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CULTURE AND THE "OTHER": THE SOCIOLOGICAL MEDIATOR BETWEEN LATINO MIMETIC DESIRE AND IRANIAN NOSTALGIA IN EXILE

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Abstract

This article examines the cultural hybridity of Iranian American and Latinx/a/o identity within the American hegemonic state. The work excavates peer-reviewed sources on postcolonial[1] narratives, the politics of identity, and the dyadic characteristics of multiculturalism within the civic realm. Gloria Anzaldúa's (1987) *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* can be used to understand how the theoretics of racial double-consciousness is prominent in both Iranian American and Latinx/a/o backgrounds, through cultural representation and labeling practice. In understanding ethnic ontology and how ethnic groups redefine their social reality, I correlate the concept of 'ethnoraciality' with racial 'double-consciousness' according to Anzaldúa (1987). By reviewing cultural media representations in the form of Latino mimetic desire and Spanglish code-switching employed on screen, I center its amplified settler-colonial narrative.Ancient-modern stories promote a reconditioning of the exilic Iranian American and Latinx/a/o subject, while helping explain their representational employment in racial double-lens theory (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981). Ultimately, I question the ethnic factors that define one's homeland in both the allegorical and literal sense. Homeland, as it is understood in its ahistorical, and exilic geographic nature, overshadows the academic prospects of modernity, and maintains a convoluted residence within the Iranian American and Latinx/a/o psyche.

Keywords

Culture, Sociological, Identity, Iranian American, Latinx/a/o, Hegemonic, Postcolonial, Colonialism, Media, Race, Ethnic, Mestiza, Double-Consciousness

Introduction

Nothing happens in the "real" world unless it first happens in the images in our heads.

—Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*

Set forth by the vehicles of invented tradition, sociological identity can be represented as an extension of the self and an expression of cultural relations to systems of domination, privilege, and subordination. These sites of difference serve as arenas of power with respect to the oppressed, who come to see the experience of themselves as

[1] The broad tendency in literary studies rooted in earlier theories of Third World studies and commonwealth literature, broadly defined as literary works written in English in the decolonized nations of the former British Empire; postcolonialism attempts to analyse the global effects of European colonialism. Though Said's (1978) *Orientalism* is largely considered as one of the primary texts of postcolonial theory, both the discipline and term are residues of the late 1980s and the 1990s. The field's origins and terminology were traced by Hodge and Mishra (1991), and was broadly canonized by *The Empire Writes Back* (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1989). Influential scholars in postcolonial studies came in the mid-1990s. The resonance and wide recognition of the discipline was promoted by the success of writer Salman Rushdie; as the title of *The Empire Writes Back* was significantly borrowed from Rushdie's newspaper article that made a playful allegory to *The Empire Fights Back*, the second film to the *Star Wars* trilogy (Hodge & Mishra, 1991; as cited in Macey, 2001, p. 304).

"Other"—strange and alien to the dominant culture. 'Culture'[2]; based on its designative meaning in the social sciences, is used to connote an environment, hegemony, and process by which individuals are embedded. This is overseen at the top by a superstructure and at the base by a series of methodological attitudes.[3] In culture, scholars acquire a wide range of meanings conveyed by the expressions *belonging to* or *in a* place, being *at home in a place.*[4] The vast cultural-national designation of Western tradition as a privileged hegemony carries with it distinctions between 'ours' and 'theirs', 'proper' and 'improper', 'higher' and 'lower'; they are to be discovered everywhere in the quasi-subjects of sociology. The transmission of culture is a process of reinforcement, by which the hegemony adds to itself the advantages given to it by its sense of national identity, its morality, its branch of the state, its exterior branches that reassert itself, and by its exonerated power as a master over everything not itself (Said, 1983). This entangled nature of cultural histories with new collective identities provides citizens with a name; a location; and discipline of their own.

One may deduce the ethnic-historical and personal as two constitutive elements, inextricably linked. Though the author begins and ends somewhere specific in their studies; depending on the location they have mapped out, no author is representative of their respective locations. This schism between the ethnic-historical and personal is profound, because the former element cannot exist without the latter, yet they may operate as oil and vinegar, repelling at times of academic pursuit of ethical knowledge, and pragmatic intellectualism. The oxymoronic tug-of-war remains continuous in academe, as the scholar gains inclination to pursue further knowledge in the subject. A researcher may conceive such sociological "boxes" of 'race', 'class', 'nation', and 'ableism' as best understood by their political leverages; used by both the dominant and the oppressed for means of tokenizing claim to power, resources, interests, and ultimately, social identity.[5] Each subject thus becomes a tool in the post-industrial box set, serving as a vehicle in the system of race and ethnic relations at large.

Sociology and its sister field; the interdisciplinary, is not a rigid category, and cannot pigeonhole a scholar into a narrow field or frame of thought. With scholastic tenacity, the interdisciplinary requires and complements a rigorous eschatological examination of historical traditions and chronological events, continuous critical thinking of the ethnohistorical nature of such traditions, and persistence in the understanding of cultural histories. Further, the field can never be anti-disciplinary or reducible to any single discipline in methodology or assumption, due to its revising nature of incorporating and interweaving the compounding intersections of race and nation. The harmonious fusion of the interdisciplinary with that of the ethnohistorical; along with its temporal study and incisive understanding, mitigates an inter- and intra-personal dialogue, and creates a newfound lens by which to view the current environment. An analysis of the Oriental as a standard adjective used to describe the Persian within oriental studies can be employed as one frame of analysis to examine media postcolonial narratives and exilic literature of the Ancient and modern. Oriental studies asks why an emphasis on global historicism is repeatedly marketed to prey on a Western desire for the transnational, the consumption of historical knowledge, and exercise of narrative power.

An Analysis of Global Historicism and Two-Dimensional Cultural Representations

Professor Curtis Marez's study of Latinx media representation at the University of California, San Diego analyzes the ethno-racial parameters of race and ethnography, particularly in his detailed review of "From Mr. Chips to Scarface, or Racial Capitalism in Breaking Bad." The article deduces replicated and dramatically manufactured representations of "Latinoness" that turns viewers away from the lived realities of working-class men of color. The commanding nature of White over brown bodies not only speaks to the unfolding of socioeconomic hierarchies, and colonial labor relations existing within the United States, but to the rampant spread of a manufactured and two-dimensional cultural representation; one reductively employed by means of an imaginary geography, space, time, and location. As Marez notes, "we can read the 'browning' of Walter White as a character-based representation of how Anglo America incorporates such workers by consuming their labor" (2013). Marez continuously replays the designative concept of mimetic desire that becomes amplified on screen. The mirroring of

[2] Can be material or non-material. The material and non-material aspects of culture are linked, and physical objects often symbolize cultural ideas. Culture can be reviewed in the context of three theoretical perspectives: functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism (Keirns et al., 2021).

[3] Edward Said (1983) derives the notion of class struggle from the Marxist triangular formula of society, encompassing the base and superstructure of society.

[4] Refer to Said's (1983) *the World the Text and the Critic* for meanings of exile in literary narratives.

[5] Refer to *The Poverty of Theory* by E.P. Thompson, particularly the illustrated model of Althusser's Marxist Orrery to describe the societal superstructure and base, illustrated by turning the handle of theoretical practice (p. 134). The figure titled "The Motor of History: Class Struggle" may also be used as an analogy to describe the bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie, proletariat, and the peasantry. When left to run automatically, the motions are dictated by four globes of the true and false consciousness of the bourgeoisie and proletariat (p. 135).

behavior in "becoming Latino" in the marketing media ploy of the television show *Breaking Bad* (Gilligan et al., 2008-2013) overshadows the Anglo settler-colonial foothold that has sprouted low wage immigrant labor in the American capitalist sector.

The Dialogue of Racial Double-Consciousness

A critical race lens of Moraga and Anzaldúa's (1981) *This Bridge Called My Back* goes a step further in magnifying the intersectional parameters of gender, race, ethnography, and "belonging" that lay the building blocks to critical race theory, while referencing a racial 'double-consciousness'. The dialogue on the level of the intra-mental asks the self-reflective question of where 'home' is within the parameters of the socio-historical, and intergenerational. The need to assign multiple registers of existence is an effect of the belief that knowledge of one's subjectivity cannot be arrived at through a single discursive theme. A case in point is the literary discourse on national collectives and national culture as an emerging academic discipline; one lay by the building blocks of pre-Third Wave Latinx theorist Gloria Anzaldúa. Anzaldúa's (1987) *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* deduces that identity is formulated by national culture, and produces meaning about "the nation" one can identify with. Cultural identity and nationhood are contained in the stories with which one is told about, memories with which one connects its present with its past, and images which are constructed of it. An ethnic studies scholar may deduce an allegory as an adverbial form of *allos* ['other'], or a structure of narrative or visual image, whose literal or obvious meaning masks one or more other meanings, often with a didactic purpose (Macey, 2001). The Ancient migration of the Aztecs thus becomes a foundational history referenced by Anzaldúa in her continuous allegories of the pre-Columbian serpent female as a dichotomous mythical image; signifying her dual divine-human nature; one Ancient, and one modern.

Fast-forwarding to the Mexican American War preceding the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, which led to further displacement of the Mexican peoples due to settler-colonial law. Yet, the pinnacle of debate pertains to contemporary discourses on migrants, minorities, and citizenship, which are to be the discovered anxieties of what it means to "belong," or to be ostracized from the national collective. Academe has thus housed a flourishing dilemma of how questions of "belonging" can be reconceptualized within the context of multicultural societies, along with structures of domination that define where home is, and for who it belongs. Thus, it is probably true that an individual consciousness going against the surrounding environment, and allied to the contesting movements and values, is an isolated voice out of place but very much *of* the place (Said, 1983). A sociologist may question the structures of domination that contrive identity, and how the creation of national identity based on settler discourse escalates resistance to the inherent sublimated forms of ethnocentrism and nationalism. In cross-examining Anzaldúa and Moraga's (1981) racial double-lens, with Marez's (2013) mimetic desire, a sociologist may ask—how do historical accounts produce a double-lens by which to view current ethnic identity?

Exilic Narratives and "Ethnoraciality"

One may consider the underlying social mechanisms that create a situation of exilic narratives among Iranian Americans by critically thinking about society and social processes. The term 'ethnoraciality', elaborated by Mosi Adesina Ifatunji of the University of Madison-Wisconsin, defines the gradations of racism in the forms of individual and societal factors, and the structural frameworks that guide racist expressions and behaviors. According to Ifatunji (2024) on the term 'ethnoracial'; "most seem to use it to avoid getting entangled in the often contentious and still ongoing debate on ontologies for race and ethnicity. That is, most seem to use this term to avoid questions and concerns associated with the underlying 'nature' of these group formations, and, instead, seek to focus the readers' attention on their descriptions of and explanations for the associated intergroup identities, conflicts and disparities" (p. 301). I evaluate the conceptual nuance and complexity of race and ethnicity when defining Iranian American identity, along with the effects of prejudice and racism on this group. By understanding the ethnic ontology described by Ifatunji (2024), and how ethnic groups define their social reality under the hegemonic order, I correlate ethnoraciality with the topic of racial double-consciousness; one based on the theoretics of Anzaldúa's (1987) *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza.* The intersectional parameters of race, ethnography, and "belonging" illustrate the dividing factors residing within the cultural psyche, in terms of both the Ancient and modern.

The "Persian" Self-Categorization

"Iranian American" has been traditionally used interchangeably with "Persian American," partly due to the Western world understanding Iran to be known as "Persia." Most Iranian Americans arrived in the U.S. after 1979, due to the Iranian revolution and fall of the Persian monarchy that has led to over 40% residing in California, and specifically, Los Angeles; burgeoning a distinctive ethnic enclave called Tehrangeles (Gutierrez et al., 2023).

Figure 1. "I am a Persian Girl!"
Description: A modern take on an Iranian woman, wearing a scarf and dark slim-framed sunglasses with thin eyebrows.

There is the practice and tendency among Iranian Americans to self-categorize as "Persian" rather than Iranian in order to dissociate from the Islamic regime of Iran that has taken charge since 1978-79, and also to distinguish themselves as being part of a Persian ethnicity, which comprises 65% of Iran's population (Gutierrez et al., 2023). Furthermore, "While the majority of Iranian Americans come from Persian backgrounds, there is a significant number of non-Persian Iranians such as Azeris and Kurds within the Iranian American community, leading some scholars to believe that the label "Iranian" is more inclusive, since "Persian" excludes non Persian minorities" (Gutierrez et al., 2023). The "Persian" versus "Iranian" label alludes to the sociopolitical nuance and complexity of race and ethnicity when defining Middle Eastern identity, along with the effects of prejudice and racism on these groups. Although cultural perspectives describing the crossing from "Iranian" to "Persian" have gradually evolved over the course of the last forty-six years, there is a growing phenomenon facing the Iranian American community of what it means to be Persian in the face of American exceptionalism under the civic realm.

Latinx/a/o Community Building and Multiple Colonialism(s)

While the usage of 'Persian' denotes a cultural identity and a conflicting sociopolitical narrative, the Latinx/a/o community captures and reflects the nuanced difference among subpopulations and identities that comprise their subgroups; establishing their language and culture as not monolithic, but rather, very diverse.

Increasingly, the similarities among Latino and Hispanic subgroups are complimented by the burgeoning differences in how they view themselves, and how they see each other, along with how they wish to be identified in the broader sociopolitical milieu. Both language and culture play an indispensable role in the growth of the current and future Latinx/a/o community. Thus, literary sources and academia must reflect the nuanced changes among subpopulations and identities that comprise the Latinx/a/o community. As sociologists, it is imperative to create literature that is relevant to the language and culture of the group, along with one that gives opportunity for the posterity to discern, appreciate, and represent the community of Latinx/a/o peoples. The importance of racialization of Latinx's as described by Laura Chávez-Moreno, alludes to its founding in the Spanish language and Spanish/English bilingualism. Chávez-Moreno shares her personal experience as an immigrant adolescent and how she views bilingualism serving as a preservation of her culture. She argues that bilingualism helps strengthen familial ties with an individual's traditional heritage (Murillo et al., 2021, p. 283-4). Chávez-Moreno further provides personal narratives of how society and academic research continue to lack understanding and attention of the Latinxa/o/ community, while centering the vitality of racializing Latinx/a/o culture. She presents a coherent argument of Latinx/a/o as a very distinct race affected by multiple colonialisms; through both original, and modern colonialism. Learning specifically about Latinxs will help contribute to the greater society in having a more concrete comprehension of their race, one separate and individual from that of the White population (p. 284-5).

Cultural Instability in Code-Switching and Media Bilingualism

Both Latinx/a/o individuals and Iranian Americans must master the dualistic switch between English to Spanish, and English to Persian. Muysken (2011) defines codeswitching as "the use of more than one language during a single communicative event."[6] Due to limited media sources on the Persian-English formal and informal conversations of Persian-English bilinguals, besides that of the queer Iranian-American character, Leila, who code-switches between Persian slang and English in *The Persian Version* (Keshavarz, 2023), this section will review the linguistic code-switch that has been grandiosely memorialized in *Tortilla Soup* (Ripoll, 2002). While *Spanglish* (Brooks, 2004) includes the Hollywood-infused story of a Mexican immigrant, Flor, narrated from the lens of her daughter, Cristina Moreno as she writes her Princeton University application essay, *Tortilla Soup* (Ripoll, 2002) covers the story of a single father, Martín Naranjo, played by Hector Elizando; the former owner of a successful Mexican restaurant who copes with raising three girls under strict tradition and mandatory family dinners. Martín cooks meals of garden

[6] Refer to Rahimi and Dabaghi's (2013) "Persian-English codeswitching: A test of the Matrix Language Frame (MLF) model."

avocados and cactus leaves picked at home in an early 2000s culturally-infused cinematic fashion. He lives with his three daughters: Leticia played by Elizabeth Peña, a religiously devoted spinster teacher; Carmen played by Jacqueline Obradors, a beautiful corporate "wheeler-dealer"; and Maribel played by Tamara Mello; the youngest daughter and student (Stark, 2002).

Figure 2. Movie still from *Tortilla Soup* (Ripoll, 2002).
Description: Martín Naranjo has a homemade dinner with two of his daughters who are at traditional odds with regards to the bicultural views that conflict with their work lives.

Much less to viewers liking is the character Nikolai Kinski as the Brazilian boyfriend, who appears completely distracted by his difficulty in pronouncing lines in English as he uses South American bravado to win over the punk-alternative daughter Maribel Naranjo. This ultimately destabilizes the dialectics of the local and global in the film (Li, 2017), as viewers are torn between a focus on language adjustments between two regions, and communicative events on-screen. The film encompasses family conversations in which the father mediates discussions between English and Spanish. The term 'Spanglish' [*espanglis* or less commonly *espanglès*] is viewed multifariously and mainly derogatorily, due to its English contact serving an excessive and "unstable" effect. The action of English-Spanish code-switching between two languages has been "mainly and most characteristically encountered among U.S. Hispanics and has attracted most notoriety" (Pountain, 2007). The haphazard code-switch in *Tortilla Soup* (Ripoll, 2002) can be viewed as an artificial language construction and phenomenon rooted in abstract media characterizations. Further, as Maribel begs her father to move out of the family home to live with her boyfriend without the prospect of marriage; a request influenced by the elder sister Carmen fulfilling her business prospects without marital commitment, the film discovers the give and take of American and traditional culture.

Discourse and Racism: The Elites and Notes on Cultural Hybridity

Very rarely is the notion of racism associated with that of discourse. The more prominent connections would be prejudice, discrimination, slavery, or apartheid, among a plethora of concepts connected to "ethnic" or "racial" domination and inequality discussed elsewhere in academic scholarship. Even now, although discourse may appear as just a "word," and cannot do physical damage, discourse at first occurs in verbal form of communication, such as that of text, talk, and communicative patterns. In general, particularly in current information societies, discourse lives in the root of racism. This is true for the majority of racism that performs harm at the hands of the elites. The definition of these elites is not merely in terms of material resources that serve as the underpinning roots of power; through that of wealth or other monetary resources, but rather, the tokens that pertain to symbolic "capital," and particularly what is considered preferential access to public discourse (Dijk, 2008, p. 148). The political, bureaucratic, corporate, media, and scholarly facets of society supersede the most vital arenas of everyday life; to the way minorities live, and how they are labeled in the civic realm. Elites control entry, residence, work, housing, education, welfare, health care, knowledge, information, and culture (Dijk, 2008, p. 145). This is done mostly by the action of writing or speaking; i.e., in advertising, textbooks, news reports, job interviews, scholarly articles, movies and television shows, all among many other mediums of elite discourse. This is also accurate for other social practices targeted against minorities, as research suggests that discursive reproductions of racism within society are not evenly distributed over all members of the civic realm. For the purposes of this article, I explain how and why racism takes place within the mediums of public discourse, the intra-mental embodiments of Ancient and modern understandings of the self, and general civic labeling practices. While separating from an analysis of their structures and cognitive processes, it is imperative to examine the properties of the social context of discourse; such as who the speakers and writers are when understanding identities of Latinx/a/o individuals and Iranian Americans.

Cultural Hybridity and Postmodern Critiques

The celebration of subaltern voices from the margin foregrounds the transgressive potential for cultural hybridity. Hybridity is illustrated as the ability to subvert the categorical oppositions and ideological movements of ethnicity, in order to provide a basis for cultural reflexivity and change (Werbner, 1997; as cited in May, 2008, p. 132).

Resonating within the discourses of hybridity and the postmodern[7] umbrella, the new social agents are multiple; plural agents engaged and immersed in a variety of struggles and social movements (Giroux, 1997; as cited in May, 2008, p. 132). Paradoxically, hybridity theory is entirely opposed to universalism, traditionals, and ideas of unitary ethnic, or linear cultural rootedness. Compared to postmodernism's opposition to "totalizing metanarratives," supporters of hybridity emphasize the malleable and nonsynchronous identities that are the norm for marginalized peoples. This stance centers the sociohistorical constructedness of culture, and its changeability. It also establishes local narratives; or *petits récits* as described by Lyotard (1984), to oppose the "totalizing narratives" of ethnicity (May, 2008, p. 132). This antithesis to totality and cultural essentialism in hybridity theory, and its substitution by local identities can be interpreted in one arena to multiculturalism, which is comparable to the politics of difference.

A Double-Conscious Critique of the Ancient and Modern

The point and gradient of multiple colonialisms allude directly to the theoretics of Anzaldúa's (1987) *Boderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. Anzaldúa explains that identity is formulated by national culture and produces meaning about "the nation" one can identify with. Cultural identity and nationhood are contained in the stories with which one is told about, memories with which one connects its present with its past, and images which are constructed of it. These stories can also allude to the exilic narratives of Iranian Americans, who house the dual identity; both Ancient and modern with regards to their Achaemenid roots. Although not much scholarly literature has been written on the Ancient identification current Iranian Americans hold with their B.C. era Aryan[8] roots, a pseudo-sociological principle introduced by Maghbouleh (2017) in *The Limits of Whiteness: Iranian Americans and the Everyday Politics of Race*, this article deduces the racial double-consciousness presented by Anzaldúa (1987) when describing her dual identity; the Ancient Aztec and modern mestiza.

Anzaldúa (1987) claims her Ancient Aztec heritage in the section "*Tlilli, Tlapalli /* The Path of the Red and Black Ink," reiterating the need for a secluded sensory-deprived environment to invoke her double-identity, one invigorated by means of disengagement and escape from the "animated story" of American hegemonic reality. Similar to a storyteller, she views her own story as a third-person narrator, with a director, screenwriter, camera operator, all while she is the actor and background aesthetics of sand and fog. In this pseudo-Oriental and ahistorical double-reality, she becomes the dialogue between herself and *el espíritu del mundo* [the spirit of the world] (p. 92). In the process, Anzaldúa alters herself and the world around her. She explains her dual nature in the clause below:

> Sometimes I put the imagination to a more rare use. I choose words, images, and body sensations and animate them to impress them on my consciousness, thereby making changes in my belief system and reprogramming my consciousness. This involves looking my inner demons in the face, then deciding which I want in my psyche. Those I don't want, I starve; I feed them no words, no images, no feelings. I spend no time with them, share not my home with them. Neglected, they leave. This is harder to do than to merely generate "stories." I can only sustain this activity for a few minutes...I write myths in me, the myths I am, the myths I want to become. The word, the image and the feeling have a palpable energy, a kind of power. *Con imágenes domo mi miedo, cruzo los abismos que tengo por dentro. Con palabras me hago piedra, pájaro, puente de serpientes arrastrando a ras del suelo todo lo que soy, todo lo que algún día seré.*
>
> [With images I tame my fear, I cross the abysses within. With words I become stone, bird, a bridge of serpents, dragging along the ground all that I am, all that I will one day be] (p. 92-3).

Whether Anzaldúa references her dual present and future self as a connecting thread to her Ancient Aztec[9] roots is not known for certain. However, scholars can deduce her continuous allegorical references that point to a mestiza double-consciousness; Ancient and modern, and a being that not only traverses time, but borderlands as well. Thus,

[7] Postmodernism is a term applied loosely, in most cases, to the wide variety of cultural practices and theoretical discourses associated with the experiences of postmodernity. It is usually juxtaposed with the modernism of the early twentieth century. Postmodernism, conjoined with 'deconstruction', became one of the main themes of 'poststructuralism'. The early references to postmodernism come from discussions of the visual arts and literature, particularly in the United States, and incorporate discussions of developments with architecture. The elements of contemporary philosophy, mainly that of the French, were then introduced into a wide and hot debate in the 1970s. The term 'postmodern' itself is much more dated, stemming from the anthology of Spanish and Hispanic poetry from 1882 to 1932 (Onis, 1934; as cited in Macey, 2001, p. 305-6). Here, the term is described as a reactionary tendency within modernism, and is contrasted with the *ultramodernismo* associated with Lorca, Borges, and Neruda. Twenty years later, the term was used by American poets Charles Olson and Robert Creeley. Later, the artistic groups of Pop Art began to challenge the modernist abstraction championed by Greenberg (Macey, 2001, p. 306).

[8] The Indo-European word for noble. *Eire* is the root word of Aryan, and through oral tradition was called "aryanema." In Avestan, *airyanema* [land of the noble] translates to "Ēran" in modern language.

[9] The Aztecs (the Nahuatl word for people of Aztlán) left the Southwest in 1168 A.D. (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 26).

her allegories transcend the past, present, and future to deduce the evil serpent fought within; an Ancient Aztec serpent starved for her own greater good. Readers can distinguish not only a fight between good and evil, but an allegory that bridges a connection between Ancient Aztec Nahuatl and Mithraic tradition preceding the state-sponsored Zoroastrian religion of the Achaemenid Period (550-332 B.C.E.).[10] According to Zoroaster[11] (d. 547-522 B.C.E.), the root of all universal cosmic meaning comes from *asha* [absolute truth]. Asha is the absolute truth and cosmic order, setting the universe in motion without chaos. The antithesis to asha is *druj* [chaos], setting the universe [asha] into turmoil and deceit. The guardian spirit, in the form of Ahura Mazda, comes from the word *urvan* [soul], symbolizing the "higher spirit." This particular fight between Ahura Mazda [higher spirit] and Druj [evil spirit] presents a recollection of one's Ancient roots that shapes both their present, and future self. The dual tug-of-war initiated between the two Mithraic spirits can parallel to Anzaldúa's (1987) narrative of the struggle of the inner: the Chicano, *indio*, American Indian, *mojado, mexicano,* immigrant Latino, Anglo in power, working class Anglo, and Asian-our psyches; all resembling the struggle that has always been inner; and played out in the outer terrains (p. 246).

Conclusion

One distinctive feature of the late 1990s has been the wide recognition of the theoretical centrality of race and ethnicity, along with its spread traversing the triumvirate of sociology, social anthropology, and history, into other disciplines (Bulmer & Solomos, 1999, p.2; as cited in Glavanis, 2008, p. 521). In another prominent collection called *Thinking Identities: Ethnicity, Racism and Culture,* Brah et al. (1999) speaks to the "fragmentation of social relations attributed to globalizing processes" (p.1). This is illustrated in the growing range of competing sociological attempts that speak to the perceived major transformations, and to the accepted centrality of "...identity at a time of rapid social and cultural change" (Brah et al., 1999; as cited in Glavanis, 2008, p. 521). As race and ethnicity have traveled from the margins of academia to integrate into contemporary social research, scholarship has centered the varying mechanisms by which the politics of difference and identity formation are constructed socially, and mediated and politicized within modernity (Brah et al., 1999; Bulmer & Solomos, 1999).

The recent cultural turn in the social sciences attributed to current scholarship on media postcoloniality and postcolonial narratives has implicitly challenged Western social science's "safe" principles that pertain to what social science scholarship should include, and leave out of the parameters of sociology. What has been recently challenged after the subaltern Third Wave is the modernization paradigm, which views modernity as inherently antithetical to communal and collective identities (Glavanis, 2008, p. 533). Within this context, the prominence of ethnicity as a structural and organizing principle for political action has regained academic credibility within the boundaries of modernity. Since the 1970s and 1980s, the most conventional Middle East scholarship, such as those of Edward Said, and that of Latinx postcolonial narrator Gloria Anzaldúa has been concerned mostly with the salience of traditional ethnic identities and primordial loyalties (Asad, 1973, 1993; Glavanis, 1990).

Ten empirical secondary sources can identify exilic narratives and racial double-consciousness within critical race theory and cultural studies: *The Empire writes back: Post-colonial literatures, theory and practice* (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1989), "Banality in cultural studies" (Morrison, 1988), "The Poetics and Practice of Iranian Nostalgia in Exile" (Naficy, 1991), *Orientalism* (Said, 1978), "Nostalgia-A Polemic" (Stewart, 1992), *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Stewart, 1984), and *The Ruins: Or, Meditation on the Revolutions of Empires: and the Law of Nature* (Volney, 1890). These secondary sources in the form of peer-reviewed articles and books help interrogate what we mean when speaking of critical race theory and postcolonial studies. Further, the mentioned texts enhance a critical review of the interpretation of Iranian exile and racial double-consciousness in various academic disciplines and areas of the social sciences, while offering a glimpse into "inter-psychic" nostalgia that survives through tangible reminders of the past. Nostalgia due to loss of homeland thus becomes the "representational practice among exiles" (Naficy, 1991, p. 287).

The acceptance of unequal power relations within the axes of race and nation highlight the fantasy and fiction of a "neutral" and "de-ethnicized" civic realm (May, 2008, p. 137). By understanding the fields of Middle East Studies, Latinx Studies and sociology, scholars contextualize from an evidenced approach, how Iranian American and Latinx/a/o daily societal-state interactions challenge the mechanisms that guide the "seemingly" static American civic realm. Therefore, a tenable multicultural frame of thought should be able to dismantle and deconstruct the neutral and linear nature of civicism; formally, the accepted universal thread of cultural values and discourses that

[10] Scholars lean towards 332 to 330 B.C.E. as the period of Alexander's conquest over The Persian Empire at the "Battle of Issus" (333 B.C.E.).

[11] At 30, Zoroaster had a vision by a river of seven bright beings coming out of the water. A class of creations including yazatas and demigods were seen in the vision. Ahura Mazda is viewed as in charge of the six divinities. The heptad angel beings are in charge of all creation.

serve as the lifeblood of the public sphere, and nation-state. Through a postcolonial analysis and a sociological acceptance, civicism—as it is formulated within the presupposed "pluralist dilemma" has never been neutral, despite the romanticized fiction of neutrality displayed by Reagan's cultural campaign. The sphere of public society within the hegemonic nation-state reflects a specific cultural and linguistic discourse of the dominant ethnic culture and group in the United States. The main detriment to minorities at the collective, individual, and intra-mental level has been the forced disempowerment of their own ethno-historical, cultural, and linguistic practices. Thus, culture is critically understood as a branch of the state, power structure, and discourse of inequality within the hegemonic social order, and has always been gatekept with an "Uncle Sam" dollar price for entry. Therefore, focus must be directed here to the mechanisms by which differing cultural knowledge(s) become instinctually and repetitively subjugated and demoralized, mainly through their hegemonies and misrepresentations; or "misrecognitions" (May, 2008, p. 137). If the concept of misrecognition is attained, the alternatives within postcolonial thinking can be feasible. The preceding subjugated forms of thought and cultural knowledge can then be reconsidered and mechanized within academe as counterhegemonic criticism to dominant forms of knowledge. Albeit, this goal within literary discussions may not suffice, as the integration and recognition of ethnic and cultural differences, even as they are coaligned with a criticism of larger-scale power dynamics, cannot resolve the issue of cultural and ethnic essentialism that is grounded within the bedrocks of society (May, 2008, p. 137).

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