

James Madison University

JMU Scholarly Commons

Department of English - Faculty Scholarship

Department of English

12-2021

Reading the Archival Remains of Arturo Islas's *La Mollie* and the King of Tears

Allison Fagan

James Madison University, faganae@jmu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/eng>



Part of the [Chicana/o Studies Commons](#), [Literature in English, North America Commons](#), and the [Literature in English, North America, Ethnic and Cultural Minority Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Fagan, Allison, "Reading the Archival Remains of Arturo Islas's *La Mollie* and the King of Tears" (2021). *Department of English - Faculty Scholarship*. 2.
<https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/eng/2>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of English at JMU Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Department of English - Faculty Scholarship by an authorized administrator of JMU Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact dc_admin@jmu.edu.



Reading the Archival Remains of Arturo Islas's *La Mollie and the King of Tears*

Allison Fagan

[9.9.21]

Visiting Special Collections at the Cecil H. Green Library at Stanford University is not unlike any other visit to any other library archive: making your way to the site of what Jacques Derrida (1995: 2) calls the location of the papers' "house arrest," you choose your lonesome desk, you request a single gray box at a time, gingerly pulling one manila folder at a time, repetitively sliding the laminated placeholder back one spot at a time. You become faintly familiar to the student checking IDs at the entrance, familiar enough that on the third day he no longer asks for yours. But you are still almost nobody, a quiet phantom. You are somehow far away from the place and the things around you, a foreigner to the materials themselves.

That distance is always complemented by the simple unsettling intimacy of the documents in each folder in each gray box on each cart that comes from some other building somewhere else, perhaps far away. Opening the very first box of the Arturo Islas Papers, you are immersed in piles of insurance forms, medical bills, and letters from doctors, a mixture of thick white letterhead and pink and yellow carbons that narrate with numbers the story of a diagnosis of HIV, and later of AIDS, with T-cell counts and dollar amounts shrinking and rising in tandem. Or, rather, they are rising and shrinking: given the reverse chronological arrangement of the folder, these documents of disease give way to documents of a body in good health, as if to say, here is a person returning to life. Arturo Islas never knew you; you'll never know him. But here you are, touching the things he touched, holding between your fingers the same death sentence he held between his own. In this moment, you are far too close, and yet the distance between you and this person, this writer and what he wrote, what he lived, has never yawned wider.

Encountering writers like Islas in the archive is one mechanism by which we experience what Jessica Shumake (2015) calls “a fleeting and yet charged encounter with [the author’s] archival remains,” gesturing to the ease with which we draw the corporeal body of the author into our imaginings of their body of work. Thus, it is suddenly sensible—though no less unsettling—to set out looking for Islas’s manuscripts, evidence of his literary corpus, only to first encounter a reminder of his physical corpus, the archive weaving together evidence of the ways each sustained and failed him, time and again. Marvin Taylor (Colucci 2012) calls the archive “a stand-in for the absent body,” and scholars interested in marking the “queer turn” in archival scholarship would ask us to attend to the ways Islas’s absent body—marked at various times and places as Chicano, homosexual, disabled, and dead—is also similarly constituted and marked via the materiality of the archive. Such a turn also, though perhaps more quietly, asks us to acknowledge the way questions of access frequently put the archival body at both a geographic and an economic remove from many would-be readers, these practical and material concerns expressing the tensions between “the object of my desire’s absence and my longing to conjure his presence” (Shumake 2015) ensured by the existence of the archive.

But the archive has a counterpart, a logical extension that aims at an erasure of such distances: the posthumously published text. Such a text, like the archive itself, might also be imagined as a stand-in for the absent body, the stand-in circulating more freely but with no less of a frustrated expectation of the author’s impossible resurrection. The frequent expectancy with which audiences are treated to posthumously published texts—from J. R. R. Tolkien’s *The Silmarillion* (1977) to Ralph Ellison’s *Juneteenth* (1999)—suggests a tacit commitment to a belief in a kind of authorial life that outstrips bodily death, a belief Islas seems to have held himself.¹ In the years following Arturo Islas’s death on February 15, 1991, editors and friends produced Islas’s final completed novel, *La Mollie and the King of Tears*, a book on which he was at work as early as the 1970s. Edited by Paul Skenazy and finally published in 1996 by the University of New Mexico Press, it both bears the hope of reviving and sustaining the literary life of its author, and of bringing it to completion. Flipping through the pages of various archival folders, however, we see reminders of the uncertain progress Islas was making on *La Mollie* in the years before he died, a progress that was haphazard and subject to

frequent revisions in its every step. To hold a copy of *La Mollie* is to hold in one's hands not only a fictional narrative but also the fiction of the novel's contained completion. In his groundbreaking critical biography of Islas, *Dancing with Ghosts*, Frederick Luis Aldama's (2004: xiii) explains his nonlinear narration of Islas's life by noting that "Islas lived as if time were nonlinear." Likewise, *La Mollie and the King of Tears* and its archival remains resist a sense of straightforward chronology—a clean, linear progression from draft to published novel—while also reflecting what Jack Halberstam (2005: 2) describes as both the anxieties of "compression and annihilation" and the "potentialities of a life unscripted" so critical to many notions of queer temporality. *La Mollie*, in all of its iterations, evinces the complicated relationship between such anxieties and potentials: bodily, narrative, and cultural.

This essay argues that the novel might be fruitfully read alongside its drafts—its archival remains—in terms of what some textual scholars call the "fluid text" (Bryant 2002) and others the "text as process" (Bushell 2009), but also in terms of what queer theorists have labeled "asynchronous temporality," an experience of texts in terms of a kind of time that Elizabeth Freeman (2007: 159) among others have characterized as "a queer phenomenon—something felt on, with, or as a body, something experienced as a mode of erotic difference or even as a means to express or enact ways of being and connecting that have not yet arrived or never will." Arguing that "time makes bodies and subjects" (160), queer theorists including Freeman have suggested that conventional, linear, or "straight" notions of time condition our expectations for our experiences of past and future, experiences seemingly unavailable to queer subjects whose relationships to the past and future are always already in peril; asynchronous or queer notions of time resist "straight" time by reimagining and repositioning subjects at the intersections of multiple temporalities. Presenting writing itself as an exercise in asynchronous temporality, Freeman notes, "Writerly strategies are ways to throw something out into a formless future, disseminating the self in the hopes that someone, someday, might reassemble the pieces in ways that in turn reconfigure his or her own present, or rearrange our sense of the past" (168).

The work of "reassembling" becomes all the more urgent and appropriate when the text at hand is one that exists in many versions, including one its author never lived to see: *La Mollie and the King of*

Tears, read with and through the knowledge of its drafts, affords an experience of the haunting feeling generated by its own simultaneous distances from and proximity to the other versions Islas imagined. And in the case of Islas's novel, we are haunted by intertwining and anxious resistances to the annihilation of Islas's body, his narrative voice, and his identity as a Chicano. The word "haunting" is key: as Tim Dean (2011: 92) notes, "queer theorists of spectrality embrace asynchronous temporalities because they regard being haunted as an opportunity to produce a different future, one that the past did not generate but still might." Reading the archival remains of what became *La Mollie and the King of Tears* is an exercise in imagining different futures.

A Timeline of Islas's Text in Process

Of Islas's three published novels, *La Mollie and the King of Tears* has perhaps received the least critical attention from scholars, though its archival life suggests a rich and complicated evolution not unlike that of the more famous *The Rain God* (1984).² The novel itself is narrated from the first-person perspective of Louie Mendoza, a Chicano man in the 1970s, waiting in a San Francisco hospital, while his girlfriend, a white woman to whom he refers as la Mollie, is in surgery after a terrible accident. Louie passes the time by recounting their relationship, parts of his life story, and the events leading up to the accident to a stranger in the waiting room. As Louie recounts everything from a petty argument between himself and la Mollie over the possibly apocalyptic significance of the passing comet Kahoutek [*sic*] to his subsequent long walk in the streets of San Francisco in search of his brother and a ride home, from the death of his daughter Evelina and to his time residing in a VA hospital, the stranger, identified only as an academic of some kind, never interrupts. He simply records (via cassette recorder) Louie's monologue, a narration that begins and ends in the same place, and yet extends backward through decades—the fate of la Mollie always hanging in the balance. In its play with past and present, it narrates asynchronous temporalities. Skenazy (1996: 190) calls the time of the narrative "post-hippie" and "pre-AIDS," while also arguing that "the post-AIDS moment of its creation" and "our knowledge of that impending world" necessarily shape the way both Islas and his readers process its meanings: there are futures the readers of the novel can imagine that Louie cannot,

the Kahoutek-shaped threat of doom taking on contours that the novel itself could not consider.³

As with much of his other work, Islas seemed to imagine and reimagine the book as a whole in different formats, something that both drew from and discarded elements of books he'd already planned to write. In a June 29, 1987 letter to his literary agent Sandra Dijkstra accompanying an early version of his manuscript, Islas (1987c) describes the work as "almost 200 manuscript pages long" and imagines that it could stand alone even if it needed more fleshing out. But he also describes "the Louie Mendoza sections as frames for three more portraits of Angel Family members—seven chapters altogether." At this time, he was also working on what would become *Migrant Souls* (1990), and possibly was imagining the two books as one. Then again, in a handwritten note at the bottom of his letter, Islas writes, "My dream is that *The New Yorker* pub. all four Louie sections in serialized form—and then, let [publisher William] Morrow bring it out as a complete work. What are the chances?"

In the archive, the iterations of *La Mollie* include an early 16-page sketch, a 200-page 1987 typescript, a revised and expanded typescript dated 1990, and the final 166-page novel. But the archive also points to those imagined versions alluded to above; both the "frame" for the Angel family and the serial publication are evidence of the various ways Islas dreamed his work to life. They matter, even in their nonexistence. This is in part because Islas's book, though published, is a portrait of nonexistence. As with many posthumously published works, both Islas's archive and the very fact of his death demand that we recognize his nonexistence written into the pages of his book. The book is in fact conditioned into print by his mortal absence: its copyright date—1996—suggests that Islas is still somehow present after his death, though the use of "was" in the back cover's biography, not to mention the afterword by Skenazy, insist that he is not. Skenazy himself, like many editors of posthumously published texts, carefully negotiates the thin line between visibility and invisibility, between accounting for the work he did to finish the unfinished and projecting a sense of unmediated or at least undiminished distance between author and reader. In his afterword Skenazy (1996: 196) alternates between the passive voice ("Excisions have been made" and "imbalances . . . had to be rectified" and the active—"I served, not always comfortably, as Arturo's stand-in" [197]) as he tries

to distinguish between what textual critics might call the accidentals and the substantives, or the skeleton of the story and the beating heart he attempts to preserve untouched. Of course, what is accidental and what is substantive is never a self-evident matter, and of course, whether the author is living or dead, editing will involve some negotiation. But when Skenazy suggests that what he left untouched was “the voice of Louie Mendoza, who is the key—indeed, the body—of this book,” we are called to attend to the ways literary and literal corpus overlap, the inescapable evidence of editing as an expression of grief, and a desire to preserve but also to resuscitate what is threatened with erasure.⁴

Elsewhere, Skenazy (2016) describes the process of editing in the absence of Islas as in part a collaboration with the dead: “I have no problems with the idea of speaking to the dead, swearing at them, asking something of them. But mostly this was a process of answering to them rather than asking of them.” The process of “answering to” rather than “asking of” suggests a delicate prioritizing of the deceased author but also the inevitable impact of the living editor, the one left behind who must choose from among versions. The process of condensing multiple versions into a single text thus produces absences and erasures, which nonetheless haunt the posthumously published text. Such a haunting reminds us that no work of literature is ever singular, finished, or produced by a single hand and suggests multiple and overlapping imagined futures are an integral component of the work of writing.

These considerations are especially important given Islas’s struggle to find publication while he was alive. *The Rain God* took close to a decade to appear in print, and at the time of his death there were no publishers interested in *La Mollie*. When Islas mused about “the chances” of serializing and then publishing as a novel the voice of Louie Mendoza, it is not clear how slim he imagined those chances to be. In the letters introducing his manuscript, Islas is almost effervescent: excited by the ease with which Louie’s story came to him, and quite hopeful that “millions of readers” would be as entranced by Louie as he was. But though some readers were also excited—Sandra Dijkstra liked Louie’s voice—others were less so. Editor Maria Guarnaschelli described Louie’s voice as “an incongruous mixture of streetwise and sophisticated” (quoted in Aldama 2004: 56). In this response, Islas perceived a rejection of “an American Hispanic voice that does not do hat dances for readers” (Islas 1987b), implying that New York editors operated as political

gatekeepers, interested only in dehumanizing portrayals of Mexican Americans, if in any portrayals at all.

Guarnaschelli reviewed the manuscript of *La Mollie*, again, only to reject it again; the manuscript was also rejected by Harper and Row as well as by, at that point, the University of New Mexico Press. On the night before he died, Islas called Skenazy and asked him to ensure that Louie's story would get published, and the next morning he handed Skenazy the manuscripts. Skenazy (2016) knew that he was just one among many who could be trusted to make try to good on such a promise: "Arturo was beloved, and we did what we could to help him, and did what he told us to do after he died." Still, the end of Islas's life is haunted by the unfinished and unpublished status of his work, and in turn, his drafts, in particular the 1987 draft he sent to Djikstra and Guarnaschelli, haunt the published novel. This and other manuscript versions of the text mattered quite a great deal to Islas; after receiving the second rejection from Guarnaschelli, Islas on April 29, 1988 wrote her to beg for the return of his manuscript: "Forgive me for being so attached to my own work; I cannot help it. I hate to think of that manuscript floating about aimlessly through the halls of Morrow or worse, lost forever in a dustbin. I won't feel right until she's back in my arms again. Do your best to return" (Islas 1988).

Islas was concerned that the work he'd done might be "lost forever," and it almost was. Without Skenazy and those at the University of New Mexico Press, the book would have had no published life. As Aldama (2004: 55–56) suggests, Islas's fear that his work might disappear also reflects his rising fear that he might not live long enough to see the book published himself: his responses to publishers "grew from his frustration as a writer who knew he had very little time left. He was aware at this point that he was HIV positive." Aldama notes that Islas avoided taking the HIV test for years; "the test can seem to confer something like an identity," Dean writes, "one that is subject to change only once" (85). Whereas in the past Islas may have been able to entertain various imagined futures, to live in an asynchronous temporality, now he finally had confirmation of illness: now this future is reduced to a single timeline. But the imagined futures for his novel were subject to that reduction only insofar as Islas believed his novel's future depended on his own.

The Penultimate Draft and Its Titles

If Islas the writer was haunted by the finality of death, the penultimate draft of *La Mollie* itself perhaps reflects the anxieties and the resistances such a haunting might provoke—reactions to his experience of queer time. Such reactions are evident in the draft by its dizzying proliferation of possible titles. Past the cover page of this “penultimate draft”—again, titled “Chakespeare in the Barrio or The King of Tears”—there is another title, this one handwritten on orange paper, indicating the title of the work as “Resident Aliens” while also referring to itself as the “original copy of ‘The Lame.’” This is followed by yet another typewritten cover page, again indicating the title as “Resident Aliens” but then followed by a list of alternate titles: “‘The State of In Between’ / Or / ‘The Lame, the Deaf, the Blind, the Dead’ / Or / ‘Mystical Nudes’ / Or / ‘St. Wretched and the King of Tears’” and finally the handwritten “Or / ‘Dancing with Ghosts’” (Islas 1987a).

Islas allows each title its own line, each separated by “Or,” the list descending down the page as if without end. In this sequence of quick revision we may read indecisiveness, but we may also read a resistance to completion, each subsequent title a new refusal to finalize, to complete the work on the page. Each of these titles, living on in the archive, bears witness to the asynchronous temporalities informing the text’s construction and its continued existences, its possible though unrealized futures. I take three of the most prominent titles—“The Lame,” “Resident Aliens,” and “Chakespeare in the Barrio”—as guideposts of sorts: as the archival evidence suggests, these are the titles Islas returned to with the most frequency. Each of these titles, essentially erased by the final published title, *La Mollie and the King of Tears*, offers an opportunity to trace more clearly the narrative’s own concerns with the erasure of 1) the physical or “half-dead” body, 2) the simultaneously resident and alien Chicano body politic, and 3) the body of the text, formed and reformed around the voice of Chakespeare Louie. Together, the archived and the published versions demonstrate and produce asynchronous textualities and temporalities; in these, the protagonist and the narrative itself are constructed as sites of anxious resistance to these multiple erasures, and readers are compelled to imagine author, characters, and the text’s published iteration as all suspended between the living and the dead.

The Anxieties of the Half-Dead: "The Lame"

The manuscript of the penultimate draft, though littered with titles, bears only one running head, "The Lame," underscoring Islas's earlier idea that perhaps it would become part of a larger work, called *The Lame, the Deaf, the Blind, the Dead*, wherein Louie's sections are called "The Lame." For a writer like Islas, who for years would "each morning . . . wake up to read, reread, and then read again his body as if it were a literary text, looking for corporeal inscriptions that might anticipate an abrupt shift in the uncertain narrative of his life" (Aldama 2004: 121), a title like "The Lame" points both to his sense of the narrowing distance between his own life and the lives of his characters and to his intensified reckonings with questions of impairment, of the body in peril.

Islas (1983) himself insisted that, despite the autobiographical elements of the protagonist of *The Rain God*, "Miguel Chico is *not* me." At the same time, most critics share Aldama's (2004: xviii) view that "Islas conceived of writing as a blurring of private with public, fiction with fact." When Miguel Chico reappears in *La Mollie*, in a chapter drawn from Islas's own experiences teaching hospitalized veterans, we are thus tempted to read Islas as haunting his own fictional text. Like Islas, Miguel Chico suffers from polio, the traces of the childhood illness borne into the future via "a gimp leg and a shoe with a mile-high heel" (MKT 123). In the "present" of the novel, Louie himself walks with a limp (having broken his leg after a shooting in a jazz club) suggesting how, as Mimi Gladstein (2008: 321) describes, "Islas inhabits a variety of characters and is textualized in bits and pieces of a multiplicity of selves."⁵ In the imagined future where the novel would be called "The Lame," we are called into conversation with the body of the author, even as that body exceeds any single representation: Islas's is not one body but many bodies, not one text but many texts.

As with its title, the penultimate manuscript also announces its concern with the body, via the first of its three epigraphs, from chapter 7, verse 22 of the Gospel of Luke: "The blind see, / the lame walk, . . . / the deaf hear, / the dead are raised, / to the poor the gospel / is preached" (Islas 1987a). These reversals describe miracles, but in the context of Islas's manuscript, they also appear as simple recordings of fact. We can see the "lame walk" when, after he is shot, Louie emerges from the hospital "limping like a dog that just got it from some car" (MKT 158), as the episode is described in the published version, Louie arduously

makes his way back to the apartment and la Mollie, who has heard about the shooting and has been told Louie was killed. An instance of what Mitchell and Snyder (2000: 49) might call “narrative prosthesis”—the “crutch upon which literary narratives lean for their representational power, disruptive potentiality, and analytical insight”—Louie’s hobbled movement is fundamental to the movement of the story and to its climax: when Louie limps into the kitchen, “dragging that cast along the floor so’s it seemed to whisper” (*MKT* 151), la Mollie, thinking he is dead, falls to the ground, hitting her head on the sink on the way down; when she begins to bleed profusely, Louie rushes her back to the hospital from which he’d just limped home. In a sense, he is both disabled and disabling.

Beyond conjuring and contesting the miracle of the walking lame, the epigraph from Luke (absent from the published novel) points to the complex presence in the narrative of the living dead. When Louie walks in on la Mollie, who thinks he has been killed, he appears as the living dead, which she confronts but cannot comprehend. In turn, in the car on the way to the hospital, when la Mollie suddenly regains consciousness, Louie thinks, “She was back from the land of the Dead, man, but only part-way. And I wanted to let her know she had to keep coming without tipping off the Bone Man that I cared” (153). These negotiations of the in-between space between life and death—left unresolved at the novel’s end as Louie still waits for news of la Mollie’s fate—conjure Gloria Anzaldúa’s (1987: 25) borderlands concept of “the half-dead”: for her, the disabled body has in common with “the perverse, the queer, the troublesome” in its refusal to accommodate the strict boundaries between healthy and unhealthy, living and dead. As half-dead figures, Louie and la Mollie resist narrative and mortal closure, lingering “part-way” between.

In turn, as Islas’s archival remains are haunted by the existence of “The Lame” as an (erased) title, we can read his embodied texts themselves as half-dead. If “narrative prosthesis . . . forwards the notion that all narratives operate out of a desire to compensate for a limitation or to reign in excess” (Mitchell and Snyder 2000: 53), then as a title like “The Lame” and its corresponding epigraph remain both visible and invisible, they seem to resist such desires, especially as such desires are compensated for/reined in by the publication of a single, definitive text. The titles imagined in its multiple versions thus help us understand

the work that would eventually be titled *La Mollie and the King of Tears* not as prosthetic but as half-dead: as haunting the interstices between unpublished and published, incomplete and complete, first and final, beginning and end.⁶

To be sure, like Anzaldúa's broader concept of border or mestiza consciousness, the condition of the half-dead is to be celebrated for its transgressive potential, but it nonetheless also conjures lingering anxiety, to be resisted: in both draft and published versions, the last word of the narrative is "alive!"—an exclamatory insistence, in the end, on resisting closure. And the narrative's negotiations of the half-dead are all the more complicated by Islas's, particularly as he wrote against the clock in the final years before his death. Scrutinizing the critical impulse to render Islas "a surrogate for a gay Chicano community" (Cutler 2008: 19) or to imagine his work "serves as a prosthesis for Chicano literature, the heretofore absent modernist limb" (18), John Alba Cutler argues that "any attempt to understand Islas's fiction within Chicano literary history needs to deal fully with his *anxieties* as integral to evolving conceptions of Chicana/o identity" (21, emphasis mine). Similarly, like the question of identifying as gay and Chicano in the 1980s, the experience of queer time is not something we should imagine Islas negotiating with any sense of ease. "In their enthusiasm to embrace asynchronous temporality," Dean (2011: 80) observes, "too many critics fail to acknowledge that there is nothing intrinsically positive about this experience, and, indeed, that it readily occasions anxiety and suffering." To read Islas's archival remains as half-dead, then, is to hold in tension, on the one hand, the textual resistance to questions of narrative, material, and even mortal closure and, on the other, the pressing desire for singularity, for wholeness, for a definitive answer to the question of what comes at the end. Both acknowledging and refusing the eventuality of bodily annihilation, the half-dead remains asynchronous, just as asynchronicity itself remains half-dead.

Distance and Resistance: "Resident Aliens"

Imagining Islas's archival remains in terms of the half-dead thus helps attune us to his work's borderlands sensibility, and we see much at stake too in the second of Islas's long list of possible titles, "Resident Aliens." If, as Julie Minich (2011: 712) argues, Islas's work constitutes

“an important intervention into the body politics of nation-building,” then the image of a “resident alien” represents not an alternative to the image the “half-dead” invoked by “The Lame” but an important variation of it. An allusion to both Louie’s perceived legal status—“he was born under the bridge that links, and separates, the United States and Mexico” (Skenazy 1996: 182)—and his experience as a Chicano “internal exile” (Neumaier 1990: 256), this second title points to the both/and-ness of double-consciousness, of a *mestizaje* connected to Louie’s Chicano identity—the home and awayness of being a (perhaps reluctant) member of the Chicano nation within the confines of the United States. Azande Seyhan (2012: 20) suggests that, “as a quintessentially hybrid identity, the Chicano/a cannot return to a national origin,” and in turn this notion that there is no national past to which to return suggests a destabilizing sense of time that parallels critical conceptions about the absent queer past.⁷ As Marissa Lopez (2011: 144) puts it, “Queer uses of time . . . undermine the permanence and production of national space.” As a (rejected) title, “Resident Aliens” thus not only helps constitute one of the asynchronous temporalities by which very different versions of the novel can coexist but also both embraces and resists Louie’s status as a member of the Chicano body politic: a subject and citizen of a nation within (and outside of) a nation.

After its multiple titles and epigraphs, the penultimate draft begins with a fictionalized note to the reader that immediately engages the notion of the resident alien. Here is the full note:

Mr. Louis Mendoza speaks English and Spanish with a Mexican accent except when he is quoting from or imitating those to whom he refers as “the more educated” members of his circle. His particular dialect emerges from the barrio of south El Paso as spoken in the 1930s and 40s, according to my in-depth research on the language of the working classes in the major urban centers along the Texas–Mexican border.

To this discourse, Mr. Mendoza adds his own constructions and deconstructions. For example, he pronounces most “-ing” words as if spelled “eeng,” emphasizing the hard “g” to a greater degree than in normal praxis. In an eccentric contradiction, he prefers “nothin” to “nothing.”

The ideological subtext of Mr. Mendoza’s monologic process is evident in his utilization of the double negative to reinforce the negative rather than to mediate the positive. In

his political unconsciousness, he also employs the phallus as signifier in an attempt, if you will, to come to terms with the Other. Despite this crude syntactical approach, he does seem to understand that language is the reader's response to the counter hegemonic movement toward syncretism.

One final note: all words beginning with "sh" are pronounced by Mr. Mendoza as if they were "ch." Hence, Shakespeare becomes "Chakespeare." In order not to offend the Anglo reader, this recording of Mr. Mendoza's speech patterns preserves the conventional spelling of the great playwright's name.

W.D. Higginson, Assistant Professor
Statistical Linguistics
Cilantro Community College Cilantro, Texas (1987a)

In this imagined version of the text, readers must experience Louie, who speaks seemingly without pause for hours, as already framed by a formal distancing mechanism: we must read across the distance introduced by the "fact" that what we are encountering isn't Louie's words themselves but a transcription provided by a professor of linguistics.⁸ The words of the story change not at all yet the frame changes them entirely: our relationship to Louie's words can't help but mutate, mediated as they are by an academic, a professional outsider.

The draft's preface, along with the titles and epigraphs, expands the distance between the cover and the story, layering intermediary after intermediary into the folds between them. We can and should attend to this expanding distance, as it tells its own story about Islas's concern with distances of all kinds: titular and narrative, yes, but also linguistic and political, even national, as well as authorial. And yet these intermediaries are barely phantoms in the published text. The distances they produce remain irresolvable, unbridgeable, even as Islas lives in and through them: the narrative experiments, the narrative multiplicity offered by the archive, provide an intimate picture of the distance between the observer and the observed, the writer and the reader, the Chicano and the American subject.

Considering *La Mollie* as an example of roman noir, Aldama (2000: 583) observes that Islas "employs a storytelling frame that shifts from the white hetero-masculine subject a la Chandler to the *pachuco*, *caló* speaking and troping Louie Mendoza," but such emphasis on the significance of

Louie's speech is satirized by the penultimate draft's fictional explanatory note, citing W. D. Higginson's own "in-depth research" and explaining "the ideological subtext of Mr. Mendoza's monologic process." Nowhere is the satire more biting than in Higginson's description of the liberties Louie takes with language: noting that Louie's accent alters pronunciation of Shakespeare to "Chakespeare," Higginson explains that "in order not to offend the Anglo reader, this recording of Mr. Mendoza's speech patterns preserves the conventional spelling of the great playwright's name." Where Shakespeare is often lauded for his manipulations of the English language, Louie's inventions are no sooner acknowledged than erased, pointing to Islas's continued concern with how linguistic play is celebrated, tolerated, or elided according to one's proximity to whiteness.⁹

In accommodating the delicate sensibilities of the Anglo reader for whom the recording has been made, Professor Higginson widens the gap between Chicano speaker and (presumed) Anglo reader. In a more limited fashion, Higginson appears in the published text too, though there he remains anonymous, and the fictionalized note is erased entirely. In the draft the professor speaks, more directly conditioning our entire experience of the novel, while in the published version he appears only as Louie addresses him: "I seen you got that tape recorder going, man. . . . You can't help it if you're just a professor from some JC like San Cilantro" (*MKT* 4). We are thus compelled to read this "transcript" through the filter of the recorder, whose purpose is to measure the variations in his dialect and his pronunciation, and in this way the fictionalized note evinces how, in purporting to know the Chicano subject, formal academic language functions to push that subject away. Making claims about Louie's "political unconsciousness" and about what he "seems to understand," Higginson instead reveals that he knows very little of value about the man he records, or at the very least cannot describe Louie in ways that do not do not demean or flatten his character.

Higginson's academic approach thus cannot register how Louie's character is constituted by the vivacity of his voice. "Louie's talk binds together the episodic and associative jumps between past and present," Skenazy (1996: 186) observes, but it "also seem[s] to bind his spirit together as well." Aldama (2004: 25) sees Louie's voice as "completely opposite to *The Rain God's* more subdued . . . book-smart Miguel Chico," so that where Islas once turned to a narrator Skenazy (1984)

called “a prig blind to the beauty of the world he once grew in and now fears contamination from,” with *La Mollie*, according to Patrick Hamilton (2011: 146), he turns instead to one aiming to “seduc[e readers] into compassion and understanding toward those differently sexed, gendered, raced, and ethnic from themselves.”

But the frame of Higginson's professorial voice domesticates the transgressive power of that seduction. Presenting Louie as someone who “understand[s] that language is the reader's response to the counter hegemonic movement toward syncretism” seems to emphasize the language used to “decode” Louie's speech over the speech itself and the story he tells. As Skenazy (1996: 180) argues, this frame thus serves to “satiriz[e] the language and posturing of the anthropological and sociological approaches to difference in which human beings are too often diminished into specimens of primitive tribal practices.” At the same time, early readers of the draft advised against such a frame. “Louis [*sic*] is fresh and interesting enough to carry the novel without the . . . quite reductive and I think clumsy device of scholarly notes worked up by a pretentious asshole,” Diane Middlebrook wrote, in a particularly strong response, and she worried that “the apparatus would drive the readers away, not draw them in” (quoted in Aldama 2004: 55). Islas did drop the frame in the final draft and the published novel itself, though the existence of this other draft nonetheless shadows any sense in the later versions that our access to Louie's voice is unmediated.

Of course, the presence and erasure of the mediating frame is evident not in the published text but in the archive, itself always at a remove from readers who might wish to see it, should they even know it exists. That the archive thus preserves the “pretentious asshole” professor almost exclusively for viewing by professors and other academics is worth pausing over. My own presence in sitting with the archive, and now attempting to convey something about its pages to you, a reader likely counted in the ranks of an academic audience, draws me, as critic, into yet another of the work's asynchronous temporalities, a future imagined only by those with the appropriate access.

The loud, introductory voice of the academic character in the penultimate draft and his more ghosted presence in the published version attest to how for Islas the process of writing involves the process of reckoning with distance, both formal and critical. What does it mean to be placed at a remove from a narrator like Louie, who turns accusingly

to his listener and says, “You like it, don’t you, grabbing people and winding their woes onto your machines so you can listen to em again and again and write about em. Strange way to make a buck, man. I guess we all do what we gotta do” (*MKT* 4). It’s hard not to imagine Islas—a tenured academic, who, having heard his own description of his work, paused to remark, “That sounds so professorial, doesn’t it?” (Walsh 1984)—introducing Higginson as a way to distance himself from, and observe, himself. As Skenazy (1996: 187) argues, “The interview that comprises the book is on the one hand an acknowledgment on the academic’s part of Louie’s existence and importance, on the other a dismissal of his story to a category of accent and syntactic variation.” But, attuned to the professor’s goals, Louie might be read here as participating in the academic distancing for his own purpose, as manipulating his story in order to prompt certain responses from his listener. In turn, as Louie articulates what’s at stake for the professor in the distancing process of making his recording, we can imagine a distance that Louie feels as well. If we bring into view the penultimate draft, framed by Higginson’s note, we see distance layering upon distance, Louie receding further and further out of reach. On the one hand, there is the published, seemingly unmediated text, the direct access to the voice of the Chicano speaker; on the other hand, there is the archived mediated text, the professor conditioning our access to Louie’s voice and offering judgments about that voice. Together, they render him as a familiar foreigner to the narrative, both an unmediated teller of his own story and the subject of someone else’s narrative, a vexed resistance to annihilation of the Chicano body politic. If in these competing versions of the narrative Louie becomes the Chicano resident alien, then in the archive, the professorial note itself appears as a kind of resident alien.

Chakespeare in the Barrio

As imagined titles for Islas’s final novel, both “The Lame” and “Resident Aliens” frame understandings of the text in ways that, refusing closure, ask us to consider the asynchronous temporalities of living and dead—of distance and proximity to the Chicano subject both narratively and materially—as attempts at resisting bodily and cultural annihilation. But in his initial letter to Dijkstra, Islas suggests one more title: “I want to call it either *Chakespeare in the Barrio* or *The King of Tears*” (Islas 1987b).

“Chakespeare in the Barrio” points to the in-betweenness of Louie’s embodied experience of Chicano identity, to a grappling with the distance between being named and naming one’s self. As Skenazy (1996: 189) suggests, “*La Mollie* . . . exemplifies this stance of living stationed between worlds and cultures, nowhere more than in Louie’s interactions with Shakespeare’s legacy.” Throughout the narrative, Louie returns to his exploits in the classroom of Miss Leila P. Harper, who required her lower-class, nonwhite students to “translate” *Romeo and Juliet* line by line into language accessible to them. Here, we see Louie’s keen if accidental insights into the world and the language of Shakespeare, or Chakespeare, and in particular the line, “And yet I but wish for the thing I have,” which Louie repeatedly claims not to understand. Echoing what Louie’s friends begin to call him while under Miss Harper’s tutelage, the title evokes cultural and linguistic borderlands. “When young Latino/as . . . connect with Shakespeare,” Ruben Espinosa (2016: 59) observes, “what they often recognize is their own otherness on display.”

Just as the draft’s first epigraph from Luke helps us interpret the draft title of “The Lame,” the draft’s second and third epigraphs—from Walt Whitman’s “Song of Myself” and act 2, scene 2 of *Romeo and Juliet*, in which Juliet proclaims, “And yet I wish but for the thing I have”—help us hear what’s at stake in “Chakespeare in the Barrio.” In aligning Islas’s work with Shakespeare’s, the epigraphs locate this novel about a Mexican American drifter not only in relation to a traditional literary canon but also to a history of US nation-building. We can easily associate that nation- (and canon-) building with Islas’s second epigraph (“Who goes there? Hankering, gross, mystical, nude” [Whitman 1855: 25]) or his description of Louie as “my Chicano Huckleberry Finn” (1987c), but it’s also evident in the invocation of Shakespeare. Kim Sturgess (2004: 142) has argued that in the nineteenth century, many in the United States wrestled with an “apparent conflict between a desire to establish literature as a distinct statement of American identity and the increasing recognition of Shakespeare as part of American heritage.” If this paradox—why does a citizenry keen on rejecting all things British come to adulate its most famous writer?—continues to baffle many scholars, it is perhaps no mystery to readers steeped in the complicated negotiations of double-consciousness, of seeking to build the notion of a Chicano nation within and beyond the existing nation of the United States.

Though the eventual published title identifies Louie as the “King of Tears,” second fiddle to la Mollie, Islas’s having identified him also as “Chakespeare” remains important. Chakespeare Louie may be elided in the published title, but in the penultimate draft carefully labeled by Islas—writing against the clock, and perhaps already aware that “When [he] donated his records to Stanford, they [would become] the property of the larger Chicano and American public record” (Aldama 2004: xix)—he still lives.

Whether the professor is present or erased, and whether he’s called Chakespeare or simply the King of Tears, in both manuscript and print, it is Louie who gets the last words in the novel. In the 1987 draft, as Louie recounts one last story of his struggling to understand that line from *Romeo and Juliet*, “And yet I but wish for the thing I have,” he associates that difficulty with his current efforts to understand what’s happening to him in this hospital waystation, and what’s happening to Mollie behind closed doors. As they are separated, la Mollie calls out, “I love you, Clark” (1987a: 222), and Louie struggles to guess if she had been imagining him as Clark Kent or as Clark Gable. Ultimately, though, it is Louie who names himself. In the final lines of the novel draft he resolves the issue: “Whatever, I saw from her look that she could tell who she was talking to—me, man. Louie Mendoza. The baddest actor alive!” By 1990, that final line would be revised to appear as it would in the published text: now la Mollie was talking to “Me, man. ‘Chakespeare Louie, the baddest actor alive!’” (MKT 166). Erased from the 1987 draft, “Chakespeare” is now inserted, reasserted. Here the text actively resists Higginson’s academic distancing: no spelling, no worry about the easily offended “Anglo reader.” As if freed from the academic frame, this Louie Mendoza can claim his own name for himself—very much an “actor.” Indeed Louie conjures himself as both an agent and a performer in equal measure. He is subject to the narrative, and dutifully plays his part, the not-so-smart smart guy who suggests to the academic recording his story: “Maybe talking to you is some kind of charm, man” (MKT 165). As subject to that narrative he is left waiting, and some early readers described the ending as lacking resolution, as a narrative space where nothing happens. But in all ways, throughout all versions Louie remains consistently “alive!” (149). In this final sentence, the half-dead Chicano bodies of the text appear as resistant subjects: both the author (whose book was threatened and conditioned by the prospect of his death) and

the “lame” Chicano embedded narrator (whose story is threatened and conditioned by the listening professor’s frame) exclaim their aliveness—their persistence as actors in the asynchronous temporalities they inhabit, including those offered by the multiple versions of this very same final line. Here the imagined futures of Chakespeare and Louie are, to paraphrase Freeman, flung outward so that they might one day be reconfigured or reassembled. We might say, that is, that approaching what we have come to call *La Mollie and the King of Tears* as a posthumous text, reading it via its unpublished versions, its guesses and uncertainties, engages us in reading as a lived experience of our own longing for the thing we have.

Conclusion

When in his early thirties Arturo Islas suffered a serious bout of ulcerative colitis that led to his hospitalization and an eventual colostomy, his mother spent many hours in a hospital waiting room. The parallels between her experience and that of the increasingly frantic Louie in the closing pages of *La Mollie* are striking. With “the minutes ticking away,” she writes in a 1969 letter, “my thoughts were ‘what if something happens and he never sees me again,’ until I couldn’t stand it” (Islas 1969). At the same time, like Louie, Islas’s mother also seems at least in part to have been deeply engaged by the experience of waiting. She writes, “I used to feel like I was dreaming while I was there . . . I couldn’t believe I was there but I was. I was never bored or tired either, as you so often thought. In a lot of ways my stay at the hospital was an interesting experience.” But though Arturo’s mother is able to write to the living Islas about her waiting room experience, as the narrative trails off we are left uncertain about whether Louie will have the chance to describe his experience to *la Mollie*. That trailing off helps constitute the narrative’s meaning but also reflects its materiality: asynchronously and anxiously, each version values incompleteness, imagining itself as a border space between cultures, between reading and understanding, between life and death. The narrative and its materiality take turns “speaking to the incomplete fulfillments we all grapple with in this earthly life,” Skenazy (1996: 198) suggests, so that just as *La Mollie and the King of Tears* tells a story of incomplete fulfillments, it is itself an incomplete fulfillment. To the extent that all written texts are such, this is perhaps no revelation.

But Islas's archive records not only his textual haphazard starts and faults but also his personal incomplete fulfillment of the chance, while living, to read Louie's voice off the printed page. The archive, that is, contextualizes posthumous publication, the creation of a text living-in-death, as an invitation to reckon with how a longing for a finished product is a longing for finality from which there is no return.

Our encounter with the pages of Islas's novel in the archive—the paragraphs we skim, the folders we shuffle through, the pages we frame through our camera lenses—fundamentally shape the way we read the text. In that sense, we might say that, for those without access to those pages, the posthumously published text becomes a stand-in for the archive that is itself a stand-in for the absent body, always holding us at a distance from Islas and from his work. Islas may have preferred that; the novel itself distances us from the story, as Louie, speaking into a scholar's tape recorder, acknowledges every word he utters as an act, a performance holding the body at a remove. But the fact of the archive, its existence, its persistence, offers an alternative way of interacting with and imagining the work of *La Mollie*. Which bodies are brought into contact with Islas's corpus, and where? Who is granted access to the story, and at whose invitation? These questions are asked simultaneously by the novel and its archive, to be answered repeatedly, indefinitely, incompletely. In the asynchronous temporalities of its erasures and additions, in the half-dead framing and reframing of this monologue of a novel, in the bodily traces of Islas's hand slashing through letters and lines, and in the presence of our own hands turning the pages of the archival remains in that cold and quiet room, Islas and the imagined futures of his work live, and die, and live again.



Allison Fagan is associate professor of English at James Madison University. She teaches courses in US Latina/o/x literatures and US print cultures and is the author of *From the Edge: Chicana/o Border Literature and the Politics of Print* (2016).

Notes

1. Given the relative lack of sustained scholarly attention to posthumously published texts as a phenomenon or genre, there is work yet to be done in considering the way these peculiar publications complicate our understandings of authorship, editing, agency, and even temporality. As a test case, this essay seeks in part to approach Islas in light of these kinds of considerations and to suggest that posthumously published texts demand a reading practice that more purposefully imagines the role of the body—of the authors, the texts, the readers—in encountering the narrative.
2. The complicated drafting and publishing history of *The Rain God*—a novel that seems to have drastically expanded and drastically contracted due to concerns about responses to Chicano or homosexual content—has been detailed by many scholars, including Aldama (2004), José David Saldívar (1991), Yolanda Padilla (2009), and Karen Skinazi (2008).
3. Islas wrote the first draft of what would become *La Mollie and the King of Tears* in a relatively short time: the penultimate draft lists handwritten completion dates for four parts of the novel ranging from October of 1986 to January 31, 1987, written while visiting and working in El Paso on leave from his position in the English department at Stanford University, where he was the first Chicano to earn tenure (Islas 1987a).
4. This essay aims to underscore Islas's novel as a product of editorial negotiations taking place both before and after his death, negotiations exemplified by the changes he introduced in response to friends and editors. We see here a sense of publication as inherently collaborative; a larger project beyond the scope of this essay would compare the various manuscripts to unpack the precise editorial decisions introduced by Skenazy and others into Islas's text.
5. For a more detailed discussion of the autobiographical elements of *La Mollie*, see also Paul Skenazy's afterword, "The Long Walk Home" (1996).
6. Emily Caroline Perkins (2006) argues that Islas's own "'half dead' status allows him to also navigate between the realms of the masculine and feminine, the mind and body, and the acceptable and unacceptable in his culture."
7. See, also, Christopher Castiglia and Christopher Reed (2012: 7), who critique "models of the queer past [where] the clock starts now: there is a present that will become history in the future but no past worth recalling as a realm of possibility in the present and, by extension, the future."

8. Skenazy (1996: 180), in his afterword to the novel, refers to a similar preface that Islas “discarded . . . shortly before his death,” though that preface is also clearly different in significant ways. Skenazy describes it as a mechanism by which “the novel is introduced as the purported transcript of a tape recording found among the papers of the late W. D. Higginson of San Cilantro Community College” (180), now introduced by a colleague of Higginson’s, adding yet another layer of narrative distance between readers and Louie, the speaker of the entire novel.

9. Islas often wrote preemptive defenses of his language to editors, agents, and publishers, explaining, “The educated think nothing of translating T. S. Eliot’s ramblings in French and Italian; surely, I present less of a problem. Hemingway, for all his Spanish gaffes, is a precedent” (Islas 1974).

Works Cited

- Aldama, Frederick Luis. 2000. “Ethnoqueer Rearchitexturing of Metropolitan Space.” *Nepantla* 1, no. 3: 581–604.
- Aldama, Frederick Luis. 2004. *Dancing with Ghosts: A Critical Biography of Arturo Islas*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Anzaldúa, Gloria. (1987) 2011. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute.
- Arturo Islas Papers. 1956–91. M0618. Special Collections and University Archives, Stanford University Libraries. Stanford, CA.
- Bryant, John. 2002. *The Fluid Text: A Theory of Revision and Editing for Book and Screen*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Bushell, Sally. 2009. *Text as Process: Creative Composition in Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Dickinson*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.
- Castiglia, Christopher, and Christopher Reed. 2012. “Introduction: In the Interest of Time.” In *If Memory Serves: Gay Men, AIDS, and the Promise of the Queer Past*, 1–38. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Colucci, Emily. 2012. “The Dirty Scene of Downtown New York: An Interview with Marvin Taylor.” August 10, *Hyperallergic: Sensitive to Art and Its Discontents*. //hyperallergic.com/55469/the-dirty-scene-of-downtown-new-york/.
- Cutler, John Alba. 2008. “Prosthesis, Surrogation, and Relation in Arturo Islas’s *The Rain God*.” *Aztlan* 33, no. 1: 7–32.
- Dean, Tim. 2011. “Bareback Time.” In *Queer Times, Queer Becomings*, edited by E. L. McCallum and Mikko Tuhkanen, 75–100. Albany: SUNY Press.

- Derrida, Jacques. 1995. *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. Translated by Eric Prenowitz. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Espinosa, Ruben. 2016. "Stranger Shakespeare." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 65, no. 1: 51–67.
- Freeman, Elizabeth. 2007. "Introduction." *GLQ* 13, nos. 2–3: 159–76.
- Gladstein, Mimi. 2008. "From El Paso to Del Sapó: Intersections of Biography and Fiction." In *Critical Mappings of Arturo Islas's Fiction*, edited by Frederick Luis Aldama, 315–35. Tempe, AZ: Bilingual Review.
- Halberstam, Judith. 2005. *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. New York: New York University Press.
- Hamilton, Patrick. 2011. *Of Space and Mind: Cognitive Mappings of Contemporary Chicano/a Fiction*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Islas, Arturo. 1974. Letter to Roger Straus. October 19. Arturo Islas Papers, box 5, folder 3. Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries. Stanford, CA.
- Islas, Arturo. 1983. Postcard to Susan Doran. March 3. Arturo Islas Papers, box 7, folder 1. Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries. Stanford, CA.
- Islas, Arturo. 1984. *The Rain God: A Desert Tale*. New York: Harper.
- Islas, Arturo. 1987a. "'Chakespeare in the Barrio or the King of Tears, Penultimate Draft.'" 1–122. Arturo Islas Papers, box 15, folder 1. Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries. Stanford, CA.
- Islas, Arturo. 1987b. Letter to Maria Guarnaschelli. December 2. Arturo Islas Papers, box 7, folder 9. Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries. Stanford, CA.
- Islas, Arturo. 1987c. Letter to Sandra ("Sandy") Dijkstra. June 29. Arturo Islas Papers, box 7, folder 10. Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries. Stanford, CA.
- Islas, Arturo. 1988. Letter to Maria Guarnaschelli. April 29. Arturo Islas Papers, box 7, folder 9. Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries. Stanford, CA.
- Islas, Arturo. 1990. *Migrant Souls*. New York: Avon.
- Islas, Arturo. 1996. *La Mollie and the King of Tears*. Edited by Paul Skenazy. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
- Islas, Arturo. 2004. *Arturo Islas: The Uncollected Works*. Edited by Frederick Luis Aldama. Houston: Arte Público.
- Islas, Jovita. 1969. Letter to Arturo Islas. July 30. Arturo Islas Papers, box 1, folder 10. Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries. Stanford, CA.
- Lopez, Marissa K. 2011. *Chicano Nations: The Hemispheric Origins of Mexican American Literature*. New York: New York University Press.

Allison Fagan

- Minich, Julie Avril. 2011. "Enabling Aztlán: Arturo Islas, Disability, and Chicano Cultural Nationalism." *Modern Fiction Studies* 57, no. 4: 694–714.
- Mitchell, David T., and Sharon L. Snyder. 2000. "Narrative Prosthesis and the Materiality of Metaphor." In *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse*, 47–64. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Neumaier, Diane. 1990. "Judy Baca: Our People are the Internal Exiles." In *Making Face, Making Soul: Haciendo Caras*, edited by Gloria Anzaldúa and Ana Louise Keating, 256–70. San Francisco: Aunt Lute.
- Padilla, Yolanda. 2009. "Felix beyond the Closet: Sexuality, Masculinity and Relations of Power in Arturo Islas's *The Rain God*." *Aztlán* 34, no. 2: 11–34.
- Perkins, Emily Caroline. 2006. "Recovery and Loss: Politics of the Disabled Male Chicano." *Disability Studies Quarterly* 26, no. 1. //dsq-sds.org/article/view/649/826.
- Saldívar, José David. 1991. "The Hybridity of Culture in Arturo Islas's *The Rain God*." *Dispositio* 16, no. 41: 109–19.
- Seyhan, Azade. 2012. *Writing Outside the Nation*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Shumake, Jessica. 2015. "Archival Research as Queer Practice: 'Pull Here.'" *The Writing Instructor*. //parlormultimedia.com/twistest/shumake-2015-03.
- Skenazy, Paul. 1984. Review of *The Rain God*, by Arturo Islas. *Oakland Tribune*, November 28, n.p. Arturo Islas Papers, box 7, folder 5. Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries. Stanford, CA.
- Skenazy, Paul. 1996. "The Long Walk Home." Afterword to *La Mollie and the King of Tears*, by Arturo Islas, 167–98. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
- Skenazy, Paul. 2016. Email note to Allison Fagan. May 19.
- Skinazi, Karen E. H. 2008. "Out of Personhood, Out of Print: Cultural Censorship from Harriet Wilson to Arturo Islas." In *Critical Mappings of Arturo Islas's Fictions*, edited by Frederick Luis Aldama, 115–38. Tempe, AZ: Bilingual.
- Sturgess, Kim. 2004. *Shakespeare and the American Nation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Walsh, Eileen. 1984. "Prof. Arturo Islas's 'The Rain God': A Variation on American Dreams." Interview with Arturo Islas. *Stanford Campus Report*. Arturo Islas Papers, box 5, folder 1. Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries. Stanford, CA.
- Whitman, Walt. 1855. *Leaves of Grass*. Brooklyn, NY. google.com/books/edition/Leaves_of_Grass/9U1gZi-O3dEC?hl=en&gbpv=1. Accessed Sept. 8, 2021.

Abstract

This essay considers Arturo Islas's posthumously published novel, *La Mollie and the King of Tears* (1996), arguing that an examination of its "archival remains"—its drafted and rejected material found in Islas's archive—offers compelling evidence of the text's anxious resistances to bodily, narrative, and cultural annihilation. Drawing on textual scholarship that prioritizes notions of texts as "fluid" or "in process" as well as on theories of queer and asynchronous temporalities, I argue for a reading of the novel as haunted by its erasures and absences, and for a reading practice that more purposefully imagines the role of the body—of the author, of the text, and of the reader—in constituting and reconstituting the narrative.

Keywords

Chicana/o/x literature, editing, posthumous publication