VAMPIRES AS AGENTS OF COLONIZATION & COLONIALISM IN RECENT MEXICAN DIASPORIC GOTHIC LITERATURE

by

Anastacia A. Parks

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
The University of North Carolina at Charlotte
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in
Latin American Studies

Charlotte

2024

Approved by:

_____
Dr. David Dalton

_____
Dr. Anabel Buchenau

_____
Dr. Maya Socolovsky

ABSTRACT

ANASTACIA A. PARKS. Vampires as Agents of Colonization & Colonialism in Recent Mexican Diasporic Gothic Literature. (Under the direction of DR. DAVID DALTON).

This comparative literature thesis showcases a comparative analysis of two seminal works of Latine Gothic literature: *Mexican Gothic* by Silvia Moreno-Garcia and *Vampires of El Norte* by Isabel Cañas. Through a rigorous examination of these novels, the study delves into their intricate narratives and thematic underpinnings, which confront issues of colonization, capitalism, patriarchy, and resistance. Moreno-Garcia's *Mexican Gothic* employs vampirism as a potent symbol to unravel the complexities of colonial oppression and white supremacy, while Cañas' *Vampires of El Norte* explores similar themes through the lens of capitalist exploitation and patriarchal dominance. Of particular importance is the utilization of a mestiza protagonist in both novels which opens up a vital conversation surrounding resistance and identity within diasporic Latine cultures. The thesis critically evaluates the significance of these works within the realms of Gothic studies, Latine literature, and feminist criticism, highlighting their enduring relevance in contemporary socio-political contexts. Through a comparative analysis, the study offers intriguing insights into the shared concerns and divergent approaches of both novels, inviting readers to engage with the complexities of power, identity, and resistance in today's society.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I extend my sincere appreciation to my advisor, Dr. David Dalton, whose unwavering support and scholarly guidance have been indispensable throughout my academic endeavors. David's mentorship has been pivotal in recognizing that literature within a Latin American context is my true passion, guiding me through this transition from a historical focus. His commitment to fostering my intellectual growth, consistently offering guidance and encouragement regardless of time constraints, has been both exemplary and deeply valued.

I also want to extend my sincere gratitude to Dr. Maya Socolovsky and Dr. Anabel Aliaga-Buchenau for their invaluable contributions to this literature project. Their unwavering belief in my academic interests and their willingness to delve into this endeavor with me have been truly instrumental. Their expertise and insights into the world of literature have not only enriched my analysis but have also provided me with invaluable guidance throughout the process. Without their support and mentorship, my journey in literature analysis would not have been possible.

Moreover, I am grateful to the esteemed faculty and staff of the Latin American Studies department for their collective contributions to my scholarly development. Their unwavering dedication to nurturing each student like family, pushing us toward our individual goals, has created an enriching academic environment. Their expertise and commitment have not only broadened my understanding of Latin American culture and literature but also instilled in me a sense of belonging within the scholarly community.

DEDICATION

To my cherished husband, Aldwin Parks Jr., whose unwavering support and love has been my anchor; to my precious hijo, my sweet *soli* whose curiosity fuels not only my passion for knowledge but fuels my drive; to my dear grandpa, whose memory and heritage inspire me every day; and to my parents, whose boundless encouragement and belief in my academic pursuits have emboldened me.

This thesis is dedicated to you, my beloved family, for your unwavering support, understanding, and the profound impact you've had on my journey. Your love sustains me, and I carry your collective spirit with me as I explore and become a voice for our diverse and vibrant cultural heritage. In honoring you, I honor the countless individuals whose stories enrich our *culturas* tapestry.

and to that little girl who claimed she would become a profesora…keep going *mija*

With deepest gratitude and love,

Anastacia A. Parks

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Many Americans opened up the year 2023 with a spontaneous trip to Puerto Rico, pouring in to see the beautiful isla. Some became so captivated they began purchasing land and pouring into local communities, thus making Puerto Rico their own home away from home. Being from the Island, my own family knew that this was just the beginning: Anglo tourists would look to profit off the island, taking everything it had to offer and leaving nothing for the locals themselves. How is this possible? Due to the damage by Hurricane María in 2017, the island's government was prompted to implement Act 60, a tax break for new (not current) residents of Puerto Rico to move their businesses and families to the island.[1] Considering this incentive is enticing businesses to migrate to Puerto Rico, most people would think that the businesses would hire the local population. However, under this Act, businesses were only required to have one Puerto Rican employee on staff. Essentially, these actors could keep their earnings to themselves.

This capitalist leaching by imperialist powers is not just limited to Puerto Rico. In fact, we see this commonly throughout contemporary Latin America, with many tourists and expats creating resorts or gentrifying communities. These actions almost always result in a relocation of locals out of their homes either through buyouts or by making areas of residence too expensive. Two Mexicana writers living in North America—Silvia Moreno-Garcia and Isabel Cañas—have noticed this pattern and have chosen to critique it through literature. Specifically, they have used the vampire to symbolize the colonizing actions of imperial powers that have been imposed on Mexican and Latin American cultures, communities, and land. As they utilize Gothic literature, these authors are able to capitalize on the dark symbolism, monsters, and evil characters of the

[1] For a discussion on the details surrounding Act 60, see Espada.

genre. This, in turn, allows them to open discussions of Anglo colonization and possession that Mexican—and by extension Latine—communities face.

In this thesis, I will explore specifically how the Gothic figure of the vampire allows Mexicana authors to explore questions of economic and political imperialism. Both authors use these monstrous figures to explain through literature how the vampiric drive to suck Mexican peoples and cultures dry merits resistance. Beyond using Vampires as their symbolic antagonists, Moreno-Garcia and Cañas are also intentional about their protagonists of choice. Both focalize their narratives through the eyes of young, female protagonists who would seem to be the prey of choice in a phallocentric vampire narrative. Nevertheless, in both works, the female protagonists ultimately subvert vampiric colonialism. What is more, they do this precisely because of—and not in spite of—their gender. This thesis will compare Moreno-Garcia's *Mexican Gothic* (2020) and Cañas's *Vampires of El Norte* (2023). My discussion will show that, in these narratives, vampires function as symbols of capitalism and colonization while Mexicana protagonists embody resistance against not only colonization and capitalism but also patriarchy. These authors utilize Gothic and Young Adult fiction to open conversations about Latina representation and healing. In the pages that follow, I will discuss the significance of the vampire both in these novels and beyond. Afterward, I will situate these works within a greater body of Chicana and Diasporic Mexicana literature and thought.

The Vampire as Colonizing Other

Preying on the blood of the innocents in the dead of the night, cursed to walk the lonely path of the undead, both frightening and romantic, the vampire hunts us all. In order to track the usage of the vampire trope in these works, I will need to briefly describe the figure's resonance

both within and beyond Latine literature and culture. While I will be focusing primarily on vampires from the Latin(a) American tradition, we should note that the vampire of Gothic literature originally appeared in Eastern European lore (Wilson 577). Bram Stoker's publication of *Dracula* in 1897 established what would become a common trope in vampire narratives, where vampires represented a threat to modernity. The mythic Count Dracula, after all, embodied the feudal society of centuries past where an underdeveloped nation-state and a decadent upper class rode one another to certain destruction. It is precisely for this reason that the Count seeks the blood of Western Europeans in an attempt to regenerate himself. Of course, far from the simple regeneration of Eastern European society, this would entail the cancerous destruction of the Western pillars of modernity: democracy, industrialization, and capitalism.

It is for this reason that Jason Dittmer argues:

> "*Dracula* can be seen as the geographic disciplining of these new Eastern European states. Instead of being allowed into Europe, they have instead been driven back into the Orient. This theme is mirrored in *Dracula* by the Count's desire to move to London—leaving Old Europe behind and joining the dynamic New Europe. Instead, Dracula is repulsed and driven back to Eastern Europe by the representatives of the West: Van Helsing the Dutchman, Harker the Englishman, and Morris the Texan" (Dittmer, 54)

The Eastern European vampire posed a threat to a unified non-feudalistic Europe; this vampire clung to a feudalistic order where it could feed maliciously and ravage everything around them for their own comforts and definition of life while simultaneously feeding off of the advancements of the West. Count Dracula's aristocratic nature challenged the political drive

toward democratization and its accompanying ties to modernity. The contradictions between the East and West are further detailed in *Dracula,* with the West being a constant symbol of advancement and progress while the East continues to believe in magic and fairy tales. According to Dittmer, through "the distinction made between Western mind and Eastern body, Stoker's novel maintains a historical distinction between Western science and Eastern magic" (56). In *Dracula,* the vampire antagonist uses magic often to scare his prey or maneuver threats to his safety while Van Helsing always uses science and progress to defeat these monsters. Viewed in this light, the vampire of Western European literature—particularly that from the turn of the twentieth century—represents a threat to empiricism, reason, and modernity. The creatures themselves generally come from Eastern Europe, a region that the authors associated with superstition and backwardness, though, crucially, not an imperialistic drive.

Of course, Karl Marx used the vampire to theorize the dehumanizing potential of capitalism in *Das Kapital* in 1867 when he compared capitalism to "dead labor, that, vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labor, and lives the more, the more labor it sucks" (149). In referencing the working day, Marx states that the time "quenches only in a slight degree the vampire thirst for the living blood of labor" (159) and warns that the vampire "will not lose its hold … 'so long as there is a muscle, nerve, a drop of blood to be exploited'" (181). This representation certainly differs from that of Stoker, who cast Eastern Europe as backward and a threat to modernity. Marx's words suggest that a type of metaphorical vampirism had inserted itself as a leech at the center of modernity. Indeed, the fruits of industrialization could only come through the presence of a metaphorical vampire that drained the masses of their labor, which became the lifeblood of modern society. Perhaps not surprisingly, it was this particular aspect of vampirism that Latin American, and later Latine, writers would find most compelling as they

adapted the monster to their own national contexts. Indeed, the main element that they would add to Marx's Vampire was the colonial underbelly that would underpin much of the capitalist extraction of labor and resources in their own national contexts.

It's imperative to mention that Latin American and Latine authors take on the Gothic which is also inherently different from mainstream European Gothic and this influences how Latine authors utilize monsters such as vampires in their novels. Latin American Gothic literature delves into the macabre and the uncanny, weaving narratives deeply intertwined with the region's historical and socio-political complexities. As noted by Sandra Casanova-Vizcaíno and Inés Ordiz, "the Gothic in Latin America is very much rooted in local realities and histories, and often linked to different processes of modernization. These include the colonization and occupation of the region by Europe or the United States; the formation of the new nation-states following the wars of independence; and the collapse, failure, exhaustion, and absence of national projects that lead to violence, inequality, and exclusion" (7). This contextualization within specific historical and socio-political frameworks distinguishes Latin American Gothic from its European counterpart. Unlike mainstream Gothic literature, which often focuses on aristocratic settings and Gothic architecture, Latin American Gothic is grounded in the region's colonial past and postcolonial struggles. Furthermore, Latin American Gothic differs from magical realism, another prominent mode in the region, by employing a darker, more sinister tone and foregrounding themes of terror and the grotesque. While magical realism often celebrates the magical and extraordinary within everyday life, Latin American Gothic confronts the darker aspects of reality, delving into the horrors of colonization, imperialism, and capitalism. This distinction highlights the Gothic genre's capacity to provide a space for Latine

authors to engage in a creative discourse on identity, history, and power dynamics, offering chilling thrills alongside profound insights into the collective psyche of the region.

Due to these differences, we see a different vampiric representation in Latin American and Latine literature. That Latin American representations of the undead would differ from those in other traditions should come as no surprise. The region has a unique colonial history with which these narratives and figures must interface. David S. Dalton has demonstrated, for example, that Latin American representations of zombies tend to view the living dead in a relatively positive light, equating their subjectivity with that of marginalized communities throughout the region ("Antropofagia"). The zombie thus becomes a resistant actor that subverts and denaturalizes a neoliberal status quo throughout a subversive performance. Vampires represent a fascinating counterpoint to these zombies because, unlike the victimized zombie horde, vampires have reason and are often conniving. Indeed, Latin American literature tends to cast vampires as colonizing forces from Europe that seek to enrich themselves by draining the blood—and the resources—of Latin American nations. An especially clear example of this appears in Guillermo del Toro's *Cronos*, a film that follows a device that turns its users into nearly immortal, vampire-like beings. Speaking specifically on this film, Dolores Tierney states that the vampire is "created by the psychic repressions or (in political terms) oppressions of bourgeois (and neocolonial) culture and its related ideologies, the progressive impulse . . . can be identified as the desire to 'overthrow' these repressions" (Tierney, 167). In Moreno-Garcia's *Mexican Gothic,* the protagonist Noemí is the symbol of Mexican nationhood and (mestizo) modernity, while the Doyle vampire family hails from England representing Anglo patriarchy. The Doyle family not only represents colonization and eugenicist ideals but also embodies the role of European colonizers who seek to impose their own ideals on the country while

simultaneously depleting it of both its human and mineral wealth. Far from threatening creatures from the past, the vampires in this film are agents of Western imperialism, a process that has historically played out in Mexico and throughout Latin America under the guise of modernity.

M. Elizabeth Ginway explores this concept regarding vampires in Mexican and Brazilian literature when she states that "vampires inhabit gothic mansions, infecting with 'bad blood' the lives of women who dare to challenge the patriarchal order" (Ginway, 166). In Cañas's *Vampires of El Norte,* the protagonist, again Mexicana, is fighting against hostile Americans who become metaphorical vampires as they try to steal land that belongs to Mexican landowners. Although Cañas's vampires do not symbolize antiquity, they are aggressive capitalist agents that impose their wants and ideals on the land and people. Once again, these Latin(e) American vampires come to embody the imperialist European and Anglo-American drive to suck Latin American countries and people dry. The vampire is a fluid monster in terms of symbolism for Latin American expressions of colonization and capitalism. Due to this, we see the vampire just as in these two novels being able to have varied roles, backgrounds, and purposes within the storyline. According to Megan L. DeVirgilis, Latin American authors that utilize vampires in their novels adhere to what she refers to as "vampire logic" that reflects the "processes (capitalism, imperialism, etc.) and figures (husbands, girlfriends, doctors, etc.) that either explicitly or implicitly (through metaphor or allegory) suggest an exploitative relationship similar to that of a more traditional vampire and his or her victim, and which speak to greater ideological, political, and economic anxieties. At times, literal bloodsucking occurs. Other times, a character suffers loss of willpower, loss of energy, or other anemia-like symptoms" (DeVirgilis, 237). This concept regarding vampires offers Moreno-Garcia and Cañas a range of options while defining their vampire antagonists within their novels.

Beyond dialoguing with Latin American and Latin Americanist takes on vampires, both of these novels also engage in much of the gender politics inherent to Young Adult vampire narratives. Both novels are unapologetically heteronormative, but they also center on female protagonists who challenge patriarchal attitudes that seek to marginalize them. In this way, they reverberate with recent vampire narratives where sexuality and identity are common themes. The vampires within this genre specifically deal with these themes by giving young adults a fantastical way to explore the "other" in a safe space. This could be the relative "other" deviating from the sexual norm or the approved social identifications. Michelle Smith and Kristine Moruzi argue that vampires represent a sexual otherness not only by assisting the girls in their story as they navigate new relations but also by embodying a symbol of rebellion in the normalized heterosexual relationship. As the critics argue, "The girls in these texts embrace their unique qualities in disruptive and potentially transformative ways that offer them choice and control over their narratives, even when those narratives are limited by desire and romance. The Gothic conventions in these novels reflect 'cultural anxieties' about girlhood, femininity, and agency that remain unsolved" (16). This symbolic nature has also been adopted by Latina Young Adult fiction writers who showcase their protagonists grappling with their identities. According to Trevor Buffone and Cristina Herrera, "readers can more easily understand the realities of their own nonfictional hybrid identities through the lens of the supernatural. The reader is left with confidence that both Chicanas have the strength to survive the real world after learning and growing from their struggles within the supernatural realm" (72). Although the authors speak from an adult lens their philosophy can be utilized in the adult literary sphere and by young adults as well.

In this thesis, I will argue that the figure of the vampire takes on a symbolic value in these recent works of literature by Mexicana authors living in the United States and Canada. In this way, the novels strive to help their readers to make sense of their own identities and circumstances. These Gothic creatures create interesting vantage points from which to question notions of colonialism, sexuality, and gender. With the vampire's symbolic fluidity, we can see intersectionalities within Mexicana literature. According to Johan Höglund and Tabish Khair, "Through its itinerant ways and transformative body, the old and modern vampire takes the reader on trips from the imperial metropolis into the colonial periphery, to the places where East and West intersect, where stable cultural categories clash, collapse and transform, allowing both the human and the political body to take new and often disturbing forms" (Khair, 2). This thesis looks at precisely this potential in the discussion of Moreno-Garcia and Cañas. I will examine how vampiric symbolism plays out in contemporary literature by Latina writers of Mexicana descent who reside in North America. In both works, the heroines resist vampires and their colonialist ideals by uplifting their own identities. Interestingly enough, their resistance is not only gendered; rather, it reflects the characters' ability to adopt a mestiza identity that builds inclusive coalitions against hegemonic forces. Now, let us turn to a discussion of Mexicana-North American literary and cultural thought.

Mexicana-North American and Latina/x Literature

Few terms take on greater importance in Mexican and Chicana/x thought than that of mestizaje. The term refers to racial mixing generally, though in both of the aforementioned countries it has come to signify the offspring of Iberian and Indigenous progenitors. Mestizaje is as old as the conquest of Mexico itself; nevertheless, it took on a nationalistic dynamic in the

twentieth century following the Revolution of 1910. José Vasconcelos wrote *La raza cósmica*, a philosophical treatise that held that a new "cosmic" race would emerge in the Americas as a result of racial mixing and that it would eventually lead to a utopian world order. Several decades later, the Chicana theorist Gloria Anzaldúa took Vasconcelos's philosophy and adapted it to the borderlands in her seminal text, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. Here, she would theorize the "new mestiza," a feminine counterpoint or complement to Vasconcelos's theorization. For Anzaldúa, a key component of the mestiza identity among Chicanas was that they were *Ni de aquí, ni de allá*, meaning that they are neither from here nor there. Anzaldúa states that the mestiza is "in a constant state of mental nepantilism, an Aztec word meaning torn between ways, *la mestiza* is a product of the transfer of the cultural and spiritual values of one group to another" (78). As liminal actors, they could claim no single homeland even as they had powerful ties to the land across borders.

Anzaldúa discusses the struggles faced by women of color and Latinas, including feminists and queer scholars, who often feel overwhelmed by the exclusionary nature of Anglo-Euro America. Mestizas work tirelessly to produce new scholarship and assert their identities in academia, but they encounter numerous barriers. As a Chicana, Anzaldúa emphasizes the importance of recognizing and embracing the richness of Latina culture within a broader, multicultural America. She expresses frustration at being perceived as outsiders and not fitting into established narratives, stating that there is a threat of identity crisis:

> "This crisis is also felt by mestizas, people of color, mujeres, and lesbians of color who inhabit so many different worlds. This new racism has pounded hegemonic theories into us, making us feel like we don't fit. We are alienated. We are exiled. Not only are they undermining us by assimilating us, but in turn, we are using

> these very same theories, concepts, and assumptions that we have bought into against ourselves. Mestizas internalize those theories, concepts, and labels that manipulate and control us. We buy into these distortions and then we use them on ourselves" (206)

Anzaldúa has spoken extensively about mestiza identity and how Chicanas and Latinas have navigated this concept. Given Anzaldúa's prominence in Chicana thought, it is perhaps not surprising that Moreno-Garcia and Cañas would choose to engage mestiza identity in their own works. Anzaldúa's work showcases how the borderlands mestiza's liminal identity leaves her feeling as if she is on the cusp of a figurative border that affects her both mentally and emotionally. Instead of allowing this border mentality to affect her negatively, Anzaldúa discusses how Chicana mestizas recognize multiple intersectionalities that allow them to truly explore multiple facets of their being as they negotiate their identities. Anzaldúa says that mestiza actors like herself must find harmony with all of the cultural aspects from which they descend: Black, Indigenous, and Spaniard. She explains that this can only be done through a joint consciousness that the mestiza dissolves after a philosophical journey. This joint consciousness combines psychological, mental, and physical traits from all the cultures that a mestiza embodies (78).

Mestiza ideals play out in different ways in the literature of García-Moreno and Cañas. The protagonists (mestiza women) experience a constant internal back and forth, an ambiguity in their consciousness. They must recognize their ambiguity but also recognize and give a name to the cultural crossroads within them. Anzaldúa speaks on the concept of ambiguity as the mestiza's ability to juggle different identities and to live fluidly rather than conforming to stagnant social norms when she says that the mestiza "has discovered she can't hold concepts or

ideas in rigid boundaries . . . rigidity means death. Only by remaining flexible is she able to stretch the psyche horizontally and vertically" (79). For the purpose of this thesis, I will be using the terms Mexicana when discussing the characters and when discussing the authors themselves or the community they represent. The term Latin American refers to people who live in a Latin American country south of the Río Grande. When we speak of Latines we are referring to individuals from a Latin American country who live and work in the United States (or, one could argue, Canada). Identifying oneself as Latine is also a political statement to those who live in North America. According to Oboler, "to identify oneself as a Latino/a is a conscious choice not only acknowledging one's history and sociocultural background but also recognizing the need to struggle for social justice. In this sense, more than solely a culturally dictated fact of life, identifying oneself as Latino/a and participating in a Latino social movement is a political decision" (31). For the purpose of clarification, this thesis will not be utilizing the term Latinx as a gender-neutral term and instead will utilize the term Latine.[2] Both of my authors are Latina, and their literature fits more cleanly in the field of North American, Latine literature than in that of Latin American literature. Nevertheless, such categorizations tend to ignore the extent to which Latin American traditions, literature, and even intellectual history affect both authors. I will now provide brief biographical information about both Mexicana authors to make this point more clearly.

Moreno-Garcia was born in Mexico in 1981 but relocated to Canada at 23 years old where she received an M.A. in Science and Technology at The University of British Columbia.

---

[2] Certainly, the term Latinx, "has mostly been embraced in the United States by LGBTQIA+, ally communities, and several scholars, Spanish-speaking Latin American countries have adopted Latiné as their gender-inclusive term" (Villanueva 3). Nevertheless, given the difficulty in pronouncing Latinx in Spanish, many activists have viewed the term as an Anglocentric imposition on their language. The term Latine overcomes many of these obstacles as a gender-neutral term that is also phonetically pronounceable in Spanish.

She has received numerous awards and nominations not only for her writing but she is also an editor and publisher for numerous works that have also received awards. She is a self-proclaimed Mexican-Canadian writer and editor, and, while she does not focus her writing on a strict genre, she utilizes fantastical and literary elements so that all of her writings bleed through each other. With every release she is gaining a larger platform for not only literature lovers as a whole but for Latinas who want to see themselves represented within other genres besides stereotypical niches. Cañas is a Mexican-American author who has lived all over the world, a fact that has given her the opportunity to explore her cultural heritage from a unique lens. Cañas has lived not only in Mexico but in Scotland, Egypt, Turkey, and New York City, to name a few, before eventually settling in the Pacific Northwest. Cañas is currently pursuing a doctorate in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations. While obtaining her Ph.D. she wrote her first Gothic Novel, *The Hacienda*. Her novel *Vampires of El Norte* was released in early 2023 shortly after *The Hacienda*'s success.

Cañas explains in an interview with the Horror Writers Association that she had to teach herself to break out of the habit of regurgitating the same white-led characters that are prevalent within the horror field and instead make an effort to include Latine characters in her novels because "the experience of being Latine/Latinx is not a monolith-we have different experiences with colonialism and migration, we're different races, we have roots in different countries, we speak different languages . . . I hope that the characters I offer in my work will become just one piece of an enormous, colorful stained glass window of Latinx representation" ("Latinx Horror: Interview With Isabel Cañas - Horror Writers Association"). Cañas credits Moreno-Garcia with opening the doors and windows for other Mexicana authors of Gothic and horror to publish their works as well. Cañas states, "I owe an enormous debt to Silvia Moreno-Garcia. Because she

kicked that door open, that door wide open. And I am so grateful for all of the work that she's done. I'm a huge admirer of her short fiction as well as her novels" (McLoughlin and Schifini). Moreno-Garcia and Cañas are both mestiza authors who are defining themselves through their own identity as Mexican authors living in North America. Their narratives provide a platform for others to find validation of their identities as they showcase independent Latina protagonists who embrace their community. These women's literature provides a space that highlights various characteristics that Latinas embody to strengthen and express pride in their own identities.

Discussion of the chapters

In chapter one of my thesis, I will first analyze the novel *Mexican Gothic* by Silvia Moreno-Garcia. Moreno-Garcia's novel *Mexican Gothic* is set in early 1950 Mexico with a vivacious socialite and Anthropology student named Noemí as the lead. Noemí receives a concerning letter from her cousin Catalina who was recently married to the Doyle family. Catalina's letter is feverish and rushed as she claims to be poisoned by her husband, the patriarch of the Doyle family. Noemí's father sends her immediately to check on Catalina's well-being but what Noemí finds is not just a sick cousin, but rather a den full of energy-sucking vampires draining the life from her cousin by the hour. The Doyle family is represented by three white men and overseen by one woman, while Noemí and Catalina are two mestizas from the city. Moreno-Garcia showcases the Doyle family not only as vampires preying on the two girls but as agents of colonization sucking the life out of the entire town and the people that they interact with. On the other end, Noemí represents the modernization of Mexico's nationhood and resistance to European colonization and influence. I will argue that Moreno-Garcia uses the vampires to symbolize agents of colonization through the constant pushing of eugenic and racial

hierarchy that is used as an attempt to control the mestiza women who are trapped in the house. Due to their belief in eugenics, colorism, and racial hierarchy, the vampiric Doyle family feeds on the physical energy of the mestiza women while also attempting to manipulate them mentally to fit into their vampiric or 'European' mold.

Chapter 2 discusses Isabel Cañas's *Vampires of El Norte*. Set in the 1840s the novel depicts the US invasion and annexation of Texas. Nena and her love interest Néstor navigate the struggles and traumas that result from class distinctions in their fight to win each other back despite Nena's fierce independence. The couple also recognize that their land is constantly threatened by American Anglos who are looking to expand their territory and despite the locals' refusal to sell land, land owners and cattle are reported missing or found drained of all blood. Cañas highlights Mexicana protagonist Nena who is not only fighting for her independence as a curandera but also actively fighting against the United States-employed vampires who threaten her land and her loved ones within it. The vampires in Cañas' book symbolize the active colonizing agents that were in play on the Texas-Mexico border during the 1840s. These vampires leech off the land owners and their hard work. The vampires spread loss and death in their efforts to acquire land from the locals, however, Nena's ambition, independence, and capability allow her to survive the constant stalking of the vampires as they prey upon her and Néstor. I will argue that Cañas utilizes the American vampires to symbolize the insatiable appetite that is American colonization of Mexican land. The vampires are hired agents that work for the American soldiers to attack landowners and steal cattle so that the locals have to sell or give the land to the Americanos despite their protest of it. Cañas's vampires differentiate from Moreno-Garcia's vampires in the fact that Moreno-Garcia's vampires symbolize well-known European agents of colonization while Cañas's vampires symbolize the entitlement of an

insatiable appetite for the American belief of Manifest Destiny. This will provide a contrast to two different types of vampires or colonizing agents that have affected and shaped Mexicana identity and culture.

In conclusion, these two authors utilize the power of symbolism that is prevalent within Gothic literature to express the anxieties of the remnants of colonial oppression. In choosing their own Latina hero to confront those symbols they utilize characteristics that allow the heroine to not only make it through the horrors but to solidify herself within her own identity. Through utilizing vampiric symbolism both Moreno-Garcia and Cañas confront and showcase different aspects of colonial oppression and face it head-on. Both novels fit into the Gothic literature genre but differ regarding their focus on colonial oppression and their response to it. Despite these differences, both authors utilize the same symbol and use a Latina heroine in order to fight the antagonists. Vampiric symbolism within these two novels will allow for an alternative viewpoint for reflecting on the effects of colonization as well as the solidification of Latine identity.

Chapter 1

Vampires as Agents of Colonization in Silvia Moreno-Garcia's *Mexican Gothic*

At the climax of Silvia Moreno-Garcia's *Mexican Gothic* (2020), white hands painfully resembling claws force the protagonist, Noemí Taboada, before the living corpse of Howard Doyle, the patriarch of the English family that controls the mining town of El Triunfo. Noemí's nose fills with a lip-curling stench that emanates from her aggressor's body. While Howard's son, Virgil, holds her down, Howard claws at her hair and forces his tongue down her throat, injecting her with a black, fungal liquid that melds her consciousness with his. She sees Howard's past colonialist actions when he stole a hallucinogenic fungus from an Indigenous community decades ago and used it to transform himself into a vampire-like being.[3] This scene shows how the Doyle family effectively establishes the vampire as an agent of European colonization by equating vampirism with literal and symbolic extractivism.[4] Throughout the novel, Moreno-Garcia utilizes the vampire trope to showcase the effects of colonization on Mexican society. At the same time, Noemí represents a drive to retain bodily autonomy against colonial-patriarchal forces. The literary clash of this Mexicana heroine with a colonialist vampire represents the opposition of Mexicana culture to colonial pressures through a symbolic stand of nationhood and femininity. Indeed, Noemí embodies resistance against colonial patriarchal structures through her assertion of cultural identity, confrontation of systemic racism, and defiant survival against oppressive forces. In so doing, the novel ultimately challenges and subverts the norms and power dynamics of a colonialist and vampiric subjectivity embodied by the Doyle family.

---

[3] The Doyle family is a type of vampire-like monster that is fairly common in Greater-Mexican cultural production. See Ignacio M. Sánchez Prado (*Screening Neoliberalism* 128).

[4] For discussions of colonialist vampires who extract the life blood of Mexico through literature and film, see Gabriel Eljaiek-Rodríguez (151-52); David S. Dalton (*Robo Sacer*, 52).

Given its popularity, *Mexican Gothic* has attracted significant attention from the scholarly community. Ignacio M. Sánchez Prado argues that the novel imagines "Mexico as a modern and vibrant country, not as a nation defined by the drug trade, undocumented migration, and poverty. This is the reason why it is critical . . . that her fiction has reached audiences beyond the Latinx community, as she may be the only current fiction writer delivering that idea of Mexico to non-Latinx readers" (329). Matthew Cutter praises Moreno-Garcia's decision to focalize the colonizing narrative through the eyes of a mestiza protagonist who resists Anglo-Saxon imperialists, a dynamic that, he claims, rarely appears in (English-language) literature (114). Hana Vega praises the novel for not only staying true to the Gothic literary canon but for modernizing it with a feminist, anti-colonial point of view (69). The novel has also received negative criticism. Elizabeth Nichols, for example, expresses her "disappointment" that the novel is not "Mexican enough" (113). This assertion, interestingly enough, ignores the very Mexican elements of the novel that Sánchez Prado celebrates. I argue that the novel uses the vampire trope to articulate a mestiza resistance to the Eurocentric, patriarchal imperialism of the Doyles. What is more, while the novel takes place in Mexico, in many ways it aims at a primarily English-speaking, Latina readership; indeed, it often casts Noemí more as Latina than as Mexican per se.

A brief plot summary will facilitate our discussion. Noemí Taboada and her family receive a concerning letter from her cousin, Catalina, detailing abuse and mental threats that she has been suffering at the hands of her in-laws. Her father asks Noemí to perform a well-check on Catalina to determine she is in good health. Upon arriving, Noemí notices that although situated in El Triunfo, the Doyle property looks like a piece of England that has been transported into this Mexican mining town. The graveyard, the home, and even the weather at the top of the mountain

are brooding, cold, and despondent, as if they came from a Victorian Gothic novel. As Noemí enters the home she is consistently thwarted in her attempts to aid her cousin and her cousin's health. She is bombarded with eugenicist philosophies and an aggressive patriarchal hierarchy. However, a nagging feeling torments Noemí that there is something deeper hidden in the home besides what she can see. She later learns that this is the vampiric Doyle family sucking the life force out of Noemí and Catalina, plaguing them with hallucinations and terrors that haunt them. It is the vampires sucking from their mestiza blood that gives them the power to continue to impose their colonial ideals and beliefs. It is up to Noemí to continue to fight against the vampire's torments to not only save herself and Catalina but to not hand over the power of their bodily autonomy to the colonial force.

As this plot summary shows, the novel follows the tropes of Gothic literature very closely. Nevertheless, Moreno García merges the Gothic with Mexican thought and cultural ideals. We see this especially clearly with regard to eugenics. The Doyle family is in decline because the men of the family have always fed on English women from their own family, a fact that has left them ailing. Because of this, they turn to mestizophilic notions of eugenics and determine that they will need to exploit mixed-race women in order to revitalize their stock. Through this means, Moreno-Garcia showcases a mestiza woman's resistance to colonialist values that have taken root in Mexico and most of Latin America. In the novel, Noemí functions as a proudly mestiza woman, while the vampires attempt to use her mixed-race ancestry to put her in her place. Moreno García's narrative echoes Anzaldúa's philosophy, particularly in Noemí's resistance to white opposition, which mirrors the principles outlined in Anzaldúa's work. Simultaneously, the novel positions Noemí in opposition to a more Anglocentric white supremacy. Although the juxtaposition of Anglo-Saxon white supremacy with mestiza

subjectivity may seem unusual in Mexico itself, it resonates strongly with Latina women in the United States and Canada who navigate similar dynamics in their day-to-day lives. According to Anzaldúa, "True multiculturalism endangers white males and forces them to feel ashamed of their culture by presenting the histories and perspectives of ethnic groups. Multiculturalists disrupt the fantasy that has dominated the State's official version of this country's history" (203). Indeed, the novel asserts the mestiza as the ideal protagonist to confront the eugenicist racism and sexism of the Doyle family.

On Mestiza Heroines, Patriarchy, and Vampire Eugenics

In an interview with Constance Grady, Moreno Garcia discussed how she built on, yet subverted, traditional representations of Gothic Otherness where: "the person who is not an Anglo-Saxon Protestant upstanding male white person, is always a source of anxiety in many different ways for people. Even if they're not the outright villain, they're still a source of anxiety in some way. . . . I think there are other ways of manifesting horror. But I also think that because the Other, the deviancy, has for a long time been people of color, there's enough space to play with that in various settings and ways." Moreno-Garcia turns this gothic trope on its head by creating a frightening, white-male Other that dominates the Indigenous, Black, and mestiza communities. According to Frederick Luis Aldama "myths and monsters form such a substantive part of Latinx culture. They are indicative of lost history and the trauma of colonization. They resound in the insecurities of Latinxs and the hidden terrors of what lies in the unknown. And they also remain a significant and vital part of Latinx identity, reminding of the central place family—and ancestors—hold within the Latinx identity" (123). In the context of Latine storytelling, monsters serve as potent symbols for processing the deep-rooted traumas of

colonization and oppression. By echoing Aldama's assertion on the indispensable role of myths and monsters within Latine culture, we underscore the pivotal function of these narratives in confronting historical injustices. Monsters, embodying fear and the unknown, become vehicles through which collective traumas are explored and reconciled. Through storytelling, Latine communities reclaim agency over their narratives and histories, fostering resilience and solidarity amidst adversity. Therefore, integrating monsters into Latine storytelling is not merely an act of imaginative creation but a profound means of reckoning with the past, shaping a more empowered future.Viewed in this light, Moreno-Garcia adapts Gothic literature to a Latin American and Latina context where it is possible to have a mestiza heroine.

Moreno García's narrative also brings white supremacy and the effects of colonization to the fore. While white supremacy has not been as important of a racial paradigm in Mexico as it has in Canada and the United States, we should note that the novel is ultimately Canadian and the main antagonists are the Anglo-Saxon Doyles. As such, these characters harbor white supremacist beliefs, a fact that makes the novel more accessible to English-language readers. In the same interview with Grady, García Moreno acknowledges the critiques of white supremacy in her novel, referring to it as "horrible" and mentioning that "African American people, Latinos . . . are the most harmed." While Noemí is technically neither African American nor Latina, her status as a mestiza protagonist with Indigenous ancestry in an English-language novel makes her Latina-adjacent. In resisting the vampiric nature of the Doyles, Noemí allegorically resists the white-supremacist order that they represent. Throughout the novel, she confronts an array of means through which the Doyles seek to control her: eerie dreams fed by a fungal connection that puts people's consciousness in contact one with another; supernatural occurrences that appear with regularity; unexplainable diseases; etc. Rather than give in to fear, she actively

investigates and challenges the forces at play. Her survival is not passive but a result of her agency and refusal to be a victim. According to Eliza Rodriguez "these are anticolonial struggles, embodied in women freeing each other from the structures of colonial heteropatriarchy--suffused with danger, romance, and glamour--the effects of escapist fiction with the added frisson of Noemí (the dark, Mexican woman, the embodiment of alterity) transformed into the heroine of the piece" (85). In her seemingly simple acts of resistance, Noemí embodies a powerful form of colonial resistance against not only vampiric monsters but colonialism as well.

Noemí is raised with an understanding of the patriarchal hierarchy that affects her life as a mestiza in 1950s Mexico. Although strong, independent, and open to philosophical ideas, she is wary of overstepping the patriarchal hierarchy that is prevalent at High Place because she is aware of the high-stakes consequences. Her various attempts at helping Catalina are met with resistance due to the Doyle family's vested interest in maintaining an extractivist status quo. Indeed, within High Place, Noemí is not treated like the pinnacle of society she is accustomed to at home in Mexico City. Instead, here, she is made to seem out of place and unruly, unlikable. She is repeatedly called an object, thing, or "creature" (Moreno-Garcia 88). While at High Place she is faced with a deeper form of restrictive patriarchy through the Doyles' colonialist system. In one altercation, she informs the vampiric Virgil that "it's my nature not to back down" (92). Noemí actively confronts systemic racism through these types of dialogue. The reader must understand that, in the Doyle family's view, "women's bodies are both territory ("colonial space") and (melded with the fungus) the wax through which Doyle's identity is stamped, molded, and secured, again and again" (Stuelke). When Noemí uncovers the mysteries and horrors surrounding High Place she showcases a literal act of resistance and survival against the creatures that try to overtake her. When she realizes that she must fight this battle alone, she

muses, “A man would command more respect. But no it was as she said: she wasn’t going to back down” (93). Noemí’s survival becomes a symbolic resistance against oppressive forces, emphasizing her agency in the face of dark and powerful entities. In this way, she embodies the notion of a resistant mestiza who challenges and overcomes white-supremacist racism.

While the novel clearly takes a strong stance against white supremacist eugenics, it also critically engages the mestizophilic eugenics of midcentury Mexico through a discussion of the thoughts of José Vasconcelos and Manuel Gamio. While Noemí explains the differences between Anglo-Saxon eugenics and those of Mexico, she does not cast the latter as good or positive. When she finds an essay by Manuel Gamio about the “impulsive temperament” of “the half-breed mestizo,” for example, she sweeps it into the trash (Moreno-Garcia, 38).

Manuel Gamio is celebrated as the father of Mexican anthropology due to his philosophy and ethnographic research. He published *Forjando Patria: Pro-Nacionalismo* in 1916 to promote the incorporation of Indigenous people into the nation. He roundly rejected white supremacist claims of Indigenous inferiority, arguing instead that unequal access to education and nutrition had caused Indigenous people to lag behind their Hispanic counterparts in Mexico. He further argued that Indigenous people could “join” the mestizo nation—a paternalistic notion, to be sure—if the state provided scientific education to those populations (Dalton, “Educating Anti-Catholicism”).

In contrast to Gamio, who viewed eugenics through pragmatic and even positivist terms (Sánchez Prado, “El mestizaje” 386-87), Vasconcelos viewed mestizaje through an aesthetic paradigm that favored European cultures and aesthetics (Dalton “Science”). Vasconcelos proclaimed that the “cosmic race,” which would be born in the Americas (18), would include the positive aspects of each race while the so-called negative ones would disappear on their own. Although his claims were stated under the umbrella of unity, he also clearly favored European

culture, expressing little interest in the Indigenous or Black components of Mexican society beyond how their genes could rejuvenate the national body (Dalton "Science"). Moreno-Garcia imagines certain similarities among postrevolutionary official mestizaje and Anglo-Saxon white supremacy through the Doyles, who have realized that, to survive, they will need to feed on women of Indigenous and mestiza descent.[5] Howard alludes to this in his first meeting with Noemí, where he references Vasconcelos's thoughts before inspecting her and commenting favorably that her complexion is darker than that of Catalina. Noemí proudly proclaims her Indigenous heritage when she hears this. Howard then asks, "Do you believe as Mr. Vasconcelos does that it is the obligation, no, the destiny, of all the people of Mexico to forge a new race?" (29-30). When she refuses to answer, he continues, "What are your thoughts on the intermingling between inferior and superior types?" (30). Noemí responds by quoting Gamio—who was, in many ways, a rival to Vasconcelos—by stating, "I once read a paper by Gamio in which he said that the harsh natural selection has allowed the indigenous people of this continent to survive, and Europeans would benefit from intermingling with them…it turns the whole superior and inferior idea around, doesn't it?" (30).[6] This argument will lie at the heart of the rest of the novel; while the vampiric Doyles will proclaim their racial superiority, Noemí will question such assertions by highlighting how these characters depend on her genome to survive.

The aforementioned conversation shows that Noemí will fiercely defend her heritage when others try to assert their own superiority. What is more, she is an intellectual who has the tools necessary to challenge racialized and gendered discourses of domination. Often Moreno-Garcia highlights Noemí's pride in her heritage through her refusal to assimilate to

[5] *Mexican Gothic* fits within a corpus of early- to mid-twentieth century Mexican narratives that imagined mestizo eugenics in conflict with the purity eugenics of northern Europe and North America. That said, where the northern Europeans must accept, begrudgingly or not, the validity of mestizo eugenics in this novel, they do not do so in earlier examples from Mexican fiction. See Dalton ("Una ruptura").

[6] For a discussion of the rivalry between Vasconcelos and Gamio, see Swarthout (89-122); Dalton (Mestizo Modernity 37-38).

European standards while staying at High Place. We see examples of this not only in her philosophical debates with the Doyles but also in minor acts of defiance such as her style of dress, which embraces her cultural traditions. At one point she is described as "look[ing] like Katy Jurado when she str[ikes] the right pose" (101). Despite their racist consternation, the Doyles also appreciate Noemí's dark hair and skin, both of which they view as integral components of her beauty. This challenges the traditional portrayal of beauty that often highlights lighter skin and hair. In rejecting the notion that fair skin or Eurocentric features are the epitome of beauty, Neomí asserts the validity and attractiveness of a broader spectrum of appearances. This challenges the colonial legacy that imposed a Eurocentric aesthetic as the standard of beauty in many parts of the world, including Mexico and Canada, García Moreno's two reference points. Noemí consciously rejects beauty practices that mimic Eurocentric standards, using makeup that accentuates her mestiza features and rejecting skin-lightening products.[7] In foregrounding Noemí's attire, Moreno García fits her novel into a long tradition of Mexican literature written by women that has used similar images to spark a resistant pose. Throughout the novel—and even on the novel's cover—, Noemí wears clothing inspired by traditional Mexican designs, showcasing an intentional embrace of her cultural aesthetics regardless of whether or not they are appropriate for High Place. When a character suggests she wear a jacket to counteract the cold at High Place, she replies, "I have a rebozo" (23), a type of clothing that was frequently equated with indigeneity in midcentury Mexico (Arias). This stands in contrast to the Western fashion trends of the Doyles, thus allowing her to uphold a visual affirmation of her identity.

[7] For further explanation on the importance of style and dress in accordance with Mexican Feminism see Emily Hind (213-20).

Noemí also maintains a connection to her Mexican traditions and language, a fact that rings especially clear when she seeks out healthcare. Although the Doyle family is adamant that they have a doctor for Catalina, Noemí goes to the village to find medicine from a local medicine woman whom she trusts over the Doyle family doctor. She also does not shy away from using her Spanish in any situation despite others attempting to shame her for her bilingualism. This particular element of the novel will reverberate especially well with Latina/x readers in the United States and Canada. Francis Doyle warns her not to use Spanish when she needs to assert herself; nevertheless, she curses at characters like Virgil under her breath in Spanish when they offend her (90). Noemí fluidly switches between English and Spanish based on the situation. Her comfort in utilizing both languages not only showcases her belief in the language being tied to her cultural identity at High Place but also challenges the concept that speaking English equates with sophistication. Moreno-Garcia's bilingual mestiza protagonist deftly moves across cultures, thus inverting a common gothic trope where purity, be it racial or sexual, becomes synonymous with whiteness and the good, while racial mixedness becomes associated with darkness and evil.

Indeed, Howard and Virgil desire Noemí's blood precisely because its racially mixed nature makes it stronger than its racially pure counterparts. This is valuable to the Doyle family in terms of continuing their line. Their historical practice of consuming other (white) women has led to decadence rather than glory. The Doyle family must feed off of women both mentally and physically to survive and pass on the consciousness from one patriarch to another, an act that essentially gives the Doyle patriarch the ability to live forever. For 300 years, Howard Doyle has kept his bloodline 'pure' through incestuous marriages to produce heirs that are strictly Doyles. However, when his niece shot him and Howard did not heal well, Virgil Doyle realized that they

needed to ‘inject new blood’ into the family to ensure the continuation of the family stock. Virgil Doyle smugly explains his reasoning to Noemí:

> “On occasion, you need to inject new blood into the mix. Of course, my father has always been stubborn about these things, insisting that we must not mingle with the rabble.”
>
> “Superior and inferior traits, after all,” Noemí said dryly.
>
> Virgil smiled. “Exactly. The old man even brought earth from England to ensure the conditions here would be like the ones in our motherland; he wasn't about to entertain the locals. But the way things have gone, it has become a necessity. A question of survival.” (237)

In this scene, we see that the only reason the Doyle family can stomach this miscegenation is because they have come to accept mestizophilic philosophies out of desperation. According to Cutter, “The Doyles accept Noemí as something exotic and physically desirable but are still repulsed by her heritage. This will lead them to desire Noemí as their own, but not as a fellow family member, instead as property” (111). This probably reflects sexism more so than racism or colorism; after all, they have treated the white women of their family in a similar manner. Nevertheless, they bring race explicitly into the equation as they claim that they fetishize her racialized body as a source of regeneration.

We also see a connecting point between Howard Doyle and Dracula, as the concept of their stifling strength comes from the chokehold they maintain on their white standards to the extent of traveling with homeland soil. Garcia Karr references how Virgil and Howard Doyle utilize their vampiric influences in regards to taking advantage of Noemí’s culture, “the vampire must not just bite but share their blood to turn someone. This is what Doyle does here [Noemí].

He infects her with his bodily fluid to attempt to turn and control her. Additionally, in some lore that blood contains memories. Immediately after being forced to consume this black fluid, Noemí begins to experience visions of the Doyle past and learns of the many disgusting things they have done" (Karr, 73-74). It is at this moment that Noemí realizes that Howard Doyle is the reiteration of the original Doyle who came to Mexico. It is a sinister concept that Moreno-Garcia presents a white vampire who can only live forever off of the bloodline of a mestiza with Indigenous ancestors.

The Vampire as a Colonizing Force

Moreno-Garcia uses her novel to show comparisons between the Doyles and a vampiric monster. She effectively does this by showcasing these monsters' colonizing tendencies alongside their insatiable appetite. Through their family's economic exploitation, cultural appropriation, and cultural suppression the Doyles not only act as colonizing agents within the novel but as metaphorical blood-sucking monsters. The background of the Doyle family's business beginnings sheds light on the reason for these vampiric comparisons. The Doyle family immigrated from England to Mexico to take advantage of the mining opportunities in the area. Initially, Virgil Doyle arrived with English miners to help manage the mine. However, due to an epidemic in 1888, the English miners passed away. Already accustomed to taking advantage of and manipulating the local Indigenous communities, the Doyle family makes quick work of monopolizing the silver mining business. Although the Doyle family brought all their needs from England from their soil with her to their home's architecture, they used mostly Indigenous Mexicans to work the mines. The Doyle family has no regard for the lives of the locals who work his mine; like many businessmen, they do not see a benefit to providing safe working

conditions for their workers. Their insatiable desire to fill their own pockets with wealth—built on the backs of cheap, Indigenous workers—outweighs the human right to life. While the profits seem to rise for the Doyle family, the local miners deal with the constant threat of death and illness. If they are lucky enough to survive, the inadequate pay is another addition to the constant detriment to local society. The humiliation continues even in death. Just like many unruly businessmen, the Doyle family is successful for a time and the wealth they accumulate adds to the growth and upkeep of High Place. Nevertheless, a lack of funding for the village produces stark differences in the economic and social experience from those below the mountain and those at the top at High Place. Not only is the local community suffering from poverty, but they are also reliant on the continued economic exploitation of the Doyle family through employment. This puts the Doyle family in a position of power above the local community. The vampiric Doyles constantly feed on those weaker who are around themselves. The family functions as a type of Marxian vampire as they drain the economy and environment of El Triunfo.[8] The Doyles drain the local resources completely to the point that when Noemí arrives at High Place there is simply no silver left in the mine. The Doyles consume community assets to feed their insatiable appetites, leaving nothing for the community except hunger and weakness.

Moreno-Garcia continues to twist the traditional vampire motif by showcasing the Doyle family's continued cultural suppression and appropriation as an example of a vampire who continues to drain. For the Doyles to ultimately live forever they need their victims weak and powerless so that the mushroom's power can take hold for the transformation and feeding of the life source. One of the ways that the Doyle family does this is by suppressing and appropriating these cultures to their own advantage. When Howard steals the fungus from the tribe, he mocks and terrorizes the local Indigenous population while simultaneously stealing an indigenous

[8] See Karl Marx (231).

woman for himself. In this way, Howard consumes the power of the mushroom and links 'The Gloom' to himself. After killing their priest, he takes what belonged to the locals and destroys everything else that he could not use to his advantage. The Doyles thus cannibalize Indigenous heritage and leave behind hollow remnants of traditions that once thrived.

The Doyle family also has their own "supernatural ability" similar to a vampire's mesmerizing ability that makes them intriguing. As Nina Aurbach argues, "vampires blend into the changing cultures they inhabit" (6), a fact that indicates that most vampires in contemporary literature and film share the traits of invisible presence in their environment. They do not stand out for their monstrous appearance or acts. They are simply more marvelous, more striking, than those around them, making it difficult to track the vampire" (Gonzalez). This is the reason why the vampire's victims are seemingly drawn to them with almost no explanation. Virgil utilizes psychological manipulation and charm to woo Catalina; their whirlwind romance leads her to accept a marriage with a stranger she barely knows. Virgil is as handsome as his father Howard is decrepit, is described as "fair-haired, blue-eyed like his father, and his cooly sculpted face was burnished with imperiousness….as if he was trying to imitate a casualness it was impossible for him to possess" (32). Virgil speaks in a tone that radiates courtesy, though not warmth, and he can effortlessly charm and smooth talk his way in every situation while simultaneously upholding patriarchal norms that make women uncomfortable, "parrying [their] words" and making them doubt themselves (92).

The Doyles' words have a hypnotic quality, weaving a spell of influence that leaves the locals entranced, unaware of the subtle draining of their autonomy while simultaneously infuriating Noemí who notices the hidden threats in their calculated utterances. They psychologically manipulate all those under their roof whether to maintain their patriarchal

hierarchy, class/ racial hierarchy, or to gain victims. The most prominent alignment that Moreno-Garcia makes with the Doyles and the vampire monster is the fact that both consummate their dark actions and manipulations under the cover of darkness, where no one can see them. The secrecy and undercover operations not only add to the vampiric mystique that they carry but also add to the fear aspect of their manipulations. As Noemí's doleful days at High Place come to a close at night she can't get any rest between nightmares and sound within the house. On one particular evening, she ventures outside of her room by a noise. However, it is a vision of Howard Doyles' sexual assault of his niece that unravels before her eyes as if in real time. As the scene unfolds before her she experiences peace and fear from the ghosts of Howard Doyle's past, Virgil happens upon her, claiming she has been sleepwalking. Despite her refusal to sleepwalk and needing assistance returning to her room, he insists. As she arrives at her room.

> He held the oil lamp at eye level and smiled at her. Virgil was an attractive man and the smile was a peasant almost teasing, in a good-humoured way-but there was an edge to his expression that the smile could not mask. She did not like it."
>
> "You won't bid me goodnight?" he asked, sounding amused. "Nor grant me a thank you? It would be rude not to."
>
> She turned toward him, looking him in the eye. "Thanks"
>
> "Better lock your doors so you don't end up wandering the house again, Noemí." (121-22).

As creatures of the night, the Doyles operate in shadows, their nefarious deeds hidden from the light of scrutiny, leaving the community in the dark about their true intentions. These examples showcase how Moreno-Garcia aligns the Doyle family not only as antagonists in her novel but as colonialist vampires with the intent of destroying and draining those around them.

Alongside Noemí's self-assured, mestiza subjectivity we find Catalina, who embodies the typical Victorian female protagonist of gothic literature. Catalina falls victim to the Doyle family, and she ultimately depends on assistance from her cousin to escape their trap. A few days after arriving at High Place Noemí begins to experience intense night terrors that feel undeniably real. At one point, Virgil infiltrates her thoughts to attempt to take advantage of her sexually. In her dream she is bathing and Virgil walks in, freezing her instantly and leaving her, unable to move as he inches toward her. As he bends down near the tub, she tries to tell him to leave, but can't. He then says, "You'll be a good girl won't you?" (182). Noemí is shaken and confused about whether the dream is authentic but she comes to the realization that it was on purpose in chapter twenty-one when she is in a weakened state and attempts to flee the house but the 'gloom' makes her pass out right outside the door. Virgil picks her up as easily as a rag doll and places her in the bathtub. He then orders her to undress and bathe herself. Although she attempts to hit him away as he watches her and places his hand on her thigh, he informs her "Are you suddenly bashful? Last time we were here it wasn't the case" She responds, "That was a dream" he responds quickly, "It doesn't mean it wasn't real" (225). He then attempts to kiss her without her consent but then Francis interrupts at the last moment. Virgil's repeated sexual assaults against Noemí show that he has no regard for her bodily autonomy. The nature of their complete plan to virtually 'marry' Noemí to help with their transformation process has no concern for her bodily autonomy either. It is concocted with the assumption that, due to the circumstances and her weakened state, she will have to comply with the ceremony. Although she does end up being forced into the farce of marriage with Francis Doyle, Virgil Doyle's younger cousin, it is the attempt at sexual assault and control that still comes from Virgil Doyle.

After the ceremony when Virgil infiltrates her room and pushes himself onto her "His grip was firm, and she knew she couldn't fight him using force alone" (260), she informs him she is married to Francis and he continues to inform her as she is under the influence of a drug. She may be fighting, but he chauvinistically tells her, "It's me you want, me you fantasize about. We have an understanding don't we? We know each other, really know each other. Underneath the layers of decorum all you do is want" (260). It is not until she plays along with his actions that she is able to push him off of her while brandishing a blade to escape.

Just like most colonizers, Virgil views Noemí and her body as an object at his disposal. Her agreement to his harassment is not needed for him to continue his attacks. According to Borland, "This novel reveals the ways in which the men of society work to oppress and domesticate the women and it highlights the masculine fear of the power of women's bodies, their intelligence, and their independence. Noemí and her cousin Catalina are physically held prisoner in High Place and through the supernaturally cultivated fungal system that Howard and Virgil take control of, the Doyle family attempts to force them into obedience" (86). As a privileged white male, Virgil is used to taking not only what he needs for his success but also what he wants in any situation to exert control and power. However, it is the entire Doyle line who is accustomed to viewing women's bodies as objects for consumption. According to Mcleod, "For Howard, his marriage to his first wife is merely a means to an end. Through her—and more specifically, his rape and impregnation of her—he will be able to learn the secrets of her people and steal the fungus from them, using it to grant himself immortality. In this way, the female body is colonized and stripped of its resources in tandem with the landscape of Mexico, and the broader issues of colonialism become mapped on the female body within the novel" (59). Throughout the novel, the Doyles attack women of all races in a way that allows

them to reproduce themselves and the social order that places them at the top. It is no mistake that the woman who eventually defeats them is a mestiza who undermines their eugenic ideal.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Doyle family epitomizes not only colonial agents perpetuating cultural and feminist oppressions but also vampiric monsters who, in their relentless pursuit of maintaining their privileged lifestyle, are willing to drain the life and vitality from Noemí and other women to achieve their selfish goals. The Doyles, akin to vampires, exploit indigenous knowledge and plants to subjugate their victims fully, manipulating both physical and psychological realms to maintain their dominance. Through their exploitation of indigenous resources and perpetuation of vampiric stereotypes, they instill fear and perpetuate cycles of oppression within the indigenous community. Noemí Taboada emerges as a symbol of feminist resistance against these multifaceted forms of oppression. Her confidence and determination to confront her adversaries, despite their formidable power, illustrate her defiance against the patriarchal order seeking to silence her voice. By resisting the Doyle family's vampiric attacks and challenging their authority, Noemí becomes a beacon of feminist resistance, embodying the resilience and strength of indigenous women in the face of colonial violence. In Silvia Moreno-Garcia's *Mexican Gothic,* the novel skillfully employs the vampire trope to articulate a mestiza resistance to the Eurocentric, patriarchal imperialism of the Doyles. Furthermore, while the narrative unfolds in Mexico, its themes and characters resonate with a primarily English-speaking, Latina readership. By portraying Noemí more as a Latina than solely Mexicana, the novel not only allows Diasporic Mexicanas a mirror to recognize their own identity but offers Latina readers a reflection of themselves in contemporary literature, providing

a mirror through which they can see their own struggles, experiences, and identities validated and represented. This mirror facilitates the recognition of Latina identity, particularly that of the diasporic Latina, traversing not only literary boundaries but also broadening the inclusivity of identity definitions.

Chapter 2

Vampires as Agents of Capitalism in Isabel Cañas's *Vampires of El Norte*

Published in August 2023, *Vampires of El Norte* by Isabel Cañas represents a very recent addition to Latine contemporary literature. Because her literary contributions are so recent—her first novel, *The Hacienda*, came out in 2022—the academic community has yet to explore her work in any depth. Nonetheless, Cañas is emerging as a notable figure in contemporary literature. Together with a select group of authors, she is reshaping Latina literature by infusing it with elements of the Gothic mode, diverging from the prevalent magical realism narrative. Cañas effortlessly blends multiple genres such as romance, history, and horror within *Vampires of El Norte* to showcase the intersectionalities within the Horror and Gothic genres. Gabino Iglesias compliments the novel and Cañas's writing style, claiming that this novel deserves praise due to "the way vampires and the invading 'Anglos' are both feared here, which means the author plays not only with a classic horror monster but also with the concept of humans as monsters that are feared in equal manner. In that way, this is both a historical and a political novel, but it never gets bogged down with dates and it never feels preachy, which says a lot about Cañas' storytelling skills"(para. 7). Clearly, this novel holds significant potential for interpreting the impact of Anglo capitalism on the Latine community and their corresponding responses to socioeconomic pressures. Nena's resistance against colonial patriarchal structures, her assertion of her cultural identity, and her willingness to confront systemic racism allow her to survive in the face of oppressive forces. It is important to note that although the narrative unfolds in the republic of Texas, it consciously targets an English-speaking Latina audience, frequently portraying protagonist Nena as a symbol of Latina identity.

A brief plot summary will facilitate my discussion. The novel has two principal characters, both of whom switch back and forth as viewpoint narrators from chapter to chapter. One is Nena, an aristocratic girl who lives on Los Ojuelos, a Texas hacienda with her father, don Feliciano; the other is Néstor, a boy who lost his farm when the Americans seized it from his family and killed his father. He now is a peasant with his uncle at Los Ojuelos. The novel begins when a thirteen-year-old Nena sneaks out of her home at night to look for buried treasure with Néstor (also thirteen) so that they can get rich and marry. As they search, a monstrous, dark creature that runs on all fours attacks her and sinks its teeth into her neck, putting her into a coma that leaves her as if she were dead. The novel goes back and forth between referring to these creatures as vampires and the *cuco*. Néstor fights the creature off with a shovel and carries Nena back to the hacienda. He flees when Don Feliciano shouts at him because he fears the man will beat him to death. Néstor spends the next nine years as a cowboy herding cattle across Texas and northern Mexico, never daring to return to Los Ojuelos because he believes he brought about Nena's death. Unbeknownst to him, his grandmother cured Nena of a *susto* brought on by the vampire attack through a curandera practice. In the ensuing years, she trains Nena to be a curandera. At 22, Néstor's family asks him to return to Los Ojuelos and help defend it from invading US troops. When he arrives, he joins a militia that will aid the Mexican army. Nena convinces her father to let her join the troops as a field medic. Néstor realizes that Nena is very much alive when he sees her at the big house of Don Feliciano; however, she refuses to talk to him because she believes he abandoned her (she has no recollection of the circumstances of his flight). Both march to the front to confront US forces; however, shortly after the first battle, both are separated from the main contingent. They encounter vampiric creatures and Nena realizes

that she has to return to Los Ojuelos in order to protect her hacienda against vampires. She tells Néstor to take her back to her home, so the two travel alone back to the home.

During the journey, Nena goes back and forth between being overjoyed to see Néstor again, to feelings of anger and resentment that he left her. They also confront vampires and Texas Rangers on the trek. Over several days, Néstor explains his side of the story and she eventually forgives him. When they arrive at Los Ojuelos, her mother is scandalized that they traveled alone together, and her father banishes Néstor from the hacienda, stating that he will kill him if he ever returns. Shortly thereafter, US forces arrive and try to take over the hacienda. Néstor goes back to Los Ojuelos to defend Nena and the others. Nena realizes that the Americans are using vampires in the attack, but she also realizes that these creatures are animal-like monsters and that they are not evil by nature. She finds a place where several are beaten and tied to posts—the Americans do this because the vampires exude terror that assists them in their attacks. She frees the creatures one at a time; a few of them attack their American captors, most just run away. The last one that she frees, however, attacks her and gives her *susto* once again, leaving her as if she were dead. Néstor finds her at this moment and once again brings her back to her home where his grandmother can cure her. When Don Feliciano comes in, he sees Néstor and tells him to leave immediately; Nena awakens at this moment and tells her father that Néstor is not going anywhere and, if he does, she will also go. Her father begrudgingly allows them to marry and they build a small farm next to his land.

Several things stand out from this discussion. Firstly, two types of vampires exist in the novel, but neither of them is a traditional, Dracula-like creature. To begin with we have a monster from traditional Mexican folklore that engages in vampire-like activities; secondly, we have different US actors: the military seeks to bleed Mexican populations of their territory, while

the financial class seeks to take territory from landowners.[9] Throughout the novel, the Anglos wield their power over both human and vampire labor, exploiting each to steal land from Mexicanos who already live on the land. For instance, the Anglos' control over the vampire population mirrors the capitalist elite's exploitation of marginalized communities for profit. Similar to Marx's vampire, the Americans serve as symbols of capitalist greed, feeding on the labor and resources of others to satisfy their insatiable hunger. According to David McNally, contemporary fables of "monsters of the market" serve as warnings, reminding us of impending dangers and catastrophes we often refuse to acknowledge (9). Against this backdrop of exploitation and domination, Nena emerges as a beacon of resistance, defying both the capitalist Anglos and the predatory vampires. Her refusal to conform to traditional gender roles and her defiance against Anglo domination demonstrates her resilience and agency in the face of systemic oppression, offering readers a powerful Mexicana portrayal of resistance in the fight against capitalist exploitation, patriarchy, and vampire dominance.

Before delving into the prevalent themes and symbols of capitalism in the text, it is imperative to grasp the connection between capitalism and gothic themes in literature. Alex Zukas highlights the longstanding association of the vampire motif with capitalism, tracing its origins back to the 19th century. Zukas invokes Karl Marx's theory of vampiric capitalism, wherein capitalists are depicted as parasitically sustaining themselves on the labor of others. Marx conceptualizes capital as a malevolent entity that thrives on exploiting living labor to perpetuate its growth, likening it to a shape-shifting, dialectical force that consumes human life to sustain itself and expand (740). This metaphorical comparison underscores the predatory

[9] In this way, the novel reverberates with other recent works of Chicanx fiction, particularly Rudolfo Anaya's *Curse of the ChupaCabra* (2006), that deal with animal-like vampiric beings that greedy humans control for their own financial and political gain. For a discussion of that novel, see David S. Dalton (*Robo Sacer* 177-83).

nature of capitalism, depicting it as akin to a blood-sucking monster that exploits the labor of the masses to further its agenda and desires. The integration of monsters and vampires in Gothic literature serves as a poignant reflection of various aspects of the human condition, encompassing innate fears, dissatisfaction with societal norms, and expressions of racial and sexual anguish. These metaphors effectively illuminate the darker facets of human existence and serve as cautionary tales for future generations. Latine Gothic literature adeptly employs these Gothic motifs to address issues such as colonization, capitalism, and identity crises, and to caution fellow Latine individuals against repeating historical mistakes that compromise cultural autonomy.

In *Vampires of El Norte*, American Yankee soldiers encroach upon Mexican land, driven by their capitalist motives. The inclusion of vampires serves as a literal representation of the lengths to which these individuals are willing to go to advance their capitalist agenda, even at the cost of human lives. As Amedeo Policente argues, the presence of the vampire symbolizes imminent danger, yet it also underscores the inherent dependence of capital on living labor for its sustenance and growth (3-8). In *Vampires of El Norte,* readers are challenged to look beyond the gruesome attacks of the vampires and recognize the true threat posed by the Yankee soldiers who exploit Nena's community. The novel thus blends traditional motifs with contemporary themes to craft a narrative that resonates with the present moment. By contextualizing the novel within this broader literary framework, we gain valuable insights into its exploration of power dynamics, economic exploitation, and the struggle for cultural autonomy. Through its utilization of Gothic elements and its examination of Latina identity, the novel offers a nuanced portrayal of life on the border, addressing pressing issues such as colonial legacies and capitalist encroachment. By examining the symbiotic relationship between capitalism and Gothic symbolism in *Vampires of*

El Norte, we not only unravel the intricate layers of the narrative but also gain a deeper appreciation for the novel's ability to serve as a mirror to societal structures and power dynamics, highlighting the enduring relevance of Gothic literature in critiquing the complexities of modern capitalism.

Yankees and Vampires as Agents of Capitalism

In the afterword of *Vampires of El Norte,* Cañas recounts the moment she chanced across an archival document where the Tejano landowner Juan Nepomuceno Cortina referred to expansionist US actors as "vampires in the guise of men [who] came and scattered themselves in the settlements" (Cañas, 364). This imagery not only reflected the social and political tensions of the time but also those which thematically run throughout the novel, symbolizing the exploitation and oppression faced by marginalized communities. The analogy of utilizing the vampire is potent as it relates to invasive expansion and capitalistic appropriation. Cortina's defiance serves as a thematic symbol for the novel, resonating throughout its narrative as a symbol of resistance against oppression. Cañas portrays the relentless pursuit of land by the Yankee invaders in *Vampires of El Norte,* employing manipulative tactics reminiscent of capitalist exploitation. Cañas strategically utilizes this portrayal, tapping into contemporary societal fascination with vampires. However, it isn't Cortina's expression of 'manhood' through the works of the patrons and vaqueros that ultimately saves the land in *Vampires of El Norte* but the confident Nena who ultimately saves her people through her healing abilities and discernment from the capitalist vampires and monsters at their mercy.

When Mexican patrons like Don Feliciano refuse to sell their properties to American bankers at undervalued prices, the Yankee invaders resort to backhanded means to achieve their

goals, orchestrating the disappearance of landowners by deploying vampire-like monsters in the dead of night. As a result of this, many of the strongest men on the ranches are afflicted with *susto*, a disease that incapacitates them, thus neutralizing them in the efforts to defend their land from relentless invaders. No one can identify the cause of this disease until Nena realizes that this is the same infliction she experienced as a child. According to Gloria Anzaldúa, susto is an important term in indigenous beliefs that describes a loss of one's soul through various traumas and wounds that individuals may encounter (246). As she explains, "during or after the original trauma we lose parts of our souls as an immediate strategy to minimize the pain. This keeps you from being with your whole soul" (246). The farmers experience a traumatic experience at the hands of these vampire-like creatures that attacked them in the dead of night rendering them as incomplete individuals, shells of who they once were. Cañas comes from a line of various authors and scholars who engage the concept of susto and susto healing in order to showcase the strength of the individual in resisting oppression.[10] In *Vampires of El Norte* this channeling of Indigenous Mexican tradition is channeled through Nena. Nena's Abuela passed down the ancient wisdom of healing susto, guiding her to tap into her inner power as a mestiza and to honor her indigenous heritage to aid her people. This practice is vital, involving a deep connection with the afflicted person's aura and the use of various herbs for healing. Through this ancestral method, Nena embraces the Indigenous component of her cultural heritage, calling upon it to revive the spirit of the afflicted and embodying her unwavering dedication to her community in Los Ojuelos. Nena's defiance of patriarchal norms echoes with a resounding challenge against the oppressive forces of both Yankee invaders and their monstrous vampire weaponry. Through her mastery of susto healing, she not only taps into her mestiza heritage and

[10] See, for example, Rudolfo Anaya's ChupaCabra trilogy.

indigenous roots but also becomes a beacon of resistance, symbolizing the strength of her people in the struggle for liberation.

Compared to traditional Gothic narratives, *Vampires of El Norte* offers a uniquely unsettling portrayal of vampiric capitalism, where the actions of the Anglo-Yankee soldiers supersede the horror of the supernatural beings themselves. One could argue that Cañas showcases examples of necroliberalism within her discussion of vampiric capitalism. According to Dalton, "the term necroliberalism highlights how economic imperatives for ever increasing production and consumption tend to produce heavy costs in human lives" (*Robo Sacer* 12). Dalton traces this phenomenon through a novel series, Rudolfo Anaya's ChupaCabra Trilogy, where necroliberal enterprise manifests as a force draining the life-force of Mexican and Chicanx communities through a drug epidemic. This epidemic spawns another vampiric monster, the Chupacabra, which preys on the afflicted populace, illustrating how recent Chicanx narratives have turned to vampirism to negotiate the necroliberal drive that has existed in the borderlands since at least the Texas Revolution. These necroliberal narratives often feature a Chicana or Mexicana protagonist who resists the economies of death that afflict her community. *Vampires of El Norte* fits within this tradition by highlighting how Mexicana authors employ vampiric monsters to negotiate questions of imperial consumption and necroliberalism. That said, while the vampires in the novel evoke primal fear, it is the greed and monstrous exploitation of the Yankee invaders that proves to be the true source of violence and dread. Claudia Lee explains this parallel effectively, stating that "'vampire capital' . . . puts its fangs into the bodies and minds of the gendered, raced, and sexed workers to suck out their last drops of bodily and mental powers as a means to amass more capital" (268). In the novel, the Yankees are depicted not only attempting to bribe people out of their land but also physically abusing and manipulating the

community in order to seize land that does not belong to them. According to Hudson, the utilization of vampires within the novel demonstrates that "as much as wealthy and powerful humans may characterize themselves as 'humane,' human interactions by the wealthy and powerful with other humans, who are poor and disempowered, have often been rather inhumane. Moreover, this violence has often been camouflaged as 'civilizing,' 'developing,' 'modernizing,' and even 'saving'" (3). Their monstrous and self-serving behavior is further solidified when Nestor and Nena witness them hauling vampire bodies to the shore as they prepare to attack Los Ojuelos. The vampires wear dog-like collars with metal masks over their faces, and their bodies are burned and bruised, providing evidence of the abuses inflicted upon them (267).

The juxtaposition of the Yankee invaders and vampire creatures forces the reader to compare whose deeds are worse and truly monstrous. The vampires' bodily autonomy as a creature or 'wild animal' is taken from them. If we return to Stephanou, it would appear that this manipulation of the vampire creature is relatively easy as "the vampire does not create anything new but depends on its human host for food. It feeds on the human and gives nothing in return; it is merely an exploiter" (25). Although the vampires have the power and ability to drain the blood from Nena's community, it is their manipulation by the Anglos—through their abuse, withholding of goods, and usage of light against them—that turns them into necroliberal weapons. This concept is truly frightening as it showcases how willing the Anglos are to get what they want. By putting the spotlight on the monstrous deeds of the Anglo-Yankee soldiers, Cañas flips the script on the typical role of vampires, giving them deeper meaning as yet another object of capitalist exploitation. This twist highlights the novel's focus on the ethical and moral aspects of power. Through its sharp look at historical wrongs and present-day social issues, *Vampires of El Norte* stands as a powerful critique of systemic oppression and a reminder of how

Gothic literature continues to shed light on society's flaws and complexities. However, the novel's intriguing impact lies in its invitation for readers to perceive the Anglo ethical code as deeply ingrained and flawed, evident in their weaponization of vampires alongside the simultaneous appropriation of land from the community. The narrative subverts the traditional gothic framework, revealing that the true villains are not the monstrous entities themselves, but rather the human antagonists who exploit them for their own gain.

Through Cañas's narrative, the vampiric tendencies of the Yankee soldiers themselves become apparent, as they exploit and dehumanize communities in their relentless pursuit of profit and power. Through the necroliberal lens, the vampires in the novel serve merely as instruments of capitalism, manipulated by the Yankees to achieve their goals. This parallel between the actions of the soldiers and the vampiric symbolism underscores the novel's thematic exploration of power dynamics and exploitation. As readers are prompted to question who the true monsters are in the story, *Vampires of El Norte* emerges as a compelling indictment of systemic oppression and a testament to the enduring relevance of Gothic literature in critiquing societal injustices.

Nena's Resistance to Capitalism and Patriarchal Structure

Vampires of El Norte uses patriarchal systems as a way to highlight feminist independence and resistance to the oppressive structures within the novel. Nena is a patrón's daughter in 1840s Texas, situated within a patriarchal system that governs the various ranchos. Nena is eager to demonstrate to her father that she is of tremendous value to Los Ojuelos as a curandera, rather than being merely viewed as a pawn to marry off to another rich family. In this way, she uses her training as a curandera and her outspokenness to continuously push against the

boundaries of this patriarchal society. This defiance is evident in various instances, such as her choice of lover, her pursuit of what may seem like an unnecessary occupation, and her firm stance against oppression.

The first instance showcasing Nena's resistance against the patriarchal systems in the novel is when, despite being the daughter of a patrón, she chooses to train as a curandera. She does this to build up the ranch and to aid in healing those afflicted with susto. At this time in Mexican (and Texan) society, such a pursuit would not have been encouraged for the rich daughter of a patrón. Rather, she would be encouraged to marry the son of another rich landowner to fortify both ranchos' defenses. Indeed, honor ideology was the backbone of the patriarchal structure of Mexico.[11] According to Ramon A. Guiterrez, marriage was ultimately the highest honor a woman could provide for her family: "the joining of two households…were transactions so important to the honor-status of the group that marriage was hardly a decision to be made by minors. The norm in New Mexico was for parents to arrange nuptials for their children with little or no consideration of their wishes. Filial piety required the acceptance of any union one's parents deemed appropriate or advantageous" (88). Although Gutierrez specifically discusses New Mexico, his quote is pertinent to the Texan case as well. This honor code was held in high regard throughout the Mexican territories that the United States would eventually annex. Despite these gender-based expectations, Nena persists with her training, tending to ranch hands afflicted by susto and asserting an independence that cannot be easily undermined.

The novel illustrates the paramount importance of safeguarding her home when she volunteers for duty at the battle lines. It becomes evident that only a curandera possesses the

[11] For further insights into honor ideology prevalent in Mexico, refer to Martinez's work "Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza de Sangre, Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico" for background on honor ideology origination. For further insights into honor ideology and gender societal expectations prevalent in 1800s Mexico, refer to Meschke's dissertation "Women's lives through women's wills in the Spanish and Mexican borderlands, 1750–1846"

ability to heal those who survive the vampire attacks, further emphasizing the significance of her role in defending her community. Throughout the novel, Nena and Néstor confront the vampire monsters, often saving each other in equal measure. However, a pivotal moment occurs upon Nena's return to Los Ojuelos. Despite her warnings, her father dismisses her concerns about the looming danger posed by the Yankees utilizing vampires. Undeterred, Nena takes charge, protecting the women of the rancho and directly confronting the vampires. In the following excerpt from the novel, Nena demonstrates her courage and determination as she defends her family and home from a vampire attack by slicing off his head, "she caught herself before she tripped, still clutching the knife. Ash fell around her onto the ground…flecks of ash stuck to the dark liquid. All that remained of the vampire" (328). This illustrates the complex dynamics at play in the novel, where characters navigate between fear and empathy in their interactions with supernatural beings and external threats. Nena's actions highlight her role as a courageous protagonist who is willing to challenge traditional norms and expectations in order to protect those she cares about. Nena's decision to allow the vampires to depart emphasizes the statement that they pose no real threat to her community. This action also highlights the symbolism suggested by Kwan-Wai Yu, who argues that "vampirism threatens by subverting proper gender definitions and behavioral expectations, which keep the imperial subject in place" (148). Nena's realization that the true monsters are the Yankees becomes evident as she interprets the presence of the vampire: "A beast could not change its nature…whether it [the vampire] was made by God's hand or the Devil's…would feed as it had been born to feed. That alone did not make it evil" (329).[12] By freeing the vampires and thereby stripping power from the Yankees, Nena

[12] For more information on the connection between capitalist vampires and their feeding style, please refer to Sami Khatib's article "The Drive of Capital: Of Monsters, Vampires and Zombies" in *Im/Possibility: On the Production, Distribution, and Articulation of the Possible and the Impossible,* special issue of *Coils of the Serpent* (2021). In the article, Khatib explores how the drive of capital exhibits an uncanny monstrosity and undead temporality that transcends the dichotomy of production and consumption. He

creates space for resistance against the invaders. This recognition leads Nena and her community to stand united against the Yankees, ultimately prevailing and forcing them into retreat.

What is particularly intriguing about *Vampires of El Norte* is its utilization of a romantic trope within the narrative to underscore themes of feminist independence and choice in defiance of patriarchal norms. This is exemplified in the novel through Nestor. Despite the apparent impropriety of their relationship within the confines of this society, by marrying Nestor, Nena subverts the patriarchal norms of society, asserting her agency and independence in choosing her own path. Rather than marry for status, she marries for love. Unlike other novels that employ romantic tropes to soften their protagonists or rescue their female characters, Cañas does not aim for such outcomes in intertwining this storyline with the struggle against capitalism. In fact, through Nestor's abandonment of Nena, we witness her transformation into a self-assured and confident individual. Despite the heartbreak caused by his desertion, Nena does not rush into Nestor's arms upon his return. Instead, she asserts her authority as a patrón's daughter, reminding him of his role—to simply protect her at the battle lines while she fulfills her duties as a curandera and he as a vaquero. Continuously vocalizing her immense displeasure at his abandonment, she confronts him about the impact of his actions on both himself and her:

> "Bold words," she could taste the acidity in the words before they struck the air. "You shouldn't go making the kinds of promises to my father that you have a history of breaking. He's bound to lose his temper with you," she squinted. The river had appeared around a bend; its slow-moving surface reflected the reddening twilight. The footsteps behind her hesitated, then continued.

---

suggests that production for production's sake becomes a "source of pleasure for the sake of pleasure" (Khatib).

> “"What the hell are you talking about, Nena–”
>
> “Don’t call me that,” she shot over her shoulder.
>
> “Strangers address me as Magdalena. Vaqueros call me señorita, or better yet, say nothing to me at all. Understood?"” (122)

Nena’s assertive demeanor and refusal to respond to her childhood nickname from Nestor demonstrate not only her independence and self-assurance but also her confidence in leveraging her own class privilege. This refusal is not only a means to embarrass him where he is most sensitive but also a way to assert herself against those who have caused her pain, even if it may seem beneath her stature. She challenges Nestor about his past actions, demanding accountability and respect in their interactions. This passage highlights Nena’s strong-willed character and her determination to assert herself in a patriarchal society. Nena’s self-assurance does not deter Nestor; rather, it prompts him to reflect on his own shortcomings and the years spent wallowing in self-pity instead of taking action to protect his homeland or check on the outcome of Nena and Los Ojuelos. It also inspires Nestor to not only win back her affection but also to return to their homeland where the couple fights against the Yankee invaders. This unintentionally demonstrates that, despite the Yankees’ attempts to weaken her community, when Nena and Nestor are united, they are stronger than ever.

Nena continues to triumph over the patriarchal powers in place once she and Nestor return to Los Ojuelos and fend off the Yankee invaders. Despite her father’s repeated assertions throughout the novel that he will not accept Nena not conforming to the patriarchal order and her mother’s disdain at the thought of Nena being with Nestor, she—though initially fearful of her father’s wrath and mother’s disapproval—stands up to him by declaring her intention to marry Nestor and continue safeguarding the estate as a curandera. While many novels might depict this

as a happy ending, Cañas acknowledges that patriarchal societies and generational obligations do not dissolve so easily. Instead, Cañas depicts Nena as steadfast in her decision, even in the face of her parents' disapproval, evident in their absence from the wedding ceremony. Over time, however, they begin to soften their stance as they realize that societal judgments about class differences aren't as important as they once thought. As months pass, tensions ease, and Nena's parents take steps towards reconciliation. They extend an olive branch by gifting Nestor a parcel of land that holds sentimental value, including the quarry where they played as children. Still, the novel's resolution doesn't hinge on the Yankees refraining from further incursions, the vampires ceasing their attacks, or Nena's parents wholeheartedly embracing her choice to be a curandera and marrying Nestor. Instead, the narrative's hope lies in the gradual healing and unity depicted, captured by Canas' words: "Day by day, step by step, bridges mended. Hands of peace were extended, and accepted" (Canas 360). It's the belief that over time and with collective effort, they can safeguard all they've fought for throughout the story.

Nena's embodiment of self-reliance, bodily autonomy, and resistance to patriarchal forces echoes the thematic exploration observed by Kennedy K. McLeod, where Gothic narrative is inherently shaped by the return of the past and its ongoing influence on the present. Over the past century, women have persistently turned to the Gothic mode, employing the genre, much like their predecessors, to delve into cultural anxieties surrounding the domestic sphere and their roles within it (McLeod, 3). This insight underscores Nena's defiance against oppressive societal norms, embodying the resilience and agency often depicted by female protagonists in Gothic literature.

Conclusion

In *Vampires of El Norte*, Isabel Cañas masterfully weaves together themes of cultural identity, capitalist exploitation, and feminist resistance within the rich tapestry of Gothic literature. Through the character of Nena, Cañas challenges traditional gender roles and confronts systemic racism, presenting readers with a narrative that transcends genre boundaries and resonates with the struggles of marginalized communities. By portraying Nena as a symbol of Latina identity and defiance, the novel not only sheds light on the enduring challenges faced by those on the border but also celebrates the resilience and agency of its protagonist. Through its exploration of Gothic elements and its examination of Mexican identity, *Vampires of El Norte* offers a nuanced portrayal of life on the border, tackling pressing issues such as colonial legacies and capitalist exploitation. Moreover, the novel delves into the concept of necroliberalism, highlighting the profound impact of economic imperatives on human lives. In this way, the narrative exposes the predatory nature of capitalism and its detrimental effects on marginalized communities, particularly within the Mexicana and Chicana experience. Through its portrayal of vampires as symbols of capitalist greed and exploitation, *Vampires of El Norte* delivers a potent critique of systemic oppression, serving as a stark reminder of the dangers posed by unchecked greed. Ultimately, *Vampires of El Norte* emerges as a significant addition to Latine literature, offering readers a captivating exploration of power dynamics, economic exploitation, and the quest for cultural autonomy. By situating the novel within broader discussions of Gothic literature and capitalist critique, we gain valuable insights into its thematic depth and societal relevance. Through its adept use of Gothic motifs and its examination of Latine identity, the novel invites readers to contemplate the complexities of modern capitalism and the enduring resilience of marginalized communities in their ongoing struggle against oppression.

Conclusion

To conclude this thesis, we have embarked on a comparative journey through the literary landscapes of *Mexican Gothic* by Silvia Moreno-Garcia and *Vampires of El Norte* by Isabel Cañas. The intricate narratives woven by these authors beckon us to explore the depths of Gothic symbolism and cultural critique. Within these novels, vampires emerge as potent symbols of colonization, capitalism, and patriarchal dominance, while our protagonists navigate the labyrinthine corridors of resistance and identity as strong mestizas. It is imperative that both novels focus on the mestiza within a broader conversation regarding the expression of Latina identity. Emma Garcia emphasizes this, stating, "one can see how the reading of popular texts serves as a tool to help a reader to invent himself/herself. In other words, the popular texts produced for and by Latinas in the last decade can then be seen as spaces from which struggles over self-definition in terms of cultural, gender, sexual, class, and national identity occur" (10). Through the lens of mestiza protagonists, these novels not only offer captivating narratives but also serve as spaces for explorations of identity and empowerment. By centering the experiences of strong mestizas, Moreno-Garcia and Cañas open up conversations about the complexities of Latina identity, inviting readers to engage with themes of cultural heritage, gender dynamics, and societal expectations. As we reflect on the significance of these novels within the broader landscape of literature, it becomes evident that they contribute to a more nuanced understanding of Latine identity and representation. By weaving together elements of Gothic fiction with themes of resistance and identity, Moreno-Garcia and Cañas offer readers an opportunity to explore the intersections of power, culture, and agency in the lives of mestiza protagonists.

Mexican Gothic employs the symbolism of vampirism to explore themes of colonization, white supremacy, and resistance. By depicting the Doyles as vampiric antagonists, the novel

illuminates the insidious nature of colonialist systems and the resilience of those who resist them. The Doyles, with their Anglo-Saxon heritage, embody the colonialist forces that seek to exploit and control indigenous and mestiza women. Their actions mirror real-world colonial dynamics, from economic exploitation to cultural appropriation. Noemí's resistance to their vampiric nature symbolizes her defiance against the white supremacist order they represent, echoing broader struggles against colonialism and oppression. The novel's exploration of the Doyles as colonialist vampires extends to their psychological manipulation and cultural suppression, further underscoring their role as agents of oppression. Through their exploitation of local resources and suppression of indigenous culture, the Doyles drain the community of its autonomy and vitality, leaving behind only hollow remnants of traditions. Noemí Taboada's journey into the heart of darkness at High Place serves as a metaphor for the horrors of colonial exploitation and the enduring legacy of patriarchy. Her resistance to Virgil's sexual assaults and her refusal to assimilate to European standards of beauty and behavior highlight her agency in the face of patriarchal oppression. Her embrace of her cultural identity and pride in her mestiza heritage serve as acts of defiance against the colonialist forces that seek to erase indigenous culture and identity. Her resistance to the white supremacist order represented by the Doyles is a testament to the strength of marginalized voices in the face of oppression. Ultimately, *Mexican Gothic* challenges readers to confront uncomfortable truths about historical and contemporary systems of oppression while celebrating the resilience of marginalized voices. Through Noemí's journey of resistance, the novel offers a powerful portrayal of the ongoing struggle against colonialism and white supremacy, reminding us of the importance of solidarity and resistance in the face of oppression.

In *Vampires of El Norte*, vampiric symbolism serves as a potent metaphor for capitalist exploitation and patriarchal dominance. Through its integration with the themes of vampirism and resistance, the novel offers a compelling exploration of power dynamics, exploitation, and feminist resistance within the context of patriarchal and capitalist structures. The imagery of vampires reflects not only the social and political tensions of the time but also the thematic undercurrents that run throughout the narrative, symbolizing the exploitation and oppression faced by marginalized communities. Nena's defiance of societal expectations, her training as a curandera, and her refusal to conform to traditional gender norms demonstrate her agency and independence in challenging oppressive structures. Despite being situated within a patriarchal society, Nena asserts her authority and plays a crucial role in defending her community against external threats, embodying the resilience and strength of marginalized voices. Cañas explores the complexities of power dynamics and the importance of collective action in the face of oppression. The novel's portrayal of necroliberalism highlights the insidious nature of capitalist exploitation through the vampiric entities, where the actions of the Yankee invaders prove to be the true source of terror. By manipulating both human and vampire creatures to achieve their goals, the Yankees exemplify the exploitation and dehumanization inherent within capitalist systems. The interplay between the soldiers' actions and the symbolic portrayal of vampirism beckons readers to delve into the intricate complexities of power dynamics and the struggle for liberation against oppressive forces, inviting a deeper exploration of the blurred boundaries between the two, prompting questions regarding the concept of true monstrosity. *Vampires of El Norte* offers a powerful critique of systemic oppression and a testament to the enduring relevance of Gothic literature in shedding light on society's flaws and complexities. Through its exploration of vampirism, resistance, and feminist empowerment, the novel challenges readers to

confront uncomfortable truths about historical and contemporary systems of oppression while celebrating the strength and resilience of marginalized voices.

These works open the door in the academic sphere to reflect on the literary import of both works within the realm of Latine literature and Gothic fiction. By situating them within larger discourses of cultural representation, postcolonial critique, and feminist discourse, we acknowledge their significance in challenging dominant narratives and amplifying marginalized voices. Moreover, their exploration of themes such as colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchy provides valuable insights into ongoing struggles against oppression and injustice, prompting further research and discussion in the academic community. The conversation surrounding Latine identity is not only tackled in these novels but is also brought to the forefront, particularly in how the protagonists navigate colonial and capitalistic forces while representing their own identity. This nuanced exploration is imperative within Latine culture, as highlighted by Amanda Ellen Gerke and Luisa María González Rodríguez, who emphasize that "the multiracial Latino aggregate cannot be understood without exploring the connections between history and culture of their home countries and the personal experiences of Latinas/os in the United States" (7).

By drawing parallels between the fictional narratives and real-world issues, *Mexican Gothic* and *Vampires of El Norte* encourage readers to critically engage with the complexities of power, resistance, and identity in today's society. Evaluating the scholarly contributions engendered by our analysis, we discern the significance of these novels to Gothic studies, Latine literature, and feminist criticism. Maria Lehnen further elucidates this interdisciplinary approach, stating that "Crossing national and academic boundaries, recent Latin American literary works translate and transform fiction through the incorporation of theory, blurring in this way, the lines between criticism and creative writing" (12). By situating them within broader discussions of

power dynamics, economic exploitation, and cultural autonomy, we gain valuable insights into their thematic depth and societal relevance. Moreover, our comparative approach highlights the importance of intersectional analyses in understanding the complexities of oppression and resistance, underscoring the need for more inclusive and diverse representations within the literary canon.

In conclusion, *Mexican Gothic* and *Vampires of El Norte* emerge as seminal works that challenge dominant narratives and amplify marginalized voices. Through a comparative lens within this thesis, we discern intriguing parallels and divergences between the two novels. Both *Mexican Gothic* and *Vampires of El Norte* offer compelling critiques of systemic oppression while celebrating the resilience and agency of marginalized individuals. Through their exploration of Gothic themes, Moreno-Garcia and Cañas shed light on society's flaws and complexities, inspiring readers to confront uncomfortable truths and imagine alternative futures. As Gothic literature continues to evolve, these novels stand as powerful reminders of the genre's enduring relevance in critiquing societal injustices and amplifying marginalized voices. As we bid farewell to these haunting tales, let us carry forward the lessons learned and continue to engage with the enduring questions of power, resistance, and identity they provoke. In doing so, we honor the resilience of the protagonists who defy the odds and assert their agency in the face of adversity, inspiring us to confront injustice and strive for a more just and equitable society.

Works Cited

Aldama, Frederick Luis, and Christopher González. *"Latinx Studies."* Routledge eBooks, 2018, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315109862.

Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands: The New Mestiza = La Frontera*. 1st ed. San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1987. Print.

—-.*Light in the Dark = Luz En Lo Oscuro : Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*. Edited by AnaLouise Keating, Duke UP 2015.

Arias, Patricia. "From Rebozo Shawls to Bandannas." Encartes, vol. 2, no. 4, Sept. 2019, pp. 175–94. https://doi.org/10.29340/en.v2n4.110.

Boffone, Trevor, and Cristina Herrera. *Nerds, Goths, Geeks, and Freaks: Outsiders in Chicanx and Latinx Young Adult Literature*. UP of Mississippi, 2020.

Borland, Faith. "The Pedagogy of Terror: Women's Education in the Gothic Novel". Dissertation, Illinois State University, 2021. ProQuest. https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/pedagogy-terror-womens-education-gothic-novel/docview/2556389561/se-2.

Cañas, Isabel. *Vampires of El Norte*. Penguin, 2023.

Casanova-Vizcaíno, Sandra, and Inés Ordiz. *Latin American Gothic in Literature and Culture.* Routledge, 2017.

Conner, Shawn. “Mexico Fertile Ground for Gothic Horror and Speculative Fiction in Silvia Moreno-Garcia’s Work.” Vancouversun, 27 May 2021, vancouversun.com/entertainment/books/mexico-fertile-ground-for-gothic-horror-and-speculative-fiction-in-silvia-moreno-garcias-work.

Cutter, Matthew. “Buried in the Earth: The Mestizo and the Colonizer in Silvia Moreno-Garcia’s Mexican Gothic.” The Graduate Review, vol. 6, no. 1, 2021, pp. 109–115. https://doi.org/https://vc.bridgew.edu/grad_rev/vol6/iss1/20.

Dalton, David S. “Antropofagia, Calibanism, and the Post-Romero Zombie: Cannibal Resistance in Latin America and the Caribbean.” *Alambique: Revista Académica de Ciencia Ficción y Fantasía*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2018, 1-21.

—. “Educating Anti-Catholicism: Manuel Gamio, Indigenismo, and Secular Redemption.” *Anti-Catholicism and the Mexican Revolution*, edited by Jürgen Buchenau and David S. Dalton. U of New Mexico P, 2004, forthcoming.

—. *Mestizo Modernity: Race, Technology, and the Body in Postrevolutionary Mexico*. U of Florida P, 2018.

—. *Robo Sacer: Necroliberalism and Cyborg Resistance in Mexican and Chicanx Dystopias*. Vanderbilt UP, 2023.

—. “Science and the Metaphysical Body: A Critique of Positivism in the Vasconcelian Utopia.” Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos, vol. 40, no. 3, 2016, pp. 535-559.

—. “Una ruptura en la fundación nacional(ista): triángulos amorosos disgénicos en Margarita de niebla de Jaime Torres Bodet y El réferi cuenta nueve de Diego Cañedo.” Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos vol 35, no. 3, 2019, pp. 382-407.

Dittmer, Jason. “Teaching the social construction of Regions in regional geography courses; or, why do vampires come from Eastern Europe?” *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, vol. 30, no. 1, 2006, pp. 49–61, https://doi.org/10.1080/03098260500499618.

DeVirgilis, Megan L. *Blood Disorders: A Transatlantic Study of the Vampire as an Expression of Ideological, Political, and Economic Tensions in Late 19 th and Early 20th Century Hispanic Short Fiction*, Temple University, United States -- Pennsylvania, 2018. *ProQuest*, https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/blood-disorders-transatlantic-study-vampire-as/docview/2171764204/se-2.

Eljaiek-Rodríguez, Gabriel. “Bloodsucking Bugs: Horacio Quiroga and the Latin American Transformation of Vampires.” The Supernatural Cinema of Guillermo del Toro, edited by John H. Morehad, McFarland, 2015, pp. 142-162.

Espada, Mariah. “How Puerto Ricans Are Fighting Back against Using the Island as a Tax Haven.” *Time*, Time, 19 Apr. 2021, time.com/5955629/puerto-rico-tax-haven-opposition/.

Gall, Olivia. “Mexican long-living mestizophilia versus a democracy open to diversity.” Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies, vol. 8, no. 3, 26 Nov. 2013, pp. 280–303.https://doi.org/10.1080/17442222.2013.797212.

Gamio, Manuel, and Fernando Armstrong-Fumero. *Forjando Patria: Pro-Nacionalismo.* UP of Colorado, 2010.

Garcia, Emma R. Reading Latinas: A Cultural Analysis of Beauty, Gender and Empowering Models for and by Latinas, University of Michigan, United States Michigan, 2005. ProQuest, https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/reading-latinas-cultural-analysis-beauty-gender/ocview/305454939/se-2.

Garcia-Karr, Danielle. "Dismembering Monstrous Metaphors in Latine Speculative Fiction". Dissertation, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, 2022. ProQuest.https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/dismembering-monstrous-metaphors-Latine/docview/2801872726/se-2.

Gerke, Amanda, and Luisa María Gonzalez Rodriguez. Latinidad at the Crossroads Insights into Latine Identity in the Twenty. Brill Rodopi, 2021.

Ginway, M. Elizabeth. "Vampires: Immunity and Resistance ." *Cyborgs, Sexuality, and the Undead the Body in Mexican and Brazilian Speculative Fiction*, Vanderbilt UP, Nashville, Tennessee , 2020, pp. 136–166.

Godfrey Richard, Gavin Jack & Campbell Jones (2004) Sucking, Bleeding, Breaking: On the Dialectics of Vampirism, Capital, and Time, Culture and Organization, 10:1, 25-36, DOI: 10.1080/14759550410001675181

Gonzalez, Tanya. *Murders, Madness, Monsters: Latina /o Gothic in the U.S.A*, University of California, Riverside, United States -- California, 2004. *ProQuest*,

https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/murders-madness-monsters-latina-o-gothic-u-s/docview/305200213/se-2.

Grady, Constance. “Why White Supremacy Is a Cult, According to Novelist Silvia Moreno-Garcia.” Vox, 6 Nov. 2020. www.vox.com/culture/21551859/silvia-moreno-garcia-interview-mexican-gothic.

Gutiérrez, R. A. (1985). Honor Ideology, Marriage Negotiation, and Class-Gender Domination in New Mexico, 1690-1846. Latin American Perspectives, 12(1), 81-104. https://doi.org/10.1177/0094582X8501200105

Hart, John Mason. Empire and Revolution: The Americans in Mexico since the Civil War. Berkeley: U of California P, 2002

Hedrick, Tace. “‘The spirits talk to us’: Regionalism, poverty, and romance in Mexican American gothic fiction.” *Studies in the Novel*, vol. 49, no. 3, 2017, pp. 322–340. *Project Muse* , https://doi.org/10.1353/sdn.2017.0033.

Hind, Emily. “Feminism and the Mexican Woman Intellectual from Sor Juana to Poniatowska: Boob Lit”. Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

Hudson , Dale. “Vampires and the Anthropocene.” The Palgrave Handbook of the Vamp, Palgrave Macmillan, Cha, 2021, pp. 1–21.

Iglesias, Gabino. "Book Review: 'Isabel Cañas: Vampires of El Norte'." NPR, n.p., 18 Aug. 2023, www.npr.org/2023/08/18/1194150491/book-review-isabel-canas-vampires-of-el-norte.

Ivis García (2020) Cultural Insights for Planners: Understanding the Terms Hispanic, Latino, and Latine, Journal of the American Planning Association, 86:4, 393-402, DOI: 10.1080/01944363.2020.1758191

Kaiser Ortiz, J. "Four Thinkers in the Twentieth Century Genealogy of Mexicanidad: Justo Sierra, Samuel Ramos, José Vasconcelos, and Octavio Paz." Genealogy, vol. 4, 2020, p. 75.https://doi.org/10.3390/genealogy4030075

Khair, T., and Johan Höglund.Dark Blood. 1st ed., Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2012, https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137272621.

Khatib, Sami. “The Drive of Capital: Of Monsters, Vampires and Zombies.” "Im/Possibility: On the Production, Distribution, and Articulation of the Possible and the Impossible," special issue of Coils of the Serpent (2021): n. pag. Print.

“Latinx Horror: Interview With Isabel Cañas - Horror Writers Association.” Horror Writers Association, 5 Aug. 2023, horror.org/latinx-horror-interview-with-isabel-canas/?fbclid=IwAR143zquRgRL8bDQB5FXFhUUvfetCMaWh95ljp1vAv1UKLKjBZFuZ79j1s0.

Leeb, Claudia. “Rebelling against suffering in capitalism.” Contemporary Political Theory, vol. 17, no. 3, 15 Feb. 2018, pp. 263–282, https://doi.org/10.1057/s41296-017-0185-0.

Lehnen, Leila M. Unimagined Identities: The Questioning of National Identities in Contemporary Latin American Literature, Vanderbilt University, United States -- Tennessee, 2003. ProQuest, https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/unimagined-identities-questioning-national/docview/305298391/se-2.

MacLellan, Matthew. “Marx’s vampires: An Althusserian critique.” *Rethinking Marxism*, vol. 25, no. 4, Oct. 2013, pp. 549–565, https://doi.org/10.1080/08935696.2013.842699.

Martínez, María Elena. *Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza de Sangre, Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico*. Stanford UP, 2008.

Marx, Karl. *Marx's Capital.* Electric Book Company, 2000. https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uncc-ebooks/detail.action?docID=3008611.

Marx, K., & Borchardt, J. (2020). Das Kapital. https://doi.org/10.17169/refubium-26311

Moreno-Garcia, Silvia. Mexican Gothic. Mondadori, 2021.

McLeod, Kennedy K. “Haunted Women: Time, Memory, and Gender in Women’s Gothic Novels”. Dissertation, 2023.

McLoughlin, Amanda, and Julia Schifini. “Episode 282: Mexican Gothic (With Isabel Cañas).” Spirits, 13 May 2022, spiritspodcast.com/episodes/mexican-gothic-with-isabel-canas. Accessed 5 Jan. 2024.

McNally, David. Monsters of the Market: Zombies, Vampires, and Global Capitalism. W. Ross MacDonald School Resource Services Library, 2013.

Oboler, S. (1992). The Politics of Labeling: Latino/a Cultural Identities of Self and Others. *Latin American Perspectives*, *19*(4), 18-36. https://doi.org/10.1177/0094582X9201900403

Paz, Octavio. *El Laberinto de la Soledad*. 2nd ed., rev. y aum., Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1959.

Pérez-Torres, Rafael. “Chicano Ethnicity, Cultural Hybridity, and the Mestizo Voice.” American Literature, vol. 70, no. 1, 1998, pp. 153–176. JSTOR.www. jstor.org/stable/2902459.

Policante, Amedeo. “Vampires of Capital: Gothic Reflections between Horror and Hope.” The Cultural Logic, vol. 1, 2012.

Rodriguez, Eliza. “Technologies of Contagion: Spores, Viruses, and the Queer Pleasures of Apocalypse.” Chiricú Journal: Latina/o Literatures, Arts, and Cultures. https://doi.org/10.2979/chiricu.7.1.07.

Sánchez Prado, Ignacio M. (2023). "Citational Gothic: Silvia Moreno-Garcia’s Mexican Archive." College Literature, 50(2–3), 323–348. https://doi.org/10.1353/lit.2023.a902221

—. “El mestizaje en el corazón de la utopía: La raza cósmica entre Aztlán y América Latina.” Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos, vol. 33, no. 2, 2009, pp. 67-83.

—. *Screening Neoliberalism: Transforming Mexican Cinema.* 1988-2012. Vanderbilt UP, 2014.

Sandoval, Anna Marie. *Toward a Latina Feminism of the Americas: Repression and Resistance in Chicana and Mexicana Literature*. U of Texas P, 2009.

Serrano, Carmen. Monsters, Vampires and Doppelgaengers: Innovation and Transformation of Gothic Forms in Latin American Narratives. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2009.

Smith, M. J., & Moruzi, K. (2018). Vampires and Witches Go to School: Contemporary Young Adult Fiction, Gender, and the Gothic. Children’s Literature in Education, 49(1), 6–18. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10583-018-9343-0

Stephanou, Aspasia. “Game of Fangs.” Neoliberal Gothic: International Gothic in the Neoliberal Age, 30 July 2017, https://doi.org/10.7765/9781526113450.00009.

Stuelke, Patricia. “Hemispheric Horror, Neofeudal Empire, and the International Women’s Strike.” American Quarterly, vol. 74, no. 3, 2022, pp. 641–663. https://doi.org/10.1353/aq.2022.0044.

Swarthout, Kelly Anne. *“Assimilating the Primitive”: Parallel Discourses on Racial Miscegenation in Revolutionary Mexico*. Peter Lang, 2004.

Tierney, Dolores. “Guillermo del Toro’s transnational political horror: Cronos (1993), El Espinazo del Diablo (the devil’s backbone 2001) and El Laberinto del Fauno (Pan’s Labyrinth 2006).” *New Transnationalisms in Contemporary Latin American Cinemas*, 2018, https://doi.org/10.3366/edinburgh/9780748645732.003.0005.

Vasconcelos, José. "The Cosmic Race: A Bilingual Edition, trans." *DT Jaen. Baltimore* (1997).

Vega, Hana. “Anticolonial Feminism, Sylvia Moreno-Garcia, and the Female Gothic: A Textual Analysis of Mexican Gothic.” (2023). Electronic Theses, Projects, and Dissertations, 1697. https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd/1697

Villanueva Alarcón, Idalis, Mejia, Joel Alejandro, Mejia, Janice, and Revelo, Renata. *Latiné, Latine, Latina, Latino, or Hispanic: Problematizing terms often used in engineering education*. Retrieved from https://par.nsf.gov/biblio/10357965. *Journal of Engineering Education* . Web. doi:10.1002/jee.20486.

Wilson, Katharina M. “The history of the word ‘vampire.’” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 46, no. 4, 1985, p. 577. *JSTOR*, https://doi.org/10.2307/2709546.

Yu, Eric Kwan-Wai. “Productive fear: Labor, sexuality, and mimicry in Bram Stoker’s Dracula.” Texas Studies in Literature and Language, vol. 48, no. 2, 2006, pp. 145–170, https://doi.org/10.1353/tsl.2006.0009.

Zukas, Alex. “Enchanted Capitalism: Myths, Monsters, and Markets.” The History Teacher, vol. 53, no. 4, 2020, pp. 733–82. JSTOR, https://www.jstor.org/stable/27058639. Accessed 7 Mar. 2024.