

# Saying “Nothin”

*Pachucas and the Languages of Resistance*

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On June 9 and 10, 1943, in the midst of the Zoot Suit Riots, Los Angeles newspapers announced the arrest of a “pachuco woman.” According to the press, twenty-two-year-old Amelia Venegas, mother of a toddler and wife of a sailor, had incited violence by urging a gang of pachucos to attack sheriff’s deputies in her East Los Angeles neighborhood. “I no like thees daputy sheriffs [sic.],” the *Herald-Express* quoted her. Additionally, newspapers reported that she attempted to smuggle a pair of brass knuckles to “zoot suit hoodlums” to assist them in their street brawls with sailors. Venegas was arrested and jailed for disturbing the peace.<sup>1</sup>



Amelia Venegas, “Pachuco woman.” *Los Angeles Herald-Examiner* Collection. Los Angeles Public Library.

Although newspaper photographs do not show her wearing a “finger-tip” coat or short, full skirt—identifying features of the pachuca look in wartime Los Angeles—Venegas was nonetheless described as a “lady zoot suiter, or at least a sympathizer with the zoot suit fraternity.”<sup>2</sup> As various scholars have shown, the zoot suit, which generally consisted of a long coat and skirt or pair of billowing trousers, signified difference and defiance in the United States during World War II, a moment of heightened jingoism, xenophobia, and concern over shifting gender roles.<sup>3</sup> Both the ensemble and, more often than not, its Mexican-American wearer were deemed unpatriotic and un-American and were even directly linked to the Axis. In Venegas’s case, the incorrect grammar and caricature Mexican accent attributed to her emphasized that her transgression was two-fold: she was not only un-American but unladylike as well.

Many studies of *pachuquismo*—the Mexican-American pachuca/o subculture—have stressed the symbolic economy of style: clothes, hair, and, to a lesser extent, makeup.<sup>4</sup> This essay seeks to add to this exciting body of work by focusing on another important—albeit literally unspectacular—stylistic element of wartime *pachuquismo*: language and speech. Like their African-American counterparts who spoke jive, many pachucas and pachucos (that is, Mexican-American zooters) spoke pachuco slang (also known as *caló*). Additionally, many used *pochismos* (lexical borrowings) and a working-class-inflected form of American English. During the Chicano movement of the 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s, these linguistic varieties, like zoot suits, became signs both of difference and of opposition for a number of Chicana and Chicano writers. They signified a refusal to conform to the status quo and a distinctly racialized, working-class, urban youth style. In short, many of the utterances of Mexican-American zooters came to signify resistance, style, and style as resistance.

The concept of resistance has had an indelible effect on the study of popular culture in the United States as well as on Chicano studies (and cultural and ethnic studies more broadly). Drawing from James C. Scott’s metaphor of the “hidden transcript,” Robin D. G. Kelley, for example, argues that the “veiled social and cultural worlds of oppressed people frequently surface in everyday forms of resistance—theft, footdragging, the destruction of property.”<sup>5</sup> Within African-American and Chicano studies, the zoot subculture of the World War II period is often looked to as an example of a “hidden transcript.” As Kelley notes, “The language and culture of zoot suiters represented a subversive refusal to be subservient.”<sup>6</sup>

By focusing on women speakers of pachuco slang, this essay explores the relationship of resistance—what Kelley describes as the “subversive refusal to be subservient”—to gender and style, specifically coolness and hipness. “Coolness” refers to self-control; “hipness” to knowledge and sophistication.

Both terms connote style and, as I argue below, social marginalization. This essay examines the gendering of Chicano resistance and style and Chicano resistance *as* style. It asks, “What is the gender of Chicano resistance and does Chicanas’ resistance differ from that of Chicanos?” In addressing these questions, I draw upon an eclectic array of sources, including a poem, short story, *corrido* (ballad), trial transcript, and play, to better understand the linguistic varieties of pachucos and pachucas in the 1940s—namely, *caló*, *pochismos*, and nonstandard American English—and the ways in which their utterances were recuperated by a later generation of Chicana and Chicano cultural workers. I argue that where male speakers of pachuco slang have been upheld as icons of resistance and cultural affirmation, female, Mexican-American speakers have faced heavier consequences. Like Amelia Venegas, they have been mocked, punished, or silenced for failing to reproduce the ideal subjects of U.S. national identity (the loyal, white, Anglophone citizen), of an oppositional Chicano cultural identity (the pachuco), and of normative femininity (the “lady”).

Because recovering Chicanas’ past use of pachuco slang—what the late feminist sociolinguist D. Leticia Galindo termed a “taboo language” for women and girls—poses particular challenges, this essay also emphasizes silence.<sup>7</sup> In exploring the meanings and uses of silence for those who called themselves and were called pachucas, I argue that Chicanas’ silence can be and has been as oppositional, rich, and complex as their male counterparts’ speech. My hope is that this study will provide us with a glimpse (or echo) of the voices and silence of the pachucas of the 1940s and thus contribute to zoot studies and feminist scholarship on the linguistic varieties and practices of Chicana home-girls in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.<sup>8</sup> Finally, I hope that my work not only complicates conventional notions of Chicano defiance and style as it exposes their masculinist and heterosexist underpinnings, but that it also amplifies the less audible forms of Chicana resistance.

#### “DOUBLE TALK” AND DISLOYALTY

In addition to scrutinizing pachucos’ and pachucas’ hair and clothes, law enforcement officers, newspapers, and social scientists demonstrated a concern with pachuco slang beginning in the early 1940s. Described both as a “pidgin dialect” and “creole language,” pachuco slang draws from Spanish, English, *pochismos*, and *caló*.<sup>9</sup> (Although *caló* is one component of pachuco slang, the two terms are often used interchangeably.) Contrary to claims that it is distinctly and exclusively Mexican American, *caló* is a product of the Old and New Worlds, as it borrows from indigenous American languages, such as Nahuatl, and from *zincaló*, the idiom of the Spanish gypsies. For centuries, it has been

associated with the underclass, with “the criminal, the poor, and the uneducated.”<sup>10</sup> In particular, it has been associated with the Tirilis, a subgroup of Mexicans and Mexican Americans who reputedly trafficked in sex and drugs in and around El Paso-Juárez in the early part of the twentieth century.<sup>11</sup>

In general, social scientific studies of pachuco slang have emphasized criminality. For this reason, it has been labeled an argot, “a secret language or conventional slang peculiar to a group of thieves, tramps or vagabonds.”<sup>12</sup> Yet, as Galindo cautions, “early research conducted by Anglo social scientists” tended to be more alarmist than “ethnosensitive,” as evidenced, for example, by the title of Lurline Coltharp’s 1965 study *The Tongue of the Tirilones: A Linguistic Study of a Criminal Argot*.<sup>13</sup> Likewise, articles on pachucas and pachucos (and Mexican-American youth in general) that appeared in Angeleno newspapers during the early 1940s highlighted sex, drugs, and violence. For example, a July 1944 *Los Angeles Times* story that purported to expose the sinister pachuco underworld reported, “Gang members speak a strange argot unintelligible to the uninitiated.” The paper translated several supposedly exemplary words from pachuco slang into English, such as *yisca* (marijuana), *la jefe* (the leader of a local gang), and *volte* (jail).<sup>14</sup>

In fact, for many Mexican-American youths of the 1940s, pachuco slang was “hep” and street smart and nothing more. Yet, more than merely pointing to a generation gap, *caló* words, such as *chale* (no) and *orale* (right on, attention), accentuated what some contemporary observers perceived as more deep-seated and troubling differences. An August 1942 story in the Spanish-language newspaper *La Opinión*, for instance, dismissed pachuco slang as a combination of “*pochismos y jerga*” (*pocho*-isms and slang) and lamented that its speakers were neither truly Mexican nor full-fledged Americans.<sup>15</sup> A *pochismo* is a lexical borrowing or loan word that combines English and Spanish, such as *marketa* (instead of *mercado*) for market.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, a *pocha* or *pocho* is an Americanized Mexican or Mexicanized American. Just as *pochismos* have been dismissed as “a tragic sign of language decadence,” the invective *pocha/o* originally signified cultural and linguistic degradation, retardation, and lack.<sup>17</sup> In the words of one scholar, *pochos* “did not do a good enough job imitating the Yankee.”<sup>18</sup>

*Pochos* and *pochas* not only did a poor job at imitating Yankees, they also failed to mimic Mexicans adequately. Indeed, many Mexicans have used the term to chastise and deride Mexican Americans, especially those who appeared to have “ruined their Spanish without ever quite learning English.”<sup>19</sup> The second-generation pachucas and pachucos of the 1940s have been identified as the first *pochas* and *pochos*, for they lived in two worlds at once: “the Anglo American and the Mexican American barrio.”<sup>20</sup> Bilingual and bicultural, many

young Mexican Americans in the 1940s were the children of immigrants who came to the United States in an effort to flee the social, political, and economic turbulence of the Mexican Revolution and to work in a rapidly industrializing U.S. Southwest and Midwest during the early twentieth century. Many were the first in their families to be born or reared in an urban setting, to speak English, and to attend school for an extended period of time. However, despite their status as U.S. citizens, they were denied the rights and privileges of full citizenship, as evidenced, for example, by de jure and de facto racial segregation throughout the Southwest. At the same time, they were expected to assimilate and all too frequently faced corporal punishment for speaking Spanish in school. What's more, many came of age in the widespread poverty and nativist (specifically, anti-Mexican) sentiment of the Great Depression.

For several contemporary observers on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border, pachucos and pachucas constituted a "lost generation."<sup>21</sup> They were rejected by white, middle-class America, but they also appeared to have renounced all things Mexican, including their own parents. Consequently, they were pitied or ridiculed as cultural orphans. After spending two years in Los Angeles shortly after World War II, Octavio Paz concluded that the pachuco had "lost his whole inheritance: language, religion, customs, beliefs."<sup>22</sup> In other words, he was a cultural bastard. Even the word *pachuco* was of "uncertain derivation," the Mexican writer and statesman pointed out.<sup>23</sup> Neither this nor that, pachucas and pachucos appeared to be more cultural void than cultural hybrid. Their ability to speak English, Spanish, and pachuco slang, to code-switch, and to invent neologisms were seen not as signs of a creative and rich bi- or multilingualism but as an utter lack of language.

Above all, pachuco slang was regarded as a mark of disloyalty and lapse in "identical equivalence."<sup>24</sup> That is, it supposedly indicated a failure to reproduce an authentic or legitimate national identity (such as Americanness or Mexicanness). During World War II, pachuco slang was deemed evidence of a refusal or inability to conform—to assimilate, in other words—and cast doubt on its speakers' allegiance to the United States, rather than signaling an alternative form of Americanness. Indeed, since the earliest days of the Republic, fluency in English has been regarded as a salient marker of American identity.<sup>25</sup> During the Zoot Suit Riots, stories in the Angeleno press about an alleged Axis plot to foment unrest on the home front underscored the commensurability of standard, unaccented English and authentic Americanness. As civic leaders publicly speculated that Axis agents had instigated the riots by infiltrating the city's barrios and prompting young Mexican Americans to attack white servicemen, newspapers reported that "an enemy agent"—identified as such because he spoke "broken English"—had been spotted in Watts.<sup>26</sup> In the midst

of this paranoia and xenophobia, the so-called “double talk” of pachucos and pachucas did little to affirm their Americanness.<sup>27</sup>

#### “DUDE TALK” AND THE BIRTH OF COOL

Long before the (white) “bad boy” emerged in Cold War America (for example, Holden Caulfield, Elvis Presley, James Dean), young, American men of color—in particular, African Americans and Mexican Americans—came to represent youthful rebellion.<sup>28</sup> Much like black jive before it, which jazz vocalist Cab Calloway described as “Negro slang, the super-hip language of the times,” pachuco slang helped to produce and express a dissident, working-class masculinity in the United States beginning in the early 1940s.<sup>29</sup> At times, this masculinity was the antithesis of socially sanctioned (specifically white and middle-class) masculinities as it privileged street smarts over formal education and found expression by reversing the signifiers and referents of standard American English (for example, “bad” became good).

For some social scientists, black jive and pachuco slang were more than just colloquial speech; they were evidence of a disturbing insubordination on the part of their speakers. In the wake of the 1943 Harlem riot, psychologists Kenneth Clark and James Barker fretted that the African-American zooter’s “habitual, seemingly deliberate, disregard of . . . the simple rules of grammar in his everyday speech” indicated a “generalized defiance of the larger society.”<sup>30</sup> Twenty years later, during the youth movement of the late 1960s, *caló* was linked to rage: it was described as “a ‘snarl’ language” that reflected “an uncompromising attitude of anger, sarcasm, cynicism, and undifferentiated rebellion.”<sup>31</sup> Of particular concern to both generations of scholars was zooters’ “excessive use of profanity in ordinary conversation.”<sup>32</sup> In a 1967 essay on *caló*, George Alvarez insisted that the “expletives *chinga* and *pinchi*, which are analogous to the English word ‘damn,’” could be found “in almost every *caló* utterance.”<sup>33</sup> And recalling his days as a young hustler, Malcolm X claimed, “Every word I spoke was hip or profane.”<sup>34</sup>

By the late 1960s, the pachuco was more than an avatar of youthful rebellion. Like Malcolm X, he became a symbol of racial or ethnic pride as movement-era Chicano writers and artists, among them José Montoya, embraced him as a symbol of cultural affirmation and resistance. Montoya’s 1970 poem “El Louie,” perhaps one of the most scrutinized Chicano literary works, recounts the life and times of Louie Rodríguez, a cool, charismatic, and doomed pachuco from the small town of Fowler in California’s rural San Joaquin Valley.<sup>35</sup> Written in pachuco slang, the poem points to the beauty and elegance of the vernacular and vulgar (that is, the common and rough). The narrator concedes that

Fowler no era nada como [Fowler was nothing like]  
Los, o'l E.P.T. Fresno's [L.A. or El Paso]  
westside was as close as  
we ever got to the big time.<sup>36</sup>

But Louie exudes big-city flair nonetheless. He wears tailor-made zoot suits and renames himself “Blackie,” “Little Louie,” and “Diamonds.”<sup>37</sup> A local celebrity of sorts, he is famous throughout the small towns of central California, such as Selma and Gilroy, and his panache is on par with that of a movie star: “melodramatic music, like in the / mono (movies),” seems to accompany him as he swaggers into the Palomar dance hall, Nesei’s pool parlor, or a parking lot fight.<sup>38</sup> And when he “sport[s] a dark topcoat” in San Jose, the metropolis, he “play[s] in his fantasy / the role of Bogart, Cagney / or Raft.”<sup>39</sup> Tragically, “booze y la vida dura (and the hard life)” catch up with Louie and he dies alone in a rented room, in all likelihood of a heroin overdose.<sup>40</sup> The narrator laments his death as an “insult” and “cruel hoax,” yet speculates that it was “perhaps like in a / Bogart movie”<sup>41</sup> and maintains that he had “class to the end.”<sup>42</sup> Even in death, Louie manages to evoke Hollywood glamour.

Contrast the pachuco’s portrayal in “El Louie,” a cultural product of the Chicano and youth movements of the second half of the twentieth century, with his unambiguous denigration in Mario Suárez’s 1947 short story “Kid Zopilote.” After Pepe García, the protagonist, spends a summer in Los Angeles and returns to his hometown of Tucson, he not only looks different (now that he wears a zoot suit and combs his hair in a ducktail), but “[h]is language had changed quite a bit, too.”<sup>43</sup> Having picked up *pochismos* in “Los Angeles, *Califo* (California),” Pepe tells his mother, “Ma, I will *returniar* (return) in a little while” every time he leaves the house.<sup>44</sup> When he comes back, he reports, “Ma, I was *watchiando* (watching) a good movie, that is why I am a little bit late.”<sup>45</sup> In the end, Pepe and Tucson’s other pachucos are punished for their big city airs when they are beaten by a group of respectable Mexican Americans, then thrown into jail, where their zoot suits are destroyed and their hair is cut. Upon their release, “[t]hey crept home along alleys, like shorn dogs with their tails between their legs, lest people should see them.”<sup>46</sup>

While “Kid Zopilote” expresses disdain for the pachuco, “El Louie” redeems him as the apotheosis of Chicano style. And where Pepe García, an emasculated dandy, is embarrassed by his square appearance and shuns attention after his hair is shorn, Louie Rodriguez epitomizes macho style and flourishes in the limelight. Wearing “buenas garras (cool threads),” he cruises around town in a “48 Fleetline, two-tone.”<sup>47</sup> And if Pepe is a ridiculous *poch*, then Louie exemplifies seamless cultural hybridity: he dances both “el boogie” and “los mam-

bos.”<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, he does not want for “rucas (chicks)—como la Mary y / la Helen.”<sup>49</sup> Pepe, meanwhile, has a hard time getting a girl to dance with him: “When he went to the Tira-Chancla Dance Hall very few of the girls consented to dance with him. When they did, it was out of compassion.”<sup>50</sup> Adding injury to insult, Pepe is beaten by a group of squares and is further humiliated by the police. In contrast, Louie, a decorated Korean War veteran, demonstrates that he is a “soldado de / levita con huevos (a very ballsy soldier)” as he moves between the battlefield and street brawl.<sup>51</sup> With a “smile as deadly as his vaissas”—that is, with a smile as deadly as his hands—he embodies masculine power, in the forms of both charm and violence.<sup>52</sup>

Since its initial publication in 1970, “El Louie” has been upheld as an exemplar of pachuco poetry (and Chicano literature in general) because of both its content and form.<sup>53</sup> As literary critic Alfred Arteaga asserts, its language “matches its content: the verse is as thoroughly Chicano as is Louie’s life.”<sup>54</sup> Yet, how “thoroughly Chicano”—or Chicana—is “El Louie” when it is written in pachuco slang, a linguistic variety that has been designated male and masculine? Like black jive, pachuco slang’s origins are in activities and realms generally associated with men and masculinity, such as the criminal underworld, androcentric jazz subculture, and working class, which, in and of itself, is often configured as male and masculine.<sup>55</sup> Consequently, it has been widely regarded as a “male-dominated, intragroup form of communication.”<sup>56</sup> As one of Galindo’s informants put it, it is “dude talk.”<sup>57</sup>

For some movement-era Chicanos, many of whom were Baby Boomers who prized youthful rebellion and defied authority by protesting the Vietnam War, boycotting agribusiness, and participating in school walkouts, the pachucos of the previous generation were “*vatos de huevos* (ballsy guys)” and “*vatos firmes* (stoic or steadfast guys)” —two of “the most complimentary terms in the *caló* vocabulary,” according to one scholar—because they articulated a distinct and dissident cultural identity in the face of denigration, assimilation, and erasure.<sup>58</sup> In other words, pachucos were hip and cool, terms that connote self-conscious social marginalization, resistance, and/or transgression.<sup>59</sup> The latter refers to an affected affectlessness, to emotional self-control and relaxation. The former originally meant “wise” or “sophisticated” and could signify worldliness in general and knowledge of the underworld in particular. While the concept of “cool” pointed to the masculine ideal of emotional detachment, “hip” was the antonym of innocent, a characteristic ascribed to both children and the ideal (that is, virgin) bride.

Just as “real” (white, middle-class, Anglophone) Americanness has been linked to mimesis and assimilation, U.S. racial and ethnic minority identities have been and still are associated with authenticity and fidelity—in other

words, with “keeping it real.” The link between language and “realness” is evident in Malcolm X’s 1964 *Autobiography*. In a refreshing reading of this work, María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo argues that Malcolm X revels in his ability to speak jive, contrary to claims that he appeared to dismiss his hustling days as “a destructive detour on the road to self-consciousness and political enlightenment.”<sup>60</sup> Indeed, he opens the chapter marking his transition from country bumpkin to urban hipster with an entire paragraph in it “just to display a bit more of the slang that was used by everyone I respected as ‘hip’ in those days.”<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, he reveals great pride in his command of the vernacular, for his fluency supposedly indicated that he was closer to and, therefore, the most appropriate leader of “the ghetto black people.”<sup>62</sup> He recounts translating jive for a putative black leader who, after being approached by a “Harlem hustler. . . look[ed] as if he’d just heard Sanskrit.”<sup>63</sup> In this recollection, Malcolm distinguishes the confused “downtown ‘leader’” from the slick “Harlem hustler,” both of whom serve as respective metonyms for “‘middle class’ Negro[es]” and “ghetto blacks.”<sup>64</sup> For Malcolm, black jive, the language of poor, urban blacks, functioned as a cultural identity marker, as a sign of authentic blackness; while standard American English, the language of middle-class blacks who lived and worked outside the ghetto (e.g., “downtown”), smacked of selling out.

Malcolm’s observations concerning the chasm between the real and the fake point to another set of binary oppositions: the hipster and the square, and, by extension, masculinity and femininity. A “fake” black man or “wannabe” white man, the figure of the Uncle Tom has been linked to “passivity, obedience, docility, accommodation, and submissiveness”—characteristics that are frequently associated with women and femininity.<sup>65</sup> As a Tom, the “downtown ‘leader’” Malcolm encounters is helpless (i.e., feminine). He must rely on Malcolm to translate for him. In addition, he is a square, for he is not “hep to the jive” (i.e., he does not understand jive, nor is he worldly or aware). As Norman Mailer has posited, if one is not hip, then “one is Square.”<sup>66</sup> Similarly, in pachuco slang, “there is no grey area between an *escuadra* (square) and a *vato loco*.”<sup>67</sup> In other words, if one is not hip, then one is square, and if one is square, then one is not a *vato loco*, a highly gendered term comparable to today’s “dawg” (as opposed to “bitch”), (male) “gangsta,” and, in its most general sense, “dude” or “guy.” Thus, if one is not hip, then one is not a guy, and, according to the logic of the sex/gender binary, if one is not a guy, then one is female or feminine.

Yet, coolness—in particular, black and brown coolness—is not just coded masculine; it is also often coded heterosexual. Its opposite, uncoolness, has been equated with social incompetence and physical impairment, with being “lame” and “a sissy.”<sup>68</sup> Likewise, *puto* (homosexual) and *culero* (coward) have

been identified as the “most derogatory” terms in *caló*.<sup>69</sup> Both invectives are homophobic and denote anal sex: *culero* derives from *culo*, which is the equivalent of “ass” in American English; while *puto* refers to a male homosexual and “speak[s] to the passive sexual role taken by . . . men . . . in the homosexual act.”<sup>70</sup> The latter is related to the word *puta*, which means female prostitute. As Tomás Almaguer observes, “It is significant that the cultural equation made between the feminine, anal-receptive homosexual man and the most culturally-stigmatized female in Mexican society (the whore) share a common semantic base.”<sup>71</sup>

Instead of being celebrated as cool or hip, Chicana speakers of pachuco slang have been branded *putas*.<sup>72</sup> In addition, they have been dismissed as *cantineras* (barflies, drunks) and gang members’ girlfriends.<sup>73</sup> In other words, they are ancillary. As John Leland points out in his history of hipness, women are generally not recognized as hipsters per se, but as (male) hipsters’ auxiliaries, “either the apron strings from which male hipness takes flight or the enticements it consumes along the road.”<sup>74</sup> The hipster flees his reproving mother to enjoy whores and other good-time girls. Indeed, according to Susan Fraiman, the figure of mother is the antithesis of cool.<sup>75</sup> To maintain hipness, the hipster must forsake her, his wife, and his children. In short, he must distance himself from domesticity and socially sanctioned femininity.

Pachuco slang’s ban from the Mexican-American domestic sphere and its incommensurability with socially sanctioned femininity are apparent in *Hoyt Street*, Mary Helen Ponce’s 1993 autobiography. Ponce, who grew up in Southern California’s San Fernando Valley during the 1940s and 1950s, recounts that when a friend inadvertently responded to her grandmother in *caló*, the girl was promptly sent to her room “to escape being slapped by her older brother, who allowed no disrespect for his grandma.”<sup>76</sup> The concept of *respeto* (respect) within and toward the biological family also resonates in Galindo’s 1992 study of Tejanas and pachuco slang. A number of her interviewees claimed that they would not use pachuco slang in the presence of their fathers out of “*respeto*.”<sup>77</sup> And one reported that, while her brothers could speak pachuco slang among themselves, they were not allowed to speak it to their parents. “If the girls used it, we were reprimanded. Especially by my mother; she wouldn’t tolerate it.”<sup>78</sup>

According to Galindo, pachuco slang is a “‘taboo language’ for women and girls.”<sup>79</sup> Many have been prohibited from speaking it and some have even actively distanced themselves from it lest they be labeled the sort of woman who deviates from the home, such as a *puta* or *cantinera*. For instance, in her 1965 study of the Tirilis, Coltharp maintained that many of the young women she encountered understood *caló*, but were “horrified” when she attempted to enlist their aid as translators.<sup>80</sup> She concluded that no law-abiding woman “would admit that she even understood one word of the language.”<sup>81</sup>

As the language of the outlaw, rebel, and hipster, pachuco slang is masculine. Since the early 1940s, it has provided young, working-class, Mexican-American men with a means—literally, a vocabulary—“to prove their manhood and vent their frustrations.”<sup>82</sup> In short, pachuco slang has allowed men to oppose the status quo. Like black jive, it has helped them to produce and shape a distinctly raced and classed masculinity and, thus, to challenge dominant (i.e., white and middle-class) definitions of manhood. Yet, unlike black jive, much of which has been incorporated into standard American English, pachuco slang has remained relatively insular, thus making it all the more distinct and dissonant. Additionally, its connections to Spanish and *caló* render it more alien and, therefore, more threatening to a white and Anglophone American identity. In speaking it, young Mexican-American men have become icons of un-Americanness, resistance, and style, from the *chukos suaves* of the 1940s to the *vatos locos* of the post-war period and the dawgs of the present.

Yet, what happened when young, Mexican-American women spoke pachuco slang during the 1940s? And what or whom did they resist by speaking it, along with nonstandard forms of English and Spanish, at a moment not only of increased social and cultural homogenization but of changing expectations of women, especially outside the home? To address these questions, I juxtapose three cultural artifacts in the following sections: a *corrido*, *People v. Zammora* (the Sleepy Lagoon trial transcript), and Luis Valdez’s play *Zoot Suit*. Together, these texts show that Chicanas who spoke pachuco slang rejected not only white Americanness and middle-class comportment but normative gender as well. They failed to imitate white, Anglophone Americans and respectable ladies alike but were still not homologous with their male counterparts, pachucos. And while the pachuco would come to embody an idealized Chicano masculinity and subjectivity during the Chicano movement, the “tough-tongued” pachuca would be ignored or maligned.<sup>83</sup>

#### “EL BRACERO Y LA PACHUCA”

The pachuco’s transformation from effete social pariah (for example, Pepe García) to macho cultural hero and icon (for example, Louie Rodríguez) in movement-era Chicano cultural production is probably most apparent in *Zoot Suit*. With the play’s premier in 1978, interest in pachuco slang appeared to re-surge among Chicanos. Throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s, advertisements for the *Dictionary of Pachuco Slang*, which guaranteed to make its reader “the baddest vato en tu barrio (dude in your neighborhood),” appeared in *LowRider* magazine. Nostalgia for the 1940s was also evident in 1940s-themed fundraiser dances sponsored by the magazine. Advertisements called on at-

tendees to wear zoot suits and promised an evening of not only disco, but “boogie woogie” and “big bands” as well.<sup>84</sup>

*Zoot Suit* featured “boogie woogie-influenced Pachuco songs” by Lalo Guerrero, who, along with other Mexican-American musicians of the 1940s and 1950s, such as Don Tosti (*né* Edmundo Martínez Tostado), is responsible in great part for helping to preserve contemporary pachuco slang. Because of these musicians’ efforts, pachuco slang of the 1940s and 1950s has been recorded not only in anthropological, sociolinguistic, and literary works but in popular music as well.<sup>85</sup> While most songs in pachuco slang were sung by men, the *corrido* “El Bracero y La Pachuca” is extraordinary because it prominently features a female vocalist.<sup>86</sup>

“El Bracero y La Pachuca” was written by Miguel Salas and recorded in 1948 in Los Angeles by Duetto Taxco and Mariachi Los Caporales del Norte. Its lyrics, sung by a man and woman identified collectively as Duetto Taxco, are in a combination of Spanish and pachuco slang and recount the unlikely union of a mellifluous Mexican bracero and pachuco-slang-speaking pachuca who meet at a dance. Using proper Spanish, the bracero attempts to woo the pachuca with poetry. When she responds, both he and the listener learn that she is an uncouth *pocha* who does not understand or appreciate the beauty of her suitor’s words. She tells him, “Ya tíreme bute chancla / traserito sin sabor, / ya me esta cayendo sura (Cut it out and let’s dance / you’re so square that / you’re getting on my nerves).”<sup>87</sup> Then, in her solo, she matches the bracero’s poem with one attributed to the “Tírilí” (reefer man):

Nel ese, ya parale con sus palabras  
del alta que por derecho me aguitan ese,  
mejor pongase muy alalva con  
un pistazo de aquella, y un frajito  
del fuerte pa’ despues poder borrar. Ja. . .

[Slow down, man,  
cut out that high-toned  
poetry jazz, you’re really bringing me down.  
You better have a drink and get with it,  
and then smoke a joint to mellow out. Ha!<sup>88</sup>]

Whereas the bracero’s poem speaks of “rosas encarnadas . . . con sus lindas aromas (red roses with their beautiful perfume),” the pachuca’s is about boozing it up and smoking dope. And while the bracero implores the pachuca to

love him “porque te quiero . . . porque te adoro (because I love you . . . because I adore you),” the pachuca demands that he cut the crap and simmer down. Apparently, he does as he is told, for in the final stanza, we learn that our hero and heroine dance the night away and are married the next morning.

As is often the case in romance, opposites attract; the bracero and pachuca are drawn to one another precisely because “eran muy diferentes (they were very different).” In addition to contrasting proper Spanish and pachuco slang, “El Bracero y La Pachuca” juxtaposes *lo mexicano y la pochá* (the Mexican and the *pochá*), the country and the city, and high and low cultures. Despite his association with agricultural labor, the bracero exemplifies high culture and politesse. Using especially flowery Spanish and hyperbolically correct diction, he addresses the pachuca as “mujer del alma mía (woman of my soul)” and “linda princesa encantada (beautiful enchanted princess)” as he recites poetry to her. In contrast, the pachuca speaks with the “whining nasal quality” and “sing-song” rhythm often attributed to pachuco slang, addresses the bracero as “ese (dude/man),” rejects his “palabras del alta (lofty speech),” and does not hide the fact that he bothers her.<sup>89</sup> If “toughness” in language is associated with “manliness” and “working-class culture” and “[f]emaleness . . . with respectability, gentility, and high culture,” then “El Bracero y La Pachuca” reverses gender stereotypes (even if it does offer a hackneyed tale of heterosexual romance).<sup>90</sup> The ballad’s respectable and genteel bracero represents high culture with his proper, perfectly enunciated Spanish poetry. As such, he is feminine. Meanwhile, the slang-speaking pachuca is a coarse philistine and, therefore, a traitor: as a boorish woman who speaks pachuco slang, she assumes a masculine position and, thus, betrays gender norms.<sup>91</sup>

#### PEOPLE V. ZAMMORA

The betrayal of normative (that is, white, middle-class) Americanness and femininity via speech is also evident in *People v. Zammora*, the Sleepy Lagoon trial transcript. It is especially apparent in testimony by Bertha Aguilar, a fourteen-year-old girl from the 38th Street neighborhood who was involved in what came to be known as the Sleepy Lagoon incident. This event took place in Los Angeles on the night of August 1 and in the early-morning hours of August 2, 1942, and it involved at least two fights: the first at a swimming hole known as Sleepy Lagoon and the second at a party at the home of the Delgadillo family at nearby Williams Ranch. After the second fight, the body of twenty-two-year-old José Díaz was found on the ground outside the Delgadillos’ house. Díaz had suffered a massive blow to the head and was transported to a hospital, where he died without regaining consciousness. The police began

to arrest suspects in what they determined was a murder case on August 3, the Grand Jury hearing began the following day, and the criminal trial opened on October 13. It ended three months later on January 15, 1943, with the conviction of the twenty-two defendants, all of whom were male. In October 1944, their conviction was overturned and they were released from prison.<sup>92</sup>

Along with several other girls and young women, whom court documents refer to as the defendants' "girl companions" (i.e., friends, neighbors, girlfriends), Aguilar was incarcerated at the Ventura School for Girls, a reformatory, and was forced to testify before the Los Angeles County Grand Jury and in *People v. Zammora* in connection with the death of José Díaz.<sup>93</sup> Although we do not know whether they ever called themselves pachucas, these girls and young women were labeled such by the mainstream Angeleno press. And just as the prosecution drew attention to the defendants' zoot suit suits and long hair, which were widely regarded as hallmarks of juvenile delinquency, it also pointed to the coats, coiffures, and black dresses that their "girl companions" had donned the night of August 1, 1942.<sup>94</sup> Not surprisingly, by the time the defendants were convicted of conspiracy to murder in January 1943, *People v. Zammora* was known as the "'zoot suit' murder case."<sup>95</sup>

In court, Aguilar reported that, immediately after crashing the Delgadillos' party, she entered a fight when she saw that a group of approximately five women had attacked her friend Delia Parra. She stated that, initially, "I didn't do nothing. I didn't want to do nothing, but when I seen the girl, you know, put up the bottle to hit Delia, I ran towards her."<sup>96</sup> Consequently, Aguilar was struck in the leg with the bottle and was left with scars. During cross-examination, defense attorney Anna Zacsek asked to see the scars and both the defense and prosecution suggested that "the young lady step along the jury rail and hold that leg up so that the jury [might] see it."<sup>97</sup> Aguilar complied. When Deputy District Attorney John Barnes noted that the scars did not appear to be anything more than mere scratches, Aguilar retorted defensively, "Well, they sure were."<sup>98</sup>

Even though she was described as a "young lady," both the content of her words and her words themselves—combined with the manner in which her statements were recorded by the court—suggest that Aguilar was not quite a "lady." In the 1942 edition of *Etiquette: The Blue Book of Social Usage*, Emily Post insisted that the "oft-heard expression, 'You know she is a lady as soon as she opens her mouth,' is not an exaggeration."<sup>99</sup> The arbiter of social manners and good taste instructed would-be ladies "how to cultivate an agreeable speech."<sup>100</sup> She implored them not to mumble, but bemoaned the loud and shrill voice as "extremely bad form."<sup>101</sup> Additionally, Post advised her readers, especially those who wished to climb the social ladder, to avoid incorrect

grammar (in particular, phrases such as “I seen it”) and “the vernacular of today.”<sup>102</sup> While she stressed that there was no place for “course or profane slang” in a lady’s vocabulary, she deemed “certain words and phrases in common use,” such as “swell,” “O.K.,” and “you betcha,” acceptable, even though they interfered with “perfect diction.”<sup>103</sup>

Regardless of how seriously its readers heeded its advice and admonitions, Post’s *Etiquette* points to the intersection of language, gender, and class. It shows women—in particular, those with middle-class aspirations—how to reproduce or perform a certain kind of femininity (“ladyness”) via language.<sup>104</sup> Decades later, feminist sociolinguist Robin Lakoff would scrutinize the role language plays in the production of gender in her groundbreaking *Language and Women’s Place*. According to Lakoff, women—specifically, white, middle-class, American women—speak and, more important, are supposed to speak “women’s language,” which is characterized by “hypercorrect grammar” and “superpolite forms.”<sup>105</sup> Of course, not all women speak “women’s language,” and not all speakers of “women’s language” are white, middle-class women. Indeed, since its initial publication in 1975, Lakoff’s study has received much warranted criticism—in particular, for positing the a priori existence of a universal, timeless, and homogeneous feminine identity projected or displayed by language. At the same time, *Language and Woman’s Place*, like Post’s *Etiquette*, points to a range of femininities (that is, to different ways in which to enact femininity or woman-ness). It exposes the constructedness of gender, race, and class and shows the ways in which these social categories and relations come into being via language.

Throughout *People v. Zammora*, Anna Zacsek, the only female attorney in the courtroom (and, coincidentally, a former professional actress), clearly spoke Post’s “agreeable speech” and Lakoff’s “women’s language.”<sup>106</sup> By and large, she used correct grammar and was respectful, even when she took issue with Judge Charles Fricke or one of the prosecutors. Indeed, at times, she was cloyingly polite. For example, when Judge Fricke complained that fifteen-year-old witness Juanita Gonzáles was inaudible because she repeatedly turned her head away from the microphone while testifying in the witness stand, Zacsek instructed her, “Will you please be a good girl and take this microphone in your hand—you have talked on telephones, haven’t you, Juanita?”<sup>107</sup> Underscoring her own femininity, the defense attorney assumed a maternal role in the courtroom and claimed that she was “just old enough to know how to handle children” such as the uncooperative Gonzáles.<sup>108</sup>

In contrast, most of the young, Spanish-surnamed female witnesses, including Gonzáles, were neither grammatically correct nor polite. Many sprinkled their sentences with double negatives and the contraction *ain’t* and

defied Emily Post with their improper use of the verb *seen*. For example, when Deputy District Attorney Clyde C. Shoemaker asked Aguilar how many cars she saw at Williams Ranch the night of the fight, she replied, “I *seen* about two.”<sup>109</sup> Furthermore, the court reporter indicated that Aguilar used improper or incorrect diction by recording her use of the words *nothing* and *going* as *nothin’* and *goin’*. In this instance, Shoemaker asked her if she was with defendant Henry Leyvas on the night of August 1, 1942. Aguilar impatiently reminded him,

I said I wasn’t going to say *nothin’*. Don’t ask me no more things. You can punish me—

MR. SHOEMAKER: We ask you to answer that question, Bertha.

A: I ain’t *goin’* to answer it.<sup>110</sup>

Because there is no audio recording of her testimony, whether or not Aguilar actually stated “nothin’” and “goin’” (as opposed to *nothing* and *going*) is unclear. Regardless, to my knowledge, this is the only instance in the entire trial transcript (which is thousands of pages in length) in which the court reporter truncated a speaker’s words. By doing so, he rendered Aguilar’s utterance a slang locution and expression of improper or incorrect diction and, in effect, masculinized her words.<sup>111</sup> What’s more, just as a caricature Mexican accent was attributed to Amelia Venegas by the *Los Angeles Herald-Express* during the Zoot Suit Riots, attention was drawn to Aguilar’s “slight accent” in the courtroom.<sup>112</sup> By using incorrect grammar and allegedly substandard diction, she appeared both unladylike and un-American.

Although we do not know if Aguilar had an accent or if she really dropped the *g* in *nothing*, her speech clearly was not polite or indirect, two characteristics of “women’s language,” according to Lakoff. The following exchange between her and Shoemaker further illustrates her candor and tenacity:

Q [by Shoemaker]: Now state whether or not at the time you testified before the Grand Jury, on August 4, which was three days after [the Sleepy Lagoon incident], that your memory was better on the subject than it is today. What is your answer, Bertha? Talk right into the microphone.

A [by Aguilar]: I am not going to say nothing. I told you all I wasn’t going to say nothing.

Q: Will you answer that question?

A: No.

Q: The question is, whether your memory was better when you testified before the Grand Jury than it is today. Will you answer that? What is your answer? What is your answer, Bertha? Will you answer the question?

Q: You don't have to holler at people. I am right here.

A: I am not hollering at you.

Q: You sure are.

Q: I am just talking in an ordinary tone of voice.

THE COURT: Answer the question, Bertha. You are just wasting time. Will you answer the question?

A: No, I won't.

MR. SHOEMAKER: Will your Honor direct the witness to answer the question, please?

THE COURT: Answer the question, Bertha. There is no reason why you cannot answer that question.

(No response.)<sup>113</sup>

Instead of cultivating “agreeable speech” by using a “pleasing voice,” “hypercorrect grammar,” and “superpolite forms,” Aguilar displayed and then boasted about injuries she claimed to have sustained in a fight. (As Galindo has noted, boasting, also known as *cábula* or *vacilada* in pachuco slang, “is generally confined to male speech behavior.”)<sup>114</sup> Furthermore, the bold teenager repeatedly and adamantly refused to cooperate with authorities; ordered the deputy district attorney to refrain from asking her any more questions; indicated that she was willing to face punishment rather than yield to his demands; reprimanded him for “hollering” at her; openly disagreed with him; and, finally, refused to speak. It should come as no surprise that she was held in contempt of court for refusing to answer the prosecution’s questions.<sup>115</sup> However, she was purged of it after offering the judge what was described as a “rare smile.”<sup>116</sup> That is, she was rewarded after behaving as a lady should.

By saying “nothing” (or “nothin’”) rather than “anything,” Aguilar demonstrated a disregard for (or unawareness of) the rules of grammar. And by saying nothing (that is, by refusing to speak), she flouted the authority of the state, as represented by the deputy district attorney and judge. As historian Eduardo Obregón Pagán observes, “Most of the girls [forced to testify against their male companions] refused to implicate the boys and subverted the trial proceedings or defied the court outright.”<sup>117</sup> Aguilar further disobeyed and hamstrung the prosecution by playing the role of good subject and claiming to have forgotten what happened the night she and her friends crashed the Delgadillos’ party. Even after Shoemaker attempted to “refresh” her memory by citing her August 1942 Grand Jury testimony (taken just days after José Díaz’s death), she insisted that she was unable to remember what happened. “I don’t remember nothing,” she stated. “When I went to Ventura they told me to forget everything.”<sup>118</sup> Similarly, during cross-examination, Juanita Gonzáles reported that when she entered “Juvenile,” she was instructed “to forget all this as

quickly as possible.”<sup>119</sup> The two teenage girls continued to stymie the prosecution by refusing to say anything lest they incriminate themselves. For instance, when Shoemaker asked Gonzáles on what grounds she refused to testify, she responded, “On the grounds you may charge me for the murder of Joe Diaz, like you done to the boys.”<sup>120</sup> Aguilar offered a more curt reply when asked why she would not answer one of the prosecutor’s questions: “I don’t know, but I ain’t going to answer it that’s all.”<sup>121</sup> Others refused to cooperate by not speaking clearly (and thus they broke yet another one of Post’s rules of feminine speech). Eighteen-year-old Dora Baca, for example, claimed to suffer from a sore throat when both the prosecution and defense complained that she was inaudible on the witness stand.<sup>122</sup>

In “Life and Language in Court,” Lakoff argues that, while “the giver of information” (the speaker) usually holds power in everyday speech, in court, “the giver of information” (the witness) does not control topics for discussion “or their interpretation and has no say over when the conversation begins and ends. The witness is generally a neophyte in the courtroom; the lawyer, a polished professional . . . the attorneys are running the show.”<sup>123</sup> Undeniably, Aguilar and the other teenage girls and young women who found themselves reluctant witnesses in *People v. Zammora* were neophytes in the courtroom vis-à-vis the judge, lawyers, court reporters, bailiffs, and others. Yet, as Kelley reminds us, “One also finds the hidden transcript emerging ‘onstage’ in spaces controlled by the powerful, though almost always in disguised forms.”<sup>124</sup> Despite her youth and inexperience, Aguilar showed remarkable bravery and resolution in the witness stand. Within her words (and lack thereof) we find a “hidden transcript” in the form of defiance, evasion, and refusal. At times, her resistance is overt (for example, when she reprimands Shoemaker for “hollering” at her). At others, it is less easily recognized—for example, when she claims to have forgotten the ill-fated events of August 1 and 2, 1942, and in instances when she refuses to speak at all, which the transcript notes as “(No response.)” Aguilar’s strategic use of silence reveals that the absence of words “has its own contours, its own texture.”<sup>125</sup> It compels us to rethink resistance and to recognize the many contradictory forms it may take, especially for working-class, Mexican-American girls and women. Her refusal to speak shows us that, like the creative wordplay of young Mexican-American men, silence, too, can express opposition, especially when it comes from someone whose speech is overdetermined by the fact that she has already been spoken for and about.

Indeed, Aguilar’s life has been marked by silence. She passed away in 1999 and, beyond her family and close friends, very little is known about her.<sup>126</sup> According to a friend who grew up with her, she was “very strong and defiant.”<sup>127</sup> As a girl, she “was a pachuca who hung around the neighborhood,” and

as an adult, she associated with the Brown Berets.<sup>128</sup> Yet, unlike the male defendants in *People v. Zammora*—in particular, Henry Leyvas—Aguilar’s participation in the Sleepy Lagoon incident and subsequent trial was not celebrated or valorized in *Zoot Suit*.

### *Zoot Suit*

When *Zoot Suit*, a play about the Sleepy Lagoon incident and Zoot Suit Riots, opens, the audience is told that it is about to see a “construct of fact and fantasy.”<sup>129</sup> In writing the play, Valdez drew directly from contemporary Angeleno newspapers and *People v. Zammora* and based many of the characters on real men and women. For example, Hank Reyna, the protagonist, is based on defendant Henry Leyvas; Hank’s sweetheart, Della Barrios, is based on Henry Leyvas’s girlfriend Dora Baca; and the loud, foul-mouthed pachuca Bertha Villarreal is, in all likelihood, based on Bertha Aguilar.

Bertha Villarreal is by no means a major character in *Zoot Suit*. However, she plays an important role, especially in relation to Della. Bertha first appears in scene seven, “The Saturday Night Dance,” where she encounters her ex-boyfriend Hank dancing with Della. After Hank rejects her advances, she dismisses Della as his “new huisa (broad)” and “little fly chick.”<sup>130</sup> Hank then tells his ex-girlfriend to “beat it,” to which she retorts, “Beat it yourself. Mira (Look). You got no hold on me, cabrón (stupid). Not anymore. I’m free as a bird.”<sup>131</sup> In addition to using pachuco slang, incorrect grammar, and profanity, Bertha revels in violence. Anticipating bloodshed, she excitedly exclaims “ALL-RIGHT!” when a fight breaks out between Hank’s younger brother and the leader of the rival Downey gang.<sup>132</sup> As the Downey gang retreats, she shouts at them, “¡Chinga tu madre! (Fuck your mother!)” and insists that she “could have beat the shit out of those two rucas (chicks).”<sup>133</sup>

Although Valdez describes her as “cool and tough,” Bertha is actually quite loud and animated.<sup>134</sup> As film critic Rosa Linda Fregoso observes, she shows lust, exhilaration, and anger, and thus is ridiculed “as exaggerated and hyper-sexed.”<sup>135</sup> In contrast, the character of El Pachuco, Hank’s alter ego, always plays it cool. When Hank begins to worry about the fact that he is the prime suspect in the Sleepy Lagoon murder case, El Pachuco demands that he “[h]ang tough” and “[s]top going soft.”<sup>136</sup> Indeed, El Pachuco keeps cool even as he is stripped to a mere loincloth and beaten by a group of white sailors during the Zoot Suit Riots. In Valdez’s words, he exits this scene “slowly . . . with powerful calm.”<sup>137</sup>

As a number of feminist scholars, including Fregoso, have shown, the female, Mexican-American characters in *Zoot Suit* fall into two categories: “the virgin or the whore, the long-suffering mother or the ‘cheap broad.’”<sup>138</sup> Della,

Hank's loyal girlfriend, is the virgin; in the 1981 film version of the play, she is described as "very pretty," "very young," and "innocent."<sup>139</sup> Although her strict father does not approve of her relationship with Hank, she promises to marry him upon his return from the war. When he ends up in jail rather than in the Navy and she is sent to the Ventura School for Girls, he is her "only hope."<sup>140</sup> All the while, Hank two-times her, even though he concedes that Della "did a year in Ventura" and "stood up for me when it counted."<sup>141</sup> Furthermore, unlike Bertha, Della mostly speaks grammatically correct English and does not wear a zoot suit. (Interestingly, only at the end of the play, after she has done time at Ventura, does she curse or insert some pachuco slang into her sentences.) In summary, she is not a pachuca. As Hank's mother observes, she does not look "[l]ike a *puta* . . . I mean, a pachuca."<sup>142</sup>

Bertha Villarreal, on the other hand, is both pachuca and *puta*. In the film, Della wears saddle shoes and modest dresses, including a jumper reminiscent of a Catholic school uniform; Bertha, meanwhile, shows leg and cleavage. Moreover, Hank's father describes her as "the one with the tattoo," a sign that she is a real or "hardcore" pachuca and quite possibly a gang member.<sup>143</sup> Yet, even though she is Della's antithesis, the two young women have one thing in common: both are uncool. Bertha acts the fool at the Saturday night dance, while Della loses her cool in the courtroom when she is forced to testify against Hank. During examination, she, like the real Bertha Aguilar, shows defiance and refuses to answer some questions. Ultimately, however, she cracks under pressure; she fails to hang tough and goes soft.

Although *Zoot Suit* earned much critical praise, it was not well received by some of the real-life men and women who took part in and were affected by the Sleepy Lagoon incident and trial. As defense attorney George Shibley (portrayed by the character of George Shearer) complained, the play "perpetuate[d] some seriously damaging distortions of the Sleepy Lagoon murder case."<sup>144</sup> In 1979, one year after *Zoot Suit* opened in Los Angeles, several of the former defendants filed a \$2.5 million lawsuit against Valdez, charging "invasion of privacy and intentional and negligent infliction of emotional distress." "That event ruined my life," Gus Zamora (after whom *People v. Zammora* was named) lamented.<sup>145</sup> Decades later, he was still haunted by the Sleepy Lagoon incident and its aftermath and claimed that the play had opened up old wounds.

One reason that it has been difficult for me to acquire information about Aguilar's life from her close friends and family (and that I do not identify those interviewees who did talk to me) is that some were "shocked" and "insulted" by her portrayal as Bertha Villarreal in *Zoot Suit* and are thus loath to talk to an academic writing about this play.<sup>146</sup> Whereas the Sleepy Lagoon trial transcript shows us that Bertha Aguilar was extraordinarily courageous,

self-possessed, clever, and articulate, *Zoot Suit* reduces her to a boisterous buffoon and “cheap broad” through the character of Bertha Villarreal. Because it restricts Mexican-American women’s roles to the virgin-whore dyad, the play erases the complexity of a pachuca’s words and deeds. Instead, like much of the early, alarmist scholarship on women speakers of pachuco slang, *Zoot Suit* fails to appreciate Chicanas’ complex relationship to coolness and hipness and misrecognizes the ways in which they have expressed resistance via both language and silence. Ultimately, it renders their artful and oppositional use and rejection of words a condemnation and mockery.

#### TAMING A WILD TONGUE

In chapter 5 of *Borderlands/La Frontera*, “How to Tame a Wild Tongue,” Gloria Anzaldúa confronts the “linguistic terrorism” that Chicanos and Chicanas have endured.<sup>147</sup> In addition to being robbed of Spanish and told that we do not speak it or English well enough, Chicanas in particular have had to overcome a “tradition of silence.”<sup>148</sup> Anzaldúa enumerates some of the labels applied to women who talk too much or too loudly: *hocicona* (big mouth), *repelona* (whiner), *chismosa* (gossip). “In my culture they are all words that are derogatory if applied to women,” she observes, adding, “I’ve never heard them applied to men.”<sup>149</sup>

Bertha Aguilar’s working-class and *pocha* tongue was tamed twice: first, by the state, which found her threatening enough to incarcerate her at the Ventura School for Girls, then by *Zoot Suit*, which transforms her into the *hocicona* Bertha Villarreal. As Lakoff points out, the “young girl” who refuses to speak women’s language “is exceedingly brave—in fact, reckless,” for there are consequences for not “talk[ing] like a lady.”<sup>150</sup> At the same time, she reminds us, those women who do speak women’s language also pay a high price: they (we) are deemed stupid, frivolous, and, I would add, easily manipulated (that is, pushovers). In short, “a woman is damned if she does and damned if she doesn’t.”<sup>151</sup> Yet, if Lakoff’s universal female subject (the white, middle-class, American woman) faces a double bind, then Chicanas face a triple one. Those who “keep it real” by speaking pachuco slang—who remain faithful to an oppositional cultural identity—betray gender norms. And those who adhere to normative definitions of female and feminine decency by speaking Lakoff’s women’s language betray the Chicano culture of oppositionality and are whitewashed. In either case, they (we) are branded traitors.

Undeniably, *Zoot Suit*, which is still performed and screened across the United States, has proven itself an effective tool for generating discussion on the Sleepy Lagoon trial, Zoot Suit Riots, and Mexican-American zoot subcul-

ture of the World War II period. In my research, I have also found it to be valuable in my interviews with Mexican-American women who came of age in Los Angeles during the 1930s and 1940s. Initially, many of these women were reluctant to talk to me about the zoot subculture of their youth and vehemently denied that they were or even knew pachucas (for reasons that I hope this essay makes apparent). However, when our conversations turned to *Zoot Suit*, which nearly all of my interviewees had seen, some waxed nostalgic about wearing “drapes” and teasing their hair into “rats” as teenagers. One even reminisced in pachuco slang. I find it sadly ironic that a cultural product that exposes the power of art to shape historical perspective and the promises and pitfalls of oral history also warps the words of its primary pachuca character—and eventually silences her.

While *Zoot Suit* continues to receive much well deserved attention from scholars in Chicano studies, it, fortunately, does not have the final say when it comes to Chicana speakers of pachuco slang. Literary works by Chicana feminist writers, such as Cherríe Moraga and Evangelina Vigil, offer more complex and nuanced portrayals of women speakers of pachuco slang, including pachucas. Within the multidisciplinary field of Chicano studies, these texts merit additional scrutiny, for they add to our conversations on *pachuquismo* and can assist us in recognizing and understanding the multiple, often contradictory languages of Chicana and Chicano resistance.<sup>152</sup>

#### NOTES

1. Quotations in this paragraph are from “Policeman Is Ambushed, Run Over by Zoot Auto,” *Los Angeles Evening Herald-Express*, sec. A1 and sec. A6, June 10, 1943. For more accounts of the arrest of Amelia Venegas, see “Zoot Suit Hunt On in Suburbs as Navy Clamps Ban on L.A.,” *Los Angeles Examiner*, 1, June 9, 1943; “6-Day Zoot War Hospitalizes 112,” *Los Angeles Daily News*, 1, June 10, 1943; “U.S., Warren Act On Zoot Suits, New Outbreak of Gang Rioting,” *Los Angeles Examiner*, 1, June 10, 1943; and “Brass Knuckles Found on Woman ‘Zoot Suiter,’” *Los Angeles Times*, sec. IA, June 10, 1943.

The Zoot Suit Riots, which occurred in Los Angeles during the first weeks of June 1943, were marked by clashes between white servicemen and young Mexican Americans, some of whom were pachucos or zooters. When servicemen apprehended those wearing zoot suits, they usually beat them; some defrocked their victims, cut their relatively long ducktails, and destroyed their clothing. Although the riots are generally associated with Mexican Americans, Angelenos of various races and ethnicities were involved, whether or not they wore zoot suits. For more information regarding the Zoot Suit Riots, see Luis Alvarez, “The Power of the Zoot: Race, Community, and Resistance in American Youth Culture, 1940–1945” (PhD diss., University of Texas at

Austin, 2001); Luis Alvarez, “Zoot Violence on the Home Front: Race, Riots, and Youth Culture during World War II,” in *Mexican Americans and World War II*, ed. Maggie Rivas-Rodríguez (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), 141–75; Edward J. Escobar, *Race, Police, and the Making of a Political Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); George Lipsitz, *Rainbow at Midnight: Labor and Culture in the 1940s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Maurico Mazón, *The Zoot-Suit Riots: The Psychology of Symbolic Annihilation* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984); Eduardo Obregón Pagán, *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon: Zoot Suits, Race, and Riot in Wartime L.A.* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); and Joseph Tovares, *The American Experience: Zoot Suit Riots* (Boston: WGBH Educational Foundation, 2001).

2. “Brass Knuckles Found on Woman ‘Zoot Suiter,’” sec. IA. For photographs of Venegas, see page 3 of the June 10, 1943 *Los Angeles Daily News*; page 8 of the June 10, 1943 *Los Angeles Examiner*; page A1 of the June 10, 1943 *Los Angeles Evening Herald-Express*; and page A of the June 10, 1943 *Los Angeles Times*.

3. In wartime Los Angeles, the zoot suit was the most prominent hallmark of wartime *pachuquismo*, the pachuca/o subculture. For young Mexican-American women, the zoot look generally consisted of a long, broad-shouldered “finger-tip” coat or sweater, a knee-length (and therefore relatively short) pleated skirt, fishnet stockings or bobby socks pulled up the calves, and platform heels, saddle shoes, or *huarache* sandals. Many pachucas also wore dark lipstick and used “rats” (foam inserts) to lift their hair into a high bouffant. For extra panache, a number lightened their hair with peroxide and some sported the masculine version of the zoot suit. Also known as “drapes” or *el tacuche*, this consisted of the “finger-tip” coat, which sometimes extended to the knee, and a pair of puffy “Punjab” pants that tapered at the ankle. Some Mexican-American male zooters added a long watch chain, a hat (known as a *tando*), or both to the ensemble, but many abandoned the hat in favor of combing their relatively long hair into a pompadour on top and what was known as an “Argentine ducktail” or “duck’s ass” (“D.A.”) in back. *Calcos* or thick-soled shoes often punctuated the look.

For a partial list of scholarly works on Mexican-American zooters during World War II, see endnote 1. Also see Elizabeth Escobedo, “Mexican American Home Front: The Politics of Gender, Culture and Community in World War II Los Angeles” (PhD diss., University of Washington, 2004); and Catherine S. Ramírez, “Crimes of Fashion: The Pachuca and Chicana Style Politics,” *Meridians* 2, no. 2 (2002): 1–35.

4. In addition to zoot suits, pompadours, and red lipstick, other defining features of wartime *pachuquismo* included pachuco slang or *caló*, jazz, and, in some instances, youth gangs and crime. Regarding the subculture’s symbolic economy of style, see L. Alvarez, “The Power of the Zoot”; L. Alvarez, “Zoot Violence on the Home Front”; Escobedo, “Mexican American Home Front”; Rosa Linda Fregoso, “Homegirls, *Cholas*, and *Pachucas* in Cinema: Taking Over the Public Sphere,” *California History* 74, no. 3 (1995): 316–27; Fregoso, “Re-Imagining Chicana Urban Identities in the Public Sphere, *Cool*

*Chuca Style*,” in *Between Women and Nation: Nationalisms, Transnational Feminisms, and the State*, ed. Caren Kaplan, Norma Alarcón, and Minoo Moalle (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 72–91; Curtis Márez, “Brown: The Politics of Working-Class Chicano Style,” *Social Text* 48, vol. 14, no. 3 (1996): 109–32; Mazón, *The Zoot Suit Riots*; Pagán, *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon*; and Ramírez, “Crimes of Fashion.”

For discussions of the wartime African-American zoot subculture, see Steve Chibnall, “Whistle and Zoot: The Changing Meaning of a Suit of Clothes,” *History Workshop Journal* 20 (1985): 56–81; Stuart Cosgrove, “The Zoot Suit and Style Warfare,” *History Workshop Journal* 18 (1984): 77–91; Douglas Henry Daniels, “Los Angeles Zoot: Race ‘Riot,’ the Pachuco, and Black Music Culture,” *Journal of African American History* 87 (2002): 98–118; Robin D. G. Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York: The Free Press, 1994); Bruce M. Tyler, “Black Jive and White Repression,” *The Journal of Ethnic Studies* 16, no. 4 (1989): 31–66; and Shane White and Graham White, *Stylin’: African American Expressive Culture from Its Beginnings to the Zoot Suit* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998).

5. James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990). The quotation is from Kelley, *Race Rebels*, 8.

6. Kelley, *Race Rebels*, 166.

7. D. Letticia Galindo, “Dispelling the Male-Only Myth: Chicanas and Calo,” *The Bilingual Review/La Revista Bilingüe* 17, no. 1 (1992): 19.

8. See, for example, Julie Bettie, *Women without Class: Girls, Race, and Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); María Herrera-Sobek, “The Street Scene: Metaphoric Strategies in Two Contemporary Chicana Poets,” in *Chicana (W)rites: On Word and Film*, ed. María Herrera-Sobek and Helena María Viramontes (Berkeley: Third Woman Press, 1995), 147–69; Norma Mendoza-Denton, “Language Attitudes and Gang Affiliation among California Latina Girls,” in *Cultural Performances: Proceedings of the Third Berkeley Women and Language Conference*, ed. Mary Bucholtz, A. C. Liang, Laurel A. Sutton, and Caitlin Hines (Berkeley: Berkeley Women and Language Group, University of California, 1994), 478–86; Mendoza-Denton, “‘Muy Macha’: Gender and Ideology in Gang-Girls’ Discourse about Makeup,” *Ethnos* 61, nos. 1–2 (1996): 47–63; Mendoza-Denton, “Fighting Words: Latina Girls, Gangs, and Language Attitudes,” in *Speaking Chicana: Voice, Power, and Identity*, ed. D. Letticia Galindo and María Dolores González (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1999), 39–56; Mendoza-Denton, “Turn-Initial No: Collaborative Opposition among Latina Adolescents,” in *Reinventing Identities: The Gendered Self in Discourse*, ed. Mary Bucholtz, A. C. Liang, and Laurel A. Sutton (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 273–92; Mendoza-Denton, “The Anguish of Normative Gender: Sociolinguistic Studies among U.S. Latinas,” in *Language and Woman’s Place: Text and Commentaries*, ed. Mary Bucholtz (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 260–68; Marie “Keta” Miranda, *Homegirls in the Public Sphere* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003); and Amy Schalet, Geoffrey Hunt, and Karen Joe-Laidler,

“Respectability and Autonomy: The Articulation and Meaning of Sexuality among the Girls in the Gang,” *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 32, no. 1 (2003): 108–43.

9. My discussion of pachuco slang, *caló*, and tirili/tirilongo is indebted to the following works: George R. Alvarez, “Calo: The ‘Other’ Spanish,” *ETC: A Review of General Semantics* 24, no. 1 (1967): 7–13; George Carpenter Barker, *Pachuco: An American-Spanish Argot and Its Social Functions in Tucson, Arizona* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1950); Susan Berk-Seligson, “A Sociolinguistic View of the Mexican-American Speech Community,” *Latin American Research Review* 15, no. 2 (1980): 65–110; Haldeen Braddy, “The Pachucos and Their Argot,” *Southern Folklore Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (1960): 255–71; Lurline Coltharp, *The Tongue of the Tirilones: A Linguistic Study of a Criminal Argot* (University, AL: University of Alabama, 1965); Coltharp, “Invitation to the Dance: Spanish in the El Paso Underworld,” in *Texas Studies in Bilingualism: Spanish, French, German, Czech, Polish, Serbian, and Norwegian in the Southwest*, ed. Glenn G. Gilbert (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1970), 7–17; Dagoberto Fuentes and José A. López, *Barrio Language Dictionary: First Dictionary of Caló* (La Puente, CA: Sunburst Enterprises, 1974); Alfred Bruce Gaarder, “Notes on Some Spanish Terms in the Southwest,” *Hispania* 27, no. 3 (1944): 330–34; Galindo, “Perceptions of Pachuquismo and Use of Calo/Pachuco Spanish by Various Chicana Women,” *La Red/The Net*, no. 48 (1981): 2, 10; Galindo, “Dispelling the Male-Only Myth”; Galindo, “The Language of Gangs, Drugs, and Prison Life among Chicanas,” *Latino Studies Journal* 4, no. 3 (1993): 23–43; Galindo, “Capturing Chicano Voices: An Interdisciplinary Approach,” in *Cultural Performances*, 220–31; Galindo, “Caló and Taboo Language Use among Chicanas: A Description of Linguistic Appropriation and Innovation,” in *Speaking Chicana*, 175–93; Rafael Jesus González, “Pachuco: The Birth of a Creole Language,” *Arizona Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (1967): 343–56; George K. Green, “Calo, Pachuco, and Lunfardo: Certain Homogeneous Tendencies in Vernacular Spanish,” in *Research Issues and Problems in United States Spanish: Latin American and Southwestern Varieties*, ed. Jacob L. Ornstein-Galicia, George K. Green, and Dennis J. Bixler-Márquez (Brownsville, TX: Pan American University, 1988), 243–49; Beatrice Griffith, “The Pachuco Patois,” *Common Ground* 7, no. 4 (1947): 77–84; Eduardo Hernández-Chávez, Andrew D. Cohen, and Anthony F. Beltramo, *El Lenguaje de los Chicanos: Regional and Social Characteristics Used by Mexican Americans* (Arlington, VA: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1975); Francisco G. Hinojos, “Notes on the Pachuco: Stereotypes, History and Dialect,” *Atisbos: Journal of Chicano Research* (Summer 1975): 53–65; Linda Fine Katz, “The Evolution of the Pachuco Language and Culture” (MA thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1974); Mazón, *The Zoot Suit Riots*; Jacob Ornstein-Galicia, “Chicano Caló: Description and Review of a Border Variety,” *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 9, no. 4 (1987): 359–73; Adolfo Ortega, *Caló Tapestry* (Berkeley: Editorial Justa Publications, 1977); Pagán, *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon*; Harry Polkinhorn, Alfredo Velasco, and Malcolm Lambert, *El libro de caló: The Dictionary of Chicano Slang* (Oakland, CA: Floricanto

Press, 1986); Jay B. Rosensweig, *Caló: Gutter Spanish* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1973); Rosaura Sánchez, "Chicano Spanish: Varieties, Styles and Functions," in *Chicano Speech in the Bilingual Classroom*, ed. Dennis J. Bixler-Márquez and Jacob Ornstein-Galicia (New York: Peter Lang, 1988), 55–68; and Sánchez, *Chicano Discourse: Socio-historic Perspectives* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1994).

10. Mazón, *The Zoot-Suit Riots*, 3.

11. Pagán, *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon*, 37.

12. Barker, *Pachuco*, 13.

13. Galindo, "Dispelling the Male-Only Myth," 5.

14. "Youthful Gang Secrets Exposed," *Los Angeles Times*, Part II, 1, July 16, 1944.

15. Carlos Amezcua, "Origenes de 'Pachucos' y 'Malinches,'" *La Opinión*, 2, August 26, 1942.

16. Galindo, "Capturing Chicana Voices," 221; Sánchez, *Chicano Discourse*, 127. According to Galindo, "Lexical borrowings from English are morphosyntactically and phonologically adapted to Spanish; for example, *troca* is adapted from truck." See Galindo, "Capturing Chicana Voices," 221.

17. Sánchez, *Chicano Discourse*, 127.

18. Braddy, "The Pachucos and Their Argot," 261.

19. "Authentic Pachuco," *Time*, July 10, 1944, 72.

20. Julian Nava, *¡Viva La Raza! Readings on Mexican Americans* (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1973), 150.

21. Wallace Stegner, *One Nation* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1945), 117.

22. Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude: Life and Thought in Mexico*, trans. Lysander Kemp (New York: Grove Press, 1961), 15.

23. *Ibid.*, 14.

24. Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 130.

25. Regarding the relationship of English to Americanness, see Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography and other Writings on Politics, Economics, and Virtue*, ed. Alan Houston (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). Also see Samuel P. Huntington, *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's Identity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004).

26. See "Watts Pastor Blames Riots on Fifth Column," *Los Angeles Times*, A, June 11, 1943; and "Pastor Blames Fifth Column," *Los Angeles Examiner*, 12, June 11, 1943.

27. "Web of 'Zoot Suit' Gangs Spreads Over Entire L.A. Area," *Los Angeles Herald-Express*, 1, June 8, 1943.

28. For a discussion of the Cold War-era "bad boy," see Leerom Medovoi, *Rebels: Youth and the Cold War Origins of Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

29. Cab Calloway, *Of Minnie the Moocher and Me* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1976), 182.

30. Kenneth B. Clark and James Barker, "The Zoot Effect in Personality: A Race Riot Participant," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 40, no. 2 (1945): 147.
31. G. Alvarez, "Calo," 9.
32. Clark and Barker, "The Zoot Effect in Personality," 147.
33. G. Alvarez, "Calo," 9.
34. Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York: Ballantine, 1964), 134.
35. "El Louie" was first published in 1970 in *Rascatripas*. I quote from the following version: Jose Montoya, "El Louie," in *Literatura Chicana: texto y contexto*, ed. Antonia Castañeda Shular, Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, and Joseph Sommers (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972), 173–78.
36. Montoya, "El Louie," 174. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations of "El Louie" are my own.
37. *Ibid.*, 175.
38. *Ibid.*
39. *Ibid.*, 174.
40. *Ibid.*
41. *Ibid.*, 176.
42. *Ibid.*, 174.
43. Mario Suárez, "Kid Zopilote," *Arizona Quarterly* 3, no. 2 (1947): 131.
44. *Ibid.*
45. *Ibid.*
46. *Ibid.*, 136.
47. Montoya, "El Louie," 174.
48. *Ibid.*
49. *Ibid.*
50. Suárez, "Kid Zopilote," 131.
51. Montoya, "El Louie," 175.
52. *Ibid.*
53. See, for example, Juan Bruce-Novoa, *Chicano Authors: Inquiry by Interview* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980), 115; Bruce-Novoa, *Chicano Poetry: A Response to Chaos* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), 16; and Bernice Zamora, "Mythopoeia of Chicano Poetry: An Introduction to Cultural Archetypes" (PhD diss., Stanford University, 1986), 167.
54. Alfred Arteaga, *Chicano Poetics: Heterotexts and Hybridities* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 68.
55. Bettie, *Women without Class*, 34; Barbara Ehrenreich, *Fear of Falling: The Inner Life of the Middle Class* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989), 109.
56. Galindo, "Dispelling the Male-Only Myth," 6.
57. Galindo, "The Language of Gangs, Drugs, and Prison Life among Chicanas," 33.
58. G. Alvarez, "Calo," 12.

59. In defining “cool” and “hip,” I draw from the following: Calloway, *Of Minnie the Moocher and Me*; Susan Fraiman, *Cool Men and the Second Sex* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003); Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Hyman E. Golden, Frank O’Leary, and Morris Lipsius, *Dictionary of American Underworld Lingo* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1950); John Leland, *Hip: The History* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004); Lewis MacAdams, *Birth of the Cool: Beat, Bebop, and the American Avant-Garde* (New York: The Free Press, 2001); Norman Mailer, “The White Negro,” in *Keeping Time: Readings in Jazz History*, ed. Robert Walser (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 242–46; Richard Majors and Janice Mancini Bilson, *Cool Pose: The Dilemmas of Black Manhood in America* (New York: Lexington Books, 1992); Medovoi, *Rebels*; Milton “Mezz” Mezzrow and Bernard Wolfe, *Really the Blues* (New York: Random House, 1946); Dick Poutain and David Robins, *Cool Rules: Anatomy of an Attitude* (London: Reaktion Books, 2000); Peter N. Stearns, *American Cool: Constructing a Twentieth-Century Emotional Style* (New York: New York University Press, 1994); and Robert Farris Thompson, “An Aesthetic of the Cool,” *African Arts* 7, no. 1 (1973): 40–91.

60. María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo, *The Revolutionary Imagination in the Americas and the Age of Development* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003). The quote is from Kelley, *Race Rebels*, 162.

61. Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, 56.

62. *Ibid.*, 310.

63. *Ibid.*

64. *Ibid.*

65. Majors and Billson, *Cool Pose*, 7.

66. Mailer, “The White Negro,” 243.

67. G. Alvarez, “Calo,” 9.

68. Majors and Billson, *Cool Pose*, 83. I recall that when I was in high school and college in the 1980s and early 1990s, “gay” was synonymous with uncool: regardless of sex or sexual orientation, a person was “gay” if she or he removed the mask of coolness and showed excessive emotion—in particular, excitement, sadness, or fear. For a brief discussion of gay cool, see Leland, *Hip*.

69. G. Alvarez, “Calo,” 12.

70. Tomás Almaguer, “Chicano Men: A Cartography of Homosexual Identity and Behavior,” *Differences* 3, no. 2 (1991): 82.

71. *Ibid.*

72. Berk-Seligson, “A Sociolinguistic View of the Mexican-American Speech Community,” 94; Coltharp, “Invitation to the Dance,” 7.

73. Coltharp, *The Tongue of the Tirilones*, 32.

74. Leland, *Hip*, 241.

75. Fraiman, *Cool Men and the Second Sex*.

76. Mary Helen Ponce, *Hoyt Street: An Autobiography* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993), 167.
77. Galindo, "Dispelling the Male-Only Myth," 20.
78. *Ibid.*, 19.
79. *Ibid.*
80. Coltharp, *The Tongue of the Tirilones*, 32.
81. *Ibid.*
82. Galindo, "Dispelling the Male-Only Myth," 19.
83. Chuy Varela, "Pachuco Boogie," liner notes for *Pachuco Boogie, featuring Don Tosti* (El Cerrito, CA: Arhoolie Productions, 2002), 11.
84. The advertisement for the *Dictionary of Pachuco Slang* may be found in *LowRider* 2, no. 2 (November 1978), page number unknown. Regarding the 1940s-themed fundraiser dances, see *LowRider* 1, no. 11 (August 1978), 39; and *LowRider* 2, no. 2 (November 1978), page number unknown.
85. For transcriptions of conversations in pachuco slang, see Barker, "Pachuco"; Coltharp, "Invitation to the Dance"; Gaarder, "Notes on Some Spanish Terms in the Southwest"; Galindo, "The Language of Gangs, Drugs, and Prison Life among Chicanas"; Sánchez, "Chicano Spanish"; and Sánchez, *Chicano Discourse*. Coltharp's "Invitation to the Dance" and Galindo's "The Language of Gangs, Drugs, and Prison Life among Chicanas" feature women speaking pachuco slang. Barker's audio recording of a conversation between two men speaking pachuco slang may be found at the University of Arizona Library, Department of Special Collections, Southwest Folklore Center Manuscript Collection (SWF 009, items 85.2/C.1 and 85.2/R.1). I am grateful to Veronica Reyes and Scott Cossel of the University of Arizona library for providing me with access to it.
86. Songs that feature pachuco slang by Lalo Guerrero and Don Tosti's Pachuco Boogie Boys, as well as other artists, may be found on *Pachuco Boogie*. "El Bracero y La Pachuca" is also on this album. I thank Anthony Macias for bringing it to my attention.
87. Translated by Don Tosti, Chuy Varela, and Zac Salem, liner notes for *Pachuco Boogie*, 21.
88. Translated by Tosti, Varela, and Salem, liner notes for *Pachuco Boogie*, 22.
89. Katz, "The Evolution of the Pachuco Language and Culture," 55.
90. Susan Gal, "Language, Gender, and Power: An Anthropological Review," in *Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self*, ed. Kira Hall and Mary Bucholtz (New York: Routledge, 1995), 173.
91. For a discussion of the theme of women and betrayal in *corridos*, see María Herrera-Sobek, *The Mexican Corrido: A Feminist Analysis* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993); and María Herrera-Sobek, "The Treacherous Woman Archetype: A Structuring Agent in the Corrido," *Aztlán* 13, nos. 1–2 (1982): 135–48.

92. For more information regarding the Sleepy Lagoon case and trial, see Frank P. Barajas, "The Defense Committees of Sleepy Lagoon: A Convergent Struggle against Facism, 1942–1944," *Aztlán* 31, no. 1 (2006): 33–62; Escobar, *Race, Police, and the Making of a Political Identity*; Escobedo, "Mexican American Home Front"; Alice McGrath, with Michael Balter, *The Education of Alice McGrath* (Los Angeles: Oral History Program, University of California, Los Angeles, 1987); Pagán, *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon*; and Tovares, *The American Experience*.

93. During *People v. Zammora*, thirty-nine witnesses were called by the prosecution and twenty-two by the defense (certain individuals were called as witnesses by both parties). The "girl companions" who were called as the prosecution's witnesses were Bertha Aguilar, Dora Barrios, Ann Kalustian, Betty Nuñez Zeiss, Josephine Gonzáles, and her sister Juanita Gonzáles. Dora Baca and Lorena Encinas were called as the defense's witnesses. Frances Silva was also held by the police as a suspect in José Diaz's murder and testified before the Grand Jury in August 1942. However, unlike the others, she was not a witness in the trial. See *People v. Zammora, et al.*, Superior Court in the District Court of Appeal of the State of California, Second Appellate District (Sleepy Lagoon Defense Committee Collection, Collection 107, Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles). The list of witnesses may be found in box 7, volume 1. Regarding the incarceration of some of the girls and young women at the Ventura School for Girls, see Escobedo, "Mexican American Home Front"; and McGrath, *The Education of Alice McGrath*.

94. References to the young women's hair and clothing may be found on the following pages of the court transcript: 1336, 1345, 3720, and 3722.

95. "Jury's Gang-Case Verdict Disproves 'Persecution,'" *Los Angeles Times*, page number unavailable, January 14, 1943.

96. Testimony of Bertha Aguilar, court transcript, 1324.

97. Court transcript, 1318–19.

98. *Ibid.*, 1319.

99. Emily Post, *Etiquette: The Blue Book of Social Usage* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1942), 97.

100. *Ibid.*

101. *Ibid.*, 98.

102. *Ibid.*, 86.

103. *Ibid.*, 92.

104. Here, "perform" refers to the repetition and disruption of symbolic categories. See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990); and Butler, "Critically Queer," *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993). Also see Homi K. Bhabha "Disemminations," *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

105. Robin Tolmach Lakoff, *Language and Woman's Place: Text and Commentaries*, ed. Mary Bucholtz (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 80.

106. According to Pagán, Zacsek (a.k.a. Olga Grey) had a supporting role in *Birth of a Nation* and “relied on her dramatic talents and personal flair” in the courtroom. See Pagán, *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon*, 77.

107. Court transcript, 297.

108. *Ibid.*, 298.

109. Testimony of Bertha Aguilar, court transcript, 1235 (italics added). Other instances in which the young women used incorrect grammar may be found on the following pages of *People v. Zammora*: 207, 218, 300, 403, 770, 1046, 1088, 1099, 1106, 1141, 1142, 1153, 1180, 1185, 1192, 1198, 1201, 1204, 1212–13, 1215, 1231, 1324, 1394, 1420, 1437, and 4509. Incidentally, each teenage girl had attended school up to the proper grade according to her age.

110. Testimony of Bertha Aguilar, court transcript, 1215 (italics added).

111. Lakoff adds that the omission of the final *g* in the gerund form is generally associated with boys. See Lakoff, *Language and Woman's Place*, 80.

112. Court transcript, 1173.

113. Testimony of Bertha Aguilar, court transcript, 1212–13.

114. Galindo, “The Language of Gangs, Drugs, and Prison Life among Chicanas,” 32.

115. Court transcript, 1202.

116. *Ibid.*, 1273–74.

117. Pagán, *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon*, 82.

118. Testimony of Bertha Aguilar, court transcript, 1212.

119. Testimony of Juanita Gonzáles, court transcript, 1043. Other examples of the young women’s “forgetfulness” may be found on the following pages: 263–66, 274–79, 454, 851, 854, 917, 1023, 1026, 1095, 1107, 1204, 1211, 1222–23, 1229, and 1437–39.

120. Testimony of Juanita Gonzáles, court transcript, 207.

121. Testimony of Bertha Aguilar, court transcript, 1201–02. See pages 225, 233, 767, 787, 1095, 1182, 1185–1189, 1192–95, 1197, 1199, 1204, 1211–13, 1229, 1233, 1238, 1354, 1386, 1396, and 1437–40 for other instances in which the young women refused to testify or to cooperate while in court.

122. Testimony of Dora Baca, court transcript, 4550. There are numerous complaints from the judge and lawyers about the female witnesses’ inaudibility. See, for example, the following pages: 234, 258, 296–97, 403, 410, 449, 521, 527, 678, 1084, 1271, 1457, 4496, and 5483.

123. Lakoff, *Talking Power: The Politics of Language in Our Lives* (New York: Basic Books, 1990), 90–91.

124. Kelley, *Race Rebels*, 8.

125. Yolanda Chávez Leyva, “Listening to the Silences in Latina/Chicana Lesbian History,” in *Living Chicana Theory*, ed. Carla Trujillo (Berkeley: Third Woman Press, 1998), 432.

126. For a brief, albeit vivid, discussion of Aguilar's sentence at the Ventura School for Girls, see Escobedo, "Mexican American Home Front," 68–69.

127. For reasons I explain below, I can not disclose the identity of this speaker. Suffice it to say that my interview with this person, whom I shall call unidentified interviewee #1, was conducted by telephone on February 19, 2005.

128. Ibid.

129. Luis Valdez, *Zoot Suit and Other Plays* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1992), 25.

130. Valdez, *Zoot Suit and Other Plays*, 43.

131. Ibid.

132. Ibid., 46.

133. Ibid.

134. Ibid., 44.

135. Fregoso, "Re-Imagining Chicana Urban Identities in the Public Sphere, *Cool Chuca Style*," 84.

136. Valdez, *Zoot Suit and Other Plays*, 51.

137. Ibid., 81.

138. Yolanda Broyles-González, *El Teatro Campesino: Theater in the Chicano Movement* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), 203. Other feminist critiques of *Zoot Suit* may be found in Fregoso, *The Bronze Screen: Chicana and Chicano Film Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Fregoso, "Homegirls, Cholas, and Pachucas in Cinema"; Fregoso, "Re-Imagining Chicana Urban Identities in the Public Sphere, *Cool Chuca Style*"; and Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano, "The Female Subject in Chicano Theatre: Sexuality, 'Race,' and Class," *Theatre Journal* 38, no. 4 (1986): 389–407.

139. Valdez, *Zoot Suit* (Universal Pictures, 1981).

140. Valdez, *Zoot Suit and Other Plays*, 90.

141. Ibid.

142. Valdez, *Zoot Suit and Other Plays*, 35.

143. Ibid.

144. George Shibley, "Sleepy Lagoon: The True Story," *New West*, January 15, 1979, 88 (box 3, folder 27, Alice G. McGrath Collection, Collection 1490, Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles).

145. See "Suit Filed Against 'Zoot Suit' Producers," *Los Angeles Times*, Part IV, 34, November 23, 1979 (box 24, "Zoot Suit Murders/Sanchez" folder, Carey McWilliams Collection, Collection 1390, Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles).

146. Telephone interview with unidentified interviewee #2 (November 20, 2004).

147. Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1987), 58.

148. Ibid., 54.

149. Ibid.

150. Lakoff, *Language and Woman's Place*, 84.

151. Ibid., 85.

152. See Cherríe Moraga, "Later, She Met Joyce," *Loving in the War Years: lo que nunca pasó por los labios* (Boston: South End Press, 1983); Moraga, *Giving Up the Ghost* (Albuquerque: West End Press, 1986); and Evangelina Vigil, *Thirty an' Seen a Lot* (Berkeley: Third Woman Press, 1982). See also Herrera-Sobek, "The Street Scene," for an insightful analysis of Vigil's poetry. I discuss Moraga's and Vigil's works in more detail in *The Lady Zoot Suiter* (forthcoming from Duke University Press).

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