to sail forth on the godly sea

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*forth Yucatán forth Isla Blanca forth San Juan de Ulua burned some copal & pinche Diaz sowed his pips pues he knows too people will say these old stories have nothing to do w/ history tell no more—but Tío already married La Marcaida / la güera & as he ate more she grew thinner*

*& Chaley's dead guilt sent him to this Pelona to her underworld he descended / cast into water*

*into cave from crag . . . in the distance roars from Yanquigohome Stadium . . .*

*put yrself in those chords Chastitellez / into snare let yrself*

*not escape / yr faults: deadly—destroying / ¡savage! mayhap ye've retracted . . . ¿or have ye*

*swallowed yr stench?—¿yr rottenness? ¿yr blackness? ¿yr faith? ugly*

*putrescent rotten forth 500 years conqueror & as fog lifts eight pueblos merge & city squeezed between mountains & sea—hugging Alaskan ports rocky island coast smoke from setting to setting / obsidianflavored smoke . . . imagine dead imagine & green raw materials of social readymade here hey hey heya / sez some tourist brushing Chaley's shoulder shrugging as he passes & some gentleman from this yellow storefront asks if Chaley's*

*looking for one maybe two quality Ay-Kay handcrafted embroidered goods made in southeast Hacia yes longer he stands here in Alaska longer & more eloquent he becomes maybe less brutish & after all this ¿why? Chaley ¿why do ye want to imagine that ye conduct yr own train*

*of thought? for bueno: te la crees muy muy carbon little nations in yr stupid soul shd shutup*

*& lose yr gall & open those crusty eyes she shuckin pearls*

*from oysters her laugh w/ his self-mexreccating jokes*

*& if he cd if he cd antes / before if Chaley . . . pues pues pues pues vision perfected products & services changed & exchanged at everfaster*

*rates / & the knowledge to design & create value efficiently again to market / & mark & market it effectively & to be becomingly true . . . bohrdars we don' need no stinkin vordhers*

*PERO: vision vision incense / dance / drum / vision*

*intense vision a donde vas Tenochititlán no puedo más ¡all common knowledge comin right on thru! ¡mande capitán! ¡en chingakay see! common knowledge diffused . . .*



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goes into land of Dead—McTlán—yr stench / rottenness reaching  
entire world—& at that instant on his pipi: dead condom filled  
w/ black beetles / scratching / crawling & she / La Muerte remains panting  
. . . coveting / thirsting for that & hungry for Chaley Mister / ye're a goodboy  
*but just of yr own volition ye defile yrself—dishonor yrself / dirty yrself*  
*cast yrself into plumpy excrement—into ¡filth!*

*b/c ye have found pleasure in vice ergo as penis penance do this: pass twice daily  
twigs thru yr earlobes once thru yr tongue esp. b/c of yr adultery b/c ye have  
hurt ye have harmed yr neighbor w/ yr lousy poetry La Muerte's voice now  
sumtotal of contrary chords—kisslurp / & suck that juice—¡O!—music /  
music sueñorita / ¡how he mutilates yr harmonies!*

### 7 history

*legit copy, MS 57462f-4 Amatl paper screenfold fragment painted both sides  
(first draft) / Late August*

shortly before the twelve  
franciscans arrived in México  
to covert those yndios to X  
    Xian men o wisdom & Xian  
men had discourse—  
    1524

*Xianization not same*

*operation as Hispanization*

12 explain to nobles & Tlatoani their rules  
    of god's agents  
    & his empire  
*y aquí señoresnuestras*  
& here our lords  
    glyph  
    these teules who offer  
    goods

the tail the

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wing offer

incense feathered serpents

glyph / glyph

WORLD KNOWERS

blood letting

night divided

divine water fire

precious breath world                      they sd

robes from clouds the fog

from inside immense water—

struck off their heads & reattached them to their nalgas

Chaley's spirit double / his nahual / sd

& it responded “. . .”

glyph

smash his face w/ rabbit-jar

glyph

*bring book painting celestial*

*western magic*

“los que estan mirando”

leyendo

los que cuentan

todas las naciones / por barbaras / y de baxo metal

que ayan sido

glyph

. . . oye oye give us a chorus . . .

PLUMED SNAKE TREE SLEAK FREEZE BREATH IF BLEED

PLUMED SNAKE TREE SLEAK FREEZE BREATH IF BLEED

PLUMED SNAKE TREE SLEAK FREEZE BREATH IF BLEED

BREATH IF BLEED

BREATH IF BLEED

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. . . & the brown slaves sing . . .

PLUMED SNAKE TREE SLEAK FREEZE BREATH IF BLEED

PLUMED SNAKE TREE SLEAK FREEZE BREATH IF BLEED

PLUMED SNAKE TREE SLEAK FREEZE BREATH IF BLEED

BREATH IF BLEED

BREATH IF BLEED

### **border**

#### **lands**

0:03viable ascii up here in the tallest mexico is standing right behind me is

0:09the border that separates the united states of america from arizona

0:12& if you look up you can see that the facts over in this area does not

0:16actually have

0:18flyer on it & there are possible ways to get over this ants & i watch some

0:23clips online people of actually what they do is get on each other's tag

0:27either on top of

0:31& it's like a human ladders so to speak & then once they get to the

0:34topic

0:36all right

0:38it up with that that bear

0:39you don't really want clamp

0:41in one of the uh...

0:42the medal ratings

0:44a matter of balance & gymnastics in if you fall down there's a bunch of friends

0:48he catches are the largest

0:50i think it took about six to eight people to actually achieve it & they

0:54got over to the other side of it

0:56know if you look this first of all the way down

0:59maricella

1:01against the next day because all the way back down this way

1:04it in the next eight days here the united states

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1:06bring about possible

1:08someone wdn't do that here in the dallas mexico does on this side effects

1:12of the u\_s\_ government sort of parking lot area

1:15everything is monitored

1:16but if you look at all the way down there you see that it's a residential

1:19area news really nothing

1:21um... if you keep going further down on the arizona side

1:24& they're actually is that a lot of border crossings though this may seem

1:27like the only way that is happy because people have seen it one of the other

1:31things that's happening right here in the colleagues mexico

1:34underground

1:36people actually teaching tunnels right here i mean not not in this uh... if you

1:40can see

1:40they may start to your or start in one of the restaurants & then work their

1:44way underground made solid start

1:47which actually proven it caught people in the active traveling their way

1:51unfortunately the reason this is happening his pickup of because of

1:55narcotics abuse from americans

1:57the money is cutting into mexico

2:00fully legal drug trade & the mexican people just makin sure get as much of it

2:04now if you'd heard this cystic kept the mexicans sitting on the mexican society

2:08here wd crumble in two years

2:11used a lot of all their legal drug money became over the border

2:15& here's the other really sad thing about what happens on the united states

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- 2:19when we enter into the dollar's mexico
- 2:21we just walk right in there's no metal detectors there's no scatters no one has
- 2:26bred any identification
- 2:27to buy it gone here in the college mexico cdn't do it if you go over to
- 2:32the united states there are so many laws that allow you to have attempted to have
- 2:36a clean record at although violence that's happening significantly further
- 2:40down toward the middle of mexico but that's how much foreigners
- 2:43those guns are coming into the country
- 2:46from the united states destroying dot
- 2:48ordered communities side
- 2:50mexico because they really don't have to get the the tourist money coming in
- 2:54because the community has just been
- 2:57right now what i mean the colleagues mexico the u\_s\_ government is seying
- 3:00that we shd be here because there is an actual warning out
- 3:04because she wasn't happy daytime
- 3:06my experience here in a college mexico
- 3:08has been absolutely
- 3:09the wonderful i feel quite safe I'm not going to stay here though
- 3:20maybe one day we won't have morris maybe are going to have chips in the more
- 3:23monitor where people are every single day of the league of their life now when
- 3:27i got back into the united states no i think you know i am going to have to
- 3:30show identification my bags will be his words coming into the dollars max walk
- 3:36arrived & that's the situation here & the prices

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3:42suspicious defenses which stops people from the side to go to that side to get

3:45jobs & education

3:47& i thought it was probably not psychotic instrumental work for medical

3:51workforce

3:52comments about it

3:54farmer i will ask it does mexico