‘La Chingada’ and ‘Machismo’: Mexican Male Homosexuality vis-à-vis Hypermasculinity in Octavio Paz’s *The Labyrinth of Solitude*

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Abstract: This article attempts to understand the Mexican concept of *La Chingada* or *Hijos de la chingada* (The children of the fucked one) as used by Nobel Laureate Octavio Paz in *El liberinto de la soledad* (The Labyrinth of Solitude) in the context of Mexican hypermasculinity and male homosexuality. Mexican ‘machismo’ is commented upon by Paz as being rooted in the idea of the dominant-male/passive-female dichotomy and informed by a power dynamic where sexual penetration becomes a metaphor for conquest. Paz’s idea of homosexuality being tolerated seems coloured by an understanding that non-heteronormative sexual role-playing is admissible in the Mexican discourse of ‘male’-ness if it conforms to a heterosexualised view of power dynamic. This paper interrogates this perception of Mexican homosexuality vis-à-vis a colonial construction of hypermasculinity in the context of Paz’s ideas of the *Chingada* in order to uncover what he intended to show as Mexican national identity.

Keywords: Octavio Paz, Mexican, machismo, hypermasculinity, homosexuality

On 17 November 1901, Mexico City police arrested forty one men from a private party; half of these men were dressed as women (Irwin). ‘The Ball of the 41,’ as it came to be known, became an intriguing scandal and gained immense symbolic importance in Mexico so much so that “the number 41 came to signify male homosexuality” (Irwin 353). This scandal, that also came to be known as the ‘The Dance of the 41,’ was widely circulated in contemporary media propagating explicitly homophobic attitudes. However, the reports on the scandal came with an interesting divide of stereotyping. Robert M. Irwin has noted that the daily *El Popular* “was careful to separate the apparently masculine from the apparently feminine, the presumably active from the presumably passive” (365). Another daily *El Diario del Hogar* “referred to the transvestites repeatedly, albeit sarcastically, as ‘women’ or ‘ladies’” (Irwin 365). Though, as Irwin has noted, the social commentaries made it clear that all were to be considered criminals, and indeed all of the 41 men were convicted and conscripted into the army, one particular daily, *La Patria,* had claimed that “nineteen effeminate men were sent to Yucatan to work in the mess halls, while twenty-two more masculine ones were sent as soldiers” to fight the Maya Indians (365). Nevertheless, the general angst was that, as voiced by *El Hijo del Ahuizote*, “the nation ought to honor with its uniform neither those who have degraded themselves with rouge and the dresses of prostitutes nor those who have served as their partners” (Irwin 365).

Apart from the dailies, the anti-homosexual novel *Los cuarenta y uno* (The 41) by Eduardo A. Castrejón maintained that those who were not dressed in drag remained at the party because they were “content […] to find themselves among their own kind of people” (Irwin 365). This view, as Irvin puts it, “suggests that effeminate men were viewed and treated differently from masculine ones; however, they were still seen as men dancing with men (and, by implication, as men having sexual relations with men), and both groups were punished as homosexuals” (365). However, one cannot

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but notice the hierarchical nature of the sexual norms which became visible after such a non-normative scandal and its subsequent controversies, which brought to the fore a vivid stereotype of homosexuality as male effeminacy and, by implication, as passivity during anal intercourse which has been pivotal in the discourse on Mexican male homosexuality ever since. This event seems to have initiated the first significant discussion of same-sex sexual relations in postcolonial Mexico and raised questions about sexuality, masculinity, and Mexican-ness. A similar idea of Mexican masculinity finds mention, almost half a century later, in the celebrated Mexican writer Octavio Paz's *El liberinto de la soledad* (*The Labyrinth of Solitude*), first published in 1950. The text elaborates upon some very important ideas of the Mexican hypermasculine 'machismo' identity and the relative views on what is considered by the Mexicans as non-masculine in the homosexual. Paz, in doing so, is considered to have introduced homosexuality into mainstream intellectual discourse in Mexico. Though the Mexican mestizo culture did not tolerate cross-gendered behaviour of openly non-normative sexuality, Paz's idea of masculine homosexuality being tolerated on the condition that it violates a passive agent seems coloured by an understanding that the non-conformant sexual role-playing is admissible in the Mexican discourse of male-ness if it conforms to a particularly discursive heterosexualised view of power politics. This article attempts at understanding this perception of Mexican homosexuality vis-à-vis a colonial construction of hypermasculinity and 'machismo' in the context of Paz's ideas of the *Chingada* in order to uncover what he intended to show as Mexican identity.

In the chapter titled "Mexican Masks," Paz contends that the Mexican male identity is that of concealment – "protecting" itself behind a "mask," because the ideal of the Mexican identity, by which he refers to the male, is to never "allow the outside world to *penetrate* his privacy" (30, emphasis added). In contrast, Paz comments that "women are inferior beings, in submitting they open themselves up" (30), projecting a view that for the Mexican male, 'opening up' is considered a weakness, is deteriorative of his manliness, and is almost metaphorical to allowing a conquest of masculinity. He further comments that the "Mexican *macho*- the male- is a hermetic being, closed up in himself" and that "manliness is judged according to one's invulnerability" (31, italics original). This fear of penetration echoes not only in socio-political terms but also in the context of sexual constructions of the masculinity of the Mexican *macho*. Paz further explains that the feminine is an object for the masculine as "she participates in their realisations only *passively*" (35, emphasis added). Later on, he mentions how, drawing from this idea of passivity in the Mexican society, "woman is never herself, whether lying stretched out or standing up straight, whether naked or fully clothed [...] she has no desires of her own" (37). In a way, "womanhood, unlike manhood, is never an end in itself" (Paz 36). The Mexican woman is, thus, "*submissive* and *open* by nature" (Paz 38, emphases added). The gendered idea that the Mexican *macho* identity is filtered and coloured by the notions of an active execution of power seems to be fundamental in understanding the sexual and social relations amongst the Mexicans, both cross-sex and same-sex.

Paz, himself, interestingly, links this idea of power politics of dominance to homosexuality in the Mexican context, which this article intends to investigate. He contends as follows:

> It is likewise significant that masculine homosexuality is regarded with a certain indulgence insofar as the *active* agent is concerned. The *passive* agent is an a*bject*, degraded being. This ambiguous conception is made clear in the word games or battles – full of obscene allusions and double meanings – that are so popular in Mexico City. Each of the speakers tries to *humiliate* his adversary with verbal traps and ingenious linguistic combinations, and the *loser* is the person who cannot think of a comeback, who has to swallow his opponent's jibes. These jibes are full of *aggressive sexual allusions*; the loser is *possessed*, is *violated*, by the *winner*, and the spectators laugh and sneer at him. Masculine homosexuality is *tolerated*, then, on the condition that it consists in *violating* a *passive agent*. (39-40, emphases added)

This apparent exception ascribed by Paz to the active male sodomiser is directly linked to the construction of the Mexican *macho* identity – the one who penetrates and opens up the inferior object of desire, implicitly highlighting the clear connection between the woman and the passive

gay man, who both become the degraded 'Other': the penetrated, open, and conquered entity due to the loss of masculinity. Raewyn W. Connell reminds us that masculinity is "simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experiences, personality and culture" (71). In this context, the 'machismo' of the Mexican hypermasculine construction, thus, gets inextricably linked to the polarised politics of domination and subjugation, in the contexts of the public and the private, the socio-political and the sexual, and the heterosexual and the homosexual. However, the elevated *chingon* is seen to retain or even reinforce his masculinity. Irwin reiterates, "all actual male homosexual relations, for Paz and his followers, involve anal penetration [...] The 'passive' partner is an effeminate homosexual, and the 'active' one is masculine and remains unmarked by homosexuality" (355). Use of stigmatising words like *puto*, *joto*, *maricon*, etc., for those sodomised and contrastively valorising words like *mayate*, *chichifo*, *chingon*, etc., which are free of stigma, for the sodomisers testify to the strict structuration of the active/passive axis. The constructs of the active/passive and the winner/loser seem to be not only implicitly related to the sexual matrix of power politics in the context of the male/female, and subsequently the male/male, but also informed by the ideas of conquest, undoubtedly with reference to the Spanish colonial rule in Mexico, which Paz discusses in the chapter titled "The Sons of La Malinche."

Commenting upon how history helps "clarify the origins of many of [Mexican] phantasms," Paz accepts that "in many instances these phantasms are vestiges of past realities" and that "their origins are in the Conquest, the Colonial period [...]" (73). Alluding to the popular word games called *albures*, Paz provides the source of such linguistic obscenities, as meted out to the violated passive agents, to be of a historical nature, directly related to the Spanish colonial era. The slangs that Mexicans men use during the *albures* in *fiestas* – in which men match wits with each other and the loser always ends up being symbolically *chingado* by his interlocutor, and thereby made into a woman or an effeminate homosexual – are drawn from the "anger, joy or enthusiasm" which "cause us to exalt [their] conditions as Mexicans" (74). He provides the example of the phrase *"Viva Mexico, hijos de la chingada!,"* about which he comments as such:

> When we shout this cry on the fifteenth of September, the anniversary of our independence, we affirm ourselves in front of, against and in spite of the "others." Who are the "others"? They are the *hijos de la chingada:* strangers, bad Mexicans, our enemies, our rivals. [...] And these "others" are not defined except as the sons of a mother as vague and indeterminate as themselves. (75, italics original)

Paz comments that the *Chingada* is "the mother who has suffered – metaphorically and actually – the corrosive and defaming action implicit in the verb that gives her her name" (75). Amidst the plurality of meanings, the verb *chingar*, as Paz notes, "ultimately contains the idea of aggression;" it "denotes violence, [...] to *penetrate* another by force" and also means "to injure, to lacerate, to *violate*" (77, emphases added), entailing sexual connotations of violence. Paz notes that the "*chingon* is the *macho*, the male; he rips open the *chingada*, the female, who is pure passivity, defenseless" (77, italics original). The verb *chingar*, thus, primarily and importantly signifies the triumph, the conquest of the powerful, closed 'machismo' over the defeated and open non-macho. The idea is that one has to '*chingar*' the other in order to avoid being the '*chingado.*' In other words, the "'macho' is a 'macho' in relation to another man, whom he must symbolically *chingar* [...] to keep his macho attributes" (Domínguez-Ruvalcaba 107). The binary of the *chingon/chingado*, therefore, becomes an indirect allusion to '*victimario*/victim.' The passivity of the *Chingada*, Paz further notes, is abject, which "causes her to lose her identity [...] her name" and "disappear into nothingness" (85-86, italics original). However, contrary to the Paz's reflection about leaving women out of the *chingon/chingado* binary which gives the impression that they do not interfere in men's conformation of their masculinities, it might be noticed that "men construct their masculinities in response, and quite often in contrast, to the women around them" (Navarro 101).

The *Chingada* is "the Mother forcibly opened, violated or deceived" and the *hijo de la Chingada* is, then, "the offspring of violation, abduction or deceit" (Paz 79, italics original). Thus, the sarcastic humiliation of the Mother seems to affirm to the violence of the Father. In this context Paz comments that "the *macho* represents the masculine pole of life [...] the *macho* is the *gran chingon*" summing up the "aggressiveness, insensitivity, invulnerability and [...] *power*" (81, italics original, last emphasis added). The essential attribute of the *macho,* thus, is power, and reveals itself as a capacity for wounding and humiliating. Richard Basham, commenting upon the discourse of the 'machismo,' notes an important relation between the woman-mother figure of the passive and the male-macho figure of the active: "*El Macho* is diametrically opposed to that of *La Madre,* [...] impenetrable, enclosed within himself [...] defensive, dominating, unpredictable, and arbitrary" (133, italics original).

Paz, interestingly, points out that "it is impossible not to notice the resemblance between the figure of the *macho* and that of the Spanish conquistador" (82, italics original), where the *chingone* becomes metaphorically linked to the Spanish colonial penetration and domination of Mexico. In this context, Paz presents the example of the mythically historical character of Dona Malinche, the coastal woman who became the mistress of the Spaniard Hernan Cortes who had dethroned, tortured, and murdered the young Aztec emperor Cuauhtemoc. He comments as such:

> Dona Marina (Malinche) becomes a figure representing the Indian women, who were fascinated, violated or seduced by the Spaniards [...] the Mexican people have not forgiven La Malinche for her betrayal. She embodies the open, the *chingado*, to our closed, stoic, impassive Indians. (86, italics original)

However, Paz concludes, rather ambiguously and self-contrastingly, that when the Mexicans shout *"Viva Mexico, hijos de la Chingada!,"* they "express their desire to live closed off from the outside world" and adds that the "Mexican does not want to be either an Indian or a Spaniard [...] he does not affirm himself as a mixture, but rather as an abstraction" (86-87, italics original). The purpose of the article in detailing this myth-legend is not to deviate from the focus on the Mexican ideas of 'machismo' and homosexuality it intends to explore but to provide a crucial factor involved, implicitly, in the ideology of hypermasculinity and 'machismo' as derived from the allusions to Spanish conquest, involved in the construction of the Mexican identity, i.e., of the notion of separation and negation based on a historically derived idea of power, domination, and identity. The references to Malinche, Cortes, etc., show how "historical characters have become myths that occupy the centre of an unresolved psychic conflict" in the Mexican identity (Stanton 228). The Mexican identity emerging from these understandings gives an idea of unresolved duality that, as Paz has noted, is "a struggle between the forms and formulas that have been imposed on [Mexicans] and the explosions with which [their] individuality avenges itself" (33). The Mexican moral and judicial forms often "conflict with their nature," "frustrating their true wishes" and preventing them from truly expressing themselves (Paz 33). The resultant politics of *indigenismo* creates the Mexican *mestizo* identity that is at once hybrid and not quite so and yet is projected as "the symbol of national unity and is therefore the privileged referent in the construction of political and cultural subjecthood" (Taylor 824). Gutierrez comments that "in Mexico the symbolic creation attributed to Malinche—the mestizo race—still plays a key ideological role in modern politics" as an "'antithesis of racist discourses and it has the capacity to incorporate differences and to reject racial puritanisms'" (qtd. in Taylor 825). However, Paz does not consider either the independence movement or the Mexican Revolution as "a genuine liberation moving towards the achievement of an authentic national identity" (Hoy 372).

Thus, the masks that the Mexicans put on due to lack of an authentic national identity (also owing to the 'fallen' nature of their illegitimate origin) propagates the lying which Paz notes "plays a decisive role in [their] daily lives, [their] politics, [their] love-affairs and [their] friendships," deceiving themselves as well as others (40). Although, according to Paz, there seems to be an indissoluble relationship between 'machismo' and homo-eroticism, Mexican 'machismo' seems to be one of those masks that Paz talks about, where the hypermasculinity of the active *macho* figure strives to dominate and projects its superiority over the passive, which, in the context of non-heteronormative

sexuality, comes out as a self-contrastive excuse for maintaining hegemonic male-driven stability. Terry Hoy, in the context of the Mexican identity has noted as such:

> Mexican history is the expression of a collective inferiority complex stemming from the results of the Spanish conquest, racial mixture and a disadvantageous geographical position. In hiding their inferiority, Mexicans have resorted to unhealthy compensations including aggressive assertions of power that have isolated Mexicans from one another and prevented the attainment of a sense of community. (371)

In this play of power, however, the gendered notion of the 'abject,' as discussed earlier, that is replicated in the power politics implicit in the *chingon/chingado* discourse of 'machismo' and non-heteronormative sexuality of men is non-absolute. Through Julia Kristeva's discussion of abjection in *Powers of Horror*, Judith Butler reminds us that though the 'abject' "designates that which has been expelled from the body, [...] literally rendered 'Other'," "the alien is effectively established through this expulsion" (169). In a similar understanding, Paz's *chingon/chingado* binary does not seem to adequately explicate the politics of Mexican masculinities. Considering the case of the Mexican ideas on homosexuality, where the passive agent is stigmatised and otherised, the discourse of hegemonic 'machismo' seems to be applied specifically to validate the duality of a hypermasculine identity. Eduardo de Jesus Douglas, while commenting on the art of Nahum B. Zenil (who is one of the few openly gay older generation activists/artists in Mexico), points out that "for a man to touch, to desire, or to accept the penis is to sever the 'natural' link between maleness and the macho ethos of penetration" (18). In order to facilitate it, the Mexican non-heteronormative man, thus, marks himself as an 'Other' to experience both subjective authentication and objective emasculation. The Mexican *macho*, thus, constructs and strives to maintain a constructed and contingent idea of the superiority of the hypermasculine, in order to accommodate the abject, non-normative, homosexual masculinity. In this context, Basham notes that "the cult of machismo has often been explained as a reaction to deep-seated fears of inadequacy and latent homosexuality" (127), where the fear seems to instigate further execution of the honour-power model of 'machismo' in Mexico.

Looking into the history of homosexuality and its reception in Mexico, in the context of the pre-conquest era, there can be found evidences that the Mexicans worshipped a deity, Xochiquetzal (feathered flower of the maguey), who was the goddess of non-procreative sexuality and love. Stephen Murray notes that "Xochiquetzal was both male and female at the same time, and in her male aspect (called Xochipilli), s/he was worshipped as the deity of male homosexuality and male prostitution" (1). It was only after the colonisation of Mexico by the Spanish that homosexuality was thoroughly criminalised. Murray notes this:

> The Spaniards condemned homosexuality more vociferously than the Aztecs had. After the conquest, all pagan rituals were banished and their rationale discredited. Mestizo culture came to exhibit a melding of Aztec attitudes towards private homosexuality and those of the Spaniards. The former ritual tradition that celebrated homosexuality as communion with the gods was lost. (2)

This attitude of the Spaniards seems to have been religiously copied into the *macho* ethos of the resulting post-colonial Mexican masculine identity. Notwithstanding the fact that the dominant conception of homosexuality in Mexico as necessarily related to gender-crossing – the simplistic *activo-pasivo* logic, as the research of sociologists like Annick Prieur testifies, Murray has pointed out towards an interesting fact regarding the perceptions on Mexican homosexuality which pertains to the recognition that some seemingly ultra-masculine men could be penetrated, as he states this:

> This phenomenon of 'flipping' is frequently discussed among male transvestite prostitutes, and the pleasure of 'surrender' to penetration is not inconceivable to masculine-appearing males [...] There is even a term, *hechizos* (made ones), for former *mayates* (insertors) who have become passive partners in anal intercourse over time. (4, italics original)

This category of men having sexual relations with other men challenges the traditional Mexican construction of the active/passive that Paz has commented upon. Research by anthropologists like

Joseph Carrier and Clark Taylor has brought out such deviations from the 'machismo' model. These "men who assumed both roles were called 'anal active and passive' by Carrier and later *internacionales* by Taylor" (qtd. in Carrillo 223, italics original), which highlighted an anomaly in the traditional system of categorisation. For Taylor, "the use of the term *internacional* seems to denote both variety and foreignness," which suggested that "it was a departure from the well-defined gender roles and thus was presumed to be a foreign import" (qtd. in Carrillo 223, italics original). For Carrier, the category of the international was a result of "the growing influence of U.S. and Western European gay culture in Mexico" (Irwin 366). Commenting upon whether the Mexican traditional perceptions of homosexual identities were being abandoned, Hector Carrillo's research pointed out that the answer is both yes and no, similar to Paz's commentary on the duality of the Mexican identity. Carrillo notes this:

> On the one hand, Mexican gays and lesbians are increasingly conceptualizing 'modern' homosexual identities – identities to which they refer with the Spanish words *homosexual*, *lesbzana* and *gay* – that are based on their attraction to their own sex regardless of their gender roles [...] but, on the other hand, norms and values based on gender roles, which could be characterized as 'traditional', continue to inform and influence contemporary perceptions of homosexuality and to provide options for individuals' interpretations of their desire toward members of their own sex. (227, italics original)

Carrillo's ethnographic research, which involved several interviews with men who had same-sex relations with men in Guadalajara in the 1990s, found that there exists a duality or hybridity in homosexual identity politics in the Mexican society. Carrillo held that this "hybridity favours the adoption of a dual identity and strongly shapes what is seen by contemporary Mexicans as modern homosexuality" (228). This concept of hybridity and overlapping sexual system results from combining both traditional active/passive model and the modern categorisations of gender fluidity.

Therefore, it follows that there are two conflicting views of homosexuality in Mexico: one relegates men who desire other men as a negative and shameful social reality, while the other regards men who sodomise/penetrate other men to still 'remain men' in contrast to the feminised sodomised non-man. In the example of 'The Dance of the 41,' there had been projected similar inter-contradictory yet conciliatory views on the (homo)sexuality of the 41 men who were convicted. Though the daily *El Popular* attempted to rationalise the twenty-two 'masculine' men at the dance by insisting that "they had been tricked, that they had not knowingly reveled with queers, as if their complicity would have incriminated them," yet "nowhere did anyone argue about whether all forty-one were homosexuals or just nineteen of them; both views were held to be true" (Irwin 365). Similarly, Paz's view, in *The Labyrinth of Solitude,* that the active penetrating role of the *macho* in (homo)sexual intercourse with a passive *joto* is seen as a source of honor and power and an affirmation of masculinity (and thus holds no stigma) holds true to only a certain extent. According to Héctor Domínguez-Ruvalcaba, "the scandal produced a disempowerment and symbolized a defeat of the dominator, using the sexual metaphor on which Octavio Paz [...] concurs" (68). Furthermore, complication arises in the context of bisexuality. Prieur notes that "male bisexuality in Mexico is neither socially accepted nor stigmatized [...] but only so long as it remains relatively invisible, so long as it is kept within a purely male context [...] and so long as it is euphemized" (qtd. in Irwin 366).

Moreover, critics like Irwin have pointed out that Paz's characterisation of Mexican homosexuality can indeed be an inadequate categorisation. He questions: "Why shouldn't homosexual penetration be essentialized by avowed heterosexuals (such as Paz) for whom penetration is imperative for the purpose of procreation" (369). This prefaces the consideration that "even if Paz's sexual symbolism of anal penetration is taken as a cultural dominant, it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which it is or was reflected in sexual practices" (369). Moreover, Martin A. Nesvig has noted that Paz's "propositions about the essential nature of Mexican sexual identity have cast a tremendous shadow over the historiography and ethnography of Mexican and Latin American sexuality" (691), and scholarly and anthropological works as that of Carrier seem to have drawn their basic ideas, rather inadequately, from Paz.

Sociologists and critics like Salvador Vidal-Ortiz, Carlos Decena, Hector Carrillo, and Tomas Almaguer have discussed about this problem of essentialised Mexican homosexual identity. Decena and Carrillo concur that "there is a certain oversimplification in the construction of the active/ pasivo model" that has left "little room for considering the complexities of interpretation and categorization in relation to sexual identities and forms of self-identifications" (Vidal-Ortiz et al. 255). In the same context, Vidal-Ortiz talks about an expansion in this idea of the *activo/pasivo* which has been circulating in such a way that it is being embraced to include a broader understanding of Mexican homosexuality (Vidal-Ortiz et al. 256). Carrillo seconds this point and notes that the sexual connotations of the *activo/pasivo* model must not be essentialised for the purpose of constructing homosexual identities, by the members of both the LGBTQ2S+ community and the academia. Commenting upon how the binary must not become the all for the understanding of Mexican or Latino cultures, Almaguer is of the view that "homosexuality has cross-culturally and historically been structured in fundamentally different ways and that the active/pasivo [...] reflects just one of the particular modalities and poetics of difference" (Vidal-Ortiz et al. 258). Carrillo proposes the possible solution as considering "simultaneously active/pasivo, disclosure/secrecy, gender-based/ object choice categorizations, and globalization/locality, all at the same time and as part of the same thing" and "seeing gay in connection to contemporary homosexualities in the way that they emerge in different sites around the world and reconstituted to reflect local conditions" (Vidal-Ortiz et al. 262). This, Carrillo claims, would facilitate an interplay that would allow "for local forms of contemporary homosexualities or gayness to emerge, without necessarily having to follow 'hegemonic' models" (Vidal-Ortiz et al. 265).

When Paz noted that the true Mexican identity revealed itself during *fiestas*, which can be considered as a carnivalesque scenario, in which "the very notion of order disappears," he has written that ""Men disguise themselves as women, masters as slaves, poor as rich" and that "anything is permitted: the customary hierarchies vanish along with all social, sex, caste and trade distinctions" (51). Paz's example of chaos as transvestism is interesting, for this is the same non-normative unmasking of the Mexican identity one witnesses in the scandal of 'The Dance of the 41.' While Paz's structured version of homosexuality may represent one Mexican perspective on homosexuality, a significant competing perspective emerges, as Irwin notes, where "the transvestites' challenge to this social order permits the freedom of *carnaval*, of sexual liberty; as Paz puts it, 'Society is dissolved'" (370, italics original). Similarly, the men in 'The Dance of the 41' had not only subverted gender roles but also opened up a new discourse on the complex relations between non-heteronormative sexuality and constructs of masculinity and femininity in the Mexican context. Furthermore, as Ben. Sifuentes-Jáuregui has pointed out with respect to 'The Dance of the 41' and its deep impact on Mexican socio-cultural imagination, "Transvestism as a misfire of 'masculinity' does not exactly mean 'castration' (something is not missing; it is hidden)," and, as such, "the acts of the '41' cannot be simply understood as an absence; rather, from a politically progressive stance, the '41' are an enactment of a gender difference" (23) – a difference that challenges the intricate pact among hegemonic patriarchy, hypermasculinity, and homophobia.

Thus, upon interrogating the dualities within the constructs of 'machismo' and hypermasculinity and the dichotomies that they strive to sustain, the Mexican construct of homosexuality actually opens up a discourse of contradictions, percolated through a multitude of socio-cultural, mythical, historical, political, and sexual considerations, always already informed by the dynamics of gender. One would not only need to consider the simplistic active/passive model mentioned by Octavio Paz but also interrogate the more complex and intricate politics of intersectionality of the social, the political, the personal, the cultural, the historical, the sexual, and the economic, which stands witness to the multiverse of Mexican non-heteronormative subjectivities.

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