The Women of *Legends of Mexico*: Symbols of Unifying Nations and Dividing Borderlands

DOI: https://doi.org/10.33806/ijaes1094

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Received: 7.5.2025 Accepted: 1.12.2025 Published Online: 4.12.2025

Abstract: This article examines George Lippard's symbolic representation of Mexican women in his 1847 novel, *Legends of Mexico*. By politicizing female bodies and historicizing their legends, Lippard legitimizes the righteousness of the United States' invasion and conquest of Mexico. The Mexican female bodies in the novel are used to create a borderland that serves to divide future generations of Mexican Americans from white Americans. Lady Inez and Ximena represent those Chicanas whose identities are put at stake as they suffer fragmentation, alienation, and cultural schizophrenia. Through his inclusion of the two female characters in his war novel and their subsequent transport from Mexico to America—a foreign land with a different language—Lippard helps create what Gloria Anzaldúa calls the borderland. The article analyzes Lippard's portrayal of violence that is inflicted upon the Chicanos in the borderland, legitimizing American hegemony and imperialism over Mexico.

Keywords: borderland, Chicana, gender, identity, imperialism, *Legends of Mexico*

1. Introduction: The border woman in a tale of war

George Lippard's 1847 *Legends of Mexico* is a fictional war narrative that incorporates most elements typically found in a tale of war, including sensationalist descriptions, portraits of heroes, intense depictions of battles, and nationalistic rhetoric. Lippard himself, one of the most popular nineteenth-century American writers, is an imperial writer who "promoted the U.S.-Mexico War" (Alemán and Streeby 2007: 107). It is no wonder that Lippard acquires this politically radical status as he becomes an active member of the Brotherhood of the Union, having "chartered the second [Circle] as No. 56" (Lause 2011: 26). His radicalism is evident in his understanding of the Brotherhood's message of expanding the borders of the United States, mixing romantic sentimentalism with American nationalism to achieve national unity and coherence. Lippard's establishment of the United States' empire as the "messianic nationalism of the order" contains "an implicit endorsement of the U.S. invasion of Mexico but also a sense of what he seems to have seen as the ultimately positive impact of American military power as a modernizing force" (Lause 2011: 30). This endorsement is made evident in *Legends*

of Mexico through portraying Mexican women in joyful marriages with American soldiers. Dan McKanan relates Lippard's failure "to enter convincingly into the subjectivities of people other than white men" to his three-dimensional characters, described as "white and male as well as working class" (2016: 34-35). Other characters in Lippard's writings are portrayed as slaves and barbarians. He apologizes to the American empire for his earlier suggestion of "land redistribution as a solution to urban poverty" (McKanan 2016: 35), preferring the idea of expansion to provide more economic resources for the country. Benjamin Swenson points out that Lippard started his Brotherhood as "his own secret society in 1849 to remedy what he believed was a spiritual battle gripping the nation" (2023: 47). Lippard was an active supporter of the war, linking the war heroes to the first president, George Washington, and, at the same time, demonizing traitors: "the prolific author linked George Washington with General Zachary Taylor in an effort to facilitate a renaissance that would cleanse the nation of its traitors and fulfill America's destined role as a beacon of freedom and liberty throughout the world" (Swenson 2023: 66).

This culture of fictional war narratives was rooted in the mass production of dime novels during the nineteenth century. According to Andrea Tinnemeyer, the primary function of dime novels was "to domesticate U.S. imperialism through the interracial marriage plot" (2006: 20). Tinnemeyer explains that the plotline of these dime novels was both sentimental and patriotic, beginning with scenes of battle and concluding with the joyful marriage of an American soldier to a beautiful and grateful "Mexicana" (2006: 20). Tinnemeyer compares these romantic Mexican war tales to the Pocahontas myth, noting that Pocahontas was the first "cultural broker" in the United States (2006: 20). Lippard's plot in *Legends of Mexico* is indeed sentimental and patriotic, opening his war romance with a gory battle and ending with the happy marriage of Ximena to an American soldier in Pennsylvania. Following Tinnemeyer's argument, Ximena "brokered" the union of the United States and Mexico, much like Pocahontas did with the Native Americans and the new American settlers. Doris Sommer argues that such romances contribute to nation-building because they are read as national novels. He points out that "eroticism and nationalism become figures for each other in modernizing fictions" and that the relationship between the two "functions as a mutual allegory" (1993: 31). Such a connection between patriotism and passion creates "a legitimating appeal" of conquest and domination (Sommer 1993: 35).

Lippard's hegemonic thoughts about Mexico strategically engage women in a new light. Although they seem out of place in Lippard's *Legends of Mexico*, their presence in the text is inescapable. Throughout the novel, women are largely present but often serve as reminders of the mothers, sisters, and wives that men leave behind when they go to war. These women are unnamed and frequently depicted as mourning and grief-stricken, yet loyal and true to their men. However, two Mexican women are singled out and given actual roles in *Legends of Mexico*: Lady Inez and Ximena. Their function in the novel provokes unconventionality and cultural agency. They are part of the culture that "thinks about itself," attempting to redefine the social order (Tompkins 1985: xi). In Jane Tompkins' view, "novels and

stories should be studied not because they manage to escape the limitations of their particular time and place, but because they offer powerful examples of the way a culture thinks about itself, articulating and proposing solutions for the problems that shape a particular historical moment" (1985: xi). Broadly speaking, those two women in the novel represent the Mexican nation as a damsel in distress who needs to be saved by the masculine arms of the United States. On a more particular level, the two women represent something far-reaching and extremely intricate, as they create and embody what Gloria Anzaldúa would later define as the borderland. The cases of Lady Inez and Ximena are similar to those of Gloria Anzaldúa and other Mexican women. Jill Darling argues that "Anzaldúa locates herself in the literal and figurative borderlands as a subject-in-process of re-formation: dismantling layers of historical narratives, icons, gender regulations, and languages to arrive at a new consciousness that is both personal and political" (2012: 159-160). The new consciousness Darling anticipates creates a new identity for the mixed race with all the complications that would formulate in the process, related to language, culture, religion, emotions, etc.

In her groundbreaking work, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, Anzaldúa defines the border woman, expressing her personal experience, as one who "grew up between two cultures" (Anzaldúa 1987: preface). These cultures include the indigenous and the new world of the colonizer. Anzaldúa describes this borderland as "not a comfortable territory to live in, this place of contradictions. Hatred, anger and exploitation are the prominent features of this landscape" (Anzaldúa 1987: preface). The concept of the physical borderland, created as a result of colonization, leads to a more profound formation of a psychological, sexual, and spiritual borderlands "wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy" (Anzaldúa 1987: preface). Many Mexican women, like Ximena, are taken across the Mexican border into the United States. Tinnemeyer notes that "Although they end with marriage between Anglo soldiers and Mexican heroines, U.S.-Mexican War dime novels never comment on or depict the next generation. The racial consequences of the post-1848 honeymoon do not appear on the printed page" (Tinnemeyer 2006: 34). For the women in *Legends of Mexico*, the situation is similar. Faced with an unfamiliar language and culture, they struggled to assimilate. Anzaldúa indicated that the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo "left 100.000 Mexican citizens" on the newly conquered United States soil (1987: 7). They were simply annexed along with the land.

Anzaldúa describes the borderlands as a "vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary" (1987: 3), and living there presents a constant threat, tension, and unrest. It would overwhelm the inhabitants "like a virus" (Anzaldúa 1987: 4). She portrays the state of these borderland inhabitants: "We were jerked out by the roots, truncated, disemboweled, dispossessed, and separated from our identity and our history. Many, under the threat of Anglo terrorism, abandoned homes and ranches and went to

Mexico" (1987:8). By taking out the two women in his narrative, Lady Inez and Ximena, from their homes and annexing them along with the land, Lippard effectively forces them to be in the borderlands between Mexico and the United States. Taken to Pennsylvania, Ximena finds herself in a real dilemma; she does not speak English and has no one to converse with in Spanish. Gradually, she will forget her language and experience the "emotional residue" of being taken from her home (Anzaldúa 1987: 3). The two women's borderlands become more psychological than physical, illustrated by their fragmentation between two cultures, languages, selves, identities, and geographies, and, above all, imperially stricken.

2. Literature review

Although Lippard is viewed as a nationalist American writer who sought to unify all Americans against various enemies and all forms of sectionalism, including class, race, and religion, studies of his literary work are limited. Therefore, this study aims to revisit Lippard's *Legends of Mexico*, with a focus on issues of gender, identity, and hegemony. In his article, Joseph Jackson describes Lippard as "one of the most original and striking literary personalities of his time in this country" (1935: 371). However, articles about him are "not numerous" (Jackson 1935: 371). Jackson defends Lippard against accusations of immorality, praising him as "the most read writer in the United States" between 1844 and 1854 (1935: 367). Lippard had a national scheme of expansion, aiming to establish an American empire at the expense of other nations. Shelley Streeby notes that Lippard, in his *Legends of Mexico*, "intends to provoke a collective bodily response to the battles being waged over national borders. As Lippard mobilizes sensationalism in the service of US empire" (2001: 10). His concept of unity rejects "the identification of whiteness with Englishness as he defines the American people as fundamentally Northern European" (Streeby 2001: 13).

Strategically, Lippard's sensational portrayal of Mexican women during the Mexican-American War reflects exploitation, aimed at achieving his nationalist goals of American unity and dominance over non-Europeans. This portrayal of Lippard reveals violence against non-Americans in his writings. Marlon Lieber describes Lippard as a "radical democrat" who "published texts full of spectacular violence" (2023: 189). This violence was directed at Mexicans, but it was presented with a different approach, emphasizing heterogeneity and harmony. Once again, Mexican women are silenced and their futures are unaccounted for. The interactions between American soldiers and Mexican women reveal the truth about the conduct of the American soldiers who were quartered in a conquered Mexican village: "The Mexican fair sex were more abundant than could have been wished, consisting chiefly of wicked, and sometimes allured girls, or obliged by want to exchange their honor for a piece of bread for their families" (Alcaraz and Ramsey 2008: 416). The tone of this statement that describes the habits of the American soldiers in Mexico is quite bitter and resentful.

The argument of this study extends beyond Jesse Alemán's and Streeby's views on Lippard's symbolic depictions of women, framed in terms of "seduction

and revenge" (2007: 107). The researchers assert that Lippard romanticized American imperialism in Mexico. This hegemonic strategy is legitimized by portraying Lady Inez and Ximena, Mexican women, in joyful unions with American soldiers during the Mexican-American War. Alemán and Streeby note: "Lippard makes women's bodies symbolically central by using sensational narratives of seduction and revenge to articulate larger conflicts between classes and nations" (2007: 107). Thus, rather than interpreting Mexican-American relations in terms of antagonism, revenge, conspiracy, and war, Lippard intentionally presents an anti-discursive perspective centered on love, marriage, harmony, and unity. This emerging discourse effectively legitimizes U.S. hegemony over Mexico.

Streeby also notes that Dana D. Nelson, in her 1998 book *National Manhood: Capitalist Citizenship and the Imagined Fraternity of White Men*, examines how Lippard "maps male dramas across female bodies" (2002: 43). Nelson's actual claim, however, is that in Lippard's novel, *Quaker City*, "men's criminal dramas are mapped across female bodies" (Streeby 2002: 151). Streeby uses Nelson's work to supplement her argument regarding *Legends of Mexico* as a text that "[justifies] exceptionalist theories of U.S. empire as uniquely progressive and beneficent" (2002: 43). In this paper, the researchers argue that in *Legends of Mexico*, Lippard uses the bodies of Lady Inez and Ximena to "map" the righteousness of the United States' invasion and conquest of Mexico. Similarly, the researchers employ Nelson's mapping theory for different purposes, as these "maps" ultimately do more than justifying invasion, conquest, imperialism, and war. The female bodies in the novel are employed to create a borderland that will serve to divide future generations of Mexican Americans from white Americans. This paper offers a new perspective on Lippard's *Legends of Mexico* through the lens of Anzaldúa's theory of the borderland, especially in relation to the characters of Lady Inez and Ximena. It shows how Lippard's portrayal of Mexican women has been shaped to serve the United States' national interests in expansion at the expense of Mexican women. In the process, those women are turned into a site of intersection and negotiation between different cultural, social, and political powers. Consequently, Mexican women's identities suffer tension, hatred, exploitation, and fragmentation. The borderland becomes a metaphorical concept that describes how those Chicanas feel when caught between two different realms and languages. Lippard draws an ideal picture of a relationship between a U.S. soldier, represented as a hero and a savior, and a Mexican woman in distress. Through having the American hero soldiers save Mexican women, Lippard legitimizes American expansion and hegemony over Mexico. Analyzing the situation of Mexican women on the borderland, one can discern that Lippard's claim of successful marriage and unification between the feminized Mexico and the masculinized United States can be challenged and undermined.

3. The Mexican woman as a borderland

It is essential to frame the inclusion of the tales of Lady Inez and Ximena in Lippard's novel as part of the genre of nineteenth-century war narratives. Their presence seems out of place in Lippard's text, as he sets the stage for a male-centered text and invites his readers into the gruesome massacres of war:

> Let us follow then, the American Banner, and while our souls are awed by the thunder flash of battle; while the horrible world of carnage with its shrieks and groans, its dead armies and butchered legions widens and crimsons around us, let us never for one moment forget that mysterious Symbol of our destiny—THE UNSHEATHED SWORD OF WASHINGTON RESTING UPON THE MAP OF THE NEW WORLD (17).

Such a masculine introduction appears overt, yet nineteenth-century war narratives often featured women within the bloody tales of battles. Streeby explains that women often serve as symbols of amicable conquest. She states that "the 'international romance'—a subgenre of imperial adventure fiction—positioned women as symbols of the Mexican nation and tried to construct cross-class coalitions between native-born U. S. white men at the expense of immigrants and non-whites" (2002: 20). In other words, the female body is situated as the feminine, Mexican nation, and the U. S. soldiers, who are native-born sons of the Revolutionary War, have the sole privilege and power to form a sexual union with them, thereby marrying Mexico, the feminine, to the United States, the masculine. Through feminizing Mexico, historicizing the legends of Lady Inez and Ximena, and romanticizing their happy marriages to American soldiers, Lippard, then, is engaged in the larger culture of war narratives.

The way the stories of Lady Inez and Ximena relate to one another is important for thoroughly understanding their roles in creating a borderland. Although their tales are distinct, they form parallel narratives that are best understood by first examining Lady Inez's story and then Ximena's tale. Before extending his invitation to readers, "Let us listen to the Legend of the Dead Woman of Palo Alto" (28), Lippard explains what he means by the term legend: "A legend is a history in its details and delicate tints, with the bloom and dew yet fresh upon it, a history told to us in the language of passion, of poetry, of home!" (26-27). Therefore, the legend of Lady Inez should not be seen as a fantastical tale woven from imagination; instead, it records a genuine history recounted with heartfelt zeal. It tells the story of a beautiful woman whose blood is a fierce blend of Castilian Spaniards and the Aztec descendants of Montezuma. Her body is depicted in detail: "her cheek a rich, clear brown; her eyelashes long and dark; her bosom full and passionate, her hair, flowing from the forehead to the waist, a shower of midnight tresses, gleaming and darkening over a robe of snow" (28). Her breast is exposed, and as she sleeps, the narrator has a clear view of "her young and voluptuous form" (28). Thus, the picture of her body is painted for us. We enter into her dream as she sleeps, and the legend unfolds. Lippard is careful to situate Lady Inez within a deracialized context. Her beauty and voluptuous form are more

significant, in Lippard's narrative, than her race, which is conveniently portrayed as not fully Mexican. As a descendant of Montezuma, her blood is considered much more royal than that of any humble Mexican. She becomes the ideal figure to symbolize the union between the United States and Mexico, or, in terms of her legend, the union of an American soldier with a woman of Mexican citizenship.

When Lady Inez's legend begins, she is a virgin in the Cathedral of Mexico, set to marry a soldier from Virginia. The priest blesses the couple, and her groom "looks into her face, his clear hazel eye drinking in those eyes of hers, which seem at once to combine all that is dark and bright in the whole world" (29). Rather than kissing the bride, he consumes her. Thus, an imperialist conquest takes the place of a romance. In their moment of unification, the "dark" world of Mexico and the "bright" world of the United States merge in a seemingly harmonious state of union. Their marriage is threatened, however, by Lady Inez's Castilian father. He "tore him from [her] grasp" and threw him into a prison cell (30). One evening before this marriage, Lady Inez was forced to marry another. However, her Virginian groom escapes from prison, risking death to be with his bride. They flee to the balcony and see that "yonder arises Fort Brown, the Banner of the Stars, waving out in red light from the background of the midnight sky" (32). Lady Inez "clung to the breast of her American husband" as they began their flight to Fort Brown (32). Thus far, the legend of Lady Inez unfolds within a patriotic and sentimental context of war.

In their flight to American safety, the Virginian leaves Inez at a farmhouse, and she waits for his return from battle. He meets her father, the Mexican General, and they battle to the death. Searching for water for the dying General, the Virginian stumbles across what seems to be the "naked and dishonored" slain body of Inez (40-41). He is mad with grief, and he stumbles through the wilderness until he reaches a hidden Aztec village. At this moment, the legend of Lady Inez departs from the mode of American patriotism and sentimentalism and enters into the exotic world of the ancient Aztecs. The story begins in the dreams of a beautiful, naked woman and ends in a mysterious, ancient realm. The perplexity is explained in the following manner: Inez had a twin sister, Mahitili, unbeknownst to her. Mahitili has a Mexican lover, but she is deceived by the Spaniard, Ranchero, who rapes and then murders her. It is her body that the Virginian finds, not Lady Inez's. The legend concludes with Lady Inez and her Virginian husband, his arm around her, standing among the Aztec village people as their priest curses the Spaniard for the murder of Mahitili and calls upon Montezuma for peace in the land (47).

It is no coincidence that the legend concludes with Spain depicted as the rapist and murderer, while the United States is portrayed as the benevolent husband happily married to his Mexican wife. Streeby points out, "By constructing a romance that brings together Inez and the Virginian despite the opposition of her wealthy father, Lippard suggests that the United States, rather than Spain, is the appropriate partner for Mexico and that the U.S. empire must and should replace Spanish empire there" (2002: 63). Mahitili's role in the legend exemplifies the

consequences of uniting with Spain. She willingly accompanies the Spanish Ranchero, only to be raped and murdered. Her lover was a Mexican Creole, so any sympathy that would normally be elicited by her fate is replaced with joy that Inez, who is loyal to her American husband and a noble descendant of Montezuma, is still alive. The legend begins in a dream and concludes in an exotic Aztec village. This structure serves to authenticate the second woman's tale in *Legends of Mexico*, for Lippard is not merely suggesting that the United States should expand its empire. Instead, he is reshaping history to make his romance appear as fact.

Lippard was no stranger to how easily legends can morph into facts and become part of history. David S. Reynolds points out that Lippard often took "poetic license" with history (1982: 64). Perhaps one of the most salient examples of Lippard playing freely with facts is his furthering of the "Liberty Bell myth" in his novel *Washington and His Generals*. As Gregory Pfitzer notes, Lippard "advanced" the myth that "the signing of the Declaration of Independence was announced to the American people on July 4, 1776, by the tolling of the bell in the tower of the Pennsylvania State House" (Pfitzer 2008: 46). This story is completely false, but, as Pfitzer points out, "Lippard believed he could render service as a historian by inspiring the nation to a celebration of its 'solemn symbol[s],' and a 'legend was soon invented which qualified the bell historically for [a] new polemical use" (2008: 46). The legend of Lady Inez, much like the Liberty Bell, was constructed to serve as another "solemn symbol" of unification with Mexico.

Lippard did not invent the story of Lady Inez randomly. One of the novels that Tinnemeyer discusses in her book is Harry Hazel's 1846 *Inez the Beautiful; or, Love on the Rio Grande, a Mexican Military Romance*. This dime novel tells a similar tale about Inez's rescue by an American officer from the "sexual threat" of a Spanish officer (2006: 30). Moreover, one of the two battle scenes in the novel takes place in Palo Alto, and the title of Lady Inez's legend is "The Legend of the Dead Woman of Palo Alto" (28). It is safe to assume that many of his readers may have read Hazel's novel as well, so it appears that Lippard is consciously transforming a well-known romance into a historical fact. By structuring the plot of the legend as a dream at the beginning and a mystery at the end, with only the middle plot relating to the Mexican War, Lippard creates a legend that can be inserted anywhere in American history, simply replacing the Mexican War plot with another storyline. Such historicizing of the legend authenticates the United States' imperialism and makes its reign seem legitimate and immortal, much like the Liberty Bell. The war between the United States and Mexico occurred over one hundred and fifty years ago. Still, it remains a present, living history for the Chicanos of America, as Gloria Anzaldúa states:

> Yet the struggle of identities continues, the struggle of borders is our reality still. One day the inner struggle will cease and a true integration take place. In the meantime, *tenémos que hacer la lucha. Quién está protegiendo los ranchos de mi gente? Quién está tratando de cerrar las fisura entre la india y el blanco en nuestra sangre? El Chicano, si, el Chicano que anda como un ladrón en su propia casa*[i] (1987: 63).

Indeed, Mexican women must walk like thieves in their own home, as they struggle to find their identities. Their children will suffer as they try to reconcile the Mexicans and the whites in their blood. The implications and consequences of Lippard, representing Lady Inez and Ximena in his *Legends of Mexico*, strike at the heart of what Gloria Anzaldúa calls the borderlands. Anzaldúa discusses the situation of the Chicanos of America:

> *Nosotros los* Chicanos straddle the borderlands. On one side of us, we are constantly exposed to the Spanish of the Mexicans, on the other side we hear the Anglos' incessant clamoring so that we forget our language . . . We distinguish between *mexicanos del otro lado and mexicanos de este lado*. Deep in our hearts we believe that being Mexican has nothing to do with which country one lives in. Being Mexican is a state of soul—not one of mind, not one of citizenship (1987: 62).

This statement is key to understanding the situation of the two women in *Legends of Mexico*. They suffer fragmentation, cultural schizophrenia, and language loss. Anzaldúa ascribes this fragmentation to the differences between being a Chicana, that is, a Mexican woman, "a state of soul," and any other outside reality, such as "citizenship."

4. The Mexican woman as a historical document

Lippard takes full advantage of his legend-turned-history before he concludes his novel. The second featured woman in *Legends of Mexico* is the Virgin Ximena. She appears at the very end of the novel, whereas Lady Inez's story is told at the beginning. Like Lady Inez, Ximena's body is described in great detail: "This, with her warm, voluptuous bosom, and the rich brown cheek, shadowed by the raven hair—Ximena" (112). She and her sister are at home in their village in Mexico, awaiting the return of their father and brother from battle. Finally, they hear the battle just outside, and their father crashes through the door, covered with his own blood and awaiting death. Ximena and her sister rushed to his side and, "with their bared bosoms, sought to staunch the flowing of the blood, which hissed, warm and smoking from his heart" (113). The American soldier from Pennsylvania, who has just wounded their father, enters the home but cannot bear the sight of his daughters with their dying father, and he soon leaves the room. Upon his return to that bloody room, the soldier discovers two more dead bodies: those of Ximena's brother and sister. A bullet entered the home and killed both, and now only Ximena remains (116).

The story of Ximena ends there, with her kneeling beside her dead father, brother, and sister, with only a quivering lip to show that "her torn heart, still throbbed on" (117). Lippard returns to the battle of Monterey and narrates the three-day ordeal. With the end of the battle in sight, Lippard again shifts scenes, now traveling to Pennsylvania, to the home of the soldier who killed Ximena's

father. Inside, his father and two sisters await his return, and their joy is immense when he walks through the front door (120). Harry, the soldier, does not return home alone, though:

> "When I left for Mexico, I told you I would bring back with me a Trophy of the War. That trophy is here!"
> Flinging the door yet wider open, he led the Trophy forward to the light. Behold it! A young, beautiful girl, whose voluptuous outline of form, is not altogether hidden in her cumbrous dress of furs, whose clear olive cheek, jet black hair and dazzling eyes, glow in the light, as they are framed in the close-fitting hood (121).

Indeed, the woman is Ximena, who suffered the loss of her father at the hands of this soldier, and then watched her brother and sister die as well. Harry explains that she is "a true woman" who nursed him back to health and became his wife (121). Harry's family welcomes Ximena "as though she had been a gift, sent to them from Paradise" (121). She does not speak English, but she does understand the language of love that speaks from her breast and her "warm, red lips" (121). Ximena's story ends with her new husband, Harry, overcome with emotion as he rests his eyes on "his wife—That beautiful Trophy, from the battle-rent walls of Monterey" (121). As a gift from Paradise, Ximena shares the same exoticism as Lady Inez. Her story could be a retelling of the ancient legend-turned-history. The unnamed soldier is recast as Harry, and Ximena is the reincarnated voluptuous beauty who falls in love with an American. She is now a borderland inhabitant, and, as Anzaldúa states, she is "separated from [her] identity and [her] history" (1987: 8).

The marriage of Ximena and Harry is much like that of Lady Inez and the Virginian soldier. Both marriages serve to forge an amicable union between Mexico and the United States. In this context, Streeby points out that "International romances between U.S. soldiers and elite Mexican women were often represented in the popular literature as a benign form of imperial conquest" (2002:64). This benignity functions as a veil that legitimizes imperialism. The scene that introduces Ximena to the story is incredibly violent, and the fact that Ximena's sister and brother are killed within their home means that American soldiers have invaded the domestic sphere and have taken advantage of the women within. The force of Harry, the soldier, however, soon turns to compassion. He tries to explain that their father shot his comrade first, and he struggles in vain to stop the bleeding from the old man's chest (113). His remorse is almost too much to bear when he returns to the room to find only Ximena alive, kneeling on the floor with her bosom exposed. Sexuality overtakes the grief of the scene, however, as the soldier notes that "the volume of her luxuriant hair" gives life to her otherwise "death-like face" (117). Again, Lippard uses a stratagem of having "a heterosexual union between a feminized Mexico and a masculinized United States, they appealed to narratives of gender and sexuality to turn force into consent and conquest into international romance" (Streeby 2002: 65).

Surprisingly, Ximena is not invaded by the American soldier; rather, she consents to leave her shattered home with him and embarks on a romantic journey to his own home in Pennsylvania. In this story, the American soldier has not subjugated the Mexican beauty; instead, they have fallen in love through their shared experiences of grief. Lippard creates more than just a fictional "international romance" with his tale of Ximena; he is inventing history. The novel's strategic combination of politics and sensational themes is extraordinary in Lippard's war fiction. Chad Luck argues that Lippard employs a strategy in his urban fiction that often subjects "the reader to sensationalized scenes of theft in which a sympathetic character is ignominiously stripped of his property, his dignity, and sometimes his life. Lippard's object here is to induce a feeling of distress in the reader" (2014: 193). In *Legends of Mexico*, the "theft" can be interpreted as the act of American soldiers running away with Mexican women such as Lady Inez and Ximena. However, this "theft" is given a different romanticized meaning in the novel, transforming the reader's emotional response from distress to one of celebrating Mexican-American unity and harmony.

The stories of Lady Inez and Ximena occur at the beginning and end of *Legends of Mexico*, respectively. The strategic placement of the two tales validates a parallel in which the first tale establishes the authenticity of the second one. As a legend, the story of Lady Inez can transcend time and space. It is an exotic tale of the ancient race of Montezuma. The curses of the Aztec priest, the inexplicable presence of the twin sister, and the ceremonial display of the people in the hidden village all represent the mysterious powers of the venerable bloodline in Aztec heritage. There is no way to determine the truth of the legend, as the American soldier is unnamed. He can represent any American. The legend of Lady Inez allows the white man to enter into the mysteries of the ancient line of descendants from Montezuma. The white man or the American soldier is now a part of Mexican legends. Lippard has effectively tied the United States to the history of Mexico by first creating a legend and then retelling that legend within the context of the Mexican War. Pfitzer summarizes what Lippard's claim—that a legend is simply a history told with freshness and passion—implies: "Hence, fictional devices could be just as appropriate as archival materials, if not more so, in conveying what was really meaningful about the past" (2008: 46). To put it differently, although the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo may be the archival document allowing the United States to annex portions of Mexico, stories, like Lady Inez and Ximena, give the U.S. a sufficient pretext for war and invasion.

Accordingly, the story of Ximena allows the white American soldier to leave the novel's romance and enter the reality of the Mexican home with violence. Still, the precedent set by the legend of Lady Inez gives him the right to be there. The philosopher Uma Narayan explains the use of the precedent in the following way:

> National cultures in many parts of the world seem susceptible to seeing themselves as *unchanging continuities* stretching back into a distant past. This picture tends to reinforce powerfully what I think of as the 'Idea of Venerability,' making people susceptible to the suggestion that practices and institutions are valuable *merely* by virtue of the fact that they are of long-standing (2005: 546).

In other words, history is a powerful force in determining the present. Narayan suggests that a culture is more likely to accept a practice or idea if there is evidence that it has always been part of that culture's past. So, in addition to positing the two women as symbols of Mexico to be romantically united with the United States, Lippard engages in a rhetorical strategy that employs a "legend" to set up the "unchanging continuities" between Mexico and the United States. He uses Lady Inez to create a history that stretches back into the distant past of Mexico, to the glorious days of the Aztec Empire, and the reign of the mighty Montezuma. Then, he positions Ximena to carry that history into the present-day Mexican War. Ximena is described as a trophy in *Legends of Mexico*, and Lippard uses her more as a historical document than a prize to be claimed. Either way, she is deprived of her humanity and turned into a commodity.

Lippard's rhetorical move in arranging the legend of Lady Inez and the story of Ximena at the beginning and end of his *Legends of Mexico* has broader implications than he could have imagined. He effectively positions these women as third-world figures, allowing them to serve for generations as the connection that binds Mexico and the United States. This strategy is not unique, as women in the third world are continually reconfigured by the prevailing hegemonic discourse of the time. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, a leading scholar in third-world feminism, explains:

> This connection between women as historical subjects and the representation of woman produced by hegemonic discourses is not a relation of direct identity, or a relation of correspondence or simple implication. It is an arbitrary relation set up in particular cultural and historical contexts (1991: 373).

According to Mohanty's critique of the hegemonic discourse, Lady Inez and Ximena, representing Mexico, are set up in an arbitrary and seemingly happy relationship by which they are married and moved to the United States. Lippard's use of these two women stands for more than just symbolic marriages. As a white, male, popular writer of his time, Lippard had the power to produce the hegemonic discourse that would create what Mohanty calls the "third world difference"—that stable, ahistorical something that apparently oppresses most if not all the women in these countries" (1991: 373-374). Lippard has created two female characters embodying "that stable, ahistorical something" that oppresses women and renders them mute (Mohanty 1991: 374). This embodiment is evident in the novel with Lady Inez, who is forced into an arranged marriage by her tyrannical Spanish father

and ultimately end up in the safe arms of her American husband, and Ximena, mourning the loss of her father and siblings but finding love, comfort, and "true womanhood" in the arms of her American husband, whose language she does not speak.

In this strategic invention of history, neither Ximena nor Lady Inez actually has a voice. Lippard gives them their dialogue, and they have no choice but to accept it. As Lippard points out, they do not even speak English, so not only is their dialogue imposed upon them, but the translation is as well. By robbing Lady Inez and Ximena of their language, Lippard helps create the linguistic crisis that Chicano Americans will face in future generations. As Tinnemeyer notes, novelists, like Lippard, do not comment on the "racial consequences" of the marriages between American soldiers and Mexican women (2006: 34). One hundred and forty years later, Andzaldúa articulates these consequences: "Chicano Spanish is considered by the purist and by most Latinos deficient, a mutilation of Spanish" (1987: 55). The Spanish language that women, like Lady Inez and Ximena, spoke in their Mexican homes will be replaced by English, and as their identities slowly slip away along with their language, the "forked tongue" of Chicano Spanish will evolve in order to preserve what little of their ethnicity they have left (Anzaldúa 1987: 55). Anzaldúa explains:

> Chicano Spanish sprang out of the Chicanos' need to identify ourselves as a distinct people. We needed a language with which we could communicate with ourselves, a secret language. For some of us, language is a homeland closer than the Southwest—for many Chicanos today live in the Midwest and the East (1987: 55).

Lippard leaves Lady Inez and Ximena in a state of isolation, stripped of their identity, and their language is now their closest homeland. He has rendered them subalterns, and they cannot speak[ii]. This language attrition that Chicanas experience after they acquire American English renders their identities torn and erased. Anzaldúa emphasizes the point that one's native language signifies identity and pride, and the loss of distinctness in preserving Spanish can create a distorted identity in a reality characterized by fear, hesitation, and complexity. Anzaldúa describes this situation:

> If a person, Chicana or Latina, has a low estimation of my native tongue, she also has a low estimation of me. Often with *mexicanas y latinas* we'll speak English as a neural language. Even among Chicanas we tend to speak English at parties or conferences. Yet, at the same time, we're afraid the other will think we're *agringadas* because we don't speak Chicano Spanish. We oppress each other trying to out-Chicano each other, vying to be the "real" Chicanas, to speak like Chicanos. There is no one Chicano language just as there is no one Chicano experience. A monolingual Chicana whose

> first language is English or Spanish is just as much a Chicana as one who speaks several variants of Spanish (58-59).

As the last reminder of their identities and homeland, Chicanas need to preserve their native tongue and self-image. Anzaldúa analyzes the processes of identity crisis and subsequent language loss as a result of being a woman living on the borderland and exposed to a more dominant language, culture, and power. Lady Inez and Ximena go through the same process as they become bound in a marriage relationship to American soldiers.

5. Conclusion

According to Anzaldúa, Mexican women will not easily forget their heritage as it is "a state of the soul" to be Mexican (1987: 62). Nevertheless, they are introduced to an American world that speaks a foreign language, forcing them to abandon their own tongue and ethnicity in order to survive. By including Lady Inez and Ximena in his war novel and transporting them to the United States, Lippard contributes to creating this borderland. He becomes an accomplice to the spiritual violence inflicted upon the Chicanos who "straddle the borderlands" (1987: 62). Lady Inez and Ximena possess a use-value in *Legends of Mexico*. Once they serve their purpose, they are left to an uncertain fate.

It is challenging to determine whether the writers of Mexican-American War narratives ever contemplated what the future would hold for those residing in the newly established borderlands. Even from the Mexican point of view, there is little evidence that future generations were of any primary concern. George Lippard, along with many other writers of the Mexican War, contributed to the establishment of the borderlands between Mexicans and Americans. His novel is regarded as both sensational and patriotic. Yet, little is said about the two women that Lippard uses to create a new history between the United States and Mexico. Lady Inez and Ximena symbolize the hundreds of Mexican women who were taken into the U.S., stripped of their identities, and forced to raise future generations not as Mexicans or Americans, but as Chicanos. Lippard leaves them in this state of inner turmoil; he shows no concern for their humanity. The women in *Legends of Mexico* are fictional; yet, their lives represent a grim reality that still resonates in the hearts of many Chicanos living in the borderlands today.

Endnotes

[i] Second author's own translation: “We must make the fight. Who is protecting the ranches (land) of my people? Who is trying to close the rift (fissure) between the Indian and the white in our blood? El Chicano, yes, el Chicano that walks like a thief in his own home.”

[ii] We refer to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's article, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”. This seminal essay in postcolonial studies was originally published in

Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg's *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois P., 1988).

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