

home/boy is an album about belonging. The kind of belonging I've tried to feel in another person's arms, in my own gender, and in my mixed heritage. I wanted to explore what it is to come back to a home that never really was.

I've never felt like I belonged in my roles as a man, or as a Chicano. So I've returned to the scene of the crime and investigated where my concepts of culture and manhood come from. It's mixed, from tv show to stepdads, but the one constant is that each definition is too limited. So the lofty goal of this project is to expand those definitions even a little bit.

Hip hop seemed like the best place to push the stale walls of brown masculinity. As a tradition, it's given me a lot of my identity as an artist and a POC, but also constructed large portions of those walls I mentioned.

In researching for this project I came across the term "hybrid territory". It was used to describe the dual cultural contexts of Chicano people within the US. It also makes me think of my non-binary gender experience, or of trying to navigate romantic love. My only point in all this is to offer that maybe we don't need to, and never will be able to map our hybrid territories.

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Hybrid Territory

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Hybrid Territory: *My Chicano Masculinity*

Terms

Chicano: a man or boy of Mexican origin or descent living in North America

Chicane: a person of Mexican origin or descent living in North America

Nortebño: A person of Northern New Mexican ancestry

Non-binary: a spectrum of gender identities that are not exclusively masculine or feminine

POC: Person of Color

Star Trek Voyager: A tv show about people in space talking a lot

Intro

Chicano masculinity has always been a weird thing to look at. It can't be held and examined in my hand. No forensics can be applied to its surface and chemical makeup. I can't threaten and interrogate it into giving up its heteronormative secrets.

It's even hard to deal with as an abstract. We can all agree it's some kind of collective product of society, and that it is a trait. But it's a trait without a fixed nature we can attribute to it. It can be dominant, it can be protective, it can be fragile. And when we plot it intersecting to the tangled series of traits that is brownness, we are left with a near meaningless term. What is a trait that cannot consistently define a specific attribute? So I have a different definition of masculinity, less as a trait, and more as as a performative act. Masculinity is a tradition, a region of learned behaviors that descend through generations. Masculinity is not the specific behaviors, but a descriptor of the behavior that we as members of society learn from others who present themselves as representative of the masculine. To prove this I will now start a coordinated campaign of oversharing.

The following are archetypes or models of colored masculine behavior I have experienced:

Disclaimer: I have of course also been given other examples of masculinity from my non-Chicano heritage and the dominant white culture's media but they are not included in the following given my topic of investigation.

1. *Machismo*

I met **Danny** as my stepfather. My mom told me he would teach me how to be a man the way my white bisexual father apparently couldn't. In many ways I think I could have related to **Danny**, he was a Latino man, in what looked to me like relative poverty, but I was more often just scared of him. His masculinity was violent and premised on his ability to control the world around him. Weightlifting and boxing were what I saw as his primary passions. Both are essentially the practice of domination over material reality, either another person or a heavy object. As a stepson, I became another part of his range of exerted control. He wouldn't let me eat if I held a fork or a knife wrong, and yelled in a way I still echo when I'm trying to make a white person scared. I learned other things from him though. He taught me how to punch. Like a kid in a neighborhood, I was afraid of that fast becoming a coping device. I would practice every day with a punching bag from Walmart. If I were being honest I've never had a good left or right hook, but as a kid, I just got wrapped up in the fantasy that I could protect my mom and myself. I wanted to be as big and scary as **Danny**.

The narrative of Chicane peoples and Chicano men within the US is often one of occupied lands, marginalization, and lost agency. Chicano masculinity is defensive masculinity, given its subjugated role. In response to this, I believe there exists, as exemplified to me by **Danny**, a tradition of *Machismo* within US Latin subcultures. *Machismo* has been described as a “cult of **exaggerated masculinity** (Gutmann 1996)”. It is a practice of hypermasculinity, violence, and abuse as a way to assert lost power in the wake of colonization. It is argued that “**Chicano men would incorporate American supremacy and then perform *Machismo* as a means to defend their injured masculine identity** (Lennes 2016)” It is worth remembering that this kind of hypermasculinity is based in heteronormativity and sexism, manhood by contrast.

1. *Noble Criminal*

My Uncle **Arthur** was depicted to me as a hero. I am partially named for him, but I'm gonna block his name out so good luck with that. He was the image of Chicano masculinity my mom put on a pedestal and pointed me in the direction of. Uncle **Arthur** was a man with a capital

M. He provided for his family, he hunted for his food, and he talked only enough to be heard. He died before my time. I grew up on his stories.

My mom was devastated when she was told that to feed his people, [REDACTED] had been selling heroin. She rationalized it, that it was a necessity and an economic decision more than a moral one. She told me he was an example of a “good soul in a bad place”. Who knows. The arc of [REDACTED]’s role in my life reminds me of the character Spooky from the TV show “*On My Block*”. When we meet Spooky he’s a violent ex-con gang member and brother to one of the main antagonists. It becomes clear within the show's second season that he can use his *Machismo* for good. He deals drugs to support his family and primarily harms or threatens others to support the protagonists. A criminal for good. An animal leashed by morality.

1. *The Revolutionary*

I fell in love with hip hop as a coping mechanism. There were two weeks where my mother’s mental illness and abusive tendencies consumed her, to the point that I would eventually be permanently removed from her custody. In the wake of that experience, I began listening to a rapper called *Immortal Technique*. Trauma leaves you with questions, and his music helped me to answer many of mine. He was a brown man, Filipino rather than Chicano, speaking about having survived oppression and violence. As a domestic abuse victim, I learned that having felt pain is not something one should be ashamed of, and that survivorship can be a role of merit. He also offered an explanation of the generational poverty I experienced as a child, and proof I could remain Chicano without living alongside my mother below the poverty line. On one track he dropped all pretense of rapping and said

“I don't consider brothers a sell-out if they move out of the ghetto. Poverty has nothing to do with our people. It's not in our culture to be poor. That's only been the last 500 years of our history; look at the last 2000 years of our existence and what we brought to the world in terms of science, mathematics, agriculture, and forms of government.”

There was a politically active brown pride in rap, and in Immortal Technique's work especially, that sustained me. But it is not worth forgetting that raps conscious and colored masculinity are premised like many of its parallels in violence. The masculinity Immortal Technique and his contemporaries provided me with was “at the intersection of hyper-masculinity (machismo) and underclass (gangster) culture (Lennes, 2016)”. This means that rebellion and political action are intrinsically part of that masculinity, but so are homophobia and misogyny. It is argued by some that “with the emergence of the gangsta rap narrative, hip-hop began a transition from

diverse cultural expression to a monolithic display of violence, misogyny, and homophobia. (Nebeu 2010)” While I can disagree with certain parts of that sweeping statement, it is largely true to my experience. Especially in regards to Immortal Technique, my hero, who said once in an interview

“As for homophobia, hip-hop never embraced faggots. One can’t deny that there are probably rappers, DJs and fans that are mo’s but I think since the culture was based around proving one’s manhood, acting like a fruit pop isn’t gonna get you anywhere”

It is now that it becomes clear to me that as a queer man, I cannot find a lasting sense of POC manhood singularly within the model pioneered by the last decade of hip hop. For all its political agency and value, it was a masculinity that had to disempower others to be powerful.

1. *The Brujx*

Now I would like to take a minute to talk about something that is not a model of masculinity but rather an alternative. The brown non-binary. I met [REDACTED] as a fellow activist, with far more experience and a few more years of high school than me. We were in their car, bouncing across the highway on the way to a student strike when they provided me with a gender mode I hadn’t ever thought to consider. Around then I had begun to take an interest in drag, and only recently admitted my bisexuality. My concept of what my Norteno* or Chicano identity meant something fixed and rigid and incompatible with my stuttering queerness. It looked something like traditional gender roles and looked nothing like me. The only thing that did appeal to me at that time was the general realm of Latina, where I could be a POC but also not feel obligated to uphold a legacy of machismo. I in no way wish to imply that the Latin feminine is not itself a varied model that has been fetishized, exorcised, and marginalized by the dominant white culture. It is just that I have found sanctuary in Latina femininity at certain points in my life. Of course, this flip-flopping between masculine and feminine was something I then felt and do feel a deep Christian shame of.

I say that all s that you understand how f[REDACTED]cking mind-blowing it was to me when [REDACTED] another Norteno/a introduced themselves to me during road trip conversation as non-binary. This was a person of color, of my same subculture, saying in casual conversation that they didn’t exclusively associate themselves with masculinity and femininity. This was my first real introduction in any sense to the concept of non-binary gender identity. But even more than it, [REDACTED] introduced me to the concept that one could be simultaneously Chicane and queer. That those identities are mutually exclusive was something I had long internalized.

The important truth Chicane non-binary identity exposes is that masculinity cannot be defined by an absence of femininity. It is in this way that homophobia and hypermasculinity must be abandoned as tenants of the Chicano manhood.

1. *The Wise Man*

I loved Star Trek as a kid. Maybe from the economic volatility of New Mexico, I yearned for space communism, or maybe I just liked all the minimalist interior design. For whatever reason, I spent a lot of nights spectating man's last frontier. Along the way, I gravitated to a character of Star Trek: Voyager called Commander Chakotay for the simple reason that he looked a little like me. Now Chakotay was intended as the first Native American Starfleet officers and is in that respect a deeply problematic racial token, who, given the writer's ignorance, fell far from the mark of genuine representation. Native critics rightly argued, "**Star Trek's representational politics emerge as a constantly updated version of a Western imaginary in which Native Americans continue to merely serve a symbolic function for a decidedly White core culture**(Kanzler)". But as a young kid, I was unaware of the political context Chakotay occupied, especially given how little his supposed ancestry is mentioned in the show. I only recognized Chakotay's actor Robert Beltran as one of the first Chicano faces I had seen in my media. I now have had to realize how much I have modeled my colored masculinity after the example provided to me by Star Trek. (God - that looks so much worse typed out.) Chakotay is soft-spoken, rarely aggressive or overly emotional, and spiritual only in the most abstract senses. I see these now as traits likely given to so that the character would not make a white audience uncomfortable, given the tendency for colored bodies to do just that. I also see these traits as a big part of how I now behave. They have given me an ability to communicate gently, and also to emotionally regulate myself to the point of numbness. I believe part of why they appealed to me at such a young age was they promised a male brown role in which others would not be scared of you, and anger was not the only means of expression.

Tragically, in my rewatching of Voyager, which sadly I cannot cite in my bibliography, I have found that within the 7 seasons of the show Chakotay's most consistent character trait is his non-confrontational relationship to authority. It is then suggested that the kind POC cannot be the revolutionary POC.

What's Left

I don't want to wash it all away. And even if I did, there isn't a powerhouse in existence that could wipe away the connotations of manhood that I've learned in my childhood and adolescence. I guess masculinity, Chicano or not, is nothing if learned. But I do believe that like

with any other education, I have the option to choose which lessons to keep. And which to abandon.

There is much to be lost. Homophobia and misogyny and a general desire for empowerment through bigotry and violent domination must be left as irresponsible modes of masculinity. In a different way, the urge to emotionally overregulate and conceal anger as to appeal to the dominant white hegemony must be similarly burnt out of my habits. There is also a lot to be preserved. The empathy expressed by Chakotay (in what is arguably some pretty badly written dialogue) is worth keeping within me. As is the political radicalism and cultural pride expressed by Immortal Technique.

But aside from my hopes for my masculinity, I believe the best thing we can do for Chicano masculinity is recognize that it is fluid, and is as hybrid a territory as the southwest that it originates from. Within it is a full range of emotions, sexuality, and expression. As the use of masculine as a definite descriptor and means of limitation fades, I hope that we will come to see that Chicano manhood is, in reality, **Chicano personhood**.

Citations

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home/boy

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FANCYPIGEONS

I wrote a poem about a dove once

After gestating in dressing room one afternoon

I performed it for more

people than I had been in front of

before in my life

started with my mom hurting me

and ended in one of the nicer past lives

I kinda reverse animal sacrifice

A woman in the audience cried

I felt accomplished

that's how the dove made me feel too

But pretty soon

my dove migrated to college

I wonder how much of that was love and how much was birdwatching

YOU MAKE ME HAPPY

I want to go home

I wanna go back back back

I want to home

or whatever the last I had

I want to go home

I guess this is just god's hand

This land isn't home yeah

I see your hand at my waist I'm looking up at your face like how do I know ya
what behind the patagonia?

This an unexplored continuing

This land doesn't know my hand

I'm without precedent

Knock knock, I know your home

I'm all-powerful and all grown

I'm home alone red-handed wet bandit

skipping stone from a person to another

and I've just landed

I want to go home

I wanna go backbackback

I want to home

or whatever the last I had

I want to go backbackback

I want to go home

I guess this is just god's hand

But its really not

3 hots and a cot

3 key and a lock

A please and stop

In need of a pause

Not peas in a pod

More daisy in asphalt

And when your feet fall

Bleeds on the block

You can tell me love or tell me off
I pirouette, I bellyflop
A silhouette, a shadow
Tied to it can't grow
No free lunch, god
I'm just such an asshole

MASTER STUDY

I've been speaking in tongues
Lying on the couch, lying to myself, bleeding out
like old rum, an expensive vintage
I been speaking to no one,
in particular, my vision blur
like I'm looking at the son
grew from the ground, shit and soil is where I'm from

I've been tracing my steps
I don't know, I don't know,
how many I got left The devil all to my left old hag on my chest
Monkey on my back holding to past I ain't doing my best

Looking around trying to find some of that love now
I run away from mirrors when it after sundown
I never got up so I can't ever come down
I don't want you I don't want to fuck around
I can't love a person, I can love a town
I can go to war
in a button-down

Let go of that rail

I've been falling off, I've been falling off shes doing her nails
Let's open the sales you're my white whale washed up on shore
don't talk no more I'm telling the tale

Can I get light for soul homie?
I ain't really that cold homie
Her teeth are like coal homie
and her words burn like embers
But it's way past September
I rotate on the center
I've been digging up wells,
I've been digging. Yeah I've been digging to hell

I ain't ready to sell, all out
Fallout ain't everything we been promised

CUSTODY

Little kid in the doctor's office
He can talk just like your prophets
He can talk you keep the profits
when he cries you come off it
You got so many comments
You say
I'm a high-risk kid
I'm ain't supposed to live
I ain't supposed to have the gifts
now I'm supposed to give
My soul was supposed to be leaving
But I'm 17 still breathing
I seen better things I'm gleaming
now I look like a fucking art that
my heart stops when I pass by that old block
I hope this car train the airplane, bus whatever the fuck don't stop
Like my own thoughts

I don't like my own thoughts

Haunted House

Broken Dishes and closed doors

Broken Dishes and closed doors

We both know what there closed for

A haunted house on a hill with a sign outside that says warning to all those the go forth
she says so what are you wearing those clothes for

Took me a while to place

But I've been here before

Heard those walls speak before

Foundations creak when there sore

Windows argue with the floor

Like I don't see the sunrise, I get used to the ugly, where's your accomplishments, or
admonishment to prove that you love me

I counter with well I ain't from here

when I moved in I didn't know there would be bugs here, and blood here and a brave new
frontier of victim mentality, not mention the broken dishes

Not to mention the broken dishes

Broken Dishes, but they weren't e ones weren't thrown at me

in the right like this porcelain looks like bone to me

in the right like maybe it doesn't look so broke to me

Maybe this is something new, or maybe we're both lonely

but I made my bed, I sowed the sheets

when you were holding on to me it made it easy to go to sleep

Ruby Slippers

I spent a good summer and stupid winter
writing poems about race poverty and my ruby slippers
Never could get back home x4

[mid chorus] x3
how I'm I supposed to be scared
what does it look like I want it to look right

How am I supposed to be scared

Do I blow hot air and get mad like my stepdad
Does a real man look like a bear
Does a real man look in the mirror
I got big pants I hope I guess I fill
But that's all jokes and sex appeal
best I feel is when I feel like I could live this moment
without ever had being broken
stand on up, I spill my Coke and
Hope I spit like Cole cause
that pain don't hurt if I can make it spoken

How am I supposed to be scared
should I pile in like when I was a kid?
But I'm out of space I don't know where there's room and the old anger ain't going nowhere
this soon but anything else would be so rare so new
my fears I chew
and swallow I didn't want to be Chicano cause I thought that meant I wouldn't get to feel

I didn't let myself cry for 3 years
cause you can brake my lights, and create my fears
I didn't let myself cry for 3 years
cause they can take my life they won't get my tears

Brujx

No role modelz and I'm here right now
No role modelz thats abundantly clear by now
Take the wheel I roll my deal, you hear me out
You can hear my mouth, you hear my words
You don't see them pour out
Oh so poor now

I guess this this is supposed to be the wild wild west
but America put it's boot to my chest
and America only loves me when I'm undressed
on stage, it's all staged
I hit you with little vignettes
bout how I'm oppressed
but if I call out institutional
power y'all unimpressed

So I politic with vampires looking down on my neck
I pray to a god that's looking down on all the rest
I pray to our lady that we ain't looking at an arrest
It's early death or debt and we betting on which the best

I've got lost and found lips
I'm adopting some femininity to wash it down with
I've been looking for some dignity and never found it
I'm not a teenage boy

I'm a world-renowned witch

Apollo 13

I came home like Apollo 13

I came home like Apollo 13

I returned from orbit

crashed landed at your service

crash landed at your cervix

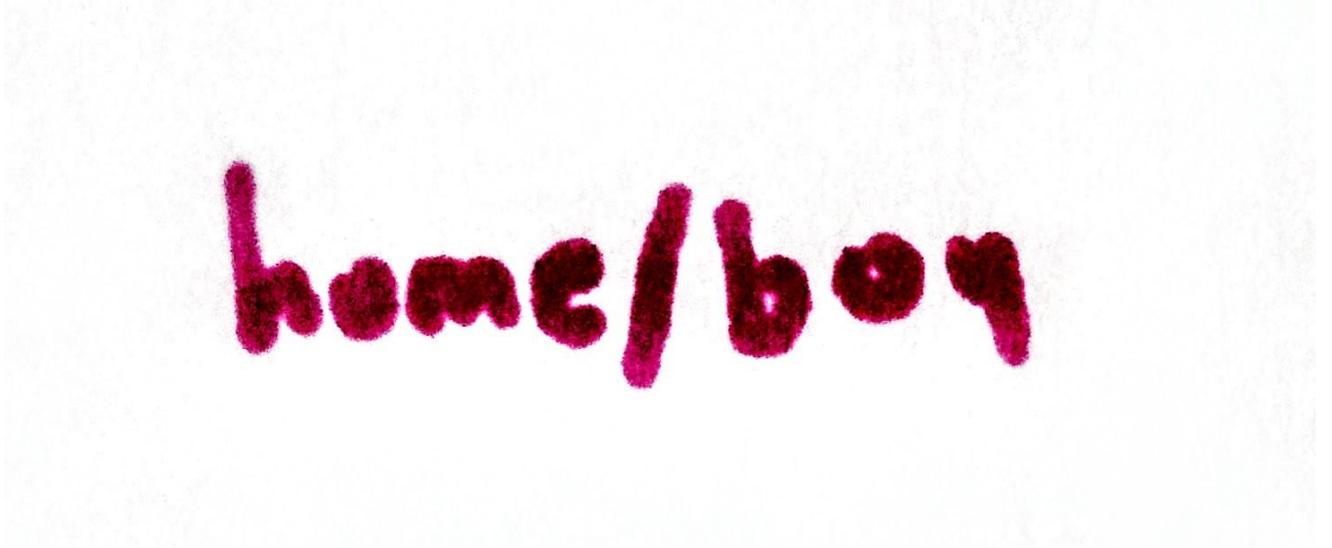
My bad habits grew and flourished

I sacrificed myself cause that's what I thought love was, Indiana Jones style left a divot
where my heart and blood was

I know that I fucked up

I picked the wrong bullet to try to jump in front of

Baby baby please give me something I can run from



listen@



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