

by MARK LaRUBIO

# Forever Forward

Maternity and the  
Child in Alejandro  
Morales' *The Rag  
Doll Plagues*.

The cries of the Child fill the pages of *The Rag Doll Plagues* with its shrieks, begging to be born; this is the conception of childbirth that is most often thought of. However, this essay will focus on how through the image of women and their maternity whether realized or potential serves as a tool for heteropatriarchy through its desire for futurity. Being that this book is constantly concerned with the figure of the Child, it subsumes the needs of the Mother and reduces her to merely a machine by which that Child is born. Being that this is so, one will be able to see just how the Gregories of the novel represent the patriarchal plague against Chicana Feminism and how those women become queered by their relationship to the Child through *La Mona*.

While many will try to absolve the Gregories of the novel, there is still something which remains problematic. From the colonial to the futuristic, each Gregory relates to the women around him by their possible and realized maternity. This becomes a focus then because of the concern for futurity which pervades the novel. As Edelman contends “the Child has come to em-

body for us the telos of the social order and come to be seen as the one for whom that order is held in perpetual trust,” which is definitely a foundational notion in *The Rag Doll Plagues*.<sup>1</sup> This is due to the Gregories building their relationship to the Child by connecting it either to the *fait accompli* of birth or the potentiality of women and viewing them by way of their fecundity. Indeed, as

Adrienne Rich writes, motherhood as an institution “aims at ensuring that that potential [for Futurity]—and all women—shall remain under male control.”<sup>2</sup> In this way, the Child itself infects the women with a queered sense of being since they are unable to be mothers to the Child because of *La Mona*.

## Virreyes

Of all the most evocative and recognizable images one can imagine of motherhood is the child wrapped in the mother's warm embrace. Indeed, this image is constantly at the center of the imagination when it comes to the role of mothers. *La Mona* however, represents then a Queering device by which that role of motherhood is effaced for as it ravages the maternal body it causes the maternal body to be removed from its place in relation to the child. Queerness

here is according to Edelman's and Muñoz's vision of the Child as emblematic of Straight Time. To better define Straight Time we must know that:

**Straight time tells us that there is no future but there here and now of our everyday life. The only futurity promised is that of reproductive majoritarian heterosexuality, the spectacle of the state refurbishing its ranks through overt and subsidized acts of reproduction.**<sup>3</sup>

This becomes central to the vision of the Gregories in their respective sections since they are so deeply ingrained in the biomedical field and are at any rate linked to that vision of as is apparent throughout the novel.

The colonial Gregory or rather Gregorio comes to the El Virreinato de la Nueva España not just as a peninsular but as the peninsular who will save the colony from *La Mona*. Since Gregorio is the figure that, in Vasconcelos' eyes, had "genius and cunning," to solve this problem there is a cer-



tain aspect of the Spaniard having predominance over the situation.<sup>4</sup> Yet, it is precisely through Gregorio's inability to halt the spread of La Mona that the Child is given precedence over the mother being that "Don Gregorio ... use[s] medicine to control."<sup>5</sup> Indeed, it is Marisela herself who begs "Do not take my hands from me. I want to hold my baby," and here the aforementioned image of the mother holding the child

proves important.<sup>6</sup> Here then, by Gregorio's decision to amputate her arms, her ability to fulfill the mother role is taken away but in a more salient way because it is through the "pregnant period" by which Vasconcelos imagines the Cosmic Race to be fully developed.<sup>7</sup> Of course, this is not to conflate mestizaje directly with motherhood but to merely assert that since the Child here is mestizo its enfiguration then is paramount to

this discussion especially since "medical rhetoric ... forms a fact of colonial discourse."<sup>8</sup> By having a Spaniard remove the maternal ability of the Mexican woman shows how the biomedical vision of colonial patriarchy can inhibit the maternal.

The piercing of the uterus in order to extract the Child is one of the more stark images of where, by way of his position, the mother is invalidated in the eviction of the Child and its placement solely in the ambit the patriarchy. An important exchange then where the mother's life is thrown out in favor of the Child is in the following:

**We must try to save them both," I said to Father Jude, who shook his head no.**

**We cannot. We must wait until she dies. Then we can open her up and baptize the child.<sup>9</sup>**

This scene is particularly salient since not only does Gregorio at first want to save Marisela, but it is Father Jude who dismisses that wish in favor of the wunsch



of the Child.<sup>10</sup> Being that Marisela is infected with *La Mona*, it queers her and makes her become a form of “radical alterity.”<sup>11</sup> It removes her completely from the ambit of the patriarchy not only in removing her ability to conceive but in her ability even to give birth.

Indeed, as Father Jude states “our duty is to baptize the fetus’ soul,” but no such consideration to duty is ever directed toward Marisela.<sup>12</sup> But even so, as Gregorio himself remarks concerning the effect we see “what *La Mona* has created—a distended limbless woman heaving for breath,” and here is where the physical queering of her is present.<sup>13</sup> Here, as a queering agent it becomes important to note that queerness is here existing outside of the realm of Futurity since “the Child remains the perpetual horizon,” of everything concerning Futurity.<sup>14</sup> What this ultimately means then is that Marisela by being infected by *La Mona* becomes subject to the realm of the queer. She is no longer viable to the politics of Futurity. Not only is Marisela expendable to Father Jude but towards the entire project of

Reproductive Futurism. Therefore, when Gregorio “br[eaks] the bag of life.”<sup>15</sup> It is not merely a biomedical procedure but a act that involves the literal invasion of the womb by those who desire to save only the Child.

Of course, one might claim that this was necessary in order to save the life of the daughter being born. However, given the all too commonly known fact that caesarean sections tended to be quite dangerous before the advent of modern Western medicine coupled with the admonitions of Father Jude towards Gregorio for even attempting to save Marisela, one cannot help but see how her life is held at lesser value than the child itself. Moreover, to consider the fact that by doing this operation Marisela’s death is essentially sealed it goes without saying then that her womb was the central focus of Marisela’s importance to Father Jude and the Viceroy. Thus, both Church and State are deeply invested parties in Reproductive Futurity.

Yet still, there are aspects which show just how then the Child “works to *affirm* a structure, to *authenticate* so-

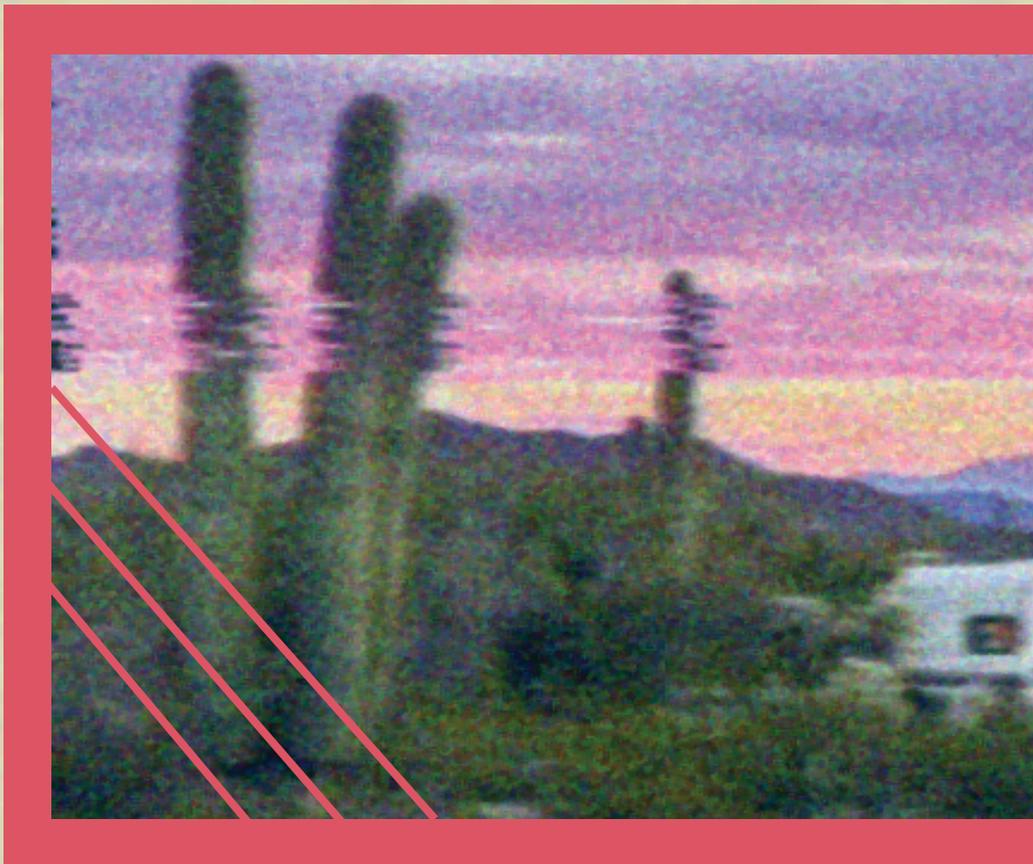
cial order,” and here it is key to recall just how the Child figures into the ending of this section.<sup>16</sup> Not only does the Vicereine herself fall victim to *La Mona* and commit suicide, which itself is queer in the face of theological concerns given the “subjugation of women and also nature,” but also the Biblical prohibition thereof.<sup>17</sup> By this, there is need for a discussion of the subjugation in question. Being that The Vicereine is—as is well remarked and commonly known—seen, like a Queen, to be the mother of the nation then her position as becoming invalidated in such a position by way of *La Mona* means that not only is she reduced to being subject to the disease but she is still subject to the double standards of the patriarchy. Then, it would seem that she is not only committing suicide to avoid a gruesome death, but to avoid the emotional disparagement that would have occurred otherwise.

Then, to look at how this changes other women, it is easily missed that the youngest daughter is “seized” with the disease as well and “ventured into the jungle and disappeared.”<sup>18</sup>

Here, I think there are many things to be said alongside the question of maternity. Not only does the Vicereine commit an act that goes against the State and Church, which I would endeavor to read as queer. This is because:

**in this fearful state of colonial Mexico, it becomes clear that culturally imposed definitions of love, sex, propriety, honor, and so on, and divisions of gender and socio-political sensibility, not excluding power relations between two or more entities, are all challenged and splintered.**<sup>19</sup>

Here, the youngest daughter of the Viceroy, literally the last person who could enhance Reproductive Futurity the farthest into the future runs away into the jungle and removes herself entirely from the ambit of both the laws of the city *civitas* but also the ambit of Reproductive Futurity by placing herself in the forest and away from the Court. The very fact that the language of seizure is brought out is salient then if only because it



makes the visualization of the disease all the more palpable. By this, I mean to say that it is very much then a Queer entity that seized the daughter and it is by that reasoning that we can see how in this portion of the novel, *La Mona* is able to queer motherhood even in its potential form.

## Modernidad

When it comes to Sandra in the portion of the novel called Delhi, the language of

futurity becomes very much aligned with the language of fecundity. This of course comes with the initial description of the cypress tree which is emblematic and is “a pure delicate crystal,” which given the context of maternity holds a lot of weight.<sup>20</sup> Yet still, it is when Gregory turns to Sandra for the first time where this image of fecundity turns to the feminine form proper. As he describes in her he “saw the world, the sea, the mountains in her legs, her arms, and her face. The cosmos became her body,” and here the blazon of sorts becomes



her way of becoming a part of the natural world in a way that negotiates between fecundity and femininity.<sup>21</sup> Of course, these two things are linked when it comes to futurity since although Edelman is primarily focused with the Child, it must be born in someway for it to be ideologically salient.

Yet, when it comes to Sandra's womb, we get explicit mentions of it in reference to the natural world and speaking of it in terms of fecundity. Indeed, Gregory states that he "traveled easily through Sandra's womb ...

She wore a skirt of undulating fields of corn," and here the literal image of fields and perhaps plowing can be imagined.<sup>22</sup> This, I think goes without saying that the variety of notions of fertility concerning wombs are very much linked to the fertility of the fields as is present in cultures as diverse as those one can imagine. Here, one can also turn to Vasconcelos who in his treatise on Hernan Cortes is very much aligned as well with these conceptualization of the female body with the natural world even stating of things being "lasting and fecund," with the land and women being placed in the object of this adjectivization in relation to Cortes.<sup>23</sup> Still, it seems to be that in this passage Gregory is heavily identifying with Sandra's maternal futurity, or rather the potential for futurity through motherhood and this is aligned with "male anxiety for the female body."<sup>24</sup> This is the central (dis)connection which (un)binds the perception that Gregory has of Sandra, but also that the patriarchy, as aforementioned by Adrienne Rich has towards women. Yet, here, I claim that this goes a step further. In the same passage,

the traveling through the womb evokes the image of the industrial vagina, a concept by Sheila Jeffreys which is stark but important considering that what matters in this conceptualization is the woman's reproductive body.<sup>25</sup>

One should not think that this language of fecundity and fertility is just focused on seeing the feminine without any relationship to the masculine or in this case, male aspects of fertility as well. There is always the conceptualization, as with Vasconcelos of the "pristine odor of earth and semen," is not only a heuristic of fertility both in literal senses but it also evokes something perhaps more important.<sup>26</sup> As mentioned with Vasconcelos, there is always the gendered viewing of the earth in relation to men, in the case of either Hernan Cortes or otherwise. This, is deeply important when considering how the Child functions in this text. By bringing in the different senses such as smell not only are we able to see just how fertility and in relation to it fecundity are brought out but how ubiquitous they are to our senses. Then, for them to have "in-

haled [Sandra] through their nostrils, mouths, and eyes,” means that she is also subsumed into an essence.<sup>27</sup> By essence, I of course mean to play with the *double-sense* of the word but to also relate back to the sensory aspect of how this all works together.

However, this is ravaged by disease. *La Mona* strikes, shakes, and shimmies itself (or herself) into very available viable portion of the sufferer. It is important that “it’s transmitted by semen and blood,” which in a way adds something to the Biblical naming of Adam and Eve, but I digress.<sup>28</sup> Being then that this virus which functions as a queering device is spread by the same means of progenition brings some interesting thoughts to bear on this text. The very fact that viruses are not alive in it of themselves and yet can wreak havoc on those who are means something more in this text. Here, *La Mona* makes Gregory see “above Sandra the green-blue cypress with its dripping roots exposed,” since now by way of the disease her connection to fecundity is effaced.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, in another and more palpable way, when Gregory de-

scribes how “[Sandra] collapsed as her roots rushed blood,” we can see just how deeply the cypress and the verdant tendrils of life are tied to the female body in Sandra’s case.<sup>30</sup> Still, with this disease her roots become not only a deracination in the sense of ungrounding from her life before *La Mona* but rather it becomes her roots in relation to the fecund ground that is maternity.

Is there any prefiguration of this one might ask? In one sense, there is. It is by performance which in its own right brings out a very unique sense of reading this novel. Sandra is in the performance of Federico Lorca’s *Blood Bride* as the eponymous bride. As the play comes to an end she “pulled a knife from underneath her blouse, danced and caressed its point, edge, width, and length. She kissed the blade, [and] she held it to her womb,” which might in some readings have the blade be a phallic symbol but in this represents the cutting line between queered femaleness in accordance to futurity.<sup>31</sup> Then, for the play to have in relation to the play the fol-

lowing:

*And it barely fits the hand  
But it slides in clean  
Through the astonished flesh  
And stops there, at the place  
Where the trembles  
enmeshed  
The dark root of a scream.*<sup>32</sup>

It would seem to make how Gregory “went quickly to her side and took the knife,” a reflect not just of securing her safety but with discussion of her womb, the possibility for futurity.<sup>33</sup> Yes, the claim might be that the important thing here is not to get her to bleed however, the emphasis put on the womb and later the breasts seems to suggest more than just the concern with blood. Here, as with the reference to a “root of a scream” seems to indicate the consequences of birth.<sup>34</sup> The scream and its enmeshed nature with a root is once more the image of the cypress above Sandra. Sandra and her lack of roots lead to the lack of the Child.

How does this enfiguration work with other aspects of the novel? Well, one can turn to Chapter Five for what I think is salient here. The young woman -- a girl really, being only fifteen

“grew the jewel of her love for her homeboy,” and here the scene turns tragic.<sup>35</sup> Just as before with Gregorio and Father Jude there is the desire to “save her and the baby,” and Gregory’s mind begins to conflate both the young woman and Sandra.<sup>36</sup> This mixing between them will prove important in a bit, but for now, focusing solely on the Child. Gregory himself is the representative of the champion of the Child when he states “we can save the child,” because he wishes to keep futurity alive as is evident in the next chapter, but here we see how drugs which if speaking about intravenous drug usage can lead to spreading HIV or *La Mona* change how the parents of the young woman view futurity.

Another important image here is when Doctor Flink “pulled the white sheet over the mother and placed his hand on her uterus. The similarities of the dead woman’s tattoo and the serial number branded on Flink’s forearm were unavoidable,” which only adds to Edelman’s ideas.<sup>37</sup> Here, I would claim, is an example of where queerness is available to view in a very distinct form.

As is commonly known, the Holocaust or Shoah had central to it the extermination of the Jewish people among others. It claimed, and this is merely from my own memory, 90% of European Jewry. Here, we see someone who lived in a queer space, the concentration camps where fecundity, fertility, and even natality were negated by the push for death. For Gregory to then see Flink’s tattoo in and her tattoo with Jimmy’s name on it, it reminds me of *Yad Va’Shem*, or Hand and Name. Both these people here are not only similar in their tattoos but in being in queer time.

Therefore, to have this moment where his hand is over her uterus, is where the queerness of this moment becomes fulfilled.

Still, their “vision is forever forward,” and still Straight time is seminal to this novel.<sup>38</sup> This is evident not only in how everything is centered on “protecting ... the child she carried,” but in how this is starkly placed next to the queer moment of the unnamed girl.<sup>39</sup> What this seems to signal then is that the deep anxiety straight time has in reference to queer time is something which hasn’t really



been spoken about in either *Cruising Utopia* or *No Future* at least in that because it is so focused on this aspect, it wishes to assimilate that which has been queered back into the fold of straight time in order to protect the Child. This becomes an important aspect to consider when thinking of when it comes to “Sandra’s royal guard. [who] were her eyes toward the future.”<sup>40</sup> Here, we can literally see how Sandra is protected by men with futurity firmly in their gaze. What does this mean then? Couldn’t one say that her be-

ing guarded is a positive thing? In terms of vitality, yes, but it seems to be more as the result of a subsumption of her maternity or rather, in the idealization of her maternity solely in the ambit of futurity.

How does that which is “in the past, in the present, and in the future,” come to bear on Gregory himself?<sup>41</sup> In Chapter 18 there is a very particular scene that speaks volumes on the idolizing of maternity. As it occurs to him:

**Mother stood before me. She spoke, but what words whispered were images which revealed her other forms. Around her danced life and death. She was virgin of the sun and moon, water and earth, fire and wind. Since birth I had been falling toward her who pushed me out into life.**<sup>42</sup>

And here we can see the way in which maternity is so central to the conception of Gregory in the imaginary feminine. Here we can see not a mother but Mother it-



self, almost as if it is the Mother goddess of lore come before him. But in more ways than one, it is the mother goddess. This is not the central crux of this point here but merely a segway into something more. With Mother being an enfiguration of the elements and above all else a virgin. Here, we can of course think of the Virgin Mary but it is by way of a Queer aspect—that being the virgin birth—by which her maternity is brought out. Here, I think there is something much more at play. It is much more than merely a gesture towards some aspect of a mother and more a line towards the maternal as a concept. Here, I would say that the typical division between virgin and whore breaks down in a novel way. How is it that one can be a mother without also losing virginity (current day procedures notwithstanding)? Of course, there is much importance placed on this in terms of the relationship between a father and a mother and this is where I think Gregory's relationship to motherhood becomes key.

Not only is Gregory having this immense scene with

Mother but in a greater way he is coming to terms of a kind with maternity. Of course, this does not mean that he reaches some final end-all-be-all of understanding, but he does invariably come to understand great aspects of how maternity is portrayed. As aforementioned, there is an inextricable link between the visualization of the natural world and the feminine body as being in themselves united and interchangeable. Once again, the language of fecundity proves paramount his relationship to Mother and motherhood in general.

Then, for Gregory and Sandra to essentially imitate a wedding proves important since they are, of course, not getting married but rather going to Mexico in an effort to get away from the United States which made the life saving drugs illegal.<sup>43</sup> However, the most important scene here is when Gregory states to us that “In about three and a half hours we looked down into a volcanic cradle crowned by Popocatepetl and Ixtacoatepetl, two white magical peaks, the symbols of a legendary love affair and the

eternal natural sentinels of Tenochtitlan,” which is of course an important image concerning both Aztlán but also something more.<sup>44</sup> This something more is that fact that by definition, being that these volcanoes are in the story the bodies themselves of the lovers, in a Queer state. By this, I simply mean to say that their ability for futurity in relation to straight time is halted and arrested before Gregory's eyes. This is the symbol that looms over Mexico City, a queered futurity. No longer can the couple ever hope to commit to straight time and reproduce for they are not only encased by the volcanoes, as it were, but are unable to fulfill the role of maternity since the woman of the story was cast to sleep or in some tellings dead.

For the entire story then, it seems that this anxiety about women and in particular their ability to bear children is literally looming over the novel. From the cypress with exposed roots to the two peaks, there is a very deeply ingrained concern that bothers the second Gregory in this case to the point where it seems as though it is central to who he is as a char-

acter. But in the grander scheme of things it becomes central in the way men relate to women. Even the topography and geography seems to speak tomes about begging and the progentive urge of the world, as it were.

Geography then becomes an important focus when it comes to working with Sandra's affliction. As they are taken to Tepotzotlan by Señora Jane, there are taken to the place where "the crops flourished deep green," and this like with Marisela is where Sandra will interact with the curanderos and the very air of the countryside.<sup>45</sup> This place-based return is, I think, very salient. Not only is it keeping with our discussion of how nature and femininity—through which maternity is expressed—are linked but it also goes back to how the Queered elements of both disease and place come together when it comes to these various aspects. Of course, it is very important that Sandra wishes to be in Mexico all things considered. Yet, it comes, once more, at the very important crux of how Gregory relates to the death of the maternal.

Once Sandra is returned

to Los Angeles, it becomes clear however that her chance of life is at its end. Here her "becom[ing] their child again," is not only a reversion to a cared-for state but also a state of defeminization.<sup>46</sup> Of course, this is the product of the disease which has been the great figure of this part of the novel. Indeed, I think in one sense La Mona figures in a very deeply domineering way in this second portion. This is because of how it works to undermine Sandra's existence in every possible capacity. It goes without saying that there are many aspects of the disease which, because it is a literal disease—that is, because it is HIV, it comes with the very literal complexities that come with being diagnosed with it during the AIDS crisis of the 80's. This means that the reversion then of Sandra is something which goes to show how this movement to make everything solely biomedical ignores the social implications of that desire to reduce it thus. Being then that "it's transmitted by semen and blood," evokes the Biblical call once more to Adam and Eve where Adam means I am of the blood and Eve means I

am alive.<sup>47</sup> Still, this comes at a rare moment of introspection that proves important for Gregory since he himself begins to view the aforementioned biomedical vision of Sandra and of womanhood. As he states "[it] became a medical compulsion, to write about her became a fetish," which at any rate seems to point to a very real commodification of her progentive properties.<sup>48</sup> This is a very serious scene due to his realization of how the "recreation" of her really means being able to hearken back to reproductive futurity.<sup>49</sup> It would seem that then, the idea of the blood transfusions, again working with the Biblical, is part of the Queering element. Another Adam has become part of Sandra and infected her and has now removed her ability to reproduce. How interesting it is then to consider the implications then that Sandra "spoke to him "like a tree, a river, a seed ... a hummingbird, like a butterfly," which is of course going to back to portion about the language of fecundity and all but here it evokes something else.<sup>50</sup> It evokes very particular images of progenation that are important in Gregory's eyes

not only because they are aligned with the cypress but also because they are very distinct heteronormative images of the same reproductive futurity upon which his image of Sandra is based upon.

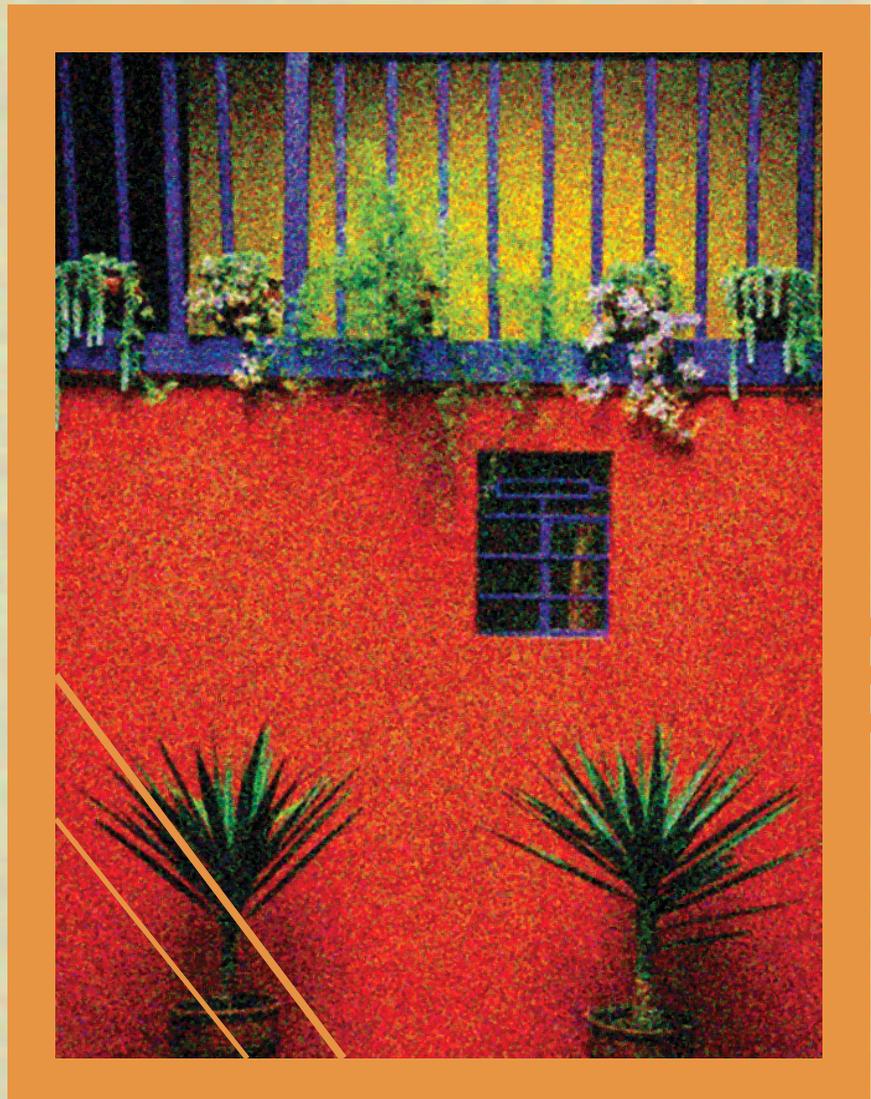
To more narrowly zoom into language, I think Sandra's name is highly key here. Her name, which can either be derived from *Alessandra* or *Kassandra*, is actually very telling. If we are to take the *Alessandra* which means the defender of men along with Spear, it actually could mean something. It immediately evokes the Spear Maiden, Brunhilde who defends Siegfried and who ultimately sacrifices herself to end the world as we know it to bring upon the new world, after which the World Tree, River Rhine, and a seed play an integral role. Brunnhilde evokes a Queered futurity because she is unable to have children herself because she is put to sleep by Wotan on a fiery mountain. This of course very much resembles the lovers who figure the peaks. Regardless, this background means a lot if only because Sandra is an enfiguration of her. I would go so far as to say that this

naming actually is important being that she is in the middle section of the book.

## Futurx

Turning now to the depiction of the very near future, we can see how futurity is called into question. When Gregory notices Gabi “couple her robotic right arm in-

to the electrical charger,” it is a coupling that is heavily queered.<sup>51</sup> Indeed it “smell [s] of burning flesh,” which points not only to a *unhumanization* but to a queering beyond the likes of which we've seen prior.<sup>52</sup> I, of course, can see the objection to this being that it is seen as an enhancement but it a sense it removes the rhizomatic multiplicity of hu-



manity and therefore futurity. Yes, this comes with the known fact of the aforementioned herding of womanhood and here once more we see another herding, as it were. As Gregory himself states “the world had turned against humanity,” and in that sense had come to be queered in a sense more distilled than before.<sup>53</sup> With cyborgs it becomes about a centralization of human capacity into something beyond human.

Here, by cyborg I mean the literal interweaving of computers with human bodies not say books, telephones, or bodies themselves as Georges Leroux argues. The fact that Gregory resists becoming a cyborg is salient

because it is the past and present that plays a role in that very decision. Because as Gregory details “voices from the past and present warned me not to allow them to deconstruct my humanity,” which is very much linked to the totalization of anthropocentric reproductive futurity.<sup>54</sup> This then would seem to suggest that it is not technology itself that is Queer but rather the way in which it can erase futurity by way of technology.

As for the plague itself, the description is heavily important when it comes to the idea of autonomous technology and cybernetics. As it is narrated:

**Perhaps the plague had subsided and moved away to another place or time. Totally unpredictable, these spontaneous plagues could appear anywhere. Produced by humanity’s harvest of waste, they traveled through the air, land, and sea and penetrated populated areas, sometimes killing thousands. Scientists throughout the world had identified thousands of these living cancers of the earth. They were of all sizes, colors and smells. Some were invisible. From our pollution we had created energy masses that destroyed or deformed everything in their path.**

**Born in the depths of the Pacific Ocean about one hundred miles offshore, three huge masses of filth had developed organically and begun to move of their own accord.<sup>55</sup>**

This quote is important in its entirety because of how it describes the plagues. Indeed, it is precisely by its appellation of the plagues that the following may be assert-



ed. These plagues are described as cancers which are commonly known to be cells which are essentially Queered in it of themselves. They are all Frankenstein's Monsters and thus are challenging to the paradigm of reproductive futurity because they are the enemy within the system, as it were. This is then coupled with the unnatural life of the plague which began to have its own life. This very much resembles the possibility for a force against reproductive futurity because it represents a negative futurity. It is not just the configuration of a Child or the Child that is necessary but of a child who falls into the heteropatriarchal system of said reproduction. This is important then when it comes to looking at how Gregory still tries to subsume Gabi when they are back in Temecula. While of course, there is a literal representation of *A Rainbow of Colors* which involves homosexual acts and thus a literal Queer scene. There is also an interesting counteraction of this where a form of normalization comes to bear upon Gabi. This is when he states "I had no choice but to eat from her passionate gardens

of charm," which reworks Gabi into the realm of futurity and fecundity.<sup>56</sup> This again relates to the "identify[ing] femininity with the body and with earthliness," which has proven to be so central here.<sup>57</sup> Not only are they engaging in erotic acts but by utilizing this language it becomes very clear how futurity is still the part that keeps Gregory centered. Indeed, (regardless of how it odd it might seem to some) he is even think about his grandfather's "account of love"<sup>58</sup> and he penetrates Gabi which adds something distinct to this vision of futurity. Not only does it exist in a very particular framework with fecundity but it seems here to operate with a very definite observation of the Queerness around it. Perhaps then, it may be asserted that Queerness becomes something greater in the novel as it progresses but in different ways precisely because it can take on forms that otherwise it wouldn't in the past. This is what makes reproductive futurity then so subtle, but at the same time so deeply ingrained in the novel itself.

Some people might even go so far as to say that this sec-

tion is not concerned with reproductive futurity. And yet, it is so central to the interactions that Gregory has in particular with Amalia. It is one particular time where she outright asks him "Do you think we should bear children?" and this question is something which proves monumental to Gregory's conception of Amalia.<sup>59</sup> As Gregory relates also "Lower Life Existence people had many children, Middle Life Existence folks barely bore enough to replace themselves and Higher Life Existence residents hardly had none," which suggest that indeed the questions of futurity are still present.<sup>60</sup> Yes, the might have class divisions and yet that still can relate to the capital C Capitalist Child. Regardless, the desire for children then is seen as a true aspect of futurity as described by Edelman both in the sense of replacement but also in a socio-economic sense.

When it comes to saving futurity, Gregory is very interested in the ways in which futurity can be assured by way of genetic resilience. So when he "went to the two stronger children, a boy and a girl," there is a very real

sense where this need for the passing on of this resilience is also important for biological reasons.<sup>61</sup> It is interesting then when it is by technology that he finds out where he “would find the child,” and here then the importance of reproducing, in this case blood but in a greater sense children, is the focus.<sup>62</sup> It is important then that the child is a girl which is of course a product of the fact that she is the survivor but factors greatly when thinking of how the Child is a female child since it assures that more Children can be born in the future. This is important considering how “gender and sexuality allowed [the blood] to reproduce naturally,”<sup>63</sup> that is, within a heterosexual schema that is aligned with futurity. When it comes then to the plague once more, it becomes clear how the previous discussion of cancer and its union with Queer is necessary for this reading. As it is related:

**Thousands had perished and thousands more had showed the symptoms of the plague. The initial infecting gases had evaporated and returned to the earth and probably to the**

**sea, where from its mother’s wet warmth it nourished and gathered more vigor to strike again.**

**This human-made beast killed rapidly.**<sup>64</sup>

The implication then that the plague has a mother which in the maternal image and sense has nurtured the plague is a Queering of motherhood. By also related it is human-made also adds to the fact that it is by humanity’s own hand that their futurity is called into question. Humanity has queered itself. This is so salient to consider with that fact that it is by the sea—from which all life sprang—that the affront to futurity comes from.

Even still, after the controlling of the virus, we have the subsumption of femininity into questions of maternity. In this case, with how “Blue Buster ... cause[d] scarring and damage to her breasts,” but yet how “a good plastic surgeon would restore the epidermis to normal shape and color,” which of course is in consideration for her to have a normal life but also means that the disease attacked a very integral portion of the image of motherhood.<sup>65</sup> And even so, it

comes with the later commodification of Mexican blood since now people “wanted these Mexicans to produce children,” in order to secure their own futurity.<sup>66</sup> This is of course tied to women since Gregory “selected [a girl] myself from a group of Mexico City virgins,” which means that the prospect of motherhood and femininity are once again deeply linked.<sup>67</sup> It means a lot considering that there is the traditional vision of women that wishes to invoke motherhood and virginity at the same time. Nevertheless, this comes as a stark image against the suicide of Gabi who is still described in the language of nature as being “like spring rose buds, slowly exposing the inner color of their flower,” of course there is still the fact that it is describing her in her moment of death.<sup>68</sup> Still, the viewing of her thus is further part of how he sees her.

When it comes to the Child however, it is Amalia and Ted to whom we can turn for this final vision of futurity. As Gregory comes to realize “people were jubilant for the return of the man who had saved the life of their child

Man-god,” and here is perhaps the place where we see the role of the Gregories fully fleshed out.<sup>69</sup> Not only do we see that the Child has finally been described in a way that truly meets Edelman’s parameters but also in a way that seems to show how the organic is important. As we can see from above there is a very direct tendency to bring together the organic into the halls of natality. By that, all that is meant is that the non-Queer is upheld in a way that is almost Petrarchan in its idealization of the Child. It puts the Child on a pedestal that is very much built upon the backs of the mothers that bear them in this novel. Not only are they the prime sufferers of maternity in the first two sections, one where a baby is born but she is unable to be a mother in the fullest of senses, in the second where she is simply unable to bear children, and lastly where some other woman is the person who has the Child then is interesting.

The interest mentioned is not just that it seems calculated by the means of futurity and propagated by the language of fecundity but how it is seemingly normalized in the structure of the novel in a way that makes even the diseases themselves a Queering agent. This novel has many important facets which are still unexplored but the relation between maternity, nature, and reproductive futurity was so intense that it seemed necessary to discourse on. After reading this novel therefore one cannot help but conclude that the anxiety of reproductive futurity is not only the Queer but also in the breakdown of the language of nature and how it might change into a Queerness as seen in this novel.

## Endnotes

1. 11
2. 13
3. Muñoz 22
4. *Translation mine* 5
5. López-Luzano 49
6. Morales 56
7. *Translation mine* 38
8. López-Luzano
9. Morales 59
10. Edelman 6
11. Priewe 397
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13. 58
14. Edelman 3
15. 59
16. *Emphasis theirs*, Edelman 3
17. Althaus-Reid 7-8
18. 62
19. García-Martínez 28
20. 69
21. 69
22. 76-77
23. *Translation mine* 121
24. McClintock 22
25. 46
26. 97
27. 97
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29. 77  
30. *Ibid.*  
31. 90  
32. qtd. in Morales 90  
33. 90  
34. *Ibid.*  
35. 79  
36. *Ibid.*  
37. 80  
38. 81  
39. *Ibid.*  
40. 127  
41. 110  
42. 111  
43. 112  
44. 114  
45. 58  
46. 128  
47. 105  
48. 104  
49. *Ibid.*  
50. *Ibid.*  
51. 135  
52. *Ibid.*  
53. 136  
54. 143  
55. 139  
56. 147  
57. Hakak 30  
58. 147  
59. 149

60. *Ibid.*  
61. 164  
62. 167  
63. 168  
64. 185  
65. 192  
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68. 197  
69. 198



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