

BORDERLANDS AND IDENTITY - MIGRATION AND REPRESENTATION

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation addresses the effects of globalization on literary and cinematic productions from the United States and Mexico in regard to the shared experiences of migration insofar as demonstrated by intensified levels of technology, movement, marginalization, and transformation of once national identities into transnational identities defined by culture and common experiences. At the same time, it also proposes a glimpse into the role of transnational companies and neo-liberal policies in diminishing the national identities of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries into stateless-transnational subjects. In addition to contemplating theories of globalization, the selections for the corpus of this study physically or thematically originate from Northern Mexico, and the Mexican-American ideological border regions of the United States. From Northern Mexico, I will use examples from the written work of David Toscana, Luis Humberto Crosthwaite, Rosina Conde, and Rosario Sanmiguel, as well as cinematographic productions from Patricia Riggen, Gustavo Loza, Alejandro González Iñárritu, and María Novaro. From the US, I have made a similar two medium-based selection of written and visual cultural texts from Sandra Cisneros, Victor Villaseñor, Richard Rodríguez, and María Ripoll. In order to understand how these cultural texts embody the aforementioned indicators of globalization, this project embarks along the migratory path from south to north (with a few deviations) to demonstrate the role of identity in developing periphery literatures which take into account transnational, national, regional, and local affiliations juxtaposed with the consequences of globalization. Moreover, we will see the maturation and accomplishment of these fringe

literatures into globally acclaimed and respected entities that now share the platform with other famed cultural works demonstrating their breadth, scope, and width.

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to the most influential teacher in my life, my grandmother JoAnn Sells (Schmidt), as she is the one who guided me on a path to higher knowledge. I am forever thankful for the experiences, interests and unconditional love that she has shared with me throughout life. Had it not been for her intriguing personality, inquisitive nature, and relentless search for answers, I wouldn't have had the skills needed to complete this project. If anyone is deserving of a doctorate, it is Grandma Sells.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 1- Globalization and Contemplating Borders/Identity.....	20
Defining Globalization: its Impact on Economy and Culture.....	21
Globalization: Mexico and the World.....	30
People, Identity and Borders in the Twenty-first Century.....	38
Globalization and its Aftermath: Marginalization, Nomadism, Fragmentation and Hybridity.....	47
CHAPTER 2- Nomadism/Migration: New Perspectives from Mexico.....	56
The State of Migration in Mexico.....	56
The Socio-economic Situation of Mexican Migration.....	60
Migration in Northern Mexican Narrative and Mexican Cinematography.....	64
Deterritorialization and the Effects of Geography.....	70
The Transnational Experience from the Mexican Perspective.....	81
<i>Santa María del Circo</i> and the Carnavalesque.....	83
New Tendencies in Migration.....	91
CHAPTER 3- Mexico's Northern Border Zone.....	98
The Border and the Participants.....	99
Mexico's Northern Border Expression.....	103
(Narco)corridos.....	116
The US Influence.....	119
Food, Otherness and Music.....	122
CHAPTER 4- Representations of Hybridity: the Mexican-American/Chican@ Discourse.....	130
Sui generis?.....	137
Representation a la Tortilla Soup.....	154
"Mexicanness".....	159
CONCLUSION.....	171
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	178

INTRODUCTION

“Border thinking” (Mignolo), Life on the Hyphen (Pérez-Firmat), Contact Zones (Pratt), Nepantla (Anzaldúa), In-betweenness (Bhabha), rasquachismo (Ybarra-Fausto), Transculturation (Ortiz), Hybridization (Canclini), Acculturation (Malinowski), Assimilation, Globalization, and Glocalization are just a few of the numerous terms and/or concepts ubiquitous to the human experience at a time when intensified human movement, commerce, and telecommunications continuously redefine people, culture, and society as a whole. In a rapidly-changing world in which all of the aforesaid terms apply in some way, shape or fashion, it is my quest to bridge the gap between two very different thematic approaches to the Mexican migratory experience that are deeply affected by the division of the physical border between Mexico and the United States. I will analyze how Mexican and Mexican-American cultural productions, chiefly film and literature, approach the topic of migration, areas of the migratory path, and identity.¹ It is also necessary to illustrate how each of these works embodies fundamental differences, as well as similarities, in its technique for writing from the “fringe” or “peripheral” areas of each of their respective countries. As a result in population shifts in the peripheral areas, increased literary production along the border, and a global readership, a new cultural “center” has emerged not necessarily as a national literature, but yet that of a literature that responds to the themes relevant

¹ Mexican American- refers to any member of the heterogeneous Mexican-origin population in the USA. Chicano is used in much of California, but some choose not to use the term for the political connotations and adopt other terms such as Hispano (New Mexico) or Mexican / Mexican American in other areas such as Chicago and Texas. Mechicano (Mexicano & Chicano) is used to connote a politicized identity that affirms cultural and historical connections between all Mexicans (Allatson 159).

to those who live along these Borderlands.² This literature addresses a large set of socioeconomic and geopolitical factors that put Mexico in the crossroads of globalization: it increases its exposure to the world due to its wealth in human labor and natural resources, while pushing some of its population into marginalization, as is the case in Ciudad Juárez in light of the misogyny that occurs on a daily basis, not to mention other barbaric practices.

In each border region, on either side of the actual physical border extending from Tijuana and San Diego to Matamoros and Brownsville, authors and cinematographers depict a reality interpreting and illustrating experiences which, in all actuality, reflect an identity, be that a local, regional, national, transnational, or an international identity. In recent times, economic agreements, technological advances, wars, terrorism, population increases, major political changes and the inequalities in wealth distribution have been globally significant events that exacerbate the magnitude of marginalized and disadvantaged people who are being thrust into a world of unknowns, a world of migration in a time when anti-immigration sentiment abounds due to the ongoing economic turmoil (recession, high unemployment, underemployment, slowing economies, and geopolitical tensions that cause commodity spikes) across the globe. This has affected nearly every country in unprecedented ways and has contributed to economic disparities and greater levels of displaced peoples who ultimately find themselves in *las trincheras* (the trenches) of more affluent nations where they, to some degree, pass through the process of acculturation and assimilation by acquiring new ways of living, thinking, dressing and speaking, whether intentional or not since many times to be able to function in that country depend on certain levels of adaptation, acculturation, and assimilation.

² This refers to the expression used by Gloria Anzaldúa in her work with the same name, but these Borderlands to which I allude encompass a voice that does not necessarily come strictly from the US –side of the physical border.

The influence of the world's wealthier nations has spurred changes in the way people from the less affluent nations live and perceive themselves, through cultural hegemony, market manipulation, and consumerism. Migration, global communications, consumption, and returning expatriates, are some of the ways that have placed the world's population in contact with one another economically, culturally, and ideologically. As a result, the progression of international interaction has formed identities and regions heavily defined by transculturation and hybridity, as marginalized and deterritorialized people and cultures, either by migration or global influences, become less "nation" oriented and more heterogeneous, just as the world was, according to Alejandro Lugo, before the "imagined community" and the nation of the nineteenth and most of the twentieth century (56). The totalizing systems of idealized politics and "nation-based" identity were created as a logical reaction to justify newly created borders, as well as promote "national" harmony, unity and security by creating a hegemonic force that blocked true heterogeneity. A nation's shared sense of ideals and characteristics were fundamental in creating the nation-state and abolishing (or at least diminishing) opposing and conflictive views in the name of "peace" and "progress," clearly at the expense of plurality. As will be explained further along, globalization's role since the latter part of the twentieth century has been as a catalyst for unraveling centuries (mainly in the nineteenth and twentieth) of nation-building and is currently redefining humanity since people and countries have become internationally connected in unprecedented ways, be it through free trade agreements, regional currencies (e.g. the euro), instant global communication via a plethora of devices that can capture images live which act as catalysts for movements like the Arab Spring or the anti-Islam video produced in the US which almost immediately sparked riots in Afghanistan and other neighboring countries. This has left the state powers at the mercy of technology and subsequent nation-based and non-nation-based

cyber threats, international companies, and an interconnected public that increasingly speaks at least one of the most commonly spoken international languages (i.e. predominantly English, and to a less degree French, Arabic, Chinese, Spanish, German). Identities are thus changing from being defined largely by the state, into one more defined as experiential and individualistic.

Undoubtedly, identity is a question of perception and perspective, and as a subject changes positions and contexts, that identity is viewed differently when juxtaposed with other influences and realities. This cultural notion of “*différence*” (Hall, DuGuy 1996) is especially noted in areas regionally notorious for constant fluxes (i.e. linguistically, ethnically, socially, culturally, and economically) that are intertwined directly or indirectly with migration and/or migrants. This is true for either side of the physical border or in regions and cities where there are significant numbers of migrants such as Texas, California, New York City, Miami or Chicago, for example, or any other world border region or city where this transpires. Although this approach of viewing the physical border can be, at times, somewhat erroneous and divisive since there are many other possible definitions of “border,” my intent is to use the physical border to highlight certain tendencies, while later recognizing that the border is also fluid and porous, as the shared transcultural realities as revealed by those who contemplate the border experience.³

Even though issues relating to the US-Mexico border and “borders” will be discussed in this work, I hesitate in categorizing this work under “Border Studies,” as the term can be defined loosely and ambiguously due to its multiple definitions and exclusions, even when the goal is to be diversified and inclusive, as Scott Johnson and David Michaelson have noted when contemplating how to approach borders from a theoretical point of view as “the idea of the

³ Other borders may be defined as sexual, psychological, cultural, ethnic, linguistic etc.

‘border’ or ‘borderlands’ has also been expanded to include nearly every psychic or geographic space about which one can thematize problems of boundary or limit” (1). However, their criticism also underscores that in order to enable a truly all-inclusive study, it is virtually impossible to not write something exclusive, as even they claim that their *Border Theory* is founded on mapping exclusions that are “geographic, ethnic, theoretical, or other” (3).

Accordingly, my focus will include the multifaceted idea of borders by respecting this broad definition, while at the same time focusing on cultural productions from the both sides of the physical border between the US and Mexico to consider their unique styles and approaches to living in a region defined by globalization and a divisive border. By recognizing their differences, as Johnson and Michaelson affirm, exclusions and some level of conclusions are almost inevitable, yet equally important in fully understanding the different subjectivities represented by each of these zones.

For instance, whereas *norteco* writers and cinematographers from Mexico have centered their works on the experience on the Mexican side of the border, it still shares similarities to the Mexican-American and/or Chican@ experience due to the very nature of migration occurring across national borders since the migrants in question are commonly, but not exclusively, marginalized themselves.⁴ However, since Mexican-American and Chican@ writing occurs outside of Mexico for the most part, it does discuss, at times, topics that are thematically

⁴ Chicano / Chicana / Chican@ / Xicano / Xicana- Originally a term of disparagement for working-class Mexican Americans, Chicano was adopted as a collective identity marker in the 1960s by the Chicano Movement. The term announced a break along generational and aspirational lines between Mexican American student and worker activists, and older Mexican Americans. It also signified a desire to differentiate Mexican Americans from other Latino/a sectors. The term comes from either 1) Chihuahua & Mexicano; 2) From Mexica (indigenous people) and the Náhuatl pronunciation “x” as “sh” or “ch”; 3) From the word “chico” used as a disparaging term by Anglo-Americans in the nineteenth century when referring to a Mexican-American (Allatson 61).

different which relate to unique cultural patterns as opposed to those of the mainstream United States (especially outside of the American Southwest), race, ethnicity and ancestry, and a common struggle socially and culturally against the hegemonic culture of the US.

Nevertheless, both literatures address the changes, challenges and realities of the migrant experience, both before and after [migrating], and the reasons as to why migration occurs in the first place, perhaps due to existing social conditions. As such, even though the discourse originating from these two different locations spawn diverse outcomes as will be unveiled in this study, we will also consider some of the characteristics that remain relevant in both literatures such as marginalization, cultural adaptation/acculturation due to human movement and geographical differences, and identity to Mexico both past and present. This present form of association with Mexico will focus on recuperating or maintaining *raíces* (roots) and is carried out via transnational identity markers largely associated with objects of mass production that can be readily consumed such as music, cinema, and food.

Conversely, it is noteworthy that a more critical worldview is struck by those on the Mexican side since they continue to live with the reality of a political system and its interactions with the US government and border regions that cause an imbalanced relationship, thus exemplifying the underdog [Mexico] of the two nations when it comes to trade and immigration policies, as well as international political and economic power.

To that end, the purpose and goal of this dissertation is to define and comprehend how the concept of identity is contemplated in Mexican and Mexican-American cultural productions around the passage of NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement) at the local, regional and global level in order to compare and contrast the differing approaches to a topic (migration) that transcends borders, while at the same time forming a new quasi-national identity depicted in

literature that alludes to realities of groups [i.e. Indigenous-Mexican, Mexican-American, *norteco* Mexicans, border cultures] based on fringe identities that, in essence, are notably affected by national boundaries and their host nation, while recognizing the transnationality of the shared borderlands that maintain deep cultural, historical and ethnic connections.⁵

This dissertation is divided into four chapters. The first chapter will serve as the theoretical foundation for understanding migration in conjunction with epistemologies that contemplate globalization as a leading factor in increased migration, world interaction and the subduing effect it poses on nationalisms and national boundaries. The subsequent chapters are divided in a regionally-specific thematic approach which facilitates the understanding that although globalization and “border thinking” are compelling forces in erasing differences and nationalisms, there are still distinctive approaches that bring to light the local, regional, national, transnational and international realities of Mexican migrants and non-migrants on each side of the physical border between Mexico and the US.

At present, by dividing Chican@/Latin@ Studies and Mexican Border Literature (i.e. *Literatura de la frontera norte*) into area-specific studies, the result has been the lack of communication and sharing of ideas in order to achieve a higher understanding of the complete phenomenon. While this division allows for an in-depth study of each area, investigations integrating the two approaches in academia are lacking since it is commonplace to have divisions between departments, disciplines, faculty and language, ideologies and methodologies. As this is unfortunate, at least in the interdisciplinary sense, it does not imply that there are not such efforts taking place to bridge the gap, especially from research centers like El Colegio de la Frontera Norte and by certain universities and interdisciplinary scholars across the border region and

⁵ The North American Free Trade Agreement between Canada, the United States and Mexico effectuated in 1994.

beyond.⁶ However, these approaches many times become a question of one's own subjectivity since one's investigation tends to side with (or focus on) one specific experience, be that the Chican@, Latin@, Mexican-American, the newly migrated Mexican experience, or the migrant border experience in Northern Mexico (i.e. *Literatura de la frontera norte*). Each of these area studies reflects on the migratory nature of certain regions and peoples where migration or border modifications have changed a way of living and created new consciousnesses from within.⁷

In spite of clear divisions, both sides embody an increasingly intertwined transnational identity facilitated by communication, established networks of migrants and markets, transportation and more importantly the diversification, size and scope of migrant origin and destination. Media and telecommunications have made it possible for a continuous dialogue transnationally since families, communities, and people maintain contact either physically or virtually with either country.

Although it will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 2, the point of departure of Mexicans migrating to the United States changed significantly, as did the place of destination, since the first migrations in earlier days involved only a few states in both countries [Mexico and US]. At present, migration encompasses all states in both countries. Prior to the 1980s and passage of NAFTA, the now intensified relations were much less established for reasons ranging from less economic activity along the border, significantly less population in border cities, and less vigilance in the border regions since migrants would flow more freely due to policies that

⁶ Colegio de la Frontera Norte, otherwise known as COLEF, was founded in 1982 <http://www.colef.mx/>.

⁷ This reference takes into consideration that the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe reconfigured the border and people were not displaced in the physical sense, but in the national sense. This is the premise of writer Gloria Anzaldúa who reaffirms a non-national identity, as she writes as having several.

were either not as strictly enforced, the seasonality of jobs and more institutional jobs programs such as the Bracero program from 1942-1964, and less migration occurring from zones outside of the historical zone of Mexico's north-central and border states.⁸

Throughout the past two decades, what were once considered nascent attempts at maintaining interconnectedness, now form complete tendencies and industries that have gained attention on both sides, especially on the US side.⁹ As an example, it is not by chance that presidential candidates in Mexico haven't forgone the large voting constituency in the US by campaigning to a large number of its nationals residing outside of the country (as was evident in the campaign efforts of Mexican ex-President Vicente Fox). The same can be said about national and transnational companies who sponsor events such as "*Cinco de Mayo*" parades and

⁸ According to the CONAPO (Consejo Nacional de Población de México) website, "*A partir del año 2000, la tasa de migración internacional (-6.35 por cada mil habitantes) presenta una tendencia ascendente; se estima que en 2008 la tasa es de -5.23 (es decir, alrededor de 558 mil personas salieron del país), lo que indica una disminución relativa de la emigración internacional. Únicamente dos entidades federativas registran una tasa positiva, Quintana Roo, con 8.98 por cada mil habitantes (con un saldo neto migratorio internacional de 11 mil individuos), y Baja California con una tasa de 8.21 por cada mil habitantes. Las restantes treinta entidades muestran un saldo negativo, dieciséis de ellas por debajo de la tasa nacional, y en el extremo se encuentra Michoacán, con una tasa negativa de 15.99, que representa a 64 mil individuos que dejaron la entidad para residir fuera del país*" (16-17) [Since the year 2000, the rate of international migration (-6.35 for every thousand habitants) shows a growing trend; it is estimated that in 2008, the rate is -5.23 (that is to say, nearly 558,000 people left the country), which indicates a relative reduction in international emigration. Only two federal entities register a positive rate, Quintana Roo, with 8.98 per thousand habitants (with a net international migratory balance of 11,000 individuals), and Baja California with a rate of 8.21 per thousand habitants. The remaining thirty entities show a negative balance, 16 of them less than the national rate, and at one extreme, is Michoacán, with a negative rate of 15.99, which represents 64,000 individuals who left their entity to reside outside the country] <http://www.conapo.gob.mx/publicaciones/sdm/sdm2008/01.pdf>.

⁹ Here I refer to television networks, film, print, music, food, clothing (if people are able to consume it, there is an industry ready to engage). Yúdice notes that the electronic media in Mexico and Brazil are monopolized by one meganetwork: *Televisa* and *Globo* (374). *Televisa* partners with *Univisión*, the principle Spanish language channel in the United States that televises several *Televisa* productions of popular *telenovelas*.

festivities in an effort to gain appeal to an emerging client base by showing their “cultural sensitivity” and giving away “freebies” promoting their products in Spanish and English.

Virtually all companies continuously strive to grow their business and have developed new client bases in many countries. The link to sales, as these companies have discovered, is identity, or shall we say the imitation and manipulation of identity. People buy and use products with which they can identify, be that lime-flavored *mayonesa* McCormick, Nestlé’s *chocolate Abuelita*, CDs with Mexican *norteño* music, or a car insurance company that speaks the language of its clients, like *Seguros sin Barreras* (a spin off division of *Inglés sin Barreras*, a popular language program for people inspired to learn English for success in the US). More will be discussed on these identity-driven practices involving “marketing strategies” and their effect on culture in Chapter 4.

Through an analysis of the effects of globalization and historically significant periods that identify the rise and fall of “nation-ness,” Chapter 1 discusses immigration, borders, national and transnational identities, as well as “border thinking” as a logical outlet for the cultural production among writers, cinematographers and musicians that relay the Northern Mexico and Mexican-American/Chican@ experience- these are areas that were traditionally conveyed as fringe identities and themes in the scheme of literatures on the national plan. Until recently, there wasn’t a platform on the national (or international) scenes until the 1980s.

Since this literature differed from what was being produced by the traditional literary circles, we will take into consideration the idea of “border thinking” that Walter Dignolo's presents in *Border Thinking and Colonial Differences* which is the belief that this “other thinking” does not intend to dominate as in the example of other national literatures (68); it essentially transgresses all national discourses and develops its own discourse capable of

exchanging ideas, political and economic realities, preoccupations etc. In essence, "border thinking" can also be looked at as a production of intellectual activity taking place on the border(s), or on behalf of peripheral culture(s) whose regions are more likely to be impacted by globalization and will accordingly hybridize before other regions based closer at the cultural center of the country.

Also in Chapter 1, we will assess the work of theorists (Ulrich Beck, David Harvey, Walter Mignolo, Arjun Appadurai and Néstor García Canclini) who speak to the decline of the state and its hegemonic powers as a "nation" due to transnational companies' subversion of these powers which decentralize the idea of "nation" and nation-based identities. The result of these "nation-less" identities is that culture and identity go "beyond" anything that can exist solely in one "nation" since it is *in-between* (Homi Bhabha), or positioned on the *hyphen* (Gustavo Pérez-Firmat). As identities oscillate between one "nation" and/or another, they occasionally show preference for one culture or the other, or abandon the notion of a prescribed culture altogether by creating their own subjectivity and cultural milieu (i.e. the Chican@ example). In a hybridized and transnationalized world, the realities of people and places affected by globalizing forces are expressed in the form of a legitimized voice that dwells on the recognition of a state's multiculturalism (Jesús Martín-Barbero) as we will see in Chapters 2 through 4.

Chapter 2 takes into account representations from an increasingly bountiful literary tradition from Northern Mexico which narrates, ponders, explains and interprets these migratory experiences, along with examples from a plethora of extraliterary cultural representations such as film, and addresses the repercussions of mass migration and subsequent effects in transforming and reconfiguring collective and individual identities.¹⁰ More specifically, this chapter focuses

¹⁰ This can include print, music, art, food, and other objects of production and/or consumption.

on themes primarily related to the Mexican perspective so as to analyze how identity is affected through the function of space/environment, deterritorialization and marginalization of citizens, as well as the changing role of the family institution as a result.

Even though many studies have been realized on topics related to migration on both sides of the border, ongoing studies are needed to review these flourishing literary traditions that are being developed and have gained international recognition. There are many factors that fluctuate and impact how the cultural texts between the two regions differ in their subject matter, approach and technique. Often times, critics have given their undivided attention to the cultural productions on this side of the border or the other, but there are critics that consider and explicitly study and recognize the differences between the two countries, such as Iglesias Prieto's analysis of two divergent border cinemas, one positioned in Mexico and the other in the US. She makes observations which are valid arguments at showing that while there are similarities, there are also striking differences between productions depending on their location, as she notes by claiming that production from this side of the border by Chican@s is more about resistance than what is encountered in Mexico. Moreover, the focus for Chapter 2 will be to characterize and contextualize the experience from the Mexican side through an analysis of what constitutes this truly different and unique *norteño* perspective and form of expression.

A large part of the Mexican perspective has been a collaborative effort on behalf of not only the authors, artists, musicians, cinematographer, and the like, but also through the formation of Mexico's *Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes* (Conaculta) in 1988:

The National Council for Culture and the Arts (Conaculta) was created to coordinate cultural and artistic policies, organizations, and agencies. Likewise, it

is dedicated to promoting, supporting, and sponsoring events that foster culture and the arts.

The immediate forerunner of Conaculta was the Assistant Secretary's Office at the Ministry of Public Education; however, it became independent by presidential decree in 1988, annexing all institutions, departments and agencies from other ministries with mandates of a cultural nature.

The reasons for its foundation include Conaculta's role in stimulating and encouraging both artistic and cultural creation, while at the same time guaranteeing full creative freedom. In the same vein, it was acknowledged that Conaculta must foster the artistic expression of social groups from different regions across the country in order to promote, preserve, and enrich the historic, artistic, and cultural elements that form part of Mexico's heritage.

(http://www.conaculta.gob.mx/acerca_de_en/)

Conaculta has actively promoted the work of those from the periphery (i.e. the northern states in border zones) in areas not traditionally known as Mexico's cultural center and was key in supporting the works of already existing independent publishers (e.g. *Yoremito* by Luis Humberto Crosthwaite). This intentional effort on behalf of the Mexican government initiated a nationwide dialogue representative of a changing demographic, economic climate, and diffusion of ideas and works of writers and filmmakers alike who were able to exchange ideas and cultures outside of Mexico's cultural center (i.e. Mexico City) while still receiving support and recognition.

Chapter 2 takes into account two cultural mediums (literature and film). From the literature side, we analyze *Santa María del circo* by David Toscana and *Instrucciones para cruzar la frontera* by Luis Humberto Crosthwaite. The film selections are *Al otro lado* from

Gustavo Loza and *La misma luna* directed by Patricia Riggen. These works originate from the perspective of the emigrant country (Mexico) to represent the aforementioned topics that I proposed to be associated with Mexican perspective, while inversely making comparisons between the differing perspectives including, but not limited to, those of Central and Northern Mexico, the Border region (from both sides), as well as that of the Mexican-American/Chicano and Anglo point-of-view, the latter of which will be analyzed more comprehensively in Chapters 3 and 4. The rationale for using a multifaceted cultural studies approach to the topic of migration through the analysis of both traditional and non-traditional means in all chapters is that it permits a comprehensive understanding of the daily realities of millions of people who experience migration either directly or indirectly. Likewise, it allows for a more tangible means of understanding how and why this migration takes place, as well as the consequences, positive and negative, that are associated with any human movement of this scope and scale, as well as the voices that represent those unique realities.

For Chapter 3's corpus, I have selected Luis Humberto Crosthwaite's novel *Idos de la mente* (2001), the short stories "Callejón Sucre," "Bajo el puente" and "Moonlit in the Mirror" from Rosario Sanmiguel's *Bajo el puente: Relatos desde la frontera* (2008), as well as the short story "Gaviota" from Rosina Conde's *En la tarima* (2001).¹¹ I will also incorporate two filmic representations: *El jardín del edén* (1994) and *Babel* (2008), to illustrate how life at the border zone is even more representative of the extremes of globalization since it is at the heart of hybridization, transculturation, and marginalization. They were chosen because they were unified geographically, that is, in relation to their proximity to the US/Mexican border. To present more than one perspective of the border, I opted to utilize examples from two Mexican

¹¹ In English the title is *Under the Bridge: Stories from the Border*; the original title was *Callejón Sucre y otros relatos* (1994).

cities: Tijuana and Ciudad Juárez. Even though both cities are distanced by geography, they are both closely intertwined a unique “living-on-the-border” reality. The topics pertinent to the study of the border will lead us to the plurality of its people and reterritorialization of the marginalized (including indigenous peoples) to the region in search for work at the *maquiladoras*, the effects that NAFTA has had on Mexican culture and the rise of regionally acclaimed religious figures and *norteño* music.

This purpose of Chapter 3 is to emphasize a unique subjectivity from both countries since the merging of cultures congregating geographically in a region, inescapable of the transnational world, creates a distinctive voice and aesthetics that solidifies an identity based on plurality. Moreover, Mexico’s northern cultural production implements the use of several regionally specific nuances and styles in order to fashion a new national existence based on their redefined interpretation of “Mexicanness” while reaffirming that they are not dependent on Mexico’s cultural “center” to exist and thrive. At the same time, analyzing the border voice will enable me to provide a closer look at how “border thinking” takes on a different meaning when juxtaposed with that of the Chicano/Mexican-American/US culture on the other side. Finally, I will be able to include a brief overview of the current political and economic debates on issues such as the construction of the fence/wall and what future implications it may have on the transcultural nature of a region so strongly interconnected historically, commercially, geographically and culturally.

The selections for Chapter 4 are all culturally tied to the US Latino/Chicano/Mexican-American experience. I have decided to also incorporate the term “Latino” in this chapter due to the fact that terms “Chicano” and “Mexican-American” are not the only two cultural labels used in the Mexican-American community or Anglo system. Latino, for the purpose of this chapter,

can also identify works that depict the Mexican-American experience, even though Latino is commonly referred to as an umbrella term for all people of Latin American descent living in the US or Canada. For this chapter, we will consider some of the previous selections from Chapters 2 and 3 (*La misma luna*, *Babel*, *El jardín del edén*, *Callejón Sucre*) and incorporate the film *Tortilla Soup*, as well as works from icons in the field of Mexican-American/Chican@/Latin@ literature, Sandra Cisneros, Victor Villaseñor, and Richard Rodríguez, all of whom were born in the United States to migrant parents or grandparents. These works include: *Caramelo* from Cisneros, *Rain of Gold* from Victor Villaseñor, and *Brown* from Richard Rodríguez.

The cultural productions in this chapter intend to depict experiences that demonstrate the plurality of the Latino voice in relation to their Mexican connection. I will emphasize and exemplify the notion of hybridity, be it through food, family/gender roles and/or identity. One common factor in this chapter is the maintaining and recuperation of identity: the quest for "Mexicanness" and/or the preservation or modification of what is considered "Mexican." As I previously mentioned, I will be focusing on what iconic figures are used when referring to Mexican identity, how they are used, and what stereotypes or myths are being created, and how this identity is consumed. These experiences will contrast those of the border in Chapters 2 and 3 since the realities depicted in Chapter 4 are by those living north of the U.S.-Mexico border.

Also factoring into Chapter 4 will be a set of methodologies that are more focused towards the US Latin@/Chican@/Mexican-American, but are just as applicable in many cases to the other chapters. For example, Chicano intellectual, José David Saldívar, builds upon the idea of "contact zones" that Mary Louise Pratt uses for research on native speech in colonial discourse, and states that "this zone [the '*Transfrontera* contact zone'] is the social space of subaltern encounters, [...] in which peoples geopolitically forced to separate themselves now

negotiate with one another and manufacture new relations, hybrid cultures, and multiple-voiced aesthetics" (13). One might argue that this negotiation must take place in one of two dominating languages (English or Spanish), and is therefore incapable of having its own discourse, but for the most part, border narratives use their own subjectivities to develop their own cultural agency, and therefore do not necessarily have to focus on language as its differentiator. At the same time, there are texts such as Gloria Anzaldúa's iconic *Borderlands/La Frontera* that highlight these discursive differences for the sole purpose of how nationality or nations in general become secondary when defining one's individuality and multiple subjectivities based on borders that span from the physical, to the psychological and sexual. In reality, many texts do stray from standard ways of communication for the sole purpose of differentiating themselves, regardless of the language; similar phenomena occur in music, art, and theatre.

The idea of "border thinking" is not necessarily a new concept, especially if we consider the research of David Maciel, who writes extensively on the historical connections that occurred before and after the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo of 1848, as he affirms that "from the second half of the nineteenth century, the "Other Mexico" has maintained strong ties with the Mexican patria [...] not only have they thoroughly followed political events, but they have also participated actively in them" (306).¹² Maciel continues to mention the many events: the French invasion of Mexico, the Porfiriato, the Mexican Revolution, the 1902 Newlands Reclamation Act or National Reclamation Act, the railroad expansion in both countries and the Great Depression (308-12), as events that had positive and negative impacts on both sides of the

¹² The original citation in Spanish reads: "desde la segunda mitad del siglo XIX, el 'México de afuera' mantuvo estrechos vínculos con la patria mexicana [...] no sólo seguían cabalmente los acontecimientos políticos en México, sino que participaban activamente en ellos" (Maciel 306).

border.¹³ As an example, there is no celebration more famed in the US than “*Cinco de Mayo*” that commemorates the contributions and camaraderie demonstrated by Mexican-Americans during the 1862 Battle of Puebla whereby economic contributions were made to help ward off the French in a short-lived victory in Veracruz since Mexico ultimately fell into an Imperial Monarchy with Maximiliano I presiding over the country for three years.

Regardless of the historical impact, the most noteworthy conclusion of these events is the continued sense of interaction and solidarity, for the most part, between Mexicans and Mexican-Americans/Chicanos. In fact, artistic productions of the times were and remain equally important in “border thinking” and draw from a wide array of cultural productions such as “*norteño*” music, *telenovelas* and cinema, to name a few. While others may dispute the amount of interaction between these two communities due to a cultural and geographical distance from Mexico’s arguably more populous and culturally influential “*Centro*,” as well as marked cultural differences between “Mexicanness” on the Mexican side versus the US side, it is irrefutable that “border thinking” is a product of a people who no longer live within the ideological confines of one culture.

In conclusion to this introduction, the fundamental goal of this dissertation is to emphasize that, although identity is never stagnant, globalization with its socioeconomic, ideological and technological changes, has indisputably impacted the people and regions in question in an unprecedentedly rapid and drastic manner. While this has observably had negative effects on certain peoples and regions, this has also been an opportunity to hear the voices of those who were previously absent or vaguely associated with the ‘national’ discourse before heightened levels of migration and intercommunication occurred. The purpose of this

¹³ This law funded the construction of vast irrigation systems that were constructed throughout the Southwest by Mexican laborers; this land was to be used for food crops.

project has been to dialogue on globalization in terms of forging new identities that have certain similarities despite geographical distance, as well as clear and discernible differences that speak to a border reality that takes into consideration the uniqueness of residing in a specific location defined by the movement of people and the transcultural nature of those peoples. The dissertation's structure is designed to follow these thematic changes along the migratory path taking into account that this is by no means representative of what one individual experiences, but rather what thousands of individuals collectively experience through time and space.

CHAPTER 1- Globalization and Contemplating Borders/Identity

“La hegemonía estadounidense en los flujos mundiales de películas, programas de televisión, música, noticias, historietas y sitios de Internet, de por sí problemática para cualquier país en el mundo, resulta mucho más preocupantes para uno en desarrollo como México”

[“The US hegemony in global fluxes of movies, TV programs, music, news, comics and websites, already problematic for any country in the world, becomes even more worrisome for a developing one like Mexico”]

José Carlos Lozano¹⁴

Understanding the different connotations that the term *globalization* encompasses is a cumbersome feat due to the innumerable variations of its usage; nonetheless, a working definition is essential for the continuation of this study to set a framework which will serve to discuss the impact that it has upon migration, borders and ultimately identity. As per the norm, any trendy topic or term *du jour* in academia, news, politics, business, or any other area for that matter can metamorphosize and acquire new meaning(s) depending on its application in a particular domain. For example, an economist and an academic may have similar ideas on what globalization entails, but they will express their methodology, ideas, hypotheses and findings in a completely different manner due to their need-specific areas, examples, analogies and overall effectiveness. This poses a series of inquiries that require clarifying what exactly constitutes globalization and deciding what role it has in interpreting cultural productions, especially in the late twentieth century and beginning of the twenty-first century (the time span established by the

¹⁴ PhD in International Communication from UT-Austin; Director for the Center of Investigation in Communication and Information at the Tech de Monterrey (Toledo et al. 274).

corpus for this study). Perhaps the best way towards a response, then, is by presenting another set of questions to be addressed throughout this chapter as a means of sifting through the multitude of possible interpretations: 1) How can globalization be defined in general terms, in terms of cultural studies, as well as more specifically in the US-Mexican context? 2) How does globalization affect diverse groups differently? 3) What implications does globalization present to the traditionally defined borders between countries? And finally, 4) how might globalization affect how identity is understood at the local, regional, national and international levels in relation to migration involving primarily Mexico and the US?

Defining Globalization: its Impact on Economy and Culture

As a term that is widely used in a number of different fields, ‘globalization’ has been defined divergently and is reliant on the explanation and prescribing of its qualities, whether they be positive, negative, or merely descriptive in nature. Starting with the positive, globalization can be viewed in a favorable context since it facilitates and provides access to commerce, travel, communication and cultural exchange; in addition, it provides the opportunity for opening barriers and promoting human rights and making stronger global alliances. Yet, at the same time, globalization can also be characterized in a negative context whereby comparisons are made in terms of global “threats” to countries and peoples with certain types of belief systems and/or economic realities. For example, for those in countries whose economies are more heavily based on consumption, services and high-end manufactured and technological products (members of the Europe Union, Australia, Japan, Canada and the US), rather than in countries in regions that export cost-effective manufactured/assembled goods, raw materials and agricultural commodities (Africa, Latin America, China and Southeast Asia), globalization can be met with

mixed emotions since the bilateral or multilateral relationships established in a global economy rarely, or perhaps never, have equal footing on economic issues, thus creating the dichotomy in power-relations where imbalances abound, in some instances dating back to colonial times and European world dominance, which at a later time became at least a tripartite relation involving Europe, the US and/or the rest of the world, as we will discuss later in relation to Mexico.

Now, even the more developed and industrialized economies, at times, witness dissatisfaction and concern due to their eroded manufacturing base that is not always offset by the creation of higher-tech jobs. The result is that a company is able to be more profitable by off-shoring production to countries whose cost of living and labor laws are more beneficial to the corporate bottom line. This has impacted labor distribution within and between countries, and will most likely continue to affect localized economies whose economic activity is based on mid to high range manufacturing jobs that will be outsourced to a developing economy in order to boost profitability and growth—two classic concepts of a capitalistic system (Modern China could be included in this since, although it maintains a communist model internally – acts capitalistically in regard to international business as it has become the world’s second economy and is projected to be the first within the next twenty years through capital investments and a neoliberal agenda for growth).¹⁵

Taking into account that globalization in the economic sense is only one aspect, albeit perhaps the most influential, a similar scenario may occur for countries that have a dominant type of religion or political base who, as a result, may be less apt to embrace changing ideologies, therefore complicating the global order of things. This would especially apply if one were to consider the complex relationship between the Christian and Muslim world, or between

¹⁵ Source <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Global-Issues/2011/0214/World-s-top-5-economies-Most-Americans-already-think-China-is-No.-1/France-2.55-trillion>.

leftist and rightist governments, which for the most part resulted from the polarizing consequences of the Cold War after World War II. The remnants of these divisive politics still persist today in Latin America, and in several other areas of the globe.

Overall, while certain countries “benefit” from globalization since it is more conducive in sustaining and supporting their value system(s), others may unwillingly be affected or, at best, have to accept the positive with the negative since a preferred traditional way of living may be in peril being that some communities may wish to remain unaffected by the rapid change that a globalized world may have upon their society. A matter-of-fact example, to demonstrate an unwanted effect, is the erosion of the traditional family structure due to the pressure for at least one or more adult members of the family to search for work abroad as a means of financial support. This is a phenomenon known as Net Migration Rate which shows the vast majority of countries with negative migration rates stemming from countries in Latin America, Africa and parts of Asia.¹⁶

Now, free from the polarizing divisions that were mentioned above, the term “globalization” can also be deemed impartial when the intentions are to create dialogue and understanding, in an interdisciplinary manner through the analysis of present-day contexts and tendencies in the world in terms of global capital: human (labor, politics, culture, mass migration), technological (computers, Internet, mass media) and goods (export/import and the generation and/or distribution of power and wealth). Whatever the application may be, all scholars correlate these areas in their own way in order to comprehend how globalization is perceived and manifested across cultural, economic, ideological and political lines.

¹⁶ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2112rank.html> (13 July 2012)

Two scholars who write extensively on the subject, Harvey and Mignolo, among others that I will incorporate into this study (Giddens, Hall, Canclini, Jameson, Beck, Appadurai, and Bhabha), have contemplated globalization in terms of its detrimental effects on society due to inequities in global capital. All of these scholars recognize the complexity and need to address issues surrounding an increasingly intense set of relationships between people, countries and cultures from around the globe as no country is left unscathed from the globalizing forces of today. Harvey, for example, understands globalization “as a process, as a condition, or as a specific kind of political project” (54). The process, he argues, highlights the “production of uneven temporal and geographical development” (60) which is consequentially the result of capitalism’s continuous need to seek out new investments, opportunities and ways of higher revenues, ultimately leading to seek out countries whose economies are not as well developed to take advantage of a cheaper workforce and natural resources, thus boosting profitability in its companies. Since the world has not developed in a parallel fashion, the ability for one country’s hegemony over another allows for an economic and political agenda to be established with little regard to the true wishes of the subordinate country. The passage of NAFTA in 1994, as Guillén Romo indicates, had this effect and was a direct product of the fall of communism:

The disappearance of the Soviet Bloc gave way to exacerbated competition among the three polarizing regions of the triad: the US, Europe and Japan. From this perspective, Washington creates the mechanisms that permit itself to establish its influence on the continent and neutralize the other poles. As such, the idea of combining US technology, Mexican labor and Canadian natural resources would prove to be attractive (88).¹⁷

¹⁷ Translation by EJW (all subsequent translations in the remainder of the dissertation will be my own unless otherwise noted). The exact quote in Spanish is as follows: “*La desaparición del bloque soviético da lugar a una competencia exacerbada entre los tres polos de la tríada:*

Since then, there have been changes in the global economic arena, such as the rise of the Chinese economy; however, competitiveness and global alliances are still fundamental in the world of business.

As one of the chief goals of capitalism, capitalizing on human labor, resources and technology as a means of generating jobs, goods, and ultimately profits appeases investors, governing boards and wage-earners-- all of whom base their standards of living on this “hopefully” consistent pattern. In the past few years since the onset of the Great Recession, there has been a domino effect on a system built on principles and ideals that have proven to lack sustainability, at least in the short-term (only time will tell whether or not this is cyclical in nature).¹⁸ Inevitably, at the present time, this has led to global problems of monetary imbalances, fiscal problems in debt-ridden governments, high unemployment, a housing crisis in many countries and high levels of inflation. In the case of Mexico and the US, since their economies are linked by economic agreements, proximity and a semi-porous border, both have greatly suffered financially as neither was able to escape the economic downfalls which even affected the relatively few emerging (and increasingly powerful and influential) world markets who managed to grow their economies during the same time period (i.e. India, China).

Parallel visions of globalization for both Harvey and Mignolo (among most scholars) place its historical roots in Western expansion from the times of Christopher Columbus.

Mignolo recognizes four stages of Western hegemony that ultimately lead up to the world

Estados Unidos, Europa y Japón. Es en esta perspectiva que Washington crea los mecanismos que le permitirán establecer su influencia en el continente y neutralizar los otros polos. En este contexto, la idea de combinar la tecnología estadounidense, la mano de obra mexicana y los recursos naturales canadienses resulta muy atractiva” (Guillén Romo 88).

¹⁸ Great Recession is considered by economists to be the umbrella term for the period between 2007 and 2010 in which the world economy declined and was driven into a severe recession, the catalysts for which was brought about by the mortgage-lending crisis and liquidity-insolvency crisis.

dynamics of the proposed current stage known as that of Transnational Corporations, which was preceded by three previous stages: Christianization (Spanish Empire), Civilizing Mission (British Empire and French Colonization), and Development Modernization (U.S. Imperialism) (36). His argument essentially highlights how “globalization” was carried out in the Latin American experience post-1492 based on asymmetrical binary relationships. In order for the current stage [Transnational Corporations] to exist, they must somehow undo the structures of the former stages in order to progress and grow – they must be above national laws and the individual needs of people and countries, hence their transnational nature. Now, by reviewing once again these stages of world dynamics, as defined by the first three movements, one denotes the country-dominant tendencies of each movement, and while the current movement is in large part an extension of US Imperialism, many transnational corporations of the current movement are not necessarily US-based enterprises, at least not solely, as their identity is also becoming hybridized (i.e. Nissan’s Tsuru produced in Aguascalientes, Mexico can be just as “Mexican” as mariachi and mole).¹⁹

This internationalization of corporations, is in many ways, the demise of democratic political systems around the globe as corporate dollars are increasingly affecting political outcomes and ideologies through their “business friendly” policies that claim, founded or unfounded, to be beneficial to all. Strikes and austerity measures in Europe in 2010 and 2011 have left voters uneasy about ruling parties and have changed the political scene for years and possible decades to come, as global imbalances are coming full circle to affect even those countries thought to have been able to withstand temporary economic woes. Developing

¹⁹ Mexico’s top-selling car source *Asociacion Mexicana de Distribuidores de Automotores*. <http://www.amda.mx/>.

economies are just as nervous, as their growth depends in large part on the economic activity from their consumers [the “developed” economies].

The globalized world of the 2000s is reshaping politics, economies, ideologies, and has brought criticism to a phenomenon that most people see, at this point, as unavoidable. Gains in modern technology have possibly forever closed the gap of temporality and geographical differences, and will continue to affect economies, politics and people in both positive and negative ways with growing impetus.

Now, similar to Mignolo’s delineation of four stages of globalization, Harvey also recognizes that trading and global exchanges were taking place even before Columbus’ voyages and that globalization is linked to the geopolitical agenda that he coins the “geopolitical crusade,” the catalyst for which, in terms of accountability include the US and its allies mainly after WWII (Harvey 68). Mexico, as a neighbor to the US, falls within that category and will be discussed more specifically later on in the next section. Meanwhile, let’s focus the discussion on one of the key concepts of the current landscape of transnational corporations, which is that of centralization and decentralization of the state.

This brings us to the question as to what was the function of the state in what some deem as the first modernity and how has the panorama changed for the world at a time in which multinational corporations need more flexibility to prosper than what a single country may offer. First of all, some further clarity is needed in understanding key concepts such as *globalism*, *globality* and *globalization*, not as synonyms, but as unique entities that connote slightly differing meanings. *Globalism* refers to a world-market system based on the ideology of neoliberalism and replaces the traditional state structure in favor of market-based decisions that ultimately rule the “state” of the state. *Globality* has more of a cohabitational association since it

encompasses any interaction worldwide based on the world being a closed entity. *Globalization* denotes a new world order of transnational actors who hold little regard for the sovereign state (Beck 9-11). Although laws and internal affairs (i.e. politics) are still much a product of the state, they are constantly under pressure from the hegemony of developed nations and transnational companies.

Therefore, on the one hand, as *globality* denotes global interaction and *globalism* symbolizes a change in ideology to a market-driven global relationship, *globalization*, then, symbolizes the loss of hegemonic powers at the national level and puts them in the hands of free-market enterprises who, in reality, will dominate at all levels as a state becomes decentralized, as Beck summarizes:

“Irrevocable globality [...] refers to the whole set of social and power relations that are not organized on a national basis, and the experience of living and acting *across borders*. The unity of state, society and individual underpinning the first modernity is in the course of dissolution. World society does *not* mean world state society or world economy society; it means a *non-state* society, a social aggregate for which territorial state guarantees of order, as well as the rules of publicly legitimated politics, lose their binding character.” (102)

This could suggest that one could continue to be unaffected by living in another country if they were to have a non-state identity. Conversely, one could also argue that in some societies, there never was unity in the state model since it was more of a perception or hegemonic discourse than a reality as examples from indigenous communities throughout the Americas have demonstrated since the very notion of nation-building – the indigenous have seldom been able to participate with equal footing with the governing members of their society, as well in most other domains.

One example is how the United Fruit Company, along with the CIA helped to overthrow the government of Arbenz in Guatemala in 1954 as a direct reaction of his reappropriation of banana plantations in a land-reform decree which would have ultimately negatively affected US interests in the country since almost half of the land was property of the United Fruit Company of the US.

So, does globalization signify that there is a new world system based on principles that defy a single state as a hegemonic force? Well, Jameson argues that the use of the term *globalization* is merely a communicational concept that masks the idea of a new world system based on culture and economic domination via consumerism whose foundation is that of the cultural production/consumption phenomenon. As an example, he notes that subsidies on cultural productions such as TV and cinema in some countries willingly undermine the efforts of weaker states that are unable to compete with stronger international counterparts (61). In much the same way, he notes that, in particular, there is a point of “fundamental dissymmetry between the United States and other cultures [...] other languages will never come to equal English in its global function” (63). While English is certainly not unique to the US, it does happen to be the language of many of the consumerist cultures, such as the US, Canada, Australia, England, and New Zealand.

Building on this idea, we can take into account Mignolo’s study on globalization and language which show similar results as he notes that the three hegemonic languages of scholarship and world literature are those of high modernity (English, German, French) (40). Spanish and Portuguese, in essence, lost their vigor and are less associated with a hegemonic status unless taking into account a binary relation with an indigenous language of Latin America where the former would dominate for reasons of total speakers and historical influences. As a result of the world hegemonic powers, as well as the internal ones, Mexico’s experiences

historically with hegemonic cultures worldwide continue to affect the present, as will be discussed in the next section.

Globalization: Mexico and the World

While the mid sixteenth and seventeenth centuries offer great insight in interpreting an economically and culturally-based definition of globalizing forces during colonial times, a few more recent examples of Mexican history will allow us to understand from where the sentiment of economic alliances of today's globalization is derived. During the neocolonial period of Latin America, Mexico was defined by foreign influence during the Porfiriato.²⁰ Although Díaz's control over matters of the state allowed him to expand bureaucracy, it wasn't without his middle and upper class supporters who, eager to boost Mexico economically, sided with support of foreign capital as the answer of optimistically modernizing Mexico to the acclaimed standards of Europe and the US. This allowed foreigners to own about a quarter of its land and the oil and minerals beneath it (Chasteen 196). This love affair of the foreign has historically been all too common in a country where the term 'malinchismo' was invented for that specific purpose of preferring the foreign over the local, especially in middle upper and upper class system.²¹ As a result, how do we differentiate between these global exchanges during the first four centuries in the region versus the last one in terms of contemporary applications of globalization?

In the Mexican context, we see throughout history how England, France, the US, and more recently, Canada, have used their economic power to persuade Mexico into accepting that a

²⁰ Period in reference to the rule of Porfirio Díaz from 1876-1910. "El Porfiriato" is known for a period of economic growth and modernization of Mexico in addition to later years of what was considered a dictatorship.

²¹ *Malinchismo* stems from the quote-unquote betrayal of the indigenous woman, La Malinche, who helped Hernán Cortés during the Spanish conquest of present-day Mexico.

neoliberal agenda will “work to the benefit of all, provided there is as little state interference as possible” (Harvey 69). On a more global scale, Harvey states that people from the “capitalist class world-wide were more or less happy to align themselves with US policies and to work within the framework of US military and legal protections” (69). This argument, in the context of Mexico and the US, demonstrates how, especially today, the economics of capitalism set the tone in the political and economic relations between the US, Mexico and Canada, and helped in the creation and passage of NAFTA.

The framework used by Harvey is similar to that of Canclini in the sense that globalization has accentuated the power of business. For Canclini, globalization serves as:

un conjunto de estrategias para realizar la hegemonía de macroempresas industriales, corporaciones financieras, majors del cine, la televisión, la música y la informática, para apropiarse de los recursos naturales y culturales, del trabajo, el ocio y el dinero de los países pobres, subordinándolos a la explotación concentrada con que esos actores reordenaron el mundo en la segunda mitad del siglo XX

[a set of strategies that carry out the hegemony of large industrial companies, financial corporations, majors in film, TV, music and computers, to control cultural and natural resources, jobs, leisure activities and the money of poor countries, subordinating them to concentrated exploitation with which these actors reordered the world in the second half of the twentieth century] (31)

This is to say that rich countries, and to an even higher degree, corporations, subjugate poor countries not only in the economic sense, but also in the cultural domain. The poor are at the mercy of having others decide how, when, and where they will engage in cultural activities. Harvey affirms this description and speaks about the consequences for having adopted this system of “self-destruction, devaluation and bankruptcy, downsizing, unemployment, loss of resources, environmental qualities and puts existing political and legal institutions as well as whole cultural configurations and ways of life at risk” (81) Consequentially, for Mexico, this new global order starting in 1994 caused an immediate increase in national and international migration (to be discussed in further detail in the next chapter), as well as other domestic concerns since the 1994 passage of NAFTA did not go without contestation.

In the same year [1994], a campaign was launched militarily and via internet by the Movimiento Zapatista of Chiapas, led by El Subcomandante Marcos, against President Salinas and the Mexican government for siding with the neoliberal policies adopted by NAFTA that would, essentially, make it completely unprofitable for local farmers to compete with their more industrious northern counterparts who could out produce more cost effectively one of the principal crops of the area: maize.²² The purpose of the Zapatista movement was to make international headlines about some of the alarm realities of a global market at microeconomic levels in places like Chiapas. This is one example when global trade directly affects remote local cultures that would seemingly be unaffected by globalization in the economic sense of free exchange agreements. The result of the military revolt by the Zapatistas led to foreign anxiety

²² The majority of land occupied by Chiapas farmers costs approximately \$270 to produce a ton of corn. In comparison, the cost to produce the same quantity in the US is \$92 (Inter Press Service, March 8, 1995)- source <http://www1.american.edu/ted/ice/chiapas.htm>.

on investments provoking the devaluation of the peso due to the preferred “safe haven” at that time, the US dollar.

Despite the US being the hegemonic force in the US-Canada-Mexico relations, the surge in corporate influence on democracy and policy even in an influential economy such as that of the US is slowly eating away at the state, as is mass media.²³ This means that although present-day Mexico continues to hold the most vulnerable position in NAFTA politically, economically, environmentally and culturally due to a currency largely dependent upon the US economy, lax environmental and labor policies, lower standards of living and high levels of underemployment, the US’ privileged status in this triad and in the world is also faltering due to higher unemployment, multiple wars, budget and trade deficits, and an ostensibly out-of-control consumerist society with more expenditures and wants than available funds to support such a systematic draining of resources and capital. In part, these “symptoms” of the US and other developed countries are a result of multinational corporations no longer willing to compensate, by default, their own nationals. In effect, the erosion of a unique base location provokes the lack a truly “national” identity which some would consider as alienation and disconnect of the masses and led to the onset of the Great Recession – the subsequent effects of which have not bode well for living standards and has kept people and governments at bay as they [corporations] deliberate a new relationship with people and governments.

There are clearly other factors for the economic downturn, but what is undeniable is that money is increasingly amassed in the upper-class echelons of society across the global. Even those who have the power to make considerable local contributions are hesitant to do so solely

²³ This idea is related to Chomsky’s work on US hegemony in world affairs. Chomsky believes that the US government and the US consumerist ways promote an imperialistic agenda whereby the US dominates world affairs and flexes its political muscle. He is a self-proclaimed socialist who believes in a highly organized society based on democratic leadership.

basing their nationality as the common denominator. Take for instance the case of Carlos Slim, the famed Mexican magnate who, until recently, preferred to reinvest his money rather than spend it on charities since his views were and continue to be different than those of Bill Gates and Warren Buffet, both of whom believe heavily in philanthropy.²⁴

In general, this new reality exacerbates an already high level of imbalances worldwide and makes it even more imperative to migrate. A recent slowdown in Mexican migrations in 2010 and 2011 signal that there will be years in which there will be fluctuations due to several temporary factors such as the violent border regions which make migration less appealing and the lack of jobs in the United States due persevering impact of the Great Recession and finally, the increase in opportunities in Mexico since the currency has made it once again favorable to manufacture cars and other industrials which, at one point, were at risk during the movement of companies to China in the early 2000s.²⁵ Since the panorama may change at any one given moment as seen with fluctuating markets, exchange rates, policy changes and global disasters such as 9/11 or the Japanese earthquake and tsunami, ever-changing economics will continue to be one of the main factors attributed to the imbalances and volatilities that exist between countries and within a country itself.

The consequence of a shrinking world due to globalization and already established migrant/exile communities across the globe (Mexicans in the US, Turks in Germany, Latin-

²⁴ The Financial Times writes: “Rather than charity, Mr. Slim believes the solution to Mexico’s problems, and his own conundrum, is more investment, especially among small businesses as they create the most jobs. It is an apparently contradictory claim given criticisms that his own market dominance squashes smaller players. ‘Human beings are contradictory,’ he shrugs.” But despite his reservations about charity, Mr. Slim has established two philanthropies, Fundacion Telmex and Fundacion Carlos Slim. <http://philanthropy.com/blogs/the-giveaway/carlos-slim-is-skeptical-about-philanthropys-potential/33> (July 7, 2011).

²⁵ Source <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2011/07/06/world/americas/immigration.html> (July 6, 2011).

Americans in Spain, Chinese in Russia, Arabs in Michigan, South Sudanese in Israel, Cubans in Miami, Hmong in St. Paul, MN etc.) will only intensify human movement when there is an alternative to certain living conditions and standards that people endure, but decide not to accept. Possible migrants look outwards toward more developed nations in order to quench their insatiable thirst for economic opportunities, equality, professional prospects and/or alternative living conditions (refugees and exiles, although often times classified as migrants after the assimilation process has started to occur, are dissimilar in that their original motives are premeditated by another set of factors which deal more life-threatening issues that poses imminent danger due to discrimination, politics, religion or other personal situations which would put them at risk for persecution).

However, falling birth rates in places like Mexico are starting to take effect on the frequency of migration and could start to challenge the current patterns in migration.²⁶ As other countries develop, new opportunities will exist domestically, lessening the rationale for migration. If one were to look at the Brazilian, or Mexican economy, for that matter, factories are being built, spin off jobs are being created, and societies continue to evolve and look more and more like those that were thought of as being developed countries. Nevertheless, migrations are still taking place and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future, albeit at a lessened

²⁶ Mexican immigration has always been defined by both the push (from Mexico) and the pull (of the United States). The decision to leave home involves a comparison, a wrenching cost-benefit analysis, and just as a Mexican baby boom and economic crises kicked off the emigration waves in the 1980s and '90s, research now shows that the easing of demographic and economic pressures is helping keep departures in check. Source <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2011/07/06/world/americas/immigration.html> (July 6, 2011).

pace, unless, of course, there is an unforeseeable event/disaster that could drastically alter this pattern.

Canclini recognizes that even if migrations are accepted based on an economic need, this isn't synonymous with acceptance on a broad level as he claims there are "short-circuits" that, in fact, separate and segregate the new arrivals in anything ranging from social living conditions to belief systems and aggression (79). Despite this scenario presenting itself across the vast majority of collective migrant groups across the world, their reception in the country of destination will vary greatly depending on several factors such as migratory status, social class and the reason for deciding to migrate.

One might argue that migration is not a new phenomenon and shouldn't be linked exclusively to globalization; nonetheless, there is a considerable difference from migrations in the pre-WWII and that of the second half of the twentieth century and first part of the twenty-first. The largest difference, according to Canclini, is that of the three types of migratory systems that exist today (definitive installation, temporary migration, variable installation), the latter two are more characteristic of today's migratory patterns (78). As a result, the assimilation that occurred in countries whose motives were to populate such as Argentina, Australia, Canada and the United States, was in some respects less complicated given that their migratory permanency aided these groups in becoming much more established (Canclini 79).

Another set of differences between migrations from before versus now can be traced to the large variety of languages and cultures that, although still widespread today, did not share some of the characteristics of new migratory tendencies. In most of the countries mentioned in the previous paragraph, migrants were of European descent prior to and/or around the time of WWII. Current migrations in these countries have drawn from a new base of migrants that come

from places that could mostly be considered to have been under colonial control at one time or another: Latin America, Africa and Asia (there are exceptions here). This has affected the path toward assimilation since there is already an established value system in the destination country in spite of the differences in origin from the former migrations.

In the case of the US or Canada, there was, and perhaps still is (true or untrue), a shared common sentiment of seeking out the “American Dream” or “Canadian Dream” and becoming “American” or “Canadian.”²⁷ Historically, ties to the homeland of previous immigrants were severed immediately due to the lack of modern technology that exists today to maintain regular communication. Another factor to consider is that because of widespread hardships and favorable immigration laws (to help populate the nation) allowed entire families to migrate without the constraints and political turmoil involved in today’s legal path to immigration, especially in the US and increasingly in Canada.²⁸ As a result, assimilation was viewed as essential for any migrant’s wellbeing and future. While this is certainly irrefutable in today’s society, what has been altered is the common set of denominators that unites (and divides) the migrant groups of today, such as those coming from Latin America. On the one hand you have people originating from different countries, yet on the other, the shared linguistic and cultural

²⁷ For lack of a better term, I place quotes around “American” knowing that for people who live in the Americas, this term can be thorny.

²⁸ Canada imposed visa restrictions on Mexicans for the first time in 2009 due to the dramatic increase in Mexicans claiming refugee status for a fast-track path to legal residency. The statistics are as follows: “Refugee claims from Mexico have almost tripled since 2005, making it the number one source country for claims. In 2008, more than 9,400 claims filed in Canada came from Mexican nationals, representing 25 per cent of all claims received. Of the Mexican claims reviewed and finalized in 2008 by the Immigration and Refugee Board, an independent administrative tribunal, only 11 per cent were accepted.” Source <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/departement/media/releases/2009/2009-07-13.asp>.

ties unites the groups in ways unprecedented in the time of the European fluxes. More about new migrants will be discussed in the following section as it is imperative to further evaluate identity, borders and assimilation in regard to current migratory trends.

People, Identity and Borders in the Twenty-first Century

Migration, exile and global inequities are all contributing factors to the intensification of global heterogeneity that challenges the national borders of yesteryears which were thought to withstand the porous nature to which they have been subjected with increased people movement, as well as global trends in food, fashion, religion, sports, music, telecommunications and the like. Appadurai breaks down these global cultural flows into five distinct categories: 1) ethnoscapas, 2) mediascapas, 3) financescapas, 4) ideoscapas and, 5) technoscapas. It is his assumption that global cultural flows are occurring in and amongst all of these “scapes”, which, in essence, divide globalization into categories – the first category, for purposes of this dissertation, help to explain increased human movement. Despite the fact that “scapes” #2-#5 are substantially less regulated in terms of their ability to penetrate borders or transcend them permitting them to function independently, “ethnoscapas” are much more regulated since people are involved, and those people have certain restrictions due to their varying status. Appadurai defines “ethnoscapas” as the “landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers and other moving groups and persons constitute an essential feature of the world and appear to affect the politics of (and between) nations to a hitherto unprecedented degree” (7).

In no moment more precise as the present, has the political debate been more prevalent. Policies towards immigrants, exiles, *gastarbeiter*, refugees and other foreign nationals are

increasingly an imperative point of political discussion, resulting in both conflictive and opportunistic viewpoints on which of these groups should be included or excluded from a country's trajectory.²⁹ In recessionary times or in times of economic difficulties, creating the correct policies is almost synonymous with voting and re-election. The urgency of policy making has affected some countries more specifically than others due to shared borders and the economic disparities between the countries.

Now to return to the list of reasons for increasing global interactions, it is also a valid argument to state that borders, although seemingly static in nature when one considers the physical border, are in constant flux. Even though "proximity" wasn't included in the aforementioned list of contributing causes since borders seldom change position, it is a factor when the conditions of that proximity change, as they have, in the case between Mexico and the United States due to: 1) significant population booms along the border regions on both the US and Mexican side of the border in the past two decades; 2) increase land and air traffic between the two countries; 3) shared telecommunications that function transculturally if one were to consider cable, music and radio programming, print and film; and, 4) the North American Free Trade Agreement which facilitated the exchange of goods and services. Thus, what was previously a more defined set of differences between Mexico and the US is a lot less distinguishable as Moreiras asserts when discussing how to approach Latin American studies in the US:

"U.S. Latin Americanism is certainly conditioned, although perhaps not yet to a sufficient degree, by the drastic demographic changes and the massive Latin American immigration to the country in recent decades. U.S. Latin Americanism can no longer pretend merely

²⁹ The commonly referred to term meaning "guest workers" in German.

to be an epistemic concern with the geographic other south of the border. Instead, the borderlands have moved northward and within. The immigrant imaginary must necessarily affect an epistemic practice that used to be based upon a national-imperial need to know the other, insofar as the other is now pretty much ourselves, or an important part of ourselves” (83)

Moreiras’ assessment of current migratory patterns indisputably highlights the importance of the immigrant imaginary, especially those contributions to a revised systematic way of studying Latin America to be more inclusive. The heterogenization of the United States is redefining “center” and “periphery” as those lines are becoming harder to distinguish.

The cultural negotiation of migrants will not only impact their own value system, but potentially alter that of the receptor country as well. It is the immigrant, on an individual or collective level, who will juxtapose his/her value system and experiences with that of the new nation that creates a unique identity based on difference whereby an identity will be constructed or imagined based on the relationship with the other (Stuart Hall, Du Gay 4). This difference towards the other may occur at multiple levels since certain subjects dwell outside of the “status quo” national identity. For example, a monolingual migrant who hails from an indigenous village in the mountains of Oaxaca and arrives to Pilsen or La Villita in Chicago will most likely find him/herself in the midst of being an *other*, not only to his Mexican “counterparts” from non-indigenous communities, but most definitely an *other* to the established communities in Chicago, or any other city in question.

The layering effect that occurs in the globalized era has dramatically been increased at all levels and created what Bhabha associates as in-betweenness or hybridity: “Social differences are not simply given to experience through an already authenticated cultural tradition; they are

the signs of the emergence of community envisaged as a project where that takes you ‘beyond’ yourself in order to return” (Bhabha 10).

Hence, cross-cultural encounters on both sides of the border between are creating emerging communities that redefine the local in relation to the other, within or outside of physical boundaries. As a result, we engage in cultures that are glocal in nature through a dialectical process (Beck 49). This can be attributed to what Beck has identified as one of the underlying traits of the second modernity—that of a powerful non-state world (102). His example had more to do with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), but could be applied to indigenous groups which, as we saw with the Zapatista Movement allowed people to think globally and act locally by utilizing technology to promote their cause and desire to go beyond the authority of the state, that was unwilling to succumb to their demands, in search for international support which puts this community in contact with the global at a local level. The state’s view of the Zapatista Movement was to subdue the insurgency; however, they were to do so keeping in mind that their actions were on the international spotlight. Similarly, a *mixteco* or *zapoteco* in California or in Baja California will equally relay his experiences with others who, if they return to their place of origin will ultimately affect politics, traditions and ways of thinking – this too is the dialectical nature of transnational subjects.³⁰

Another aspect of migration presents another circumstance that questions national identities from the outside, as we will see when presenting the idea of “Mexicanness.” To clarify what is meant by “Mexicanness,” reverts back to that homogenizing force which is clearly a conventional invention derived from the political and popular discourse after the Mexican Revolution. It entailed and still projects today a unifying (albeit perhaps antiquated) national

³⁰ The *mixtecos* and *zapotecos* comprise two of the most influential indigenous groups in Oaxaca.

identity based on food, religion, music, TV/film, as well as on other traditions and practices. The expression that first comes to mind when thinking about “Mexicanness” is to be what Mexicans on both sides of the border often refer to someone as “*bien mexicano*” – this is a phrase used to denote characteristics that are seemingly very Mexican and encompass anything from being “*bien macho*,” eating hot *chiles*, listening to *corridos* or other popular forms of music such as *música nortena* or *música duranguense*, driving a *Lobo*, wearing cowboy boots, drinking tequila and singing *serenata* at the wee hours of the night to an *amada* (a typical scene from a *telenovela* such as the recent *Destilando Amor* broadcast by Televisa starting in 2007 via the Spanish language channel in the US, Univision). It goes without saying that although adapted to the twenty-first century, the basis for those characteristics was identical to those of the “machos” or Villa-types of the Revolution. Without a doubt this image will constantly be renegotiated in the general sense.

As one might presume from the “definition” above for “Mexicanness,” settling on what constitutes identity can be fairly problematic. Even though two subjects may be from within the physical borders of Mexico, the individual from Oaxaca will most likely be perceived as not embodying “Mexicanness” to the standards or preconceived notions that someone from Guadalajara would since his/her ideas on what constitutes the “patria” may vary greatly or entirely. With that said, it is also vital to keep in mind that, as Canclini mentions, measuring identity can be inconsistent and arbitrary. Although I don’t argue that point, there are notable differences as we will see further along that delineate stark contrasts to cultural productions dealing with migration and its effects on people, regions and countries. His example of the concept of “Mexicanness” or “*mexicanidad*” parallels what was just discussed in the previous paragraph. He highlights how sociologists try to measure “*mexicanidad*” to determine if it is

more ingrained in North or Central Mexico through imagining a set of identifiable characteristics deemed applicable to both populations. His critique is that identity is constantly defined and redefined, and that in the course of social interaction, this ultimately affects how one acts and assimilates this identity (85).

In another unrelated study that also examined identity, Latin American immigrants living in the United States were asked to use individual cameras to document their own idea of identity by taking photograph images of what they considered representative of a Latin American identity vs. the US identity. The results emphasized several peculiarities – for the Latino identity, images of food, work, groups of people with “ethnic” ties dominated (this will be demonstrated in Chapter 4); meanwhile, for the US culture, objects such as architecture, technology, cars and the absence of people prevailed (Ariza and Portes 40).³¹

As unbiased as this portrayal of identity by migrants themselves appears, a similar scenario of any migrant group would most likely repeat the same photos to demonstrate food and culture vs. objects – it would be interesting to repeat this across several migrant, exile and refugee groups to verify the pattern. But then again, what would matter most would be who, exactly, is taking the picture? From what social class do they pertain and where do they work? How long have they lived in the country and what are their plans for returning, if any? In what type of living conditions do they live and how does that compare to those before migrating? How do they maintain their culture and language? How many people in their everyday life share a similar reality? The answers to these questions allow a closer look into tangible examples of

³¹ The exact quote in Spanish is the following: “mientras la identidad latina se asocia principalmente con el trabajo, la comida, la agregación de personas, la pertenencia a bandas y el enclave étnico, la estadounidense – desde la mirada de los latinos – se vincula con la grandiosidad arquitectónica, los objetos, la alta tecnología, los automóviles, la ausencia de personas y el desperdicio; en suma, la dilapidación de recursos en una sociedad que nada en la abundancia” (Ariza and Portes 40).

how globalization has changed local cultures, increased transnational identities, formed hybrid identities and challenged the assimilation process for new migrant groups, as they too are redefining “post-national” identities.

To demonstrate how the transnational identity is developing or was developed by Mexicans residing in the US, I would like to cite Jorge Ramos, well-known host of *Noticiero Univisión*, who points out that Mexicans on this side [the US side] keep in contact in many ways with the “other” [actual] Mexico. He cites a study from the Pew Hispanic Center that shows that one in three Mexicans has travelled to Mexico in the past year, six in ten have sent remittances, and eight in ten have called to Mexico (69). He also calls attention to the effects of assimilation that take place outside of either discourse since it is a renegotiation of both linguistic reliances and the effects of assimilation as he points come from television, school, work demands and laziness – the quote is in Spanish for the purpose of showing the examples in Spanglish:

“Sin embargo, mientras más tiempo pasa, más nos alejamos. Se nos olvida hablar bien el español. A veces decimos ‘aseguranza’ en lugar de seguro, ‘troca’ en lugar de camión, ‘parquemos’ nuestro auto (no coche) y llamamos a un ‘rufero’ cuando ‘liquea’ el techo. La televisión, la escuela, la presión laboral y la flojera nos hace saltar al espanglish.”

[However, as time passes, the more we distance ourselves. We forget to speak Spanish well. Sometimes we say ‘aseguranza’ instead of insurance, ‘troca’ instead of truck, ‘parquemos’ our auto (not car) and we call a ‘rufero’ when the roof ‘liquea’. TV, school, work pressures and laziness makes us use Spanglish.] (69)

This adaptation of new words is not limited to just Mexicans living in the US, but as more and more people come in contact with English in Mexico, either through direct or indirect experiences, there is an infiltration of Anglicisms or Spanglish-cisms in contemporary speech such as in the word “*aplicación*” instead of “*solicitud*”; or “*llamar pa’trás*” instead of “*devolver la llamada*”; and as mentioned above “*troca*” instead of “*camioneta*”. To clarify, many types of Spanglish abound; however, some words would most likely be more acceptable than others to native speakers from the enunciator’s country of origin. In some instances, for the language “*puristas*,” this would be entirely unacceptable, but for a rural community in the Mexican Highlands of Jalisco or a small village in Michoacán, this could be standard or at least acceptable given the frequency of migration to the US.

Is the Spanglish referred to by Jorge Ramos used inadvertently as a way of assimilating into a new community? What does this reveal about transnational subjects and a possible consequence of living, as Bhabha would say, “beyond”? Allaston makes the observation that although many speakers of Spanglish are fluent in both languages, those who can only speak Spanglish would, in fact, demonstrate how “their linguistic world reflects their socioeconomic status: limited, marginalized, lacking mobility, and unlikely to be valued or heard beyond their immediate communities” (215).³² It is quite possible that Gloria Anzaldúa would contest this notion, but one cannot refute her knack for language and a unique discursive style as part of her

³² From personal experience working with the Michigan Migrant Head Start Association (Telamon Corporation) for the past 6.5 years, I can attest that there are people who fall into this category since they are migrant workers who work in agriculture as crop pickers and do not live in permanent housing year-round. As a disclaimer, though, I would say that the vast majority are Spanish dominant. They have limited economics, they are marginalized as once they are at their migrant camp, their mobility is limited, and they are seldom engaged in civic activities and live rather isolated lives. Ramos’ comment is also on par with Spanglish being used in the workplace, as speakers dominant in Spanish will use words associated with job specific vocabulary in Spanglish or completely in English even though they may or may not be fluent. A linguistic study would, once again, reveal the socioeconomic status.

Chicana aesthetics through the use of Spanish, English, indigenous languages, and combinations of the three. For Anzaldúa, this is a voice of resistance and expression; for others, the way in which language is altered is less premeditated. Anzaldúa's contribution takes a foothold in defining Borderlands (psychological, sexual and spiritual), while at the same time 'un' defining nation-based discourse (Johnson and Michaelson 11).

Anzaldúa's methodology is foundational and acts as a precursor in an increasingly internationally recognized Borderlands literature, but is many times equivocally confused with solely the physical border. Her recognition of other borderlands such as the psychological, sexual, and spiritual have paved the path for other writers to expand on this idea that "the Borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy" (Anzaldúa 19). Writers from North Mexico are equally involved in questioning these borders as they, too, are familiar with the effects living at the crossroads and on Mexico's "fringe" – be it linguistically, ideologically, physically, spiritually, or any other way.

As will be discussed further in depth in Chapter 2, *norteño* literature wasn't well known until that latter part of the twentieth century. I will mention a few of these reasons now for the purpose of discussing the next topic in the current chapter. First of all, since the majority of Mexican literature and population were based in the center of the country, so was the literary machine. *Norteño* literature wasn't well known in the literary circles in the center, and it was most definitely not widely distributed like its counterpart in Mexico's interior, "*el Centro*". Secondly, most "fringe" literature and tendencies such as *norteño* or Chicano Literature were not in vogue and appeared as individuals, not as movements. Today's landscape has drastically

changed that since production, distribution and reception of norteño border literature or *literatura de la frontera norte* have entered the international arena. Thirdly, one of the most important points, historically speaking, was the fact that the globalization forces hadn't made the impact that began around the passage of NAFTA, or a few years leading up to that point.

Globalization and its Aftermath: Marginalization, Nomadism, Fragmentation and Hybridity

On both sides of the physical border narratives and other cultural productions project an imaginary that asserts unique characteristics of a collective identity. Guzmán asserts that identities, in the context of North Mexico, express a duality, ways of resisting change, as well as transformations due to the influence of the US and globalization (10). Ironically, the chaos caused by globalizing effects such as the clashing, merging and emerging of cultures, in addition to voices to dialogue these experiences through a multitude of cultural production (narrative, music, film), is allowing for what Bhabha considers as the move from singularities to different subject positions that are based on difference or in-betweenness, namely in regard to race, gender, generation, institutional location, geopolitical locale, sexual orientation (Bhabha 76). The fact that many of these actors produce from the periphery, or have a thematical base build on a peripheral experience, has allowed what we know as popular culture to not only thrive, but become an intrinsically vital connection with those who share a similar reality and can identify with what is being presented: art, *telenovelas*, *corridos*, short-stories, movies, blogs, and so on.

At the base of these new positions is a voice that challenges hegemonic and patriarchal tendencies and speaks to the degree by which marginalized populations are affected by globalization. In many cases, their thematically diverse enunciations subvert established

institutions, transcend borders and open a discursive space that is pertinent and necessary for their existence and expression of identity. In this sense, the fragmenting nature of globalization through mass migrations, families divided by borders, strict legal restrictions, temporary migrations, (trans)cultural exchanges and marginalization, has brought about another development which is that of bonding observed by Beck:

Globalization generates (compels) bonding [...] There emerge transnational or transcontinental 'communities' [...] they create the basis for geographical and social coexistence and cooperation, but also for a new form of social bonding. This new logic of living and working together in separate places is practised both in transnational corporations [...] and in transnational 'communities' (Mexican Americans, American Mexicans), 'families', 'ethnic subcultures' (an imagined Africa) (50)

What fortifies this bond is a shared sense of marginalization and fragmentation in the lives of those who identify as such. For example, in the Northern Mexico, migrants from across the country are attracted to border towns since they offer permanent or temporary employment to the masses of people who, due to their marginalized situation, seek better opportunities in *maquiladoras* or service industry jobs that correlate with the growing nature of the border towns. It also witnesses subjects in transit who will ultimately cross the border (possibly by having to arrange and pay a *coyote* if they lack documents to enter the US legally). Finally, Mexico's northern border is also the US' southern border, which means that this also becomes the repository zone for the deported since it is common for US Immigration and Customs Enforcement to arrange only for deportation to the border, not the complete return home. As a result, the social bond that is created in correlation to this border experience goes farther than just the commonality of a social situation, it also lies at the core of cultural production since

music, movies, newspapers, magazines, websites, non-profit organizations and even stores selling religious relics (Jesús Malverde, San Judas Tadeo, Juan Soldado).³³

It isn't arbitrarily that innovative styles of music or television programs are invented or adapted to articulate and contextualize the sentiments and realities of those who have been left at the margins of society. After all, hybridizations are at the root of many forms of popular culture, especially in the realm of music, clothing and religious figures (built on "old" world and "new" world traditions). In the world of music alone, there are songs that speak to the existence of each and every mankind: rich/poor, aristocratic/plebeian, red/brown/black/white/yellow/pink (or whatever color one wants to try and classify humans), educated/uneducated, etc. The fact of the matter is that music has always been coupled with the human soul as it speaks "beyond" words and into the sensorial cabinetry of our most inner self. So if this is nothing new, how can we relate this phenomenon with globalization or transnational cultures?

Popular culture by definition has a unifying effect upon people as it bonds and forms commonalities that allow them to have a sense of belonging to a collective group that they can identify with or can believe in, based on who they are as individuals. If we look at the concept of Rasquachismo, a form of hybrid Chicano aesthetics, we see the early workings of identity formation.³⁴ Bhabha attests that this sensibility: "renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent

³³ Jesús Malverde-Apostle and patron saint of lost causes and hopeless situations; San Judas Tadeo- Patron saint of illegal immigrants; Juan Soldado- Mexican Folklore hero associated with Mexico's drug traffickers (*narcotraficantes*) and also with the poor.

³⁴ *Rasquachismo* is defined as "a particular Chicano/a popular cultural aesthetic or sensibility, most often but not exclusively related to theatrical and performance production. An appropriation from Mexican Spanish (*rasquache* is something that is provisional and poorly built), within Chicano/a discourse this aesthetic came to the fore in a range of cultural tendencies, notable theater associated with the 1960s Chicano Movement" (Allatson 200) The term was first defined by Ybarra-Frausto (1992). Many associate the concept with the *Teatro Campesino*.

‘in-between’ space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present. The ‘past-present’ becomes part of the necessity, not the nostalgia, of living” (Bhabha 10). This confluence of time reiterates a common expression used in Spanish that can, in part, help explain how temporality affects identity, especially in the case of migration since there is a linkage with an uncertain present, a past that is spatially and temporally different than the present, and an even more uncertain future. The expression is as follows: “*no sé quién soy, de dónde vengo y hacia dónde voy.*” In English, it reads: “I don’t know who I am, where I come from or where I’m going.” This existential inquiry has its roots in a myriad of songs in both languages as our identities are never really complete, as Hall suggests: “identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions” (4).

Humans are, by nature, driven to recognize differences. A person can only be considered tall when the other is noticeably shorter, as a lack of difference would result in a homogenous relation that wouldn’t necessarily call any attention to the matter. Another less obvious analogy would be how to consider if someone were rich (in the monetary sense). To be “rich” is defined only because someone else has less or is perceived to have less. These identity markers are especially apparent when people are displaced, as difference immediately marks a new identity based on the provocation of the *id*. This is not due to one aspiring to re-invent an identity, but the only way one could avoid being placed in evidence of “difference” is through isolation. However, in the historical context, there is a tendency for people to move in masses and interact, at least to a minimal degree with others who are dissimilar. If one were to migrate as an individual – not within the confines of a collective group – it would be much more difficult to preserve traditions, customs and language if there were little opportunity for reciprocal

interaction. Consequently, geographical location and mass migration are what allows for a continuation of culture, albeit in their modified forms, as can be witnessed today in places like Los Ángeles (Mexican influence), Miami (Cuban influence), Southern Louisiana (Cajuns), Dearborn, MI (Arabs) or any other area that has multigenerational families who not only maintain food and music, but language as well. It should be noted that a continuous influx of people from those respective countries is also a large factor in cultural longevity. If foreign nationals representing certain country or ethnicity cease to arrive, continuity of strong cultural bonds will be placed into question.

Pérez Firmat, who writes extensively about the Cuban exile experience, addresses what it is like living and coming of age between two cultures while at the same time having to be at the forefront of this experience. In regard to the new cultural identity from these exile groups, he lightheartedly mocks the different Cuban-American experiences through the implementation of acronyms that denominate American Born Cubans as ABCs, or Cuban Born Americans as CBAs, both of which intend to simplify a complex set of differences amongst even Cuban-Americans. Although the Cuban-exilic experience is different from the Mexican experience, especially when considering the different influxes of Cubans that were driven primarily by political exile, many parallels can be drawn between the two groups, the first of which is having to live as Pérez Firmat puts it, “on the hyphen.”³⁵ His works identify hyphenated identities such as Mexican-Americans, Cuban-Americans, or “*any other nationality-American*” that would constitute the recognition of past heritage. As indicated by the hyphen, these subjects live in-

³⁵ Several key moments of Cubans arriving to the US include the first wave of exiles when Castro came to power and around the time of the unsuccessful Bay of Pigs invasion, a second wave from the *marielitos* in 1980 and a third wave from those who are considered *balseros*, or rafters.

between, in an area that is comprised of being, and not being, part of a particular entity that voids the dichotomy and defines a combination of both, hence hybridity.

In helping us understand this sense of intermediateness through hyphenations, we can deduce that through the migratory process, the focus is actually not on the past, but on the future:

Though they seem to invoke an origin in an historical past with which they continue to correspond, actually identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not ‘who we are’ or ‘where we came from’, so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves (Hall 4)

This question of becoming, not being, leads to an inquiry of why some people/groups prefer self-representation that clearly acknowledges a non-hyphenated identity such as *Hispanic*, *Latino*, *Chicano/a*, rather than *Spanish-speaking American*, “*Latin-American*” *American* (i.e. Colombian-American, Chilean-American etc.), and *Mexican-American*. The non-hyphenated identities (Chican@ / Latin@) tend to not form a part of the “Mexican” identity since after the Revolution, there was a shift in what being “Mexican” entailed. This would be a primary difference of what the “national” entailed prior to migration outside of the country, while fully recognizing that denying hybrid identities within Mexico would be completely erroneous due to its postcolonial nature and diverse population. In contrast, to my knowledge, there is not the widespread use of dual identity markers as one would find in the United States. This can be exemplified by the lack of combinations such as *méxico-zapotecos* (Zapotecan-Mexicans), just as is the case for an indigenous group within the US when one would not define the Ojibwa, for

example, as Ojibwa-American. The combination only occurs when there is migration over “national” boundaries as we encounter with the expression *méxico-americanos* (Mexican-Americans), which is implemented in common discourse both by scholars and self-identifiers. In this respect, those groups accepting of single-word identifiers appear to refute the idea of a hyphen and apt for a blank page that will be written by their own discourse and experiences that entail not just the past, but the combination of all three temporalities: past, present and future.

The effects of globalization, as previously mentioned, have increasingly placed people, primarily the poor, at the vanguard of hybridity. They have been thrown into a world of the deterritorialized and must take their nomadic experience that has distorted their sense of belonging and cast them into a space and time that they will ultimately re-territorialize them through their new enunciations and hybrid practices. As George Yúdice points out in an example in regard to indigenous peoples in the transnational arena, discussions among increasingly exposed individuals and cultures is that it “brings to the surface the complex negotiations of cultural reproduction and identity, particularly for marginalized or subordinate groups, that are now negotiated in a transnational sphere (370). Even though his example deals more with indigenous identity, what he does call to attention in these discussions is the function and concept of *agency*. *Norteno* writers, filmographers, artists and the like, and their counterparts [i.e. Mexican-Americans/Chican@s/Latin@s] in the US, have developed cultural agency based on their unique position at the margins away from the cultural centers and hegemony of the Mexican and US hegemonic societies. This has allowed them a vantage point of constructing a distinguishable identity and discourse based on what they are, and not, what they are not.

This separation from the respective cultural hegemonic forces speaks to their transnational realities that for Hall, “crush the border fences” (4). Likewise, Mignolo’s “border thinking” is unerringly based on a similar concept. This is due to the fact that since a hybrid culture is able to straddle both cultures, it manipulates “a variety of chronological circles and temporal rhythms” (Mignolo 37). A prime example that he gives in literature, is that “one can write in English and still add to it the density of Spanish/Latin American memories, as Latino/as are doing” (41).

Globalization has set the stage for a privileged site of enunciation that no longer needs the “center” for its validation, as the fragmentation process of the globalized world occurs, it also allows for creating a new national identity based less on the importance of a country and historically significant events pertaining to that country, and revalues and redefines the local in respect to the idea of nation as Martín-Barbero states in his article “*La globalización en clave cultural: una mirada latinoamericana*”:

La identidad no puede entonces seguir siendo pensada como expresión de una sola cultura homogénea perfectamente distinguible y coherente. El monolingüismo y la uniterritorialidad, que la primera modernización reasumió de la colonia, escondieron la densa multiculturalidad de que estaba hecha cada nación y lo arbitrario de las demarcaciones que trazaron las fronteras de lo nacional. Hoy las identidades nacionales son cada día más multilingüísticas y transterritoriales.

[Identity can no longer be thought of as a perfectly distinguishable and coherent unique homogenic culture. The monolingualism and uniterritorialism that was reaffirmed by the

first colonial modernization hid the dense multiculturalism which comprised each nation and the arbitrary demarcations that traced national borders. Today, national identities are more and more multilingual and trans-territorial.] (Martín-Barbero 10)

The last line in the material cited above that read “national identities are more and more multilingual and trans-territorial” is, as we mentioned before, a direct product of globalization; nonetheless, the meaning of “more” also signifies that national identities are still “national” identities in a sense. My argument in the next chapters is to demonstrate how the “multilingual” and “trans-territorial” still represent a polyphonic voice of the country in which they live and only transcend the national border for certain issues, while adhering within the physical border and its implications to avoid “crossing over” in terms of identity.

The enunciation (i.e. cultural production) of a fragmented and marginalized Mexican living in Mexico, or that of a Chican@ or Mexican-American with Mexican heritage living in the United States will still reflect some degree of nation in their writing, either as acceptance or resistance, or both. For those who have spent considerable time in both countries, their fragmentation in both cultures and languages will also be reflected. As they all ponder their subjectivity (or subjectivities) different from the hegemonic culture representing the country in which they reside, they also write from a position which gives them the platform and cultural agency to accomplish their endeavor as the new literary tendencies more fully embrace the ideas of multiculturalism, experimentalization, and a plurality of voices that ultimately strengthen their collective alteration of hegemonic culture and diversity what constitutes the nation and the transnational [subject].

CHAPTER 2- Nomadism/Migration: New Perspectives from Mexico

El hombre, antes que nada fue nómada.
[Human beings, from the outset, have been
nomads.]³⁶

Octavio Paz

The State of Migration in Mexico

Present-day migration from Mexico involves a wide spectrum of participants from all social classes who migrate for varying educational, professional, personal and economic reasons. Although the socioeconomic situation of each migrant varies significantly, the migrant to which I allude in this study can encompass any Mexican who is either “en route” towards Northern Mexico or who has recently left Mexico for the U.S. for any of the aforementioned factors, while also taking into account, as we will review further along, that the most common reason for migrating is primarily economic. Yet, regardless of the status of those who currently embark on the migratory path, the effects of migration have been woven incessantly into the tapestry of Mexican history in such a way that one would be amiss in discussing the region exclusively in terms of intransience from pre-Colombian times to the present-day. This is especially true throughout the past century given that mobility, primarily northbound to Northern Mexico and the United States, has increased exponentially due to established networks comprised of family, friends and community members that have facilitated communication, services, housing and employment opportunities.

In juxtaposition with the northerly migratory patterns to the US and Canada³⁷, national migration within Mexico has also increased in the past century and has included common

³⁶ Source <http://researchguides.library.wisc.edu/migrationUS-Mex>.

destinations such as the larger Central Mexican municipalities of Mexico City, Guadalajara, Puebla, León, Querétaro (to name a few), and more recently the Northern Mexican border cities of Tijuana, Ciudad Juárez and Reynosa (and several others), where Mexico is redefined by microcosms representing the entire country, while at the same time constructing a unique regional and border-city identity due to the proximity to the United States. The interconnected communities that have been established along the way were formed, in large part, by the “labor-intensive” group which is frequently comprised of those who are considered to be undocumented.³⁸ These migrants often lack the resources and opportunities to legally enter the US via an official process which, in turn, causes extended stays along the Northern cities where many migrants wait until arrangements can be made to cross the border.

Undoubtedly, this presents a much more complex situation that compounds factors ranging from strict migratory laws, heavily-guarded borders and violence in Mexican border regions, to the erratic availability of work and the acculturation process in the receptor country [the United States]. Migration, in the case of Mexico, functions as a tool for the self-empowerment of individuals looking to overcome cumbersome social and economic disparities that can be attributed to several factors, including, but not limited to: its colonial past, current political or economic corruption, consequences resulting from its drug wars, and finally its neoliberal policies dominated by large multinational corporations.³⁹ In fact, González

³⁷ Canada is also a net receptor of Mexican migrants, but this migratory pattern is still nascent in nature.

³⁸ Casteñeda notes that in the 90s, between 150,000 and 250,000 Mexicans emigrated annually and definitively to the United States; however, only around 55 thousand did so through legal means (64).

³⁹ “In the last four years nearly 30,000 Mexicans have been killed in an orgy of violence driven by narco-trafficking, gangsterism and organised crime”
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/hardtalk/9130155.stm> (Oct. 27, 2010).

Velázquez states that Mexicans are, in essence, abandoned by public policies and are exploited by large agricultural Mexican and transnational companies which, in turn, contribute to the highly marginalized state of 75.2% of the rural population in Mexico who arduously struggles to compete with US and European subsidies and high levels of production from larger operations (27). This has led, as previously mentioned, to high levels of migration from rural Mexico to urban Mexico, and from all areas of Mexico to the United States.

Consequently, in terms of contemplating this shared reality between two countries, both Mexico and the US have established their own unique discourse(s) at all levels (e.g. politically, economically, nationally, regionally, and locally). Due to the complexity of the situation, local, regional and national governments find themselves caught in the dichotomy, where on the one hand, human rights and legal issues are at stake, yet, on the other hand, there are considerable economic gains to be made on both sides of the border, thus creating “Border Games,” whereby many attempts are made to stop the flow of migrants without success.⁴⁰ It should be noted that these “Border Games” could be considered “successful” if certain political parties gain an advantage from an image point-of-view as trying to deter illegal immigration. Nevertheless, despite knowing that the current system has significant shortfalls, it is well known that migrants in any country fill a void in the receptor nation from an inexpensive-labor standpoint and an economic advantage from remittances sent from the emitter country.⁴¹ Castañeda observes that the market forces are more powerful than anything else in stopping any flux of migrants. This is

⁴⁰ Andreas insightfully analyzes how the two governments, especially the US government, maneuvers itself for political reason while failing to establish true policy in deterring immigration to the country knowing that, in reality, migrants fill an economical viable part of low-wage jobs that, in turn, help the economy (despite public opinion). He refers to this situation as a “well-entrenched clandestine cross-border labor market” (85).

⁴¹ These remittances represent 2.5% of the Mexican GDP and directly aide around 17 million people, 40% of whom rely solely on this source of income (González Velázquez 31).

due to the crisis of 1994, disproportionate salaries, Mexican demographics and finally the need for cheap labor in the United States (73).

In times of global inequities where high unemployment, the closing of factories, global competition and anti-immigrant sentiment abound, both sides remain bewildered on how best to manage the situation while knowing the scope of the issue is beyond the control of either government. In this sense, migration for both countries represents a difficult everyday part of life that involves a wide array of participants in society – migrants, businesses, politicians, *coyotes*, law enforcement, legal representatives, social services, and a myriad of others.⁴² One way to view this correlation of human interaction is what Canclini calls “a dispute of everyone against everyone where factories are going bankrupt, jobs are lost and massive migrations increase, as do interethnic and regional confrontations,” (10) such as those in the US border states, primarily Arizona, where there has been a rise in anti-immigration laws, hate groups, self-prescribed vigilantes such as the “Minutemen” and racial profiling.⁴³ He also states that despite attempts to homogenize humanity through globalization (many times referred to as purely economic), it can also be seen as an entity that disrupts everyday life and destabilizes governments and people who are at the mercy of outside influences: economic, cultural and technological (11). In order to fully understand globalization, Canclini suggests using a socio-anthropological perspective where the analysis of statistics and conceptual texts speak of the permeable borders through personal accounts and images that speak of the fractures and

⁴² “Coyote” is the commonly-used slang term given to the human traffickers who assist in transporting Mexicans to the United States by bypassing immigration authorities.

⁴³ A U.S. federal district judge in July put on hold key parts of the state law known as SB 1070, arguing that immigration matters are the federal government's responsibility. The law has since been partially implemented and contributes to what the U.N. worrisome world-wide racial profiling legislation. Source <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE6A055U20101101> (Nov. 1, 2010).

segregations of globalization leading to narratives and metaphors (11). It is precisely these personalized representations that will allow us to analyze how Mexico views the topic of migration.

The Socio-economic Situation of Mexican Migration

Each of the cultural texts pertaining to this study also exemplify themes that relate specifically to the socio-economic consequences originating from the overwhelming need to migrate since the establishment of *maquiladoras*, the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), as well as the devaluation of the peso and Mexican economic crisis in 1994.⁴⁴ These significant historical events append an already extensive list of migratory movements analyzed by US-Mexican migratory historian Jorge Durand, who for the purpose of providing an historical framework on the Mexican migratory experience to the US, helps us understand the progression of migration up to the present day. It is especially noteworthy that each of the following periods of migration has been caused by differing conditions in each country based on military confrontations and/or economics involving one or both countries:

- 1) Mexican-American War and Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo (1846-48);

⁴⁴ *María Eugenia de la O (2004) identifica tres ciclos y patrones en el proceso de evolución de las maquiladoras en México: la región pionera que se desarrolla en la década de los sesenta en la franja fronteriza del país; la región de expansión maquiladora que incluye algunas ciudades de norte, noreste y noroeste de México y que se desarrolla en los ochenta y finalmente la que se denomina como región emergente cuya característica es un rápido crecimiento en la década de los noventa y que se ubica en centro-norte, centro y Península de Yucatán. (Méndez Montero et al. 88)*

María Eugenia de la O (2004) identifies three cycles and patterns in the evolution of the *maquiladora* industry in Mexico: the pioneer region in the 70s along the border region; the expansionary region of the *maquiladoras* that includes some cities in the north and northeast of Mexico that was developed in the 80s and, finally, the region that is designated as an emerging region whose rapid growth is characteristic of the 90s and is located in the north central and central regions as well as in the Yucatan Peninsula (Méndez Montero et al. 88)].

- 2) California Gold Rush (1848- 1850);
- 3) Mexican Revolution (1910-17);
- 4) *Cristero* Wars (1926-29);
- 5) Great Depression (1929- early 1940s);
- 6) Braceros program (1942-64);
- 7) Undocumented phase (1964-86);
- 8) Mexican peso crisis and passage of NAFTA (1994);
- 9) US and World Economic boom of the 1990s. (55)

To this list of key migratory periods, it would be valid, in my opinion, to add a tenth period which involves the even more recent Global Recession (2007~2011), also known as the Great Recession, that has had grave consequences on job security on both sides of the border. On the Mexican side, the *maquiladoras* laid off workers because the law of supply and demand during recessionary times weakens factory output and the need for workers. It was not until late 2009, early 2010 that hiring finally started to increase to meet the demands of these manufactured goods in the US.⁴⁵ The latter two periods from the list have affected Mexican migration to the US in a negative way; however, the current economic downturn has done even more damage be it through the passage of anti-immigration laws or lack of once abundant

⁴⁵ Despite a weak U.S. economy and a drug war that has turned this city [Ciudad Juárez] into Mexico's deadliest, the *maquiladoras* are on the rebound. These assembly-for-export plants that crank out everything from brake pads to plasma TVs for U.S. companies are opening new facilities, expanding existing ones and hiring more employees. Some firms looking for lower costs have even begun shifting production from China back to Juarez. The recovery of the about 350 *maquiladoras* is the single bright spot in a city where drug violence has killed 7,000 people in three years. The *maquiladoras* may also be a sign that the economy in the region is finally turning the corner, after gross domestic product for Mexico shrank by almost 7 percent in 2009, the worst contraction in decades.” Source <http://www.businessweek.com/ap/financialnews/D9KTRSBG0.htm> (7 Feb 2011).

employment.^{46 47} Despite any decline in current migrations, the fact that they are still occurring augments the already noteworthy increase in waves of migrants throughout the 1990s and much of the early to mid-2000s.⁴⁸ This explains how these periods have and will continue to rapidly change both Mexico and the US culturally and demographically. Moreover, citing these previously mentioned movements and current economic conditions helps situate the background and subsequent analysis during which the cultural texts in this study were produced.

So, even though Mexico's familiarity with this northerly migration dates back to the mid-1800s, the incorporation of migratory themes is rather recent in the panorama of Mexican literature and cinema, in part, because of the increasingly vast breadth and intensity of migration throughout the entire country. As a result, both Mexico and the United States have been witnessing a unique and dramatic impact along the shared border due to the economic "promises" that the *maquiladoras* of Northern Mexico could provide for transnational companies and the workers that they would need to carry out their neoliberal agenda through the newly created trade agreement.

⁴⁶ "States across the country [US] have proposed or enacted hundreds of bills addressing immigration since 2007, [...] Last year, there were a record number of laws enacted (222) and resolutions (131) in 48 states, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures." Source <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/24/us/politics/24immig.html>.

⁴⁷ Current US unemployment stands at about 9.4% nationally and is higher in many of the areas where Mexicans were employed in the once robust construction industry in regions in the Southeast and Southwest.

⁴⁸ According to the PEW Hispanic Center, "This sharp decline has contributed to an overall reduction of 8% in the number of unauthorized immigrants currently living in the U.S.-to 11.1 million in March 2009 from a peak of 12 million in March 2007, according to the estimates. The decrease represents the first significant reversal in the growth of this population over the past two decades." Source <http://pewhispanic.org/reports/report.php?ReportID=126> (1 Sep 2010).

For many cities and towns along the US/Mexico border, the post-NAFTA population boom has contributed to a nomadic-like culture in which customarily strong family ties and stable traditions are being transformed and modified primarily through deterritorialization and reterritorialization in constantly unstable border regions. This destabilization of people and culture has transformed identities, developed new consciousnesses of the self, and has posed an emerging set of questions that can only be understood through a closer look at how this reality is depicted in cultural texts produced from both countries.

As a result the geographical boundaries of migrants now extending to all Mexican and US states, have affected the relations on both sides of the US-Mexico border and are contributing to a transnational experience that is helping to redefine how migration is interpreted internally and internationally. As Valenzuela Arce suggests, “*(l)as relaciones sociales que se conforman en algunas ciudades y estados del centro del país, como Michoacán, Jalisco o Zacatecas mantienen contactos intensos con sus migrantes que radican en los Estados Unidos, pero dichas relaciones no están definidas por la colindancia fronteriza sino por su condición transnacionalizada*” [The social relations that are comprised in some cities and states in the Central part of the country, like Michoacan, Jalisco or Zacatecas, maintain intense contacts with migrants living in the US, but such relations are not defined by the adjoining border, but rather by their transnationalized condition] (63).

This transnationalization can be seen in music, food, festivals, clothing, magazines, books, newspapers, movies and documentaries, religion, language, politics, and in economic trends through North America, be it in Mexico, the United States, and now in Canada. In fact, it is not uncommon to find sections of the paper or electronic newspapers dedicating entire sections labeled “Migrants” (in *Imagen*) or “Migration” (in *El Sol de Zacatecas*), as is the case with these

two commonly published newspapers in one of the more historically recognized migrant emitting states, Zacatecas, which like other regional newspapers have similar sections in their local newspapers as this is a common phenomenon in many of the cities of north central Mexico, and increasingly in southern Mexico.⁴⁹

Even though this transnational identity is undoubtedly present in the US and Mexico, the focus for this chapter outlines how migration is viewed from the Mexican perspective. Consequently, this will lead us to a more conclusive investigation that correlates the underlying trends and aspects of migration as related to identity in both the US and Mexico while attempting to explain, and contemplate this unique human experience of migration from the Mexican perspective rather than of the Mexican-American/Chicano perspective which will be explored further along. Yet, since many experiences lack defined boundaries, some themes such as marginalization and hybrid identities will be universal, while others will be more regional and national in nature.

Migration in Northern Mexican Narrative and Mexican Cinematography

Among the narratives included in this study is *Santa María del Circo* (1998), by Nuevo León-native David Toscana, who writes about a group of marginalized members of a circus through a parody that shows the grim reality of those who are abandoned by society and have to do what is in their means to survive. Although there are many attempts to establish themselves, they are never permitted to leave their state of marginality. I will examine how Toscana parodies these nomadic figures in order to represent the marginalized and deterritorialized Mexican who is excluded from the luxuries of a stable existence and searches for normalization by dubbing the

⁴⁹ Durand recognizes the Mexican States of Aguascalientes, Durango, Zacatecas and San Luis Potosí as the historical region of migration (58).

dusty town upon which they stumble, “La ciudad metropolitana Santa María del Circo”.

Likewise, in Tijuana-native Luis Humberto Croswaithe’s *Instrucciones para cruzar la frontera* (2002), I will continue to explore the way in which the process of migration degrades and displaces those en route to an unknown destiny eager for a way to escape their marginalized state which is alluded to in both writers’ border narrative. The tone of frustration, anger, satire and desperation is elemental to my argument that, even given the demeaning nature of migratory topics, these *norteño* novelists are able to convey their perceptions and critique of Northern Mexico in a lighthearted fashion and burlesque tone that uses this humoristic and entertaining approach in order to appease a sympathetic audience who finds commonality in the dour reality depicted in each work.

In addition to the two written texts chosen for this investigation, I have included two film selections, Mexico City-native Gustavo Loza’s *Al otro lado* (2004) and Guadalajara-native Patricia Riggen’s *La misma luna* (2008), where I will examine the destabilization of the family structure since each of these representations depicts the story of children whose father (*Al otro lado*) or mother (*La misma luna*) has migrated without the rest of the family to find work to support their families through remittances. The lack of understanding from the perspective of a child and parental “abandonment” leads each of the protagonists astray on a quest to be reunited with their parent. At a broader level, these cinematographic productions, along with the narrative selections, epitomize the ramifications of migrations where an uprooted lifestyle affects not only the person in question, but rather entire families, towns, regions and nations. Essentially, these two films and two novels illustrate how space/environment, displacement, marginalization, and the changing role of the family have entered the psyche of a nation submerged in the migratory debate.

Now, addressing these issues from the Mexican standpoint is the premise for an emerging group of writers from Northern Mexico (David Toscana, Luis Humberto Crosthwaite, Federico Campbell, Eduardo Antonio Parra, Rosario Sanmiguel and Rosina Conde, amongst others) who have made notable contributions to a nascent national discourse that confronts the harsh realities of the highly transited crossroads in Mexico that are characterized by a constant flux of migrants towards the US-Mexico border region. This growing group of contemporary Mexican intellectuals which began to surface in the 1980s, as Trujillo Muñoz explains, failed to receive national exposure at a theoretical level until the 2002 publication of Rodríguez Lozano's *El norte: una experiencia contemporánea en la narrativa mexicana*, where he recognizes a distinct *norteño* discourse and emphasizes an emerging literary voice in the peripheral zones of the North, outside of the traditionally and culturally dominant region of Central Mexico (17-18). It is this emerging voice that took nearly two decades to develop and become recognized beyond the regional level. What's more, he states that this peripheral production revitalizes Mexican culture and gets rid of the notion of cultural monopoly in Mexico and recognizes the surfacing of new cultural "centers". In essence, the barriers on localisms have been broken and several writers from the North are, in recent years, being appreciated at the national level (Parra 71).

In discussing the literary tendencies of Northern Mexico, Guzmán recognizes that this literature has resulted from interaction in a globalized world where many problems abound such as illiteracy, extreme poverty, and deterioration of the political, cultural and social situation (10-11). She also acknowledges that this *norteño* discourse questions what she says "modernity" has failed to achieve; in essence, "modernity" in this view equates to the more recent definition of the term as defined by neoliberal terms (Slater) whereby man advances based on the principle

that technology and private enterprise create optimal conditions for efficiency and a favorable relationship between individual (consumer) and corporation (producer).

Moreover, since the passage of NAFTA in 1994, this relationship in Mexico has resulted in even more inequities because of the lack of ability by the individual to harness the benefits of the corporate world for all to share in its prosperity. As a result, much of this literature reflects the deception of the so-called “modernized” world, while at the same time highlighting the consequences: “[...] *es una literatura que refleja la inequidad de la sociedad, así como los problemas generados por la violencia, la inseguridad, la injusticia, la desterritorialización y migración, entre otros, lo que incluso conduce a una deconstrucción del sujeto y a la pérdida de la identidad*” (10). [{... } it is a literature that reflects the inequity of society, as well as the problems generated by violence, insecurity, injustice, deterritorialization and migration, among others, which also contribute to the destruction of the subject and the loss of identity (10)]. Identity is not necessarily “lost” *per se*, but what is questioned is what comprises this identity: linguistically, ethnically, culturally, economically, regionally, nationally and internationally. This questioning arises from a region that has seen many changes in the past three decades because of the importance of human equity in the processes of economics in a globally interconnected world.

Guzmán also insightfully adds that the themes of this Northern literature reflect the situation of the country and the human condition. The following characteristics prescribe an overview of this thematical approach:

“sus relatos trascienden lo local y, aunque acentúan los rasgos de la región, su mirada va más allá; lo que escriben los norteros no se circunscribe a los bordes de la región: su expresión forma parte de la literatura universal, la crisis de la modernidad” (11)

[their works transcend what is local, and even though they accentuate the characteristics of the region, their view goes further; what the *norteños* write doesn't circumscribe the limits of the region: their expression forms a part of universal literature, the crisis of modernity (11)]

This crisis can be viewed as a system that victimizes those who find themselves as subordinates in a system (Canclini, Giddens) that is in part controlled by their consumption (culture, goods, etc.).

In much the same way, a group of cinematographers from Central Mexico (Alejandro González Iñárritu, Gustavo Loza and María Novaro, Patricia Riggen) also share in this ambition of depicting the realities of a nation who copes with the issue of migration, not only in the border regions, but in Central and Southern Mexico as well. Their contributions to the migratory debate transcend the national scene and have attained transnational and even international status with productions such as *Babel* (2006) and *Al otro lado* (2004) where they make their case for the global migratory trend in extending the debate from Mexico and the US to other countries such as Spain, Cuba, Morocco and Japan. Giddens provides depth to this local/global migratory tendency and explains how globalization has affected the world:

Globalisation refers essentially to that stretching process, insofar as the modes of connection between different social contexts or regions become networked across the earth's surface as a whole. Globalisation can thus be defined as the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa [...]
whoever studies cities today, in any part of the world, is aware that what happens in a

local neighbourhood is likely to be influenced by factors – such as money and commodity markets – operating at an indefinite distance away from that neighbourhood itself. (64)

For this precise reason, the global community has transcended national boundaries in its attempt to comprehend and acknowledge our interconnectedness. However, Giddens also states that, “at the same time as social relations become laterally stretched and as part of the same process, we see the strengthening of pressures for local autonomy and regional cultural identity” (65).

Hence, while Mexico and other countries experience global economic pressures that compel its populace to contemplate international migration as an alternative, the redefining of local values and traditions becomes more relevant. In the context of Mexico, this is especially true since it is the world leader in migration, surpassing countries such as India, Philippines, Pakistan, China, Morocco and Turkey (González Velázquez 26).⁵⁰

These new cultural “centers”, as Bartra points out, are a result of a “fragmented Mexico” in a postmodern world which has actually fueled its creative energies:

Postmodernity with all its bitterness has brought us, nonetheless, the hope of escaping these flattening metadiscourses. The experience of a fragmented Mexico – the Mexico of here and there – and the constant transgression of all borders, political and cultural, is one of the simulating symptoms of the last years: it is a way of living that, far from shutting off the creative impulses of the Mexican intelligentsia, has opened new perspectives. (40)

Many of these creative energies come from the increased flow and communication of migrants to the US and around the world and confirm Gómez-Peña’s concept of the “borderization” of the

⁵⁰ Between 2000 and 2005, 2 million Mexicans left Mexico for the United States (González Velázquez 26).

world (Bartra 40).⁵¹ From border literature, new tendencies emerge, and innovative forms of expression arise to construct identities which have formerly been overlooked or unnoticed by established national literatures. Border literature, on either side of the physical border, encompasses a wide array of experiences and events that depict a reality shaped by geography, politics, economics and socio-cultural factors. In fact, Canclini affirms that it isn't coincidental that the most innovative reflection on deterritorialization is occurring in the Borderlands between Mexico and the United States (290).

Deterritorialization and the Effects of Geography

One of the most current discussions pertinent to displacement and deterritorialization due to migration is that of migratory patterns. *Santa María del Circo*, *Instrucciones para cruzar la frontera*, *La misma luna* and *Al otro lado* all address these patterns in different ways, thus, attempting to represent the multitude of experiences and emotions among those who migrate. One deciphering change facing today's migrant, as González Velázquez states, is that unlike former times when migrants flowed more freely, current tendencies signal a longer stay in the receptor country to the extent that if/when the migrant stays and doesn't return, his/her status then changes to "immigrant" (29). While this "long stay" is certainly the case based on the premise that crossing the border has become more difficult, this does not mean that there isn't some level of circularity in migration despite newly constructed border fences, vast deserts, militarization of the border and stricter migratory laws. Likewise, his explanation of the moment at which a migrant becomes an "immigrant" is a bit one-dimensional given that migrants seldom

⁵¹ Gómez-Peña believes that displaced people are a consequence of the colonial project. The displaced are basically those who have been left in a marginalized state.

know whether or not there will be an opportunity to return safely. Also contributing to this complex process is the fact that migrants have access to a risky and ever-increasing network built by the *coyotes* and *narcotraficantes* who, through corrupt means, are able to penetrate even the most difficult border situations.

Now, to reflect upon one of the defying factors that inhibit the pass of migrants will allow us to understand the role of the border and geography in the Northern narrative of Mexico, as Parra points out when discussing the term “desert”, which he defines as a reductionist term for “northern” writers from Mexico in the late 1980s who were claimed by many critics to be a part of the “*narrativa del norte*” (72).⁵² Even though Parra discourages the use of generalizations for the literary production of Northern Mexico, much to the same degree as Guzmán, he does establish three contributing traits of *norteño* writers differentiating them from other writers: the omnipresence of the landscape and climate, the geographical proximity to the United States, and *norteño* language/discourse. He also adds that the landscape and climate are elevated to the level of protagonists which distinguishes it from other more stable and naturally hospitable regions in Mexico (73). This protagonistic landscape helps define part of the tradition found in numerous novels worldwide-- from Faulkner’s invention of Yoknapatawpha County to Gabriel Garcia Marquez’ fictional town Macondo, and more specifically in the Mexican context, fictional towns such as Juan Rulfo’s Luviana and Toscana’s Santa María del Circo (town), to name a few. As Lee Daniel points out:

⁵² Five writers form part of this group: Gerardo Cornejo, of Sonora; Jesús Gardea, of Chihuahua; Ricardo Elizondo, of Nuevo León; Severino Salazar, of Zacatecas; and Daniel Sada, of Mexicali (Parra 72).

(i)t is not uncommon for the imaginary town, on occasion, to appear abandoned even when it is not.⁵³ This phenomenon is seen in the novels of many Hispanic writers [...] However, Santa María del Circo (town) is truly deserted – not just for the moment – and the abandoned city is abandoned for a second time as the two reunited circus groups leave the dusty little town. Santa María del Circo (town) manifests most of the traits of the typical imaginary community: it is tailored after an actual place, realistically depicted, isolated, hot, dry and dusty (261-2)

Geography and climate in both *Santa María del Circo* and *Instrucciones para cruzar la frontera* follow these trends in their representation of non-hospitable environments by illustrating how the desert-like conditions and isolation are transmitted and reflected in the attitude and actions of the characters (i.e. nomads) affected inevitably by this constant anguish.

In *Santa María del Circo*, the physical description of the land and the presence of dust exemplify the inadequate living conditions unfavorable for humans. In addition to being a nuisance, the dust symbolically serves as a constant reminder that the place in which they are staying is uninhabited and lifeless: “*El color rojizo de la tierra y una nube de polvo*” [the reddish color of the earth and a cloud of dust] (10) are images that are in stark contrast with other regions of the country where there is ample rainfall and green vegetation, such as the coastal areas or in Central Mexico. The dust gives an imagery of contrast where, on the one hand, there is an absence (of life), yet on the other, an unwavering presence (of nature).

⁵³ Daniel defines 12 traits of imaginary towns: 1) small, 2) isolated, 3) dusty, 4) dry, 5) deserted or abandoned, 6) depicted realistically, 7) suspended in time, 8) underdeveloped economically, 9) generally the weather is hot, 10) silence predominates, 11) other real cities and towns are mentioned to help the reader more readily accept the fictional town as real, and 12) the places usually deserve their condemnation of “*pueblo chico, infierno grande*” (258-9).

As Rodríguez Lozano notes, “(l)as sensaciones que produce el desierto pueden ser muy variadas. La soledad, la tristeza, la íntima alegría, el desconsuelo, son efectos inefables ante las amplias superficies de terreno donde los ardientes rayos del sol dejan su huella” [The desert can produce various feelings. Solitude, sadness, intimate happiness and grief are ineffable effects of the vast spaces of land where burning rays of sun leave their mark] (131). At the same time, the narrator illustrates how human interaction with this environment creates havoc and only contributes to the already burdensome land: “cada paso rasguñaba la tierra y levantaba más polvo que el mismo viento ” [Each footstep that slid across the earth kicked up more dust than the wind itself] (11). To personalize this experience through one of the characters intensifies the experiences so that we can feel what Barbarela feels as she unknowingly sweats and tries to rid herself from the bothersome dust stuck to her dress as we see in the following passages: “parecía no haber sudado, salvo por la tierra pegada en los tobillos, hecha lodo” [she seemed not to sweat, except for the dirt stuck to her mud-covered knees] (11); “Barbarela se sentó en el suelo e inmediatamente se puso de pie, molesta por el polvo adherido al vestido” [Barbarela sat down on the ground and immediately stood up, bothered by the dust stuck to her dress] (12); and, “Barbarela se sacudió el vestido para desempolvarlo un poco” [Barbarela shook her dress to get the dust off just a bit] (13). Barbarela’s struggle illustrates how anyone crossing the desert would be engulfed by this uninviting environment of the desert full of dust and despair. Although Toscana doesn’t name the desert explicitly, his reference to “Estamos en pleno desierto” [We’re in middle of the desert] (10) suggests that they are in the Chihuahuan Desert which extends across Texas, New Mexico and Arizona in the US to the Mexican states of Durango, Zacatecas, Chihuahua and Nuevo Leon, Toscana’s home state. This region, although inhabited by people, is relatively unforgiving to those who attempt to cross it.

To much the same degree, the abandoned village upon which the circus entertainers stumble provides a glimpse into their “imaginary” world where silence abounds, yet mimics the isolation of some of the small towns of the region: “*Unos metros más adelante el camino se allanaba y se distinguían las techumbres de las primeras casas. Ningún ruido parecía venir del pueblo, y don Alejo se extrañó por tanto silencio*” [A few meters ahead, the road flattened and a few rooftops from the houses could be seen. There didn’t seem to be any noise coming from the town and don Alejo had a strange feeling since there was so much silence] (34). Y, “*Permanecieron un rato inmóviles, y uno a uno fueron cayendo en la cuenta de que el sitio era demasiado silencioso*” [They all stood still a few moments, while one by one, they began realizing that the place was too silent] (35). Silence, many times circumvented by an excess of dialogue amongst the circus performers, is a metaphor for those who are abandoned from society and lack human interaction. What’s more, life is hardly sustained with the types of vegetation that Mandrake, one of the cirqueros, finds: “*Mandrake recorrió los alrededores de Santa María del Circo. No encontró árboles frutales ni nada de lo que pudieran echar mano para no morir de hambre*” [Mandrake ran around Santa María del Circo. He didn’t find any fruit trees or anything else he could get his hands on as to not die from hunger] (101). Overall, both descriptions of the land and village serve as a metaphor for the *cirqueros*’ rejection not only from land, but also from people. Due to the lack of human activity, time has, in essence, come to a standstill in the small uninhabited village, which could be an even larger metaphor for the numerous small towns in Northern Mexico that have succumb to an exodus of its population through migration since these small towns, as Toscana depicts, are not conducive to providing a sustainable lifestyle in today’s competitive world. These towns also represent the reality of

which González Velásquez alludes to by saying that over three-quarters of the rural population is marginalized.

In a certain sense, the town of Santa María del Circo (town) acts as an oasis which, notwithstanding its unwelcoming qualities, offers freedom from societal norms and the ability to create something new. The encounter of this “pueblo fantasma” immediately sparks the interest of the *cirqueros* to establish order. In this regard, this novel complies with what Canclini deems as a need to transform and innovate due to the dissatisfaction with the world in its state of disorder or, on the other hand, perceived organization (11). In fact, through this novel, Toscana proposes a carnivalesque (Bakhtin) approach where, by means of satire and parody, chaos and abnormality in everyday life are revisited and mocked by this “marginalized” group of “freaks”: Barbarela- the bearded lady; Natanael- the dwarf; Fléxor- the contortionist; Hércules- the strong man who loves an acquired toilet, etc. Further along, I will discuss how these characters, and those of the other texts are marginalized by society, but for now, I will continue to consider how space influences other works from the region.

Much like the barren, dust-ridden topography in *Santa María del Circo*, in *Instrucciones para cruzar la frontera*, climate functions at a protagonist level during the monologue in the short-story, “*La fila*” or “The line”, while the driver waits in an apparently eternal line of cars in order to cross the border. This desperation is symbolic of the burdensome passage that one has to face to get from Mexico to the US, even with legal documentation. Yet, at the same time, humor is ever-present in this senseless folly: “*hace calor [...] y nos obliga a sudar. El calor es como un pariente gordo, efusivo, impertinente*” {it’s hot... and it makes us sweat. The heat is like a fat relative, effusive and impertinent} (15). In a more realistic tone, he describes others who are trying to pass the time, such as a young lady who sweats, sweats and sweats, but still

tries to fix her hair and make-up, only the make-up starts to run instantly: “*Ella suda y suda y suda*” (16); “*La muchacha se peina, se arregla el maquillaje que comienza a escurrir*” (16).

This image is similar to the personalization of the heat as describes in Toscana’s character Barbarela who was molested by the dust and was also sweating profusely.

In “*La fila*”, there appears to be a progression of heat from the more global sense to that experienced by someone else, and finally by the narrator himself who feels asphyxiated by the elements and stress of crossing the border. It isn’t only the physical aspect of the border that creates this sensation of “hell,” but also the political situation: “*El sudor me atrapa la cara*” [The sweat traps my face] (16); “*El sonido se mezcla con el calor*” [The sounds gets mixed up with the heat] (17); “su presencia cercana [del guardián con su uniforme azul] inunde el ambiente mientras el calor, el calor” {his close presence [of the officer with his blue uniform] inundates the surroundings while the heat, the heat} (18); “*mis manos no dejan de sudar*” [my hands don’t stop sweating] (19). These passages are used to create tension in the story and play with sensorial experience of the reader without being excessively overbearing. To break this tension, humor is incorporated, on occasion, into the prose in order to alleviate the reader, as is the wordplay with “*el calor que nos abraza y nos abrasa*” [the heat that hugs us, chars us] (15), or the comparison with an “obese relative” (15).

These long waits of insupportable heat are expressed by Crosthwaite’s narrative technique of writing descriptive paragraphs of the area, the emotion, and of the people who are also waiting to cross. However, this narrative style in paragraph format (represented by [...] in the following example) is interjected by one-line ideas that highlight how the mind wanders during such a long wait at the border: “[...] *La fila no avanza* [...] *No avanza* [...] *La fila no avanza* [...] *La niña deja de llorar cuando su mamá le da un golpe en la cara* [...] *No avanza*

[...] *Aquí está mi pasaporte*” { “[...] The line doesn’t move [...] It doesn’t move [...] The line doesn’t move [...] The small girl stops crying when her mom smacks her on the face [...] It doesn’t move [...] Here is my passport” }(15-20). Even after arriving at the border, his mind wanders after the exhausting experience of waiting in the hot, polluted, noise-filled atmosphere that doesn’t allow him to understand the border officer and instead reverts to a dream where he is on the beach with a woman, and they go home. The only aspect of the encounter that is legible is the fact that he has “*ojos verdes*” (green eyes) and that he speaks to him in English. Waiting for the climax of the situation, we do not find out the outcome of crossing the border because the narrator prefers to call attention to other details related to the anticipation, not the outcome.

In another short-story from Crosthwaite’s book, “*Muerte y esperanza en la frontera norte*” or “Death and hope on the Northern Border”, the emphasis evolves from heat to the other extreme in the desert or “*zona desértica*” (46), to the cold:

Nadie había mencionado el frío” y “Nadie mencionó las bajas temperaturas; de haberlo hecho, se habría traído por lo menos una chamarra (no falta un primo que preste una chamarra o un gabán). Ellos traían sus camisas, sus camisetas, pero nada que los cubriera del frío. Empezó una tormenta de nieve en el camino. Nadie mencionó la nieve
[No one had mentioned the cold. No one mentioned the low temperatures; having done so, he would have at least brought a jacket (surely some cousin could have lent a jacket or poncho). They brought shirts, t-shirts, but nothing that could protect them from the cold.

A snowstorm began on their way. No one mentioned the snow] (45).

On the one hand, the severity of the environment does not constitute the omission of wittiness as the parenthetical interjection of the “cousin” who would lend a jacket. Yet on the other, the repetition of “*nadie mencionó*” (“No one mentioned”) draws attention to the lack of

understanding of the border region by migrants unfamiliar with the desert-region and the changing climate which differs from that of Central and Southern Mexico.

Another part of the landscape which serves as an obstacle in this ruthless climate is the man-made border fence/wall or “*gran muro metálico* [big metallic wall]” (45) and the sea: “*Las fronteras deberían detenerse frente al mar, quitarse el sombrero, respetar los confines que marca la naturaleza. Sin embargo, esta línea no permanece ahí, se atreve a rebasar las olas y entrar al océano con esa pedantería propia de las fronteras*” [“Borders should stop in front of the sea, take off their hats, respect the confines that nature delineates. However, this line doesn’t stay there, it ventures off to surpass waves and enter the ocean with that pedantry of borders”] (124).⁵⁴ This passage marks a critique of the border fence which extends into the ocean at the San Diego, US- Tijuana, Mexico border region along the coastline, creating a preposterous attempt to dominate the sea. This is precisely the idea of María Novaro’s 1994 film “*El jardín del Edén*” where whales (also warm-blooded mammals) are able to flow freely from one side of the ocean to the other, but the people cannot. Borders for Novaro are a man-made construct that, instead of increasing the “safety” of people (on both sides, not just the US), has jeopardized and altered the lives of many who are merely looking for work and a way to provide for themselves and their families. While it may appear more “safe” from the US perspective, the level of danger in Mexico has gone up exponentially.

In comparing and contrasting the idea of space between the *norteco* writers and the central-Mexican cinematographers, *Al otro lado* takes a slightly different approach since it occurs, in addition to Cuba, Spain and Morocco, in a geographically-distinctive region of Southern Mexico in the state of Michoacán. While the first scene does depict the sea, it is more

⁵⁴ The Mexico-US barrier (or border fence/wall) is a series of independently build structures that stretch along parts of the nearly 2,000-mile border region.

representative of borders between Spain and Morocco, and between Cuba and the United States. The body of water that it does present, however, is that of a lagoon, which, accompanied by a backdrop of mountains and cattle, represents an impoverished, but charming and lush rural village called Zirahuén.⁵⁵ Along with a spectacular view, the *laguna* (or lagoon) is introduced in a completely different manner than the desert or desert-like conditions in the North of Mexico.

In this quaint village in Michoacán, the father/husband, who ultimately leaves his family for the United States in search of work, acts as a local storyteller by telling his son that the lagoon is home to a legendary indigenous princess that defied the Spanish conquistadors. As per the legend, the princess wept so much after being kidnapped by her groom to be, that she created the lagoon in which she would, make the ultimate sacrifice and drown herself. The image of this idyllic heaven or *locus amœnus* on earth is juxtaposed by families struggling to elevate their social status. Part of the reason to show these images of a pre-Colombian time is to show part of Mexico's pride in its indigenous past which reinforces the notion of an envisioned peaceful Mexico before the arrival of the Spaniards. As such, the land forms part of a nostalgic past and functions as a message to never abandon or forget the homeland, which is a common *leitmotiv* in immigrant and exile literature. At the same time, it serves as a message to those who are on the verge of leaving Mexico to "reconsider" the reasons for which they are about to embark on an unknown journey.

Harvey explains this act of remembrance and reminiscence in the context of a postmodern world: "The difficulty under capitalism, given its penchant for fragmentation and ephemerality in the midst of the universals of monetization, market exchange, and the circulation of capital, is to find a stable mythology expressive of its inherent values and meanings" (217).

⁵⁵ The lake area and village known as Zirahuén is home to about 2,500 people. Source <http://www.mexconnect.com/articles/3500-zirahuén-michoacán-mexico-s-walden-pond>.

In the film *Al otro lado*, this stable mythology is represented by a pre-Colombian episode and accompanies the traditionally strong work ethic of agrarian regions of Mexico. At the same time he questions how this need to remember affects discourse in the current context: “Is this the foundation for collective memory, for all those manifestation of place-bound nostalgias that infect our images of the country and the city, of region, milieu, and locality, of neighbourhood and community” (218)? In this sense, Prisciliano’s father opts for a fatherly-son moment that gives meaning and value to his family’s life despite his imminent migration to the “other side” where his nostalgia will only be further compounded due to the unfamiliar terrain, culture, language and customs.

In *La misma luna*, as in *Al otro lado*, the first scene entails water. Yet, in this instance, the image portrays Mexicans crossing illegally until “*la migra*” arrives to make arrests.⁵⁶ The only escapees are young Carlitos’ mother and her friend, both of whom are working illegally in Los Angeles, California in order to send remittances to sustain their families which they left four years prior. Dissimilar from the other works in this study, however, *La misma luna* emphasizes a multi-spacial presence which transcends the limits of Mexico and enters into the terrain of the United States to El Paso, Texas; Tucson, Arizona; and Los Angeles, California.

In Mexico, Carlitos and his maternal grandmother live in Palomas, Chihuahua, a municipality located at a border crossing south of the Rio Grande and a meeting point for non-local Mexicans and Central Americans. Carlitos’, although only a young boy, works as an “assistant” for doña Carmen who arranges false identifications and passage to those who do not have proper identification to cross legally. This border region, like the examples in the two

⁵⁶ “La migra” refers to Immigration Services formerly known as the “INS” or Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS). Today, this entity is called “ICE” or Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

narratives, yet different from *Al otro lado*, represents a place of difficult passage due to the human and physical boundaries.

The Transnational Experience from the Mexican Perspective

In general, *La misma luna* depicts several cultural dichotomies, including the fact that it takes place in two countries (Mexico and the United States). In this respect, the film insists on denoting differences instead of showing a more culturally-sensitive regional idea of what some critics have deemed a borderless region referred to as "MexAmerica," which was first coined by Garreau in *Nine Nations of North America* (1981).⁵⁷ The capital of MexAmerica, by Garreau's definition, most logically falls to the cultural center of the region and residence of Carlitos' mother: Los Angeles, California. Similarly, in 1988 Langley published *Mexamerica: two countries, one future* to denominate the same cultural phenomena. He, unlike Garreau, extends this definition even further north to Chicago, Illinois to show socio-spacial connections.

While both films highlight a transnational experience, there is a definite preference for Mexican values as depicted in the parallel scenes in *La misma luna* where Carlitos is in Mexico and his mother in Los Angeles, California. In this depiction of "real" food and family values, Carlitos prepares a traditional Mexican breakfast of hot chocolate to accompany sweet bread which he gives to his ailing grandmother, while his mother warms a Pop-tart upon which she places a "chile en vinagre" to mask the flavor of this quintessential breakfast-on-the-go typically associated with the high-paced lifestyle in the United States.

⁵⁷ In this work, Garreau highlights that politically defined borders are less relevant than cultural and linguistic ones as is the case for MexAmerica, i.e. Southern and Central California, New Mexico, southern Arizona, the Rio Grande Valley region in Texas and most of Northern Mexico, including Baja California.

Part of these filmic experiences, as Iglesias Prieto observes, is to draw attention to the differences from Mexico versus that of Chicanos and their unique set of qualities and characteristics that differentiate them. She states that from virtually all aspects, Border Cinema is the opposite of what Chicano Cinema has become since even though they each highlight the border and the problems associated with identity:

El cine fronterizo ha sido un importante generador y consolidador de estereotipos sobre la frontera y lo fronterizo, un elemento central en la simplificación de su vida sociocultural, mientras que el cine chicano se ha caracterizado por su trabajo deconstructivo y por ser un cine de resistencia y enfrentamiento. [Border Cinema has been an important generator and consolidator of stereotypes about the border and everything associate with the border, a key element in the simplification of its socio-cultural life, while Chicano Cinema has been characterizes by its work as deconstructive and as a type of cinematic production of resistance and confrontation] (332).

The perpetuated stereotypes of Mexican-Americans is another example of this pro-Mexican discourse that contrasts that of “the other side” as we witness in *La misma luna* when doña Carmen (human trafficker) mocks the ability of a young Mexican-American unable to speak Spanish while asking about taking babies in order to illegally traffic them in order to make money: [doña Carmen to Carlitos] “*que si entendimos, mula de chicanos que ni siquiera saben hablar su propio idioma* (they wanna know if we understand, Chicanos mutts who don’t even know how to speak their own language) [...] *se creen mejor que uno sólo porque nacieron del otro lado, ¿verdad?* (they believe they are better than the rest just because they were born on the other side, right?) [...] *con esta cara de sustos que tienen estos güeyes, de volada se les cae la migra* (with that frightened look those idiots have on their faces, the migra is going to get them

in a jiff).” In the previous quote, we witness the one of the attitudes of Mexicans towards Mexican-Americans, who, according to doña Carmen, are automatically called “Chicanos” since they have not maintained their linguistic ties to their cultural heritage.

Another notable aspect of doña Carmen’s articulation is through the use of her colloquial speech with expressions such as: “mula” (mixed-blood), “el otro lado” (the US), “güeyes” (idiots), “de volada” (right away) y “la migra” (ICE). These expressions show how Mexican hegemonic discourse and language function to supersede any perceived cultural or economic advantage that is believed to come from being born in the US.

Doña Carmen’s intolerant view of the English-speaking Mexican-American community that arrives to Mexico shows the importance of speaking Spanish in order to be culturally accepted as a functioning member of society. However, she appears much more tolerant towards a group of indigenous migrants that she is tending as the Mexican-Americans arrive to her shop. Even though the origin of the indigenous men is not disclosed, it appears as though two of them do not speak Spanish, but rather an indigenous language, as they discuss the details of her offer to arrange for their passage via means of a *coyote* to the other side. This scene represents the effect that mass migration has had internally in Mexico with large numbers of indigenous peoples arriving to the borderlands looking to find employment either in the border region or on the other side.

Santa María del Circo and the Carnavalesque

González Velázquez points out some of the most convincing statistics on this front while referring to the unfortunate fact that at least 3 million Mexicans need to migrate domestically (within Mexico) following the crops:

Los campesinos migrantes que se contratan en las zonas hortícolas del norte del país, son los nuevos errantes del siglo XXI, que se han visto obligados a convertirse en nómadas en su mismo país. [Migrant laborer employed in the agricultural zones of the north of the country are the new wanderers of the 21st century that have been forced to become nomads in their own country.] (33)

He claims that 29% come from Guerrero, 25% from Oaxaca, 18% from Veracruz, 15% from Sinaloa and the rest from other states (33).

The emphasis on internal migration as a sort of “nomadism” is precisely the message portrayed by the characterization of the circus members in *Santa María del Circo*. The *cirqueros* are, par excellence, the rejected members of society where in order to function accordingly, one needs to fulfill a certain degree of normality. By reflecting briefly on Foucault’s notion of abnormality, we understand that those who lack normality can be categorized as monstrous. For Foucault, this monstrosity is characterized by a weird and extreme phenomenon where the forbidden and the impossible merge. He also suggests that disfigurements of the body are considered unnatural and extraordinary even though they occur naturally even in nature. As such, this abnormality marginalizes those who cannot be considered as obedient citizens, and are likewise considered as a threat to the natural order of things. This can cause three reactions: 1) suppression, 2) medical treatment, or 3) pity (Foucault 56). The characters in the novel, as Rodríguez Lozano confirms, move about their brief world (i.e. microcosm) with the burden of a corporal disfigurement which, because of their exceptionality, break from the customs of the space which they inhabit (64). Given that their capacity to live a “normal” life is limited, the profession of being a circus act allows an exit to this marginalization because in the case of the circus, being “different” is acceptable, since, in reality, the more unique, the better.

The arrival of the *cirqueros* to Santa María del Circo (town) recognizes a moment when, for the first times in their lives, notwithstanding their connection to the community with their circus life, they are presented the opportunity to achieve a “normal” life since inhabiting this abandoned town offers the opportunity for them to fulfill the normalization process in order to escape the space their marginality. Through these “marginalized” characters, the author utilizes a burlesque and entertaining discourse with the explicit intention of being politically incorrect by using the excuse of the carnivalesque context.

By incorporating this tone in the novel, what is seen as a criticism of society is presented in a comical manner which converts serious topics into humor, as is seen in the scene when Barbarela, the bearded lady, wants to play the role of Jesus Christ in an official representation of the Passion of Christ when, all of a sudden, the man playing the part interjects “*no me chinguen*” [don’t screw with me] (56). Toscana’s marginalized characters are witty in the sense that their inquisitive nature, perhaps exacerbated by the fact that these are no “ordinary” citizens, allows for a rather blatant level of liberty in creating a critical voice towards societal norms and practices, particularly given that Mexico’s religious tradition post-*Conquista* has been chiefly Catholic.⁵⁸

By showing the life of the *cirqueros* as a spectacle, Toscana illustrates a sad and hidden reality of society while providing the occasion for the public, or reader, the chance to laugh at the “abnormalities” of the characters through their witty and ironic discourse. According to Debord, the spectacle in society isn’t a supplement or an embellishment to real life, but rather the model of the dominant social life (6). This is to say that the world could be considered a circus, a

⁵⁸ Mexico’s 2000 census reflected a population that was 87.9 percent Catholic, down from 98 percent in the 1950s. Source <http://laht.com/article.asp?ArticleId=354647&CategoryId=14091> (8 Feb 2011).

marginalized place at its extreme, out of control. Taking this into account, the state of the world parodies postmodern life, because just as in the example of the circus, the postmodern age manifests chaos due to the displacement of people and labor.

Part of this discontentment could be a main factor in criticism against the long-standing Catholic Church as we saw in a previous example. Present-day religious practices in Mexico have changed considerably from the past decades and have evolved into what Monsiváis would consider “rituals of chaos.” As we mentioned earlier, three figures have become well-known as either (unofficially recognized) Patron Saints, or myths: *Juan Soldado*, *Jesús Malverde* and *San Judas Tadeo*. In *Santa María del Circo*, by mocking religion in a society that is principally Catholic, Toscana is opening himself to the possibility of offending a public, but in this case, the permission that is given to the participants of the spectacle is a way to void them of rules and established cultural norms and morals since, in reality, they were never given a place to carry out a “normal” life. For that reason, Toscana wouldn’t automatically be associated with an anti-religious message as it is more an issue of the “abnormal” *cirqueros* who are acting out against a society in which they are not fully accepted.

In *Santa María del Circo*, the author parodies history in a variety of historic events that include the absurdities of war on both the Mexican and US sides. Debord informs us that history only exists through mankind because without him, there would be history, but it wouldn’t be pondered because the language and the technology that is used to create it is history (126). This idea of recreation, for Toscana, loses its importance in the case of a nomadic group of *cirqueros* since their sense of belonging as the rejected doesn’t fit any “national” model. In much the same way, this is a Chican@ idea, as their “national” model is created using an invented place [Aztlán]

for the same purpose as the cirqueros when they establish their new town of Santa María del Circo.

The act of creating history is a social event that requires the participation and acceptance of more than one person. Viewed from this perspective, mankind depends on the memory of others. A developed society is conscious of time, but is dedicated to denying it because it doesn't see what has happened, but what returns since only a state society organizes its temporality in terms of the immediate experience with nature using a cyclical model (126). As such, memory in Santa María del Circo is limited to the marginalized who, in reality, are nomads in their own society because they travel from one town to another with the circus. Upon arriving to the ghost town, they are excited with the idea of establishing there since they could essentially create and appropriate their own world: "*Mandrake asintió y aseguró que la única forma de tomar posesión legítima del lugar era refundándolo, nombrando de nuevo el pueblo, sus calles, el ojo de agua, y reiniciando su historia*" ["Mandrake nodded and assured that the only way to take legitimate possession of the place was to re-establish it, renaming the town, its streets, its waterhole, and reinitiating its history"] (84). To much the same degree, the Spanish Conquistadors and all conquering forces that came to the "New World" practiced the same formula of renaming places based on a Christian name. Ironically, the *cirqueros* are in a way rectifying history since they are the ones renaming and reinventing history to their liking even though they (like the indigenous at the time of the Conquest) are the marginalized.

Returning to the idea of parodying history, Toscana put into practice a burlesque tone for his own analysis through the voice of his characters. In the case of the Mexican Revolution, the narrator describes Mexican history as "barbarous" by saying: "*Basta ver las batallas épicas, bestiales, que organizamos cuando peleamos mexicanos contra mexicanos, y la facilidad con*

que doblamos las manos cuando nos profana un extraño enemigo” [“Enough with seeing epic and bestial battles that we organize to fight Mexicans against Mexicans, and the ease with which we fold our hands when a strange enemy swears at us”] (110). A logical explanation for Toscana’s style comes from two reasons: 1) He sees the Mexican Revolution as a complex event that, as history shows, was basically fought among leaders that had follower who fought just to fight, without knowing much about the rationale for doing so, much like in Mariano Azuela’s novel *Los de abajo* (1915); and 2) Toscana breaks from the traditional Latin American “Boom” authors such as Juan Rulfo, Mariano Azuela and Carlos Fuentes as a way to establish a new way of contemplating the Revolution through a new voice, the “*nueva narrativa mexicana de la frontera norte*.” This voice is dominated not necessarily by internal affairs, but international ones as well. In this respect, Toscana’s tendency is to unite the present with the past, as we see when he indirectly subverts the roles and importance that national heroes play through the discussion of the newly-founded newspaper in Santa María del Circo, *El País*.

As the *cirqueros* contemplate what they deem as newsworthy items, they come to the conclusion that, like the sensationalist new today, parallel with the reality that plagues Northern Mexico, the only news that is worth publishing are those referring to crime and blood. Even though Toscana’s novel doesn’t speak explicitly about the drug cartels, femicide, gangs and migrant deaths, he does offer an explication for how Mexico has come to view death based on an example during the *Porfiriato*. Instead of rejecting the idea of violence, the *cirqueros* embrace inventing a story for the purpose of having news; however, after an anecdote whereby a crime was invented and two people were killed, they had to declare that they were times of Don Porfirio when “*primero se hacían las ejecuciones y luego venían la preguntas*” [“first they carried out the executions and the questions came later”] (95). In order to avoid such events,

they decided that instead of a newspaper that was based principally on text, they would use pure images (97). In the current globalized world, what has occupied our world has been an increased set of visual material that, like globalization itself, achieves a higher level of fragmentation since the images are immediate, varied and self-explanatory (considering the visual images of violence from the border).

The idea of a modern Mexican society that Toscana projects in the tone of his novel reflects the general tendency of globalization to reduce the importance of the patriarchal nation, history and religion. The reader cannot help but laugh at the playful language that is integrated in the reality of the novel within a past and present context. For example, in terms of war, the text criticizes the fact that wars are no longer fought face to face, but behind a desk (109) and that there is no longer anything very brave or masculine with wars: “*Así están acabando con la hombría de la guerra; a como van las cosas, no te extrañes si los reclutas son puros jotos; ¿qué promesa más atractiva que un viaje largo con un montón de hombres refocilándose todos juntitos en una trinchera*” [“That’s how they are ending with the bravery of war; how things are going, don’t be surprised if all the recruits are gay; what better offer than a long trip with a ton of men rubbing up against one another all together in a trench”] (109). What Toscana is alluding to here is that in addition to the loss of nationalisms and religion, there is also, because of globalization and redefined roles of men, a perceived loss of masculinity. Since men were many times the “founding fathers” of the nation and of the Catholic religious institution, it isn’t surprising to see example of national symbolism equally satirized, like the national anthem that should not have “empty” words, but rather just music (180), or religious architecture that needs very little faith to construct a church like that (100).

Toscana's mission through *Santa María del Circo* is to modernize Mexico to a level where it is acceptable to make fun of what has happened and is happening in the country. For Toscana, it is a country based on several traditions, as we witness in the discourse of Don Alejo (the circus master) who wanted something different where the idea of a good show would be one: “*montado con actos asombrosos y temerarios; nada de simplezas y chistes gastados [...] ya habían acostumbrado a la gente: querían ver a sus miserables payasitos*” [“they had already accustomed the people: they wanted to see their miserable little clowns”] (64) and he continues to rant that “*la gente no cuestionan las tradiciones, simplemente las acepta y vive con la idea de que son buenas si son religiosas; sabrosas si son de comer; interesantes si vienen de los indios; y divertidas si son un espectáculo [...] Benditas sean las tradiciones que nos dan sustento a los personajes más anacrónicos y repetitivos de este país de mierda*” {“people don't question traditions, they just accept them and live with the idea that they're good if they are religious; delicious if you can eat them; interesting if they come from Indians; and fun if they are a show [...] blessed are the traditions that give sustenance to the most anachronistic and repetitive people in this shitty country”} (65). These lines demonstrate that Mexico is country of contrasts where, on the one hand, there is a direct relationship (economically and otherwise) with the one of the most influential countries of the world, yet it remains locked in time on a cultural level. This very same idea will be repeated in Chapter 4 as we discuss the consumption of identity in the Mexican-American community, which, for the most part is consumption based on the aforementioned themes.

Writing from Northern Mexico, Toscana's writing style embodies a desire to create something new since Mexico, and especially the north, is no longer a country of *campesinos* because there are new realities, particularly, urban ones where race, class and gender are being

rewritten. The new roles of society are different, as are its players. For that reason, there is a section in the novel where the *cirqueros* discuss assigning new jobs through the drawing of names: “*Es muy sano que en toda sociedad haya negros- explicó Balo-, si no, ¿quién se va a encargar de limpiar las letrinas y todas esas cosas que nadie quiere hacer?*” [“It’s very healthy in every society to have blacks – explained Balo -, if no, who’s going to be in charge of cleaning the latrines and all those things nobody wants to do”] (91). Balo’s proclamation speaks to the equality of democracy where, like in any of the big narratives that promised a utopian society, the world is simply one of asymmetries.

Toscana’s proposal with this novel is to just accept the world of inequalities by laughing at them and the rest of the chaos that surrounds us. The *cirqueros*, *par excellence*, are the symbols of a globalized world where inequalities abound and where neither governments nor religions will be able to ward off a way of life that is being redefined by isolation, displacement and nomadism, all of which bar many a process of normalization and equality. To that end, Rodríguez Lozano adds that this regiomontano has opted to look for different ways of making literature of Northern Mexico more universal without abandoning the realness of the borderland reality (80). This is the contribution of the thematically varied writers from Northern Mexico. This plurality in multi-voiced aesthetics is important in redefining this region of contrasts and contradictions, and will continue to be so since the border will always signify divisions, even if relationships were to improve to the degree, say, of the European Union members. Regardless, there will be differences involving language, politics, legal issue, culture, education, health, business, and more.

New Tendencies in Migration

With the movie trends such as *Al otro lado*, *La misma luna*, *Babel*, and *El jardín del edén*, there seems to be a style of movies and documentaries (such as *Objetivo: el Norte*) designed to at least call to attention the dangers and consequences of international migration. To much the same degree, articles published in local newspapers on migration on both sides of the border have begun a dialogue with the Mexican community of Mexico with the one in the US.⁵⁹ One of the most important issues surrounding migration in the twenty-first century is orphans. Not just a reality for undocumented Mexicans living in the US, this theme points out two trends: 1) globalization has marginalized people to such an extent that they are willing to jeopardize the wellbeing of their family, and 2) legislative battles (such as the one surrounding the Arizona Law SB1070) have made it increasingly difficult to continue living peacefully in a place where on the one hand at least one parent is undocumented, but children who are legal citizens of the same country. Several cases in the first decade of the twenty-first century brought this scenario to public attention.

In *El Siglo de Torreón* and *Imagen de Zacatecas*, an article titled “Piden niños a EU que legalice a sus padres” (“Children ask the US to legalize their parents”) was published on March 24, 2007. The article informed that a group of children and adolescents in Los Angeles, sons and daughters of undocumented immigrants, sent 400 letters to legislators in Washington asking to provide opportunities towards legalization for their parents. They claim that the topic originated when these children started making special requests to Santa Claus such as: “*quiero que mis*

⁵⁹ In recent times, technology and the interconnectedness between Mexico and the US has allowed stations like Univision to broadcast live from Latin America and discuss issues beyond the traditional borders. Likewise, novelists such as Luis Humberto Crosthwaite also act as a columnist who writes for the *Enlace* Spanish-section in the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, as well as in the *Milenio Diario* in Mexico City. This shows the true transnational nature of the topics of shared interest among both nations. (http://sdpnnoticias.com/nota/30364/Presenta_Crosthwaite_su_mas_reciente_novela_en_Azcapotzalco 4 April 2011)

padres tengan licencia para que me lleven al parque” and “*quiero que tengan papeles para que tengan buenos trabajos y que me lleven a México.*” Gloria Saucedo, the Representative for Hermandad Mexicana, indicated that after the march on the March 25, 2006 in Los Angeles, many children didn’t show up for school and they [the Hermandad Mexicana] realized that children suffer when a migratory law can separate them from their parents. At that time, they estimated that there were around 600,000 children and adolescents of the undocumented living in the US.⁶⁰ This dire situation isn’t just a worry in the US, but in areas of heavy migration in Mexico as Gustavo López Castro explores in Michoacán. He recognizes the dramatic effects and implications that Mexican migration to the US entails and stresses that all citizens and entities are affected: those who go, those who stay, those who don’t have migrant parents, local authorities, the rearranging of social order, and the minors who risk themselves or are put at risk to be a part of the migrant flow (547). This show that migration is equally, or (as true as it is) even more likely to affect Mexico more so than the US; though, it is doubtful that people in the US would perceive it in this manner.

Even supposing the movies of discussion in this chapter are not the first in engage in this debate of the “*olvidados y abandonados*” (“forgotten and abandoned”) including children, women and parents, it is important to note that for the first time in Mexico, there is now more of an open discussion on the abandonment of family members since it is usually the men who travel to the “other side.” Increasingly, however, this trend includes both parents who leave behind their children with aunts and uncles, or grandparents. In *La misma luna* this was the case with young Carlitos. His only contact with his mom was by telephone or presents, and his dad was completely absent from Mexico altogether. In *Al otro lado*, it was the father figure who left the

⁶⁰ Source <http://www.elsiglodetorreon.com.mx/noticia/266624.piden-ninos-a-legisladores-de-eu-legalizar-a.html> (24 Mar 2007).

family of all three children representing Morocco, Cuba and Mexico. The connection of these stories with similar real-life situations is strikingly similar. Perhaps the most iconic case of an abandoned child in the US is that of Elián González, who, after the death of his mother in 2000 while crossing from Cuba to Florida as a *balsera* (one who travels in a raft), there was a complicated legal battle between the US and Cuban governments. Despite the presence of his biological father in the US, Janet Reno (the Secretary General) ordered the return of the child to Cuban authorities since Elián was “rescued” in the ocean and not on dry land, the requirement for Cubans to qualify for refugee status. In a slightly different case involving Elvira Arellano, an undocumented woman from Michoacán, and her son Saúl, made national headlines since she became the undeclared spokeswoman for all undocumented parents of legalized children in the US. Nonetheless, she sparked several legal battles in the US, most of which have not been resolved to this day.

In *Al otro lado*, Prisciliano’s father exposes another debate that has surged in Mexico on what I like to call the “New Mexican Machismo” (el “*nuevo machismo mexicano*”) that entails migration as a means towards a personal benefit that goes beyond providing for the family. Although I am not condemning migration, what I do believe important is to take into account how consumerism has also affected potential migrants within Mexico since they can, as Prisciliano’s father (Rafael) converses with his reticent mother who doesn’t understand why they can’t simply make do with what they have. Rafael tell her: “*Lo hago por ustedes... voy a traer un chingo de dólares para comprarnos una casota bien grandota y los voy a pasear en una de esas trocas americanas*” [“I’m doing it for you... I’m going to bring back a ton of dollars to buy ourselves a huge house and I’m going to drive around with all of you in one of those American trucks”]. This dialogue is much more than one between two people in a small community in

Mexico. It is an iconoclastic and reoccurring premise for men (and women) deciding to cross to the “other side.” It also demonstrates another form of marginalization that women must endure as a May 31, 2007 article in *La Jornada Zacatecas* titled “Grave depression, característica de las abandonadas por migrantes” indicated as it exposed high levels of depression in women whose husbands left for the US and didn’t return, in some cases, for decades. The women suffered depression on account of various factors including the absence of their spouse, sexual neglect, and economic difficulties. The article basically points out that a woman, for being faithful to her husband, community, and religious practices, suffers a series of unfortunate events.

In *Objetivo: el Norte* (2006), a televised documentary broadcast on the Discovery channel in May of that same year, we confront a similar situation involving family separation, danger, and abandonment of family members. In addition to discussing the injustices that criminalize the undocumented and the indifference of the *coyotes* (i.e. *polleros*) who just want to make their \$2,000 per person that they try to cross, there are also various interviewees that declare their intentions of wanting to work in the US. Some of the reasons that they mentioned were the following (I have taken the liberty to translate them, I will put the original statement in the footnote): “hunger is stronger than fear,” or “I want to work here in order to set up a business in Mexico,” and finally, “Mexicans are naïve, and before necessity and hunger, we will do anything.”⁶¹ While those reasons are all very valid and do not relate to a question of greed, another example of couple of brothers from Ixmiquilpan, Hidalgo, who want to follow the example of their brother who left 10 year prior and sent money back to build a house, highlights a trend more on par with that of Rafael (Prisciliano’s dad in *Al otro lado*). According to Carlos

⁶¹ The original quotes from *Objetivo: el Norte*- 1) “que el hambre es más fuerte que el miedo;” 2) “que quiero trabajar aquí para poder poner un negocio en México;” and, “que los mexicanos son necios y que ante la necesidad y el hambre hacemos cualquier cosa.”

Camacho, a journalist in Ixmiquilpan, “*los jóvenes cuando terminan su educación secundaria prefieren irse a los Estados Unidos porque ven que es la única forma inmediata de lograr ciertos benefactores: tener un vehículo propio, tener sus dólares, tener una mejor vida, poder casarse en mejores condiciones con la novia que dejaron en su pueblo*” [“the young guys prefer to go to the US when they finish high school because it is the only immediate way to achieve certain benefits: having their own vehicle, money, a better life and being able to marry under better conditions with the girlfriend/bride that they left in their town”]. So, what started as a case of marginalization, and a rather valid argument for migrating to the US, now becomes more of a question of a lifestyle, a routine and something expected.

The last example of the documentary that is of interest is my point about abandoned (i.e. left behind) family members. Frequently, it is shown that children or wives are the ones left behind, but in the case of Rosa María and Diego Cuellar, parents of sons who have left for the United States, it is the parents who suddenly find themselves flush with cash and a new home, but without a family to share it with. They clearly state that they would prefer to have a humble home and be with their family rather than live the lifestyle of those who have money, but are separated from their family. It could be stated that globalization is the culprit since those who migrate either deal with an intolerable level of marginalization, succumb to a world of images and consumerism, or a combination of both.

Unlike the discourse that we will see Chicano/Mexican-American cultural productions, there is seldom a desire to fully return to Mexico if one is born in the US, or has spent most of their lives in the US. It is highly unlikely to see the topic of greed surface in what is produced north of the border. In the sense, the documentary shows a familiar, yet never talked about side, to northern migration. It is a side that is based on leaving family behind, justifying the risk

because of a desire for financial independence, and lamentably, the story of a young population that remains detached from their own society. The consequence of this detachment, according to the documentary, is that once someone has become accustomed to a different style of living, higher wages, and a different set of norms, the return can result in an impressionable experience that impedes re-adaptation to their culture and former place of residence.

Another trend that has manifested itself in recent years is the fact that upon “becoming successful,” if an undocumented wishes to run for political office, they must do so in Mexico since that is the only legal platform they have for developing a voter constituency. Often times, there can be resentment in a local place of the person who suddenly arrives after having been absent for so many years and vows to “change” Mexico using skills and money that were acquired in the US.

In brief, this chapter addressed how different cultural productions articulate the consequences of global inequities that ultimately manifest themselves in the forms of displacement, marginalization, and fragmented identity. This turbulence in Mexico has put *norteno* writers and cinematographers on the forefront of contemplating and capturing the effects of globalizations in a way that they can reveal a piece of reality while at the same time creating a voice that is internationally and autonomously recognized for its technique and overall ingenuity. The next chapter will built on these contributions as they continue to reveal further elements along the Mexico’s northern border.

CHAPTER 3- Mexico's Northern Border Zone

<p><i>"El santo de los mojados"</i>⁶²</p> <p>[...]</p> <p>Concédenos Señor yo te pido llegar a los Estados Unidos no dejes que regrese al infierno que a mi país convierte el gobierno. [...]</p> <p>Manda tu refulgencia Señor por mares y desiertos para que ya ni el frío ni el calor dejen más muertos.</p>	<p>Estamos en peligro de perder la vida y aquí no nos podemos quedar no queda otra salida</p> <p>San Pedro eres el santo patrón de todos los mojados concede la legalización al indocumentado. [...]</p> <p>Protégenos de los asaltantes contrabandistas y otros maleantes Permítenos brincar el alambre pues nuestros hijos se mueren de hambre.</p>
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-Tigres del Norte⁶³

In Chapter 2, it was established that cultural productions depicting the transitory nature of Northern Mexico expose the burdensome realities-- namely marginalization, migration and fragmentation-- that are associated with the adverse effects of an increasingly interconnected and globalized world where asymmetries abound. In no place is this more apparent than at the Mexican/US border itself given that the border represents a place of encounter. As the political, physical and ideological division between two countries, it is a hotbed for a multitude of people

⁶² The term "mojado" is English for "wetback" and has a derogatory connotation due to its reference towards Mexicans who cross the border without legal status. El santo de los "mojados" refers to Saint Peter in this case; however, the Patron Saint of immigrants is typically San Toribio Romo, "mejor conocido como el Santo de los mojados, es otra imagen a la que se encomiendan los inmigrantes para cruzar la frontera y al que piden no ser víctimas de los asaltantes, ni ser agarrados por la migra ni, en el peor de los casos, morir a consecuencia de las altas temperaturas del desierto de Arizona"

<http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/internacional/57188.html>.

⁶³ "Los Tigres del Norte" is one of the most important musical groups from Mexico who emigrated from the state of Sinaloa, Mexico to California. This is due, according to Saldívar to "their 1985 international hit 'La jaula del oro' (The Gilded Cage)," which he explains "remains their signature songs and is one of the best popular/vernacular artistic expressions of the Mexican immigrant experience" (5).

and occurrences, for instance, the presence of law enforcement (local, regional, national and international), migrants (from all parts of Mexico and, arguably, Central America), tourists, factory workers, businesses, chaos, hybridity, corruption, *narcotraficantes*, *coyotes*, prostitution, violence, religious fervor and, lamentably, death.^{64 65} The voice of the border zone is reflected by this massive gathering of people and activities and is frequently portrayed by the characters of the movies, novels or stories representative of this reality by border writers. Border cities, in and of themselves, are their own protagonists that reflect a local identity built on elements from an entire nation deterritorialized, fragmented, reconfigured and reterritorialized by globalization, as food, culture, music, language, style, religion, ideas and sentiments converge to reformulate their significance in a new hybridized context that blends the old with the new; the rural with the urban; the local with the global; the poor with the rich, as well as the present with the past and future. The focus of this chapter will demonstrate how this direct contact with the physical border and its participants manifests border living in film and literature.

The Border and the Participants

Historically, the border zone has symbolized, and still does in many ways, everything from converging cultures, wars and historical divides, to opportunity, diversion and vice. Particularly in regard to the latter of the three aforementioned characteristics, there is a complete set of industries (legal and illegal) that form part of the general landscape of a border town, perhaps even more so in Tijuana due to its close proximity to a major US city and the most

⁶⁴ Religious fever refers to the various patron saints and figures associated with migrants and *narcotraficantes*.

⁶⁵ This refers to the infamous violence against women in Ciudad Juárez (*feminicidio*), but includes all persons killed.

populated state and largest representation, in numbers (not percent), of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans.⁶⁶ These factors grant the San Diego-Tijuana border crossing, also known as the San Ysidro border crossing, as the world's most highly transited and congested.⁶⁷ However, border crossings such as the one in El Paso, Texas/Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua actually holds the record for the most pedestrians crossing on foot for any US Border, north or south, and weighs heavily on its interconnectedness typified in the work of Rosario Sanmiguel.⁶⁸ A few of the other major border regions recognized by the US' Department of Transportation's Research and Innovative Technology Administration (RITA) as being top areas for passage between the two countries along the southern border with Mexico are: 1- Colexico, California/ Mexicali, Baja California Norte; 2- Nogales, Arizona/ Heroica Nogales, Sonora; 3- Laredo, Texas/ Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas; 4- San Luis, Arizona/San Luis Colorado, Sonora; 5- Brownsville, Texas/Heroica Matamoros, Tamaulipas; 6- Hidalgo, Texas/Reynosa, Tamaulipas; in addition to many others that see millions of people crossing each year. Although these border conglomerates do not figure into this study *per se*, the future of these regions and their cultural productions will most likely play a large role in pluralizing the voice of the border experience, and like their counterparts, will be the continued nuclei of hybridity and transculturation.

In many of the abovementioned border towns in Mexico, one would find venues that cater to people in movement (migrants, tourists, temporary workers). These places consist in a

⁶⁶ <http://www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/c2kbr01-3.pdf>.

⁶⁷ Statistics for all forms of transportation are available at the website from Research and Innovative Technology Administration (RITA) which coordinates the U.S. Department of Transportation's (DOT) research programs
http://www.bts.gov/programs/international/transborder/TBDR_BC/TBDR_BC_QuickSearch.html.

⁶⁸ RITA statistics for 2010.

variety of edifices that serve as a backdrop in movies and writing depicting the border, such as clinics, pharmacies, casinos, hotels, bars, and food stands. In contrast, border-town culture is also comprised of illegal activities which further exacerbate the marginalization process as human traffickers, drug traffickers and prostitution systematically victimize innocent people by highly targeting women and the young as the most likely exploited for the sex trade or illegal adoption operations.

While locals and politicians on the US side more often than not jump to conclusions and blame Mexico for these transgressions, the instigators and consumers of these illicit industries from the US side of the border are as much to blame if not more for creating a need for such activities. Even ex-President Vicente Fox recognized this in a US televised interview in English where he asserted that Mexico really isn't the one with the drug problem (in reference to the US addition for illicit drugs).⁶⁹ In terms of the "sin city" destinations of Mexico, Trujillo Muñoz affirms that for the *anglos*, the border was (and still is) a lawless area where you could go to live the "Mexican" life of parties, gambling, mariachi and exotic adventures; likewise, he also regards the labor and industrial components as a way that not only defined the Mexican border's industrial nature, but also proved to be significant in keeping Mexico up-to-date in the capitalistic sense (18).⁷⁰

A fair assumption is that border towns are far from being isolated, and thrive due to a constant influx of money that caters to risky behavior. They have also relied more heavily on

⁶⁹ I do not have a source for this interview since it wasn't a source I actively sought out, but merely watched on TV at the moment it was televised.

⁷⁰ Synonym for people from the US that wouldn't necessarily fit into the category of Mexican or Mexican-Americans, often associated with white-European descent. In Canada, the term *Anglo* or *Anglophones* (English-speaking) is used in reference to the linguistic and cultural differences that separate them from *Francophones* (French-speaking) and 'Allophones' (those who have a different non-indigenous maternal language other than English or French).

themselves to be business-savvy to adapt to change in order to keep operating successfully since, in a sense, they are isolated from Mexico's important central cities, such as the Federal District of Mexico City. These factors push border cities to be more on par in developing independently and, in accordance with, their northern neighbor, rather than with their rural and more sparsely populated outlying areas to the south and Mexico's populated cities of the interior.

To recapitulate the economic activity on the border, on the one hand, there exists a tourist industry of the legal and illegal nature which has existed for several decades, along with the daily domestic activities, and on the other, a large presence of transnational companies (*maquiladoras*) since the passage of NAFTA that benefit from tax loopholes, lax labor and environmental laws, as well as the proximity to the US.⁷¹ These transnational companies have increased job prospects, mainly of the low-paying labor-intensive type, and created the typical south to north movement within Mexico even though some migrants seek employment within their country and choose to relocate to one of the interior metropolises like Guadalajara or Mexico City, while others are determined to cross the border to the US after a temporary stay in a Mexican border town.

Overall, the literature, film and music produced from areas such as Ciudad Juárez and Tijuana, or any other border city, narrate this zone of commotion and articulate the mayhem of daily life of living on the border demonstrating their individuality and collectivity as border towns. Part of this chaos of the border, as should be noted, is attributed to the rapid rate of growth of the Northern border region in Mexico has gone from a population of 2,352,691 in 1970 to over 16 million in at the turn of the twenty-first century (Valenzuela Arce 15). The population explosion as a major factor in the regions development during the twentieth century

⁷¹ Monsiváis dates this "*zona libre*" of "sin as merchandise" back to the 1920s (12).

as the region expanded from 1,250,000 in 1895 to over 16.6 million at present time (Canales 1999). This rapid expansion has influenced a change from what was previously considered a provincial area, to a region that contains almost 20% of Mexico's domestic population.

Mexico's Northern Border Expression

For this chapter's corpus, I have selected Luis Humberto Crosthwaite's novel *Idos de la mente* (2001), the short stories "Callejón Sucre," "Bajo el puente" and "Moonlit in the Mirror" from Rosario Sanmiguel's *Bajo el Puente: Relatos desde la frontera* (2008), as well as the short story "Gaviota" from Rosina Conde's *En la tarima* (2001).⁷² I will also incorporate two filmic representations: *El jardín del edén* (1994) and *Babel* (2008), to illustrate how life at the border zone is even more representative of the extremes of globalization since it is at the heart of hybridization, transculturation, and marginalization. We will also re-evaluate the movies in Chapter 4 as they show themes pertaining to the US "Mexican/Mexican-American" experience.

The purpose of this chapter is to build upon Chapter 2's notion of a fragmented and deterritorialized culture whereby the voice of enunciation is that of the border itself – its regionalism, its uniqueness and its encompassing nature of the marginalized, the invisible and the aspiring. We will identify what makes living on the border different from other experiences along the migratory path, as the border brings together regional, national and international exposures to give it its unique local flair that takes into consideration the unrivaled human activity which serves to differentiate it from Central Mexico and the US' Latin@/Chican@ experience.

⁷² In English the title is *Under the Bridge: Stories from the Border*; the original title was *Callejón Sucre y otros relatos* (1994).

Reflecting the reality of their surroundings, *norteño/a* writers have established their eagerness to separate themselves from their Central Mexican counterparts as they use a type of writing that Berumen describes as being more flexible and experimental, which given the thematic differences, as well as those involving style and technique, helps to subvert established literary canons (14). Trujillo Muñoz also affirms that writers in Mexico's northern border-state region-- especially in the states of Nuevo León, Chihuahua, Sonora and Baja California-- have been the pioneers in the literary decentralization of Mexico (16). Although perhaps now an antiquated point of view due to the rapid growth and international reception of cultural productions from the region since the comment was published in 2002, Rodríguez Lozano goes a step further in criticizing the lack of interest by those characterized as being *defeños* (from Mexico City) by commenting that the culture from Central Mexico neglects whatever goes beyond the confines of what it has established and that it also has no regard for production by either gender, male or female (51).⁷³ Due in part to the women writers of the north, such as Rosario Sanmiguel or Rosina Conde, in addition to those from the famed center (Elena Poniatowska, Elena Garro, etc.), it is a well-known fact that many gains have been made in diversifying the voice of women and men in Mexican literature not only in Central Mexico, but also in the border regions.

The distinct sensibilities and perspectives of all writers, male and female, along the border provide an unfiltered and independent form of expression that doesn't necessarily rely on outsiders to define their individuality since they are the only ones with the cultural agency to do so, as their voice must come from within. In essence, *norteño* literature is representative of

⁷³ The exact quote in Spanish reads: "la cultura centralista mira con desdén todo aquello que salga de los esquemas establecidos y ahí, en la cuestión del género no hay distinción. No interesa nada que no venga de la mano defeña, sea escrito por hombres o por mujeres" (Rodríguez Lozano 51).

geographic features different from Mexico's central zone, a diverse population comprised people from the entire country whose cultural identity is, in all probability, not representative of Mexico's central identity markers, in addition to several marginalized groups ranging from the indigenous and the poor, to even gangs (e.g. *los Zetas*, MS-13), prostitutes, *coyotes*, *narcotraficantes* and others who have fallen victim to a systematic deterioration of a legally viable way towards self-sustainability in part due to the competitiveness of the globalized world that first marginalizes people by way of poverty and then doubly marginalizes them as they revert to illegal activities: drug dealing, gangs or prostitution, illegal migration and the like.

How then, does this tendency differ from what has been produced in other areas of the country south of the Border region since there is also some degree of marginalization that is country-wide? First of all, since Central Mexico and its cultural industries have basically monopolized what is diffused and accepted as culture has led to a movement in which those from the North look to publish and distribute their own literature in order to break from the cultural hegemony of Mexico City. From this point of view, Mexico's peripheral zones, mainly the north, has actively sought out an alternative to the editorial powerhouses of Mexico City as Tabuenca Córdoba contends by stating that the decentralization of states that occurred in Mexico allowed a boom of authors to avoid having to "ask for permission" for publishing and were finally able to publish and distribute their texts in a considerable number of magazines and small book publishers (47). To a similar degree in the US, Arte Público Press (based in Texas) has published many books in regard to "fringe" writers who write about topics related to US Hispanics.⁷⁴ This publication outlet has allowed for individual writers to have a platform for

⁷⁴ This refers to anyone Spanish-speaking or ethnically or culturally tied with a Spanish-speaking tradition: Latin@, Chican@, Mexican-American, Cuban-American, Puerto Rican, etc.

self-expression. Likewise, regional tendencies have allowed certain areas to flourish as the loyal readership has extended beyond the region in question.

As a result, Northern Mexican literature, like other regional literatures, intentionally or unintentionally distances itself with the center of Mexico through experimentation and innovation, from which emerges a variety of differences including form, language, theme, as well as spatial and temporal variations. As we see in *Idos de la mente* (2001), Crosthwaite uses several conventional and non-conventional narrative resources to mimic the unstable reality that surrounds the cantinas and border town he depicts in his novel of *música norteaña*. Among this innovative mélange are descriptions, dialogues, monologues, interviews, letters, telephone conversations, stories, drawings, song lyrics, advertisements and titles. These discursive variations permit the author to separate himself from other writers since he, in essence, combines elements of popular culture such as music and art, as well as social critique of society, and border culture, in general. At the same time he engages his reader to enter and relive the daily life of his two main characters, Ramón and Cornelio, on their quest to music stardom by composing and singing *norteaño* music, a likely dream that, like life, has its ups and downs. The interaction between these two protagonists allows for a glimpse inside the music and cantina culture that is so vibrant in a place like Tijuana, a northern metropolis that allows for reinvention, tradition and a platform where “anything and everything goes.” Border towns, like border writing, is like a continuous blank page that witnesses daily transformations and remains far from static.

Crosthwaite's narrative aesthetics seemingly cross the borders of traditional genre-specific writing with what some may consider a style of pastiche.⁷⁵ The same could be said about *Instrucciones para cruzar la frontera*, from the last chapter, as he once again as utilizes the rupture of space in the narrative, implements short or repeated ideas and maintains the frequent use of monologue and parody to make fun of an antagonizing experience of crossing the border. Where these two texts from Crosthwaite show dissimilarities, is in the social aspect of the narrator. The title word "*instrucciones*" (instructions), would indicate that the book was meant, in a satirical way, to be more of a guide, a direct line of communication between the author (an authority on the issue) and reader (and potential border crosser). Although this isn't a "manual" *per se*, it does carry on many of the same characteristics as an instructional guide, but with the use of sarcasm that transcends legal issues and concentrates on the lack of civility of the entire charade of long waits, absurd questions, racism and superiority complexes. For this reason, there is noticeably little social interaction in terms of dialogue when compared to what one finds in *Idos de la mente* where Cornelio and Ramón frequently engage in conversation among themselves and with others. At the same time in *Instrucciones*, there are anonymous dialogues where instead of the appearance of names, you have letter combinations, such as in the short story "La silla vacía" where AAA dialogues with ZZZ on defining the border:

AAA: ¿*Qué ves ahí?* (What do you see over there?)

ZZZ: *Nada.* (Nothing.)

AAA: ¿*Qué ves?* (What do you see?)

ZZZ: *Te digo que nada.* (Nothing, I tell ya'.)

⁷⁵ A concept related to the combination of styles. It is mostly associated with Postmodernism in its pursuit, not to define the chaos in modern life, but to celebrate it, make fun of it and embrace it.

AAA: *Haz un esfuerzo.* (At least try.)

ZZZ: *No veo nada.* (I don't see anything.)

AAA: *¿Ya vas a empezar?* (Are you going to start up again?)

ZZZ: *¿Con qué?* (With what?)

AAA: *Con el rechazo.* (With rejection?)

ZZZ: *No.* (No.)

AAA: *Con la negación.* (With denial?)

ZZZ: *N...*

AAA: ... (79)

Anonymous people are seldom used in *Idos de la mente*, as everyone is identified in one way or another, but where Crosthwaite's texts share similarity is in the use of "... " to indicate silence, as is demonstrated in a dialogue between José Alfredo and Cornelio while discussing the breakup of los Relámpagos de Agosto.⁷⁶ In this conversation, silence speaks louder than words as José Alfredo (his confident and veteran singer of *norteño* music) asks:

- *¿No lo has visto?* (You haven't seen him?)
- *No.* (No.)
- *¿No lo quieres ver?* (You don't want to see him?)
- *No.* (No.)
- *¿No extrañas el sonido de su acordeón?* (Do you miss the sound of his accordion?)
- *No.* (No.)
- *¿De veras?* (Are you sure?)
- ...

⁷⁶ *Los Relámpagos de Agosto* is the name of the group formed by Cornelio and his best friend Ramón.

- ...

- ... (176)

While the dialogue is quite simple, the effect is powerful and innovative as it shows a narrative technique that prefers the nuances of the simplified and ordinary colloquial way of speaking, complete with verbal pauses that are iconic of Crosthwaite's characters. One also notes the negation in both the questions and the answer until the last one is posed. Overall, this avoidance of complicated and refined speech patterns paves the way for the incorporation of local vernacular that not only defines conversation between men from the north, and men in general, but it also creates a literary space that is unique to Northern Mexican literature.

Building upon this macho way of speaking, in *Idos de la mente*, the two friends, Cornelio and Ramón, curse without remorse and tease each other as friends would by using affectionate terms commonly used amongst men in Mexico: "*No seas payaso, pinche Cornelio.*" ["Don't be a clown, you dumb ass Cornelio"] (14). For those who are familiar with the tonality of the *norteño* way of speaking, Crosthwaite's literary technique captures this sensation through the musicality of the verses that, like the spoken language are swift and precise with a hint of *doble sentido* (double meaning). For example, when Cornelio and Ramón are conversing, they have a series of short dialogues that are categorized as being short-phrased and mimicking an ordinary conversation typical of two guys with a hair-brained idea that was neither well planned nor very engaging:

*Ramón y Cornelio acostados en el piso. Miran el techo, el foco, las manchas de humedad. Botes de cerveza vacíos regados aquí y allá. Moscas dan vuelta y vueltas en el mismo sentido.*⁷⁷

-...

-Oye, ¿no se te antoja hacer un dueto? [Hey, what about doing a duet?]

-¿Un dueto? [A duet?]

-Una banda. [A band.]

-¿Una banda? [A band?]

-De música. [Musical.]

-¿Música? [Musical?]

-¿Que si no se te antoja tocar algún instrumento? [ya know, if you feel like playing an instrument]

-Para qué. [What for?]

-Pos nomás. Como nos gusta tanto... No sé. Es lógico, ¿no? [Just ‘cuz. Ya know, since we like... I don’t know. It’s logical, right?]

-¿Lógico? [Logical?]

-No sé. [I don’t know.]

-¿Te refieres a una banda de rock? [You mean a rock band?]

-¿Te gusta el rock? [You like rock?]

-Ni madres. [Yeah right.]

-¿Entonces? [Well?]

⁷⁷ In English “Ramón and Cornelio lying down on the floor. They look at the ceiling, the light bulb and the water stains. Empty beer cans spread all around. Flies flying around and going in the same direction” (17).

-¿Te refieres a un dueto de música nortea? [You mean a nortea music duet?]

-Claaaaro. [(Sure.) Shur-ee.]

-¿Pa llevarle serenata a las muchachas? [Do go play for the girls?]

-Pa lo que quieras. [For whatever you want.] (17-18)

This conversation is a perfect example of orality on paper. This text script-ready for a play since it imitates the exact sentiment that Crosthwaite is trying to capture in this light-hearted conversation between two locals. Expressions like “*pos nomás*” and “*ni madres*” bring the sense of familiarity to the forefront. “*Claaaaro*” captures the rhythm of *nortea* speech, while the overall mood is short and sweet, with few adjectives, a true macho-like paragraph of unelaborated ideas and diction.

As such, throughout the text, the inclusion of orality adds to the local identity and informality of the border regions. Even after becoming famous, the two do not have to behave in accordance with social norms that a “*familia de bien*” (an affluent family) would have adhere to since their fame can be attributed, in the case of Ramón and Cornelio, to their *nortea* music, which is defined as a popular music enjoyed by the masses. One wouldn’t expect anything less from a “*machín*” of *música nortea* to use such expressions as: “*pos*” (13), “*mera*” (52), “*nos valió madres*” (58), “*¿Cómo chingaos no!*” (75), “*pendejos*” (99), “*somos carnalitos*” (102), “*cochinadotas*” (112), “[...] *chingar a su madre*” (126), “*está cabrón*” (161).⁷⁸ Most of these terms/idioms are specific to Mexico and represent the voice of Mexican humor among class differences that, along the northern Mexican border, was largely forged in the name of economic agreements and global imbalances due to mass migrations towards the US-Mexican border to work in *maquiladoras* or cross to the other side. This is not to say other “upper class” Mexicans

⁷⁸ This refers to another way of expressing the term *macho*, which describe a man as being masculine.

do not utilize these expressions, they just emphasize a more day-to-day and/or working-class lingo with words like “pos” o “somos carnalitos”.

By the nature of Crosthwaite’s cultural production being presented in the written form, he has been deemed by Parra to be possibly the most important re-creator of orality in Mexican literature (74). This aspect of colloquial speech is just as prevalent in film, as the focus changes from written language to that which is spoken. In Iñárritu and Arriaga’s *Babel*, for example, much attention was given to the regional sensibilities of language, food, traditions and landscape (both urban and rural). Language was emphasized through the local expressions and ways of speaking recreated in the role of García Bernal, the nephew of Amelia, an undocumented nanny who takes full responsibility of the children of a US couple who is currently traveling in Morocco and suffers a tragedy. Although some of his word choices define speech patterns typical of informal settings, he, like Ramón and Cornelio, uses expressions common to Mexico and rural language in general, as do the other characters. Some of the terms used by Santiago (Amelia’s nephew) are: “*nomás*,” “*güey*,” “*güerita*,” “*ven pa’ca*,” “*pa’trás*,” “*chíngate*,” “*pinches gringos*,” and “*¿qué onda?*” Santiago’s discourse parallels that of ordinary young men in most parts of Mexico. His profession as a *taxista* (taxi driver) shows a rudimentary side of people who are accustomed to traversing the border, but not without harassment. We can confirm Santiago’s sentiment towards US border agents since he articulates his frustration and discontentment by declaring them “*pinches gringos*” for interrupting and impacting his daily life and livelihood as a taxi driver.

Now, returning to another strikingly prototypical speech pattern that has seen little evolution by those who reside in rural areas, *Babel* embraces the locally accepted and commonly encountered form of second-person singular preterit tense conjugations that is uttered when one

of the relatives says, “*comadre, ¿los trajistes?*” While this use of both “*comadre*” and the ending “*istes*” is representative of rural parlance, it is quite fathomable that many of the relatives attending the wedding of Amelia’s son live in the nearby city of Tijuana. This shows that despite close proximity to major populated areas, rural characteristics were brought to the city where this phenomenon would be far less likely. This tends to differ from Mexico’s interior (at least in literature, and perhaps in orality), as the patterns of city dwellers’ speech are different from the nearby rural areas – this is, however, a generalization meant to emphasize the pattern of oral speech as commonplace for cultural productions from this region.

Refocusing on the female writers in this chapter, we are once again exposed to orality relating to daily life and surroundings. Both Conde and Sanmiguel implement local jargon to add to the habitualness of border living and speaking. In Conde’s “*Gaviota*,” for example, when Marta asks Elena what she was going to do, she says, “*¿qué onda, qué vas a hacer?*” The expression “*¿qué onda?*” would be similar to the English “So, what’s up?” Even though this expression has been quoted from the productions from the male writers in this study, in Spanish, the tone of this enunciation would most likely be considered less frequent among woman, but with the idea of showing daily life and speech, Conde intends to capture these small nuances of ordinary and unaltered voice that isn’t trying to portray women differently to prescribe to some supposed cultural norm. Thus, when the indirect answer from Elena through the voice of the narrator says that finding work was hellish “*estaba cabrón*” (16), it provides a sense of not only frustration through the use of cursing, but a glimpse into the reality of being a single mother looking for work in a *maquiladora* where families and pregnancies are frowned upon. This demonstrates the double marginalization and discrimination of being a single woman, first in the sense of the economic burden of raising a child alone, and the second, the way in which

maquiladoras blatantly discriminate against females in pre-employment screenings or visual denials at the time of application on a presumed pregnancy.

To exemplify Elena's frustration, Conde's narrative style of using "tú" in a way to avoid direct dialogue allows for things to be said that are not necessarily said explicitly, but rather thought or implied. For example, instead of direct dialogue asking Elena where she was going to sleep that night with her child, the text implements the use of impersonal indirect speech: "*¿En dónde dormir esta noche?*" (16). The voice of the omniscient narrator also insinuates that the child's presence isn't necessarily wanted and uses a series of words in colloquial language to add to the burden that having a child, being homeless and looking for work can entail: "*Casi todos tus amigos te miraban con enfadado cuando les caías; además, no soportaban al niño, al mion, al chillón, al latoso, al chiple, al fregón, al mamón... Sentiste coraje. ¡Qué se chinguen!*" (16).

Elena is one of many women who suffer from the iconic misogyny because of the nature of the *maquiladora* culture which, paired with that of *coyotes*, prostitution rings and human traffickers, exhibits the marginalization of women to the extreme. For this reason, in the story "*Callejón Sucre*," the un-named protagonist's monologue allows us a glimpse at this daily agony and monotony: "The driver wants to talk but I don't respond to his comments. I'm not interested in his stories – the preppy kid who refused to pay or the tips that the tourists give in dollars. I don't want to hear about murders or women" (2). Here, the protagonist makes it clear that the topic of femicide (*feminicidio*) and other "border town" topics are unwanted topics of conversation. She incorporates the feminist approach to the story by either shunning men all together, or by refusing to speak with them since, in the case of the strip club, both the adolescents and the regular clients at the bar.

In general, the tone of “*Callejón Sucre*” is dark, melancholic and depressing, as though it were a metaphor of the night for the women of Juárez. She continues to describe the routine, boring, predictable and miserable night at a strip-club bar: “A woman with Chinese eyes dances on the catwalk that divides the hall into two sections. A group of teenagers scandalously celebrates her gyrations. The rest of the diehards wrap their lips around their bottles and down the last of their beer” (2). The visuals that she refers to in the text point to an industry that is well established in Juárez. She describes the low light, smoke, dirty curtains and clusters of bars along the street where she and a friend apparently used to work. This insider’s look into the most rudimentary of border establishments distance border writing from that of both Chicanos and Mexicans as Castillo and Tabuenca Córdoba attest by claiming that literature from Conde has been largely ignored on both sides since the border for Chicano/a literature “tends to serve as a utopic abstract reference,” while for Mexican literature it “occupies an ordinary space, a place that is infrequently represented in writing” (125). While this is certainly true in literature, we also see how ordinary spaces, places and people are placed into representing the barriers that are established to confine people to one side, however un-natural that might be for a region that would normally otherwise be even more blended.

The rigid nature of current border practices creates a non-natural flow of people who reside in close proximity to an area difficult to traverse without some degree of hassle as is apparent in *El jardín del edén* where this “non-natural flow of people” is insinuated from the study of migratory patterns of whales realized by the American-in-Mexico, Frank. To the child who inquires about their nationality as he learns that they give birth in Mexican waters, Frank must clarify that whales do not have nationalities or the same borders that humans face. The whales in this case serve as a metaphor of disturbing the natural freedoms by which humans

should live being that they too are mammals. What is more, the innocence of a child's logic proves to question the absurdity of nationalities as, in the case of these mammals [whales] is completely redundant. Obviously this view is simplistic, but it provides an alternative way of contemplating natural migratory patterns which were more commonplace before the strict border practices were put into place in the later part of the twentieth century, and even more so after Secure Fence Act of 2005 as the controversial construction of the border wall/fence on the US side was enacted to stop the flow of terrorists, the undocumented, and drug traffickers.

The construction of the wall is another way of marginalizing those who were already at a disadvantage of not having the proper documents to cross the border. Accepting the reality for what it is, neither accepting nor condemning the undocumented, the border wall has been an indignity to humanity as those who look for alternative means to cross to escape their marginality will still do so with increased risk. Adding to their state of marginalization as they are at the mercy of corrupt individuals who hold no regard for their well-being, *coyotes* and *narcotraficantes* become even more ruthless and corrupt as they subjugate the disadvantaged to dire conditions that on too many occasions result in death or personal tragedy.

(Narco)corridos

Giving us a glance insight into the world of drug traffickers (*narcos*), Crosthwaite's *Idos de la mente* provides an example of their influence over the *corrido* genre. This illegal practice of *narcotraficantes* is to approach musicians of *corridos* and request that they relay specific messages by fusing certain lyrics within a song, thus resulting in *narcocorridos*. Even though they are paid, their refusal to comply will result in severe consequences. For example, In *Idos de*

la mente, the character of Cornelio is approached by a man who gives him orders and threatens his life:

Debes escribir una canción. Si decides no escribir esa canción, te mueres. Vas a recibir mucho dinero por esa canción. Si no aceptas el dinero, te mueres. Esa canción debe contener las siguientes palabras:

*Amigo, gallo, valiente, AK-47, perico,
Tijuana, pacas de a kilo, cherokee del año, chivo,
Amapola, mujeres, jefe de jefes.*

*Si excluyes una de estas palabras, te mueres. La canción es para festejar el cumpleaños de mi patrón. Es posible que recibas una invitación para tocar en su fiesta. Si rechazas la invitación, te mueres. (140)*⁷⁹

This display of power shows how the *narcotraficantes* have subverted the power of the state by controlling a widely accepted and popular musical genre. Although there are continuous attempts to ban or outlaw *narcocorridos*, their rise in power is synonymous with the loss of the state power to control them. In this microcosm we are exposed to the realities of a globalized world where markets, legal and illegal, tend to have the upper hand in state affairs, at least in the sense that the state is no longer strong enough to control them. As a matter of fact, Miguel Cabañas affirms that *narcocorridos* rewrite globalization from the margins as this genre provides agency to the masses to describe the saga of their marginalized state of being criminalized and displaced (520). What happens to Cornelio in *Idos de la mente*, however, subverts even those

⁷⁹ The translation is the following: “You should write a song. If you decide to not write that song, you die. You are going to get a lot of money for that song. If you don’t accept the money, you die. That song should contain the following words: *Friend, rooster, brave, AK-47, parrot, Tijuana, kilo sized bailes, a new Cherokee, goat, poppy, women, boss of bosses*. If you exclude one of these words, you die. The song is to celebrate my boss’ birthday. It’s possible that you might get an invitation to his party. If you don’t accept the invitation, you die” (140).

who subvert as he proclaims to himself, “*Sabes qué, yo no escribo chingaderas [...] Aquí sólo hay un Jefe de Jefes*” [“You know what, I don’t write that crap {...} Here there is only one Boss of Bosses] (140). He doesn’t seem to be threatened by the thought of the “narcos.” Besides, he considers himself is a man of “principles,” and singing that genre isn’t his “cup of tea.”

Being that Cornelio was more a less a “has been” – “Jas bin” or “nóbary” (117), as they refer to Ramón in the novel, to mimic the Anglicisms of the region – nothing appears to have happened to him, but he doesn’t stop here in his disparaging remarks about what he consider to be a real *corrido*, unlike the ones now that are interrelated with the drug traffickers. This leads Cornelio to criticize this loss of traditional *corridos* as he hears one on the radio: “*Enciende el radio. La pinche música que están haciendo ahora... Estos mocosos no saben lo que tocan. Yo me acuerdo de la mera época de los Relámpagos, entonces sí sabíamos lo que era una canción nortea. Los corridos hablaban de hombres valientes, no de narcotraficantes culeros*” [He turns on the radio. The frickin’ music that they are making now... Those snot-nosers don’t have a clue what they are playing. I remember the prime years of *Los Relámpagos*, when we did know what a *nortea* song was all about. The *corridos* spoke of brave men, not of those douchebag drug traffickers] (182). However, the popularity of Los Tigres del Norte and literally dozens of other groups has flourished to the extent that even though the government tries to outlaw its usage, as previously mentioned, the more it gains in popularity – thanks in part due to social media like YouTube and other similar streaming sound/video websites, and pirated CDs sold in the common *tianguis* (open air markets/bazaar) in Mexico.

An excerpt from a the on-line news source Reuters confirms this finding (unofficially) from a Tijuana pirate music seller named Ramiro Gonzalez: “We haven’t seen a fall in sales because of the ban [...] On the contrary, more and more people want the music and are singing

it.”⁸⁰ Popular culture in the cybernetic world basically transgresses the established national and international laws since, just as was the case with transnational companies, transnational culture goes beyond the confines of traditional national boundaries set by physical borders. The frustration of the state has even led to recent questioning of whether or not to just legalize drugs all together since the current system of criminalizing associations with illicit drugs between Mexico and the US is not working (despite several attempts and public appearance from presidents to try and convince people otherwise). The “Border Games” continue...

Up to this point, we have established that the distinctiveness of the regional language, along with the music genre of the *narcocorridos*, distinguishes Northern Mexico from Central and Southern Mexico, but another area that linguistically and culturally impacts the language depicted in cultural works from the region is the proximity to the English-speaking “other side.” As previously shown with Crosthwaite’s usage of “*jas bin*” or “*nóbary*,” instead of the English “has been,” or the Spanish “*pasado de moda*,” we discover the fusion of the two, respecting the Spanish pronunciation through phonetically writing how one would perceive it aurally, regardless of their abilities to speak English.

The US Influence

Conde, Sanmiguel and Crosthwaite all have words that represent either modified Spanish in the form of *Spanglish*, or words entirely used in English as we will see in the case of Sanmiguel.⁸¹ Parra reiterates that by contaminating Spanish and modifying it, the result is an enriched vocabulary as we find with authors such as Crosthwaite and other northern writers (77).

⁸⁰ Source <http://cnews.canoe.ca/CNEWS/Features/2011/06/27/18342036.html> (27 June 2011).

⁸¹ *Spanglish* is the mixing of English and Spanish.

Additionally, one could say that this language reflects the culture and identity of the region, and in doing so, language subversion through the use of the “contaminated” words symbolizes the hybridity and everyday usage of certain expressions and words. Meanwhile, on the other side of the border, the same is occurring in Spanish, as Jorge Ramos pointed out with the words “aseguranza” or “troca.” This transnational occurrence is the result of a two major factors, one being the proximity of the two language that show the shared border by communities in contact with each other, and the second, the influence of mass media on today’s society through the reinforcement of such expressions in popular television shows, commercials and movies.

Now, although some words and expressions may be heard across Mexico, the written orality of *norteño* literature is what sets it apart from other Mexican literatures. Instead of using the standard word for restaurant (restaurante), the word chosen by Sanmiguel in her short story “*Bajo el puente/Under the Bridge*” is that of the oral register, “restorán.” Additionally, the regional significance of some of the expressions, such as Sanmiguel’s mention of geographical locations in Juárez like the “Avenida Lincoln” or in neighboring El Paso, TX, the view from Juárez of the “montaña Franklin,” both of which have historically famous names from the US, show that there is, at least to some degree, a common consciousness from both sides of the border based on the fact that Ciudad Juárez (Mexico) is adjacent to El Paso (US) – actual passage into the other country isn’t needed to visually live in both. Another peek into the life of a border town lead Sanmiguel to mention the names of one of the *maquiladoras*, General Motors. Life in Juárez is surrounded by constant geographical reminders, natural and un-natural, of a co-existence of the two countries unparalleled in other parts of Mexico.

Sanmiguel’s use of terms in English is higher than it is for the writers in this study mainly due to the fact that one of her stories, “*El reflejo de la luna/Moonlit in the Mirror*” is set in El

Paso, TX. In this story she recounts the saga of Nicole, a former migrant farmworker's daughter turned lawyer who formerly picked cotton in Southern Texas with her mother. Although she had the opportunity to attend law school, the first years of her life were as a poor migrant worker, so her mission for the past five years was to defend her people: "*llevaba cinco años defendiendo undocumented and migrant workers*" (194). Despite the text being in Spanish, the vocabulary used to represent that experience is written in English (i.e. "undocumented and migrant workers") to show that the experience was on the "other side," and also reiterate that it is not part of the reality on the Juárez side of the border as that status is never achieved from Mexicans on the Mexican side of the border. It does, however, confirm the fact that the economic asymmetries between the two countries have historically existed and led people to migrate in search for work.

Other words used by the narrator instead of their Spanish equivalents to depict activities on the other side, are "cotton fields" (instead of "*campos o cultivos de algodón*"), "trailer home" (a US housing concept and an accent mark that doesn't exist in English to respect Spanish pronunciation of the word), "high school" (which has a slightly different connotation than "*la secundaria*" or "*la prepa*" (*preparatoria*), "tátushop" (a place to get tattoos), and "Easter brunch" (a cultural practice from the US that differs from that of Mexico where it would be more likely to be an "*almuerzo*" or "*cena*"). Expressions like "ride" and "okay", which are commonly borrowed from English into day by day Mexican Spanish and keep the same spelling for Sanmiguel; however, Conde also includes the word "okay" in her short story "*Gaviota*," but changes the spelling to "oquey" to mimic the phonetic changes necessary for it to be "Spanish." The same applies with "har-rock café" (Hard Rock Cafe) and "los shors" (shorts), both

anglicized words adopted into Spanish orality and, in the case of the border writers, into the written word.

Other concepts that indicate globalizing forces related to language and culture are the mentioning of fast food places, such as Sanmiguel's mention of "Dairy Queen," (213) or Conde's mention of "Denny's" (15). As part of the border landscape, restaurants and food are increasingly the target of hybridity due to the "transcultural" taste buds of people accustomed to both styles of food. Transnational corporations are the usual culprits to this phenomenon, especially since many fast food chains have developed client bases on marketing techniques that, in essence, Americanize the food experience in Mexico; however, the same could be said on the US side of the border where food chains are quickly adopting "chipotle-style" foods, tequila-lime chicken, chalupas, gorditas, mole, taquitos, and much more. Transnational corporations are more profitable if they adopt food choices that speak to the very people whose fragmented identity equates into fragmented food preferences. Food in *Babel* has the function of showing "otherness" and "hybridity" as the children, accompanied by Amelia, participate in the festivities.

Food, Otherness and Music

Once we learn of the upcoming wedding by Amelia's son, we are immediately transported from a world defined by US standards, to an unknown world to the "*gringo*" children who are under her care, but who are physically unaccustomed to Mexico. Although they live just across the border and understand Spanish since their nanny speaks to them mostly in her mother tongue, they are shocked by the new world presented to them once they cross the border with Santiago. In Mexico, we are immediately exposed to images from which they are normally

protected, such as the hotels and brothels along the border town streets they navigate on route to the wedding. Along the way, they are also awestruck by the bizarre traditions that do not form a part of their reality. Their nanny is essentially their portal into a transnational world even before they arrive to Mexico as certain traditions make complete sense to them, such as dancing, eating tacos, and speaking Spanish. However, given that this wedding takes place in a rural setting, they feel uneasy at seeing how Santiago kills the chickens with his hands and when gunshots of celebration are fired. The wedding is the perfect ambiance to show the local culture in its most authentic form, complete with hundreds of people, live *norteño* music (*banda, baladas, corridos, and waltzes*), food gluttony, and alcohol consumption. Even though these past few examples pertain to the film *Babel*, they are strikingly similar to what Rodríguez Lozano refers to when commenting on Crosthwaite's writing where the border is a vital place where one enjoys, cohabitates and exists as this daily human activity of different discourses of Tijuana are central to the expression his writing (40).

In *Babel*, Santiago, Amelia and the two *gringo* children for whom she is responsible represent millions of people who merely wish to cross the border temporarily without the intention of a permanent stay just to visit family, travel or go shopping. Between the foolishness of Santiago's attempt to escape the border patrol and the incomprehensible laws (to Amelia) requiring permissions to bring the children back to their home country, lives were put at risk unnecessarily just for something as simple as not being to find a babysitter for children who aren't even her own. *Babel* also demonstrates, through its interpolated stories in Japan, Morocco and the US/Mexican border, that those who are most likely at fault for the misfortune of the innocent are not necessarily monsters who purposely affected the lives of others. Who would be able to fathom that a Japanese tourist gave his gun to his guide in appreciation for his services, but later

the same gun would fall into the hands of two adolescences that would innocently shoot an American mother of two children who meanwhile are unknowingly in Mexico with their nanny and will have misfortune of their own. Iñárritu's film shows the interconnectedness of all global citizens and suggests that the movement of people implies a chain reaction of society that ultimately affects everyone.⁸²

Similar to the “gringo” children in *Babel*, in *El jardín del edén*, the character of Jane offers a glimpse of what it is like to live on the Mexican side of the border in Tijuana from an Anglo from the US. The plot of the movie intercalates the stories of several people: Serena, a Mexican widow and her children (Julián, Luis and Paloma); Liz, a Chicana with a profound identity crisis; the *gringa* Jane; Jane's brother Frank; and Felipe, a migrant looking to cross to the US. The movie oscillates between Spanish and English and shows the linguistic confusion that can be caused from this zone of encounters where all the characters are searching for their “Garden of Eden,” as suggested by the title. For the most part, the only person who truly suffers on account of language is Liz, the Chicana who is criticized for not correctly pronouncing her daughter Guadalupe's name in Spanish. She openly admits to having an identity crisis and seeing herself as an “*india*” (Indian woman) in the mirror even though she feels “white” (i.e. Anglo) inside.⁸³ While Tijuana represents a painful link to the past for Liz as she exhibits a strong dominance for English and a Chicana identity, for Jane it is all about excitement, new

⁸² “American” in the context refers to someone from the United States.

⁸³ Although pejorative, a common expression in US Spanish and target for many jokes for renowned comedians such as Carlos Mencia, Liz fits the description of what some would consider “*coconut*” (brown on the outside and white on the inside). Similar expressions that speak to the nature of other ethnicities lost in a hegemonic culture homogeneously dominated by whites would be *oreo* (for African Americans) and *banana* (for Asian Americans). This perceived “betrayal” to the “*raza*” generates these insensitive comments from within a community. This shows both a challenge to the hegemony and fortifies the notion of a hybridized state.

adventures, unfamiliar traditions (as seen through the eyes of a tourist), an opportunity to express herself in a foreign language and help out those who in need, whether they seek the help or not.

El jardín del edén is iconic in exposing the Chicano identity as something that is “in-between” and “beyond”. In the US she is identified as “different” from the hegemonic culture and wallows in her artistic expression and interviews with similar subjects as a way towards healing herself from what Gloria Anzaldúa classifies the “herida abierta.”⁸⁴ These Borderlands affect Liz much more than anyone else in the group since her tripartite identity (*chicana*, *mexicana*, *gringa*) place her most at risk for lacking a “national” identity, contributing to a borderland subjectivity that is unsurpassed by the others, who seemingly are more willing to embrace the cultural crossroads of the two countries as they are in less personal conflict with the idea of ethnicity, language, “nationality” and identity.

In *El jardín del edén*, however, we do witness the double marginalization of those who are crossing as undocumented as we witness through the male protagonist, Felipe, gets robbed and beaten while trying to cross the border. Even though his happy-go-lucky attitude doesn’t depict the true sentiment of an undocumented migrant nervously waiting to cross the border, it does help to diversify the concept of border to include different perspectives on identity and immigration, as not everyone is wanting to migrate north, contrary to the idea of the “American Dream.” The two men in the movie, Frank and Felipe, are aspiring to go in opposite directions. Frank prefers the low-key coastal lifestyle of Baja California and Zacatecan Felipe desires to cross to the other side. This plurality in the male imaginary is unequaled to that which is given to the female voice. Castillo and Tabuenca Córdoba, for instance, do criticize some of the stereotypes of both men and women of the movie, but applaud the fact that women are depicted

⁸⁴ “*Herida abierta*” (Open wound) is the expression Anzaldúa uses to describe the border in *Borderlands*.

for women's sake: "women of different races and ethnic backgrounds, different aspirations and professions, cross paths and rub along with each other. No longer are we dealing with feminine images marked with Montalvo's exoticism" (210). They cite former films as being degrading to women who were objectified and seen only as symbols without the sophistication seen in the psychology of other women in this film.

Filmed in the 90s, *El jardín del edén* is dated prior to the major construction project of the border wall/fence, but in Tijuana, there was already a fence that divided the border that sought to limit the natural flow of people between the two countries. Physical borders and barriers, metaphors of intentional separations of people, nations and culture, have effects that keep linguistic and cultural changes at bay and hinder the natural co-habitational interaction that would exist at an even greater level if the borders were less restricted. Regardless of the physical division, just as illustrated in Sanmiguel's short stories, there is interaction across the (border)fence line as the border patrol from the US, fully engaged in watching a baseball game across the border, applaud when the widowed Mexican woman's son hits a homerun (thanks to the last minute coaching techniques from the Jane's brother Frank who has fully accepted Mexico as his putative country).

Thus far, even as Frank and Jane are "outsiders," they are fundamental to the movie's portrayal of Tijuana, Baja California and Mexico, as it is only through their "foreign" eyes that we are able to focus on the diversity that surrounds the border region, even more so with Jane than with her brother, who seems to have looked toward Mexico for its natural beauty of a coastline conducive for his fascination with migratory whales. Frank fails to see the fascination of what is "different" for his sister Jane, as she is fascinated all people and things with which she encounters. Jane's gaze is that of the exotic "other:" the Oaxacan (huave) ladies working in the

kitchen and speaking their indigenous tongue while cooking “exotic” dishes, or the young indigenous lady carrying the massive birdcage on her back as she strolls through the market to sell her merchandise (i.e. songbirds). Jane’s discovery of Mexico is as a person who wants to appreciate, assist those in need, and blend in as a transplant, as she claims not to be a tourist, but an “*escritorio*” (“desk”)– what she meant to say was “*escritora*” (“writer”) but since her Spanish is limited, this turn out to be a playful word switch that makes Felipe chuckle as she fits the stereotype of the typical “*gringa*” who wants to try out her Spanish in Mexico.

This “otherness” is also apparent in Felipe’s character as he begins fall for this blond and fun-loving “*gringa*” on a different level since he has misinterpreted her goodwill gestures for something else. In this sense, although Jane enjoys her new “life” in Mexico, since she doesn’t speak the language and is really only in Mexico to find her expression in a career that just occurred to her, we do not see her as a character that is psychologically developed beyond wanting to participate in good deeds, such as illegally transporting Felipe, and who she thought was Felipe’s brother, back to the US in a car she purchases. The rationale, then, for Jane’s character is that she opens the viewer, both Mexican and American, to the blend of different types of Mexico (through the huave women) or “Mexicanness” (as seen in the character of Liz, the Chicana), but what it also does, is open the interpretation to the diversity of another group of border “goers” that refers to the gringo tourists – the temporary (tourist) and more permanent kind (retirees) since Baja California is home to both.

Returning to the topic of music, in several of the works listed, we see the importance of music along the border region. In *El jardín del edén*, one of the scenes that involved music was in the pre-border crossing celebration where Jane and her “guys” ate, danced, sang, and momentarily forgot about any pending worries. In Crosthwaite’s *Idos de la mente*, this function

of music is key in all walks of daily life as the short chapter “*Pa má la vida es un sueño*” (“Life’s but a dream for me”) indicates. In this chapter, the narrator describes how one song (a song from *los Relámpagos de Agosto*) is responsible for touching so many lives in a city where “*se detuvo el corazón [de la ciudad] unos momentos*” (“the city’s heart stopped for a moment”) as it hit the radio waves (63).

He describes the universality of music since it fuses all classes and bridges the gap between rural and urban, the poor and the rich, the good and bad citizens, etc.: “*La canción siguió su paso seguro a través de las grandes ciudades; se abrió camino entre pueblos y rancherías; se extendió a través de la vastedad del campo. La escucharon de la misma forma tanto médicos como campesinos; penetró por igual la conciencia de abogados y convictos, jueces y delincuentes. Se pegó a los pensamientos de los cínicos y denostadores. Hizo bailar a los hombres rudos; convenció a las mujeres indecisas*” [“The song went all the way to the big cities; paved through towns and rural villages and opened up to the vast countryside. They all listened to it, doctors and country people alike; it didn’t discriminate as it penetrated the conscience of lawyers and convicts, judges and delinquents. It hooked onto the thoughts of the cynics and the offended. It made stiff men dance; it convinced undecided women”](63). For Crosthwaite, music is what unites his area, Northern Mexico, into a distinct region that has a tradition that is reinvented in music and through the variety of people who listen to it. Music’s function is different wherever or whoever needs it: restaurants, lines of people at the bank, school girls, moms, timid students, public jails, protests, etc. (63). Even in Rosina Conde’s “Gaviota,” Elena’s hard life as a single mom is alleviated by the sound of music as she wakes up to a song titled “*Himno a la alegría*” [“Anthem to happiness”] (16), is a popular song from Manuel Ríos and Victor Manuel which talks about everyone going back to being brothers and

sisters and living in happiness with the new sun (the new day). It also talks about the sadness that comes with life's luck. This song, "*Himno a la alegría*," is really a motto for the border region as a whole, especially for women affected by misogyny, but also for all those who are involved in the, too often than not, violent border region.

In conclusion, the border region has participants from all strata of society. It is a region of pain and agony, as well as a region of music, dance, and happiness. Conde, Sanmiguel, Crosthwaite, Novaro, and Iñárritu capture these emotions as they depict daily life along the border that separates lives, societies and cultures, but also brings together a unique blend of people who make the collective voice of the Mexican Northern Border. For the next and final chapter of this work, we will now cross the physical border while occasionally returning (physically or metaphorically) when the transnational reality is permitted or required.

CHAPTER 4- Representations of Hybridity: the Mexican-American/Chican@ Discourse

“No soy de aquí ni soy de allá”
[“I’m not from here, nor am I from there”]⁸⁵

Chalupa Rule Five: LA ESCALERA (The Ladder)

“Your ethnic ‘flavor’ and your cultural heritage are not barriers. They are important, integral rungs of the ladder as you climb upward in life. *Recuerda. Remember.*”
-Mario Bósquez⁸⁶

In the previous two chapters, we examined how the detrimental effects of globalization functioned as a catalyst for forging a distinguishable Northern Mexican identity which, although already present to some extent, didn’t prosper until the recent times due to the proliferation of cultural productions from, and about, the region. To much the same degree, the Mexican-American discourse in the US has undergone a similar pattern, in part, due to the influx of migrants and renewed ties with Mexico via telecommunications which have fortified a regional and transnational identity at the demise of purely national identities (Mexican or US) which were conventional constructions from the onset. Currently, there is a global trend towards the celebration of periphery identities that, in essence, now form a part of the broader and more inclusive literary and cinematographic traditions of the both Mexico and the US. For this reason, while both Northern Mexico and Mexican-American cultural productions have become more predominant at the national and international levels, it has been due to a direct correlation with increased marginalization and migration; however, they have developed under different

⁸⁵ Facundo Cabral, Argentine singer and songwriter (1937-) & later adapted by Awkid, Chicano/Latino group from South Central Los Angeles that combines hip hop-style vocals with regional Mexican music.

⁸⁶ Mario Bósquez, author of *The Chalupa Rules: A Latino Guide to GRINGOLANDIA*, was New York City’s first full-time Chicano television anchor.

circumstances and perspectives, and reveal clear demarcations based on their position, north or south of the physical boarder. In sum, in this fourth and last chapter of this dissertation, we will continue addressing what it means to be Mexican-American, Chican@, and Latin@ by analyzing how history, marginality, memory and the globalized world of cultural consumerism all affect identity and the cultural productions from what Ramos coins as “*el México de acá*.”

For Ramos, as just mentioned, there are two Mexicos separated by a border, the one with 103 million people south of the Río, and one with 25 million people north of the Río (68). He describes the southernmost Mexico (*el de allá*) as one defined by turbulent elections, the expulsion of its best workers, and a fledgling modernity that has yet to demonstrate its impact on economic and social progress in Mexico to the degree of its northern neighbors. Meanwhile, for this [US] Mexico (*el de acá*), those who left have formed a sort of island with “tentacles” in the other country, the one of the cultural re-conquest, the one that all Mexicans on this side dream about, but one to which they don’t dare return, for what? (Ramos 68).

Although Ramos clearly doesn’t speak for all Mexicans or Mexican-Americans living on the US side of the “Río” [Bravo/Grande] due to historically distinct migratory patterns, he does offer insight from the perspective of someone born in Mexico who presently resides in the US. Ramos exposes a dichotomic relationship that Mexicans (and Mexican-Americans) on the US side of the border cope with in regard to “the return.”

As is typical for many immigrant and exilic groups, what starts as temporary solution to an apparently urgent situation or circumstance, ends in a permanent stay. This transitional period prompts some critics, especially those who study exile literature, to inquire at what point does literature move from an exilic perspective to a migrant perspective as Carine Mardoossian points out in her article “From Literature of Exile to Migrant Literature.” While her article

speaks more of Haitian and Dominican writers dwelling in the US, some critics have begun to speak of Mexicans as exiles (either historically from wars and uprisings, to current conditions such as those subjected to the ails of the drug war, dire economic conditions, or victimization due to misogyny or sexual preference). It should be noted that these were some of the reasons cited by Mexicans declaring refugee status in Canada that abruptly prompted that government to requiring visas for Mexican nationals in 2009 with virtually no forewarning. While some immediately acknowledge a distancing from Mexico politically, economically and ideologically, without the intention of returning, the issue is seldom as clearly palpable.

Regardless of the terms by which Mexicans relocate to the US (or in some cases Canada), Ramos poses an important question as to why immigration is still taking place, and more importantly, why Mexicans, although demonstrating a yearning for the homeland, want to return: “*para qué?*” On the macro level, there are several explanations for the present migrations that encompass everything from the current economic marginalization due to free exchange agreements, unfair practices of agricultural subsidies in commodity-driven exporting countries, the lack of fair competition in relation to transnational corporations that are most heavily based in developed nations, to an increased desire and tendency towards a consumerist culture. Similarly, one could also cite the historical tradition that is based on previous sponsorship programs (such as the *Bracero* program or current H-2A visas for agricultural workers), wartime periods in Mexico and economically significant events such as the Peso Crisis and the passage of NAFTA (as well as other factors established in previous chapters).

As for the current trend in migration from a micro perspective, if we contemplate for a moment the underlying source for the level of marginalization and migratory patterns (as seen with the brothers from Ixmiquilpan in Chapter 3), we witness a reality based on the issue of

economics rather than reasons linked to political or human rights. In other words, as Jorge Ramos points out, even though logically tied to a political tradition, the most frequent answers are of the economic or matter-of-fact nature: “*Allá no hay buenas chambas*” [“There aren’t any jobs there”] or “*Pos mis hijos ya nacieron aquí*” [“Well, my kids were born here”] (69). These utterances comprise a collective voice of the Mexican who is from Mexico and has decided not to return on the principles of a new scenario based on the result of what was, in theory, a short-term migration and later turned into something of the long-term nature due to children who are no longer Mexican, but US citizens born of Mexican parents.

Ironically, neither *La misma luna*, *Al otro lado*, nor *Babel* addressed this issue of children born by parents in the destination country (to where the migration initially took place). The film representation in this study that speaks more explicitly about those born on the US-side and their struggle with cultural assimilation is that of *Tortilla Soup*, which leads me to believe that this is one of the principle differences of cinema produced from the Mexican perspective rather than that of the Mexican-American/Chicana/Latina perspective. However, to a certain extent, *El jardín del edén* also shows the continuing struggles with identity for Mexican-Americans as shown by [Chicana] Liz’ daughter Lupe who unable to understand Spanish, was unable to distinguish the meaning of newly acquired vocabulary from her new Mexican friend who tricked her into telling her mother something vulgar in Spanish, for which Liz, lax in her abilities in Spanish only complimented her young daughter for unknowingly cursing. Her travels to Mexico were, in all actuality, supposed to help her and her daughter find the answers to a lost heritage and void that is never fulfilled.

Now, as expected and demonstrated by numerous accounts of sons and daughters of migrants, the voice of the most marginalized and most affected by globalization, such as

undocumented or visa-restricted migrant farmworkers, are infrequently represented on a first-person narrative basis. Those who are able to write about their marginalized situations are usually those who have overcome economic obstacles or pertain to the first or later generations of children born in the US. In the case of Victor Villaseñor's *Rain of Gold*, for example, he narrates the story of his family's misfortune during the Mexican Revolution and *Cristero* wars and subsequent discrimination of his family upon arrival in the US which occurred before he was born. Even though Villaseñor grew up in the US, his voice (and that of his family) is one of a collective nature by voiceless marginalized persons of a different *époque*; however, his voice demonstrates how this collectivity thrives through a vibrant oral tradition in the Mexican-American community.

As such, another difference with Mexican border literature is that the focus for literature produced by Mexican-Americans is often dominated by the past, mainly due to the oral history tradition which is not as prevalent in the works of Northern Mexico, especially in the work of Toscana and Crosthwaite, more so than in the case of Sanmiguel, for example. This topic of temporalities will be addressed in more detail later in the chapter as we discuss the work of Sandra Cisneros, who, akin to Villaseñor, maintains a dialogue with the past through a strong oral tradition that resonates in her writing style of narrating the past and usage of vignettes, mimicking the episode-like nature of storytelling.

Another reality and voice in addition to the Mexican-Americans such as Richard Rodríguez, Victor Villaseñor, or Sandra Cisneros, is another group for which representation remains largely unaccounted—this is the voice of Mexicans living in the US, who, citizens or not, with or without intentions of returning, may or may not auto-classify themselves as Mexican-Americans, Chican@s, or Latin@s. This group, unlike those born in the US, is

sometimes excluded from educational systems, political systems and government programs. Their immediate concerns are less engaged in remembering Mexico and oral traditions, as is prevalent with the Mexican-American novelists, and fulfill the typical work-intensive reality of foreign-born nationals who are seek a future (temporary or permanent) in the US. In fact, Ramos points out that of the 10 million Mexicans living in the US that were Mexican born, only 40,000 registered to vote in the 2006 election (69). Is this lack of voter registration due to changing laws that threaten those without legal documents, or is there a sort of laissez-faire attitude towards a country that, for one reason or another, did not provide what it was they needed to continue residing there?

Being apolitical is one consequence of globalization when mass migrations of the undocumented sort discourage democracy. The new model appears to be: once marginalized, always marginalized (politically). However, as we see with movies like Arau's *A Day Without Mexicans* (2004), or the massive protests that have occurred in the last decade in large cities rallying for the rights of all people living in the US, documented or not, there does appear to be a voice that, although it isn't always allowed to vote in the US, still reigns through that of other people who can and who perhaps still carry the historical memory of their ancestors. In this way, political changes and a democratic voice are realities of a global nature since there is a significant number of voting constituents who represent similar values and backgrounds as one might encounter with the current migratory trends. In this sense, voters in the US (and correspondingly in Mexico) are able to act as liaisons with migrants due to discontentment with policies that, at times, affect fellow family members, church members, community members, co-workers, and a multitude of other people that form a part of an intertwined landscape between the two countries.

Returning to the use of Ramos' choice of vocabulary to describe this interconnectedness between Mexicans living in the US and Mexico (i.e. "tentacles"), he is also addressing the current trend of transculturalization, where people live in-between, or across cultures and nations. A tentacle implies that there are several arms that, like an octopus, are in different areas at once, or can be moved together to manipulate one single object without having to actually be close to that object. Likewise, it appears as though Ramos intended to also imply that people grasp onto whatever it is they are seeking (i.e. the positive aspects of their homeland). Although this definition is not necessarily innovative, it does serve as a very crude example of how culture is relived abroad-- through the selection of different elements (from the past) that comprise the whole (the past-present reality).

In the case of someone born in Mexico, the return can mean something rather concrete since there is probably still some connection to family, friends, institutions, a favorite hangout, a great childhood memory, *abuela's* cooking, eating *nieves* or *raspados* on a hot day, going to the *feria*, dancing at one of the several possible celebratory events, going to a store to speak Spanish (and only Spanish, not in Spanglish or English), etc. On the contrary, for someone not from Mexico, but of Mexican (or Chicano) origin, this return would mean something entirely different. One of the biggest problems of Chican@/Latin@/Mexican-American studies today is trying to figure out to which group everyone belongs, and what it is that they have in common.⁸⁷

For Mexicans, Mexican-Americans, Chicanos, and Latinos, maintaining some part of the past is also part of their present and vice versa. Living in this past-present reality is, in all

⁸⁷ The Pew Hispanic Center published "When Labels Don't Fit: Hispanics and Their Views of Identity" (2012) stating that their studies indicate that those who are labeled as "Hispanic" or "Latino" do not necessarily want to identify as such, but would rather opt for a term demarking their country connection—i.e. Mexican-American, Cuban-American. (<http://www.pewhispanic.org/2012/04/04/when-labels-dont-fit-hispanics-and-their-views-of-identity/>)

actuality, not that different for anyone, but communication and consumerism have changed the possibilities more so now than ever before for maintaining that past-present relationship.

Sui generis?

In her preface to *The Chicana/o Cultural Studies Reader*, Angie Chabram-Dernersesian recognizes that Chicana/o cultural studies must remain “open to unexpected, unimagined, and even uninvited possibilities” in respect to its functionality as a tool for the analysis of culture (xix). This “uncharted” territory exposes what some critics may deem a lack of structure and methodology, while others embrace the concept of “all-inclusiveness” since an area like Chican@ or Latin@ studies is already a bi-product of a counter-hegemonic discourse that was engendered in a WASP-dominated society.⁸⁸ Emerging from a “fringe” identity, to be Chican@, Latin@, and/or Mexican-American has one major, and influential, factor that distinguishes it from the “fringe” area of Northern Mexico, or from the rest of Mexico: the undeniable fact that “nation” and national territory persist, even when many attempts, such as “border thinking” try to erase (or lessen) this nineteenth and twentieth-century construct.

If, on one hand, a person’s place of birth, family origin, and residence have little variation, one likely scenario would be that that person would have a non-conflicting subjectivity, unless of course they do not fit the “*status quo*” (if there is such a thing) of those places. Now on the other hand, when two or more of those characteristics resulting in dissimilarities coexist, it could potentially act as a catalyst for a fragmented identity and multiple subjectivities.

⁸⁸ White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (and patriarchal) society.

For example, if someone living in Mexico was born in Mexico, from a Mexican family, and feels “Mexican” in the sense that she/he embodies what is considered to be “Mexican” by that person, and in accordance with others in that same social circle, there would be lower levels of fragmentation due to a series of homogeneous factors. In the case of those who have one or more alterations in regard to “nation” in the abovementioned “formula,” the end result would be a hybridized identity. This simplistic way of exploring identity is necessary, or at least fathomable, as far as an approach to Chican@ /Latin@ /Mexican-American studies is concerned since biological, geographical and psychological factors are elements in (de)constructing an identity that has developed into varying labels, areas of study, and a collective voice as is evident in literature, cinema, music, art, and politics. As such, Chapter 4 will be defined in terms of itself (its own definitions), in juxtaposition with Chapters 2 and 3 (the Mexican perspective), and with the overall theme of identity, migration and globalization since it encompasses a complete range of languages, cultural practices, ethnicities, networks, temporalities, histories, and social realities.

Now to address cultural labels, it is safe to say that they are based on identity and can be complex concepts that are as diverse as the world itself. Paul Allatson’s book *Key Terms in Latino/a Cultural and Literary Studies* dedicates almost three hundred pages to helping researchers decipher the intricate meanings this vast and varied terminology. Using the terms Chicano/a, Latino/a, or Mexican-American is ambiguous and cumbersome since each entails differing connotations which can be used exclusively or in combination. As much as one would like to avoid these cultural labels, they are prevalent in all readings as an analysis is virtually impossible without the use of some term or another (as Johnson and Michaelson pointed out in *Border Theory*). The major feat, then, is to be as inoffensive as possible by avoiding assigning

or using a term incorrectly. However, this isn't always simple or apparent since a preferred term only exists by the enunciator him/herself. Nevertheless, college admissions, affirmative-action policies, health and educational statistics, government censuses and the like all allocate a series of categories to help them better understand an overall profile that can translate into numbers in order to articulate the purpose or goal of their study. The problem, as one would imagine with this practice, is that there aren't enough pages or boxes that would accurately describe how someone may choose to be labeled.

Culture and ethnicity are much more complex than what can be described by race/ethnicity, language, history or status in the case of the Chican@s, Latin@s or Mexican-Americans since there are many variables that alter their connection with the country in which they live [the US]. As pointed out earlier, there have been several significant periods in the historical relationship between the US and Mexico that influenced borders, people, and migration. From modified borders through the Gadsden purchase of 1853 and the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo of 1848 whereby a few thousand people were affected, to the Mexican Revolution of 1910 and the following decade of the '20s, when almost 10% of Mexico's population escaped either conditions paralleling that of an exile community or endured economic hardship to the extent that migration was their only viable option. But what contributed greatly to the rise in the border region population of those years was the fact that they estimate that during the 1930s, a half million Mexicans were repatriated: 17% voluntarily and 83% deported by force (Canales 98). Now if one were to also consider the mass migrations of the Bracero program and the migratory waves of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, there is almost no way of finding coherency for what defines the origin and history of Mexican-Americans; however, it is not necessarily true (nor possible) that there should be one.

In the last of a trilogy of novels, *Brown: The Last Discovery of America*, Richard Rodríguez wittingly addresses the complexity of terminology with his prototype for Chican@s as they, “scorn the term Hispanic” (108).⁸⁹ He also claims that “Chicanos resent having to share mythic space with parvenus and numerically lesser immigrant Latin American populations” (109). This is obviously a blatant cynicism meant to disqualify the idea of Aztlán (the Chican@ homeland), but he doesn’t stop there, as he broaches a topic that has its logic, but can only come from someone who has the cultural agency to discuss the historicization of an indigenous past by Chican@s. His criticism is that:

Chicanos say, borrowing a tabula rasa from American Indians, we are not just another ‘immigrant’ population in the United States. We were here before the Mayflower. Which is true enough, though ‘we’ and ‘here’ are blurred by imprecision. California was once Mexico, as were other parts of the Southwestern United States. So we were here when here was there. In truth, however, the majority of Mexican Americans, or our ancestors, crossed a border. (109)

What Rodríguez highlights is cultural amnesia that is part of the problematic of the act of remembrance from oppressed (and non-oppressed) groups. As for the future of Mexican-American/Chican@/Latin@ studies, it is crucial to recognize that there will always be immigrants that continue to arrive due to the effects of globalization described in Chapters 1, 2, and 3. Consequently, the question could be posed as to whether the current consciousness of Chican@s will be conveyed to future Mexican-Americans (and Mexicans) who haven’t even been born. The same can be said for other “minority” groups since heightened world migrations

⁸⁹ His trilogy includes *Hunger for Memory: The Education of Richard Rodríguez* (1982), *Days of Obligation: An Argument with My Mexican Father* (1992), and *Brown: The Last Discovery of America* (2002).

are reshaping what constitute identity (i.e. African-American, Latin-American, etc.). Will a Somalian refugee's son or daughter consider him/herself African-American, Somalian-American, or just American? And their children? At what point does the nationality part of the designation cease to exist, and when, in its place, does a regional umbrella name take over? In the end, it is really a question of how each group, community, family and individual maintains their identity through memory.

Speaking on the topic of memory, and the "*presentista*" vision of Halbwachs, José Colmeiro mentions that collective memory unites the past with the present, and the individual with a social group, in order to maintain historic continuity and a sense of identification of the individual with the community.⁹⁰ He also upholds the idea that memory continually reconstructs the past (Colmeiro 16). In this sense, Chican@s, for Rodríguez, have selectively reconstructed their past by not taking into account all components of "their" history. From another perspective Sandra Cisneros offers "her" version of history and memory in the preface of her novel: "The truth, these stories are nothing but story, bits of string, odds and ends found here and there, embroidered together to make something new. I have invented what I do not know and exaggerated what I do to continue the family tradition of telling healthy lies. If, in the course of my inventing, I have inadvertently stumbled on the truth, *perdónenme*" (preface). Throughout Cisneros' novel (and the other works addressed in this chapter), there are images and memories of the past, along with practices of the present. This form of present-past living defines hybridity and transculturalism. This notion of belonging or feeling connected to two places, or two (or

⁹⁰ José Colmeiro studies historic memory in the context of the Spanish Civil War; however, his research is applicable to any exile or immigrant community as any effort to maintain a cultural consciousness with the past will require sufficient memory in order to solidify the "story." At the same time, exile, immigrant and subaltern communities also deal with divisive "baggage" that, in essence, will most like be pushed aside in favor of a more positive existence build on utopia and selective memory as Richard Rodríguez points out.

more) cultures, is a constant. For Cisneros, there is one sort of connection, and for Richard Rodríguez, there is another. For Mexican-born Jorge Ramos, there is, yet again, a further way of viewing the relationship of Mexico (US)-Mexico. These voices, like the voices of Northern Mexico, form a common bond of place. For those in Mexico, it mostly stays in Mexico, but for those who reside in the US, the plurality of voices grows even greater.

One of these voices, as mentioned, addresses the topic of historical memory which has been fundamental in recounting the oral traditions of the displaced peoples of the Mexican Revolution north of the border in the United States where these forms of individual and collective memory appear in various forms of expression, such as art, murals, novels, song and theatre, or Villaseñor's novel which is one tangible example of an oral tradition being passed down to a younger generation and put into written text. Villaseñor, the son of Mexican immigrants who fled the Mexican Revolution to escape the atrocities committed by soldiers and bandits -- namely pillaging, the destruction of communities, killing of the innocent and raping of women and girls. In addition to these atrocities and injustices of that era, this novel narrates the autobiographical story of Villaseñor's maternal and paternal families during the Mexican Revolution and the struggles they endured on their quest towards a more empowered status in the United States. This act of remembrance by Villaseñor's family reminds us that an entire population's discourse from the Mexican Revolution, while frequently refer to in "corridos" and oral traditions on this side of the border, was seldom recorded so vividly in the form of a written text as it is in *Rain of Gold*.

French philosopher and sociologist, Maurice Halbwachs, known for developing the concept of collective memory and remembrance, uses the notion that collective memory unites the past with the present, and an individual with a social group, in such a way that it produces a

sense of historical continuity and identity within the community. In this way, Villaseñor unites the experiences of three generations, two of which came from Mexico and another that was born in the United States. As Colmeiro suggested, “*el pasado es reconstruido por la memoria básicamente de acuerdo a los intereses, creencias y problemas del presente*” [“The past is reconstructed by memory, principally due to interests, beliefs and present-day problems”] (16) y por tanto, “*la memoria colectiva se hace necesaria como construcción ideológica para dar un sentido de identidad al grupo, a la comunidad, a la nación*” [“Collective memory is necessary as an ideological construction to give a sense of identity to a group, community, or nation”] (17). As such, Villaseñor is, in essence, justifying his families’ reason for leaving Mexico while at the same time embracing his Mexican past. Consequently, even though his account is made at an individual level, he is the voice of his family, and an entire community of Mexican-Americans who grew up hearing about the Mexican Revolution without witnessing it firsthand. In the “Forward” of *Rain of Gold*, Villaseñor also acknowledges a feeling urgency to write about the past and document the oral histories in his family and community (in Southern California), in part, due to his age, marital status and feelings of becoming Anglicized: “Then, turning thirty and finding the woman I wished to marry and have my children with, I suddenly realized how empty I’d feel if I couldn’t tell my own children about our ancestral roots” (Forward 1). To maintain this sense of historical continuity and identity, it is not uncommon to return to the past in immigrant, or even exile literature. In the context of the Mexican Revolution, however, most sources opt for the use of the term immigrant/emigrant to describe the Mexicans who fled the revolutionary Mexico. Hesitantly, I question whether those escaping physical or political harm could or should be considered exiles being that, at some level, their conditions were similar to

other groups who left war-stricken territories to seeking political and social refuge, as was the case in other Spanish-speaking nations—Spain, Argentina, Chile, Cuba etc.

Perhaps part of this argument of terms lies in that those who left in exile from those countries had higher levels of education and took a more active role in denouncing the atrocities committed by their respective dictatorships. While on the other hand, it is also conceivable that they possessed the necessary tools, such as a higher level of education and a larger level of acceptance in the host countries, to give them a stronger voice, albeit in a foreign country. Conversely, Mexicans who came to the United States during the Revolution were, for the most part, uneducated, unskilled, lacked knowledge of the English language and took on unskilled labor-intensive jobs (Sinmadera 1).⁹¹ Another factor against Mexicans in the early 1900s was the racism towards the Mexican workers, as frequently cited by Villaseñor in the second half of the novel. Secondly, Mexico lacked clear political divisions, creating social and political chaos, at a time when the world was not necessarily dealing with the effects of polarized politics in the Cold War era as was the case in Argentina, Chile, Cuba, Spain among several other nations around the world. And finally, the Mexican Revolution was seen as, in the eyes of some, a necessary evil in bringing social reform to a deeply divided society socially, by economics, and politically.

Nonetheless, I do find common ground between US, Spain and Mexico, or Chile and Argentina for that matter in that the second generation and third generations are actively seeking to record stories of their family's [hi]story as to not forget the past. In Mexico, the generational gap between now and then is obviously much larger since the Revolution is more dated;

⁹¹ Source:
<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/immigration/alt/mexican4.html> (March 3, 2010)

however, the same scenario could be applied to the student and labor movements in the late '60s when Mexico also took an active part in silencing its people.

Many countries are at the historically delicate crossroads between recuperating and possibly losing the remaining remnants of historical memory. Recognizing this situation in 2007, Spain passed a law (*La Ley de Memoria Histórica*) to preserve historical memory and rectify the distorted history of the Franco years tainted by decades of oppression, censorship and manipulation. Similar efforts are recognized in the Conosur. For example, in Chile, La Universidad Finis Terrae created the Center of Investigation and Documentation in Contemporary Chilean history with the objective of recuperating historical memory in the country. In Argentina, la CONADEP (Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas) was created in 1983, and, along with the Organization of Las Madres y Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, investigations were and are still being realized to condemn the actions of the government in the murders and disappearances of students.

At the same time a nation should never forget injustices, as with all periods of turmoil, a society also goes through a time of grieving and healing. This process leads many people to become apolitical as a means of survival and coping. But, in the case of Spain, the “recuperation period” lasted for decades and lead to a form of social amnesia and forgetting. As a result, it wasn't until people healed and aged and felt unthreatened by persecution that historical memory of the conquerors and victims could be freely recorded in interviews, documentaries and on paper. In Mexico, many of the novels about the Revolution were not published until decades later—especially if we cite classics from authors such as Juan Rulfo and Carlos Fuentes. In the United States, the Mexican and Mexican-American communities were not as prompted to record their oral history due to a lack of interest by both the Mexican and United States public.

However, there are recorded testimonies of people made by anthropologist Manuel Gamio who interviewed both veterans of the Mexican Revolution and refugees that fled the fighting. Many spoke of returning after an establish political system was put into place, but many decided not to return to Mexico they were worried about being incarcerated or shot. In some cases, the memories and traumas of violence were so engraved that even when it was safe to return to Mexico, they did not do so (Taylor Hansen 5).

Precisely for this reason, there comes a moment when in all societies, this historical memory must be preserved and protected so that one can learn from the outcomes and live a future based on avoiding the turmoil of the past. In Mexico, the practice of preservation is questionable as just last year the “Sala de Prensa del Gobierno Federal en México” from an April 22 memo discusses the current state of historical memory in Mexico and the dire situation in which it finds itself. This is especially alarming, according to Patricia Galeana, one of the organizers of the Special Commission for the celebrations for the Bicentennial Mexican Independence and the Centennial of the Mexican Revolution, as she comments on the fact that the current lack of ventilation and high humidity levels of the Palacio de Lecumberri, a renowned former prison in Mexico, is causing the loss of important historical documents. Even though the Biblioteca Nacional in Mexico is in the process of converting these documents digitally (Aguilar Sosa), if Mexico were to establish a more concrete plan to preserve historical memory, perhaps the contributions from Mexicans and Mexican-American could aid in developing an even richer understanding of the Revolution. An interesting view of these inadequate locations for historical archives several countries prompted Colmeiro to comment that the word “archive” takes on a synonymous definition of jail, especially since many countries’ public archives are found in former jails, such as Mexico’s Lecumberri. He claims that these former jails are metaphors for

the forgotten, silenced, censured and repressed memory (29). Even though Villaseñor's novel does not form a part of these disintegrating documents, nor does he deal with censorship, his voice, and that of his families, was essentially muted in the eyes of a government who would never hear from these citizens again within its territory. Consequently, this voiceless community would only be able to make their voice known amongst themselves without even being able to fully express themselves due to the hegemonic cultural barriers in the United States who also left this community without a platform on which to speak out about the injustices and war in Mexico and labor issues in the United States.

Nevertheless, in Villaseñor's *Rain of Gold*, this oral tradition is brought back in the form of collective memory and helps to redefine the Mexican Revolution and includes peripheral voices in both its victims and participants. The following quote from the novel emphasizes these voices and also puts into evidence the geographical and thematic importance of this conference:

Stopping, Juan caught his breath, then put his straw hat back on and continued down the white, hot, soft dirt road at a leisurely trot toward his family who was hiding behind their little cart and a tired old burro so that they wouldn't be trampled by the approaching soldiers. Juan and his family had been on the road for weeks. They were on their way north, hoping to cross the Rio Grande at El Paso, Texas, into the safety of the United States. Their settlement up in Los Altos de Jalisco, that Don Pio had built to last for ten generations, had been destroyed. (102)

Villaseñor's novel demonstrates how an individual account of the Mexican Revolution serves to form a more encompassing collective memory of the roughly 400,000 to 1 million Mexicans (depending on the source) who escaped the tragedies and the violence that took the lives of

nearly 1 million Mexicans at a time when the population stood at approximately 15 million.

Border critic David Maciel also affirms that despite present-day immigration which tends to be cyclical, the massive migrations of the early 1900s were important in forming a strong unified Chicano identity:

La gran mayoría de los miles de mexicanos que cruzaron el Río Bravo en busca de mejores oportunidades nunca regresarían a su país de origen. Los recién emigrados durante la época de la Revolución y la población chicana ya establecida formaron una comunidad sólida, valiente y consciente de su mexicanidad y de su legado histórico [...] (y) en múltiples maneras fortalecieron la cultura mexicana en los estados fronterizos norteamericanos (324).

[The vast majority of the thousands of Mexicans who crossed the Río Grande in search of better opportunities would never return to their country of origin. The recently emigrated during the time of the Revolution and the already established Chican@ population formed a solid community brave and conscious of their “Mexicanness” and their historic legacy {...} (and) in many ways, fortified the Mexican culture in the US border states]. (184)

This surge in Mexican immigration to the United States had a significant impact in migratory patterns along the border states of Texas and California and ultimately in the United States who would start to feel the influx of Mexicans who were contracted to do labor-intensive work due to a lack of labor force. Interestingly, the Library of Congress states on its website dedicated to Mexican Immigration that “El Paso, Texas, served as the Mexican Ellis Island--a gateway to a different life for Mexican immigrants and a powerful symbol of change and survival for their children and grandchildren.” This port of entry and idea of change and survival is exactly what

Villaseñor alludes to in his extensive novel of 562 pages which has various discourses based on the oral accounts of family members. Even though the second part of the novel deals mainly with the struggles and daily battles of life as a Mexican living in the United States, the first part of the novel reveals names, dates, places and first-hand stories from Revolutionary times as told to him by his grandparents, parents, and aunts and uncles, but more specifically by his maternal grandmother who would sit him on her lap and tell stories of the past, of the Revolution and of the troops of Francisco Villa and Carranza who came into their box canyon in the mountains of Chihuahua to fight, and also by his father whose family escaped from Los Altos de Jalisco and came north through Texas (Forward, 1).

In general, the Villaseñor's novel functions as a testimony of thousands of distraught Mexicans who would leave their homeland never to return again in search of economic and political stability in the aftermath of entire villages and towns destroyed and abandoned. In *Rain of Gold*, the two towns of historical reference are Lluvia de Oro where the author's maternal family dwelled and "The Mountain Village" in Los Altos de Jalisco (near Arandas) founded by his grandfather Don Pio. As a side note, Lluvia de Oro- located in the southern part of the state of Chihuahua, as of 2009, is actively mined by the Lake Shore Gold Corp (of Canada). In fact, on the company's website, it states that the Lluvia de Oro deposit produced between 1898 and 1915 as discussed in Villaseñor's novel and again in the early 1950's (LSGC website).

Due to the fact that the two towns where Villaseñor's family resided were in the north and north central Mexico, one might pose the question as to how different regions in Mexico dealt with the Revolution and if there were any tendencies in migratory patterns during the first part of the XX century. According to Profesor of Anthropology, Jorge Durand, the historic region of Mexican migration included the states of Jalisco, Michoacán, Guanajuato y Zacatecas

(60). He also recognizes its ideal location due to the railroads that passed through los Altos de Jalisco, Aguascalientes and el altiplano potosino. He also mentions that factor that race had in preferring people from these regions: “La zona era ideal para los enganchadores y contratistas porque tenía importantes excedentes de población rural, porque estaba comunicada de manera eficiente por medio del ferrocarril, por quedar más cerca de Estados Unidos que otras regiones y porque la población era mayoritariamente blanca y mestiza” [The zone was ideal for those looking to hire because they coming from rural areas, and because it prospered due to the railroad system. Why stand by the United States more than other regions simply because the population was majority White and Mexican]. (61). For this reason, and because of the *Cristero* wars, many small towns were completely abandoned as we see in the mountain village of Villaseñor’s paternal family.

Even though there are ample novels, newspaper clippings, war-time propaganda and even pictures to depict the Revolution produced within Mexico, I find it less common that much attention is paid to literature written by Mexicans and Mexican-Americans in the United States in Mexico. Could it be that there exists a certain level of resentment in Mexico towards those who left “la Patria” as David Maciel affirms: “en México se les veía como ‘pochos’ o individuos que al asimilarse a lo norteamericano habían perdido su mexicanidad y el amor por su país natal” (325). Returning to the examples of anthropologist Manuel Gamio, critic Taylor Hansen claims that he is more known in Mexico for his earlier works dealing with Mexican indigenous populations and remains virtually unknown in Mexico for his work on Mexican Immigration to the United States. He also mentions “La razón por la que los dos libros escritos por Gamio sobre la inmigración no fueron editados en México se debió [...] al poco interés por parte del gobierno y del público de aquel tiempo con respeto a los grupos indígenas, los pobres y los

pobladores de las áreas rurales de dónde provenía la mayoría de los inmigrantes. También [...] los mexicanos que emigraron a los Estados Unidos no eran bien vistos en México. Eran considerados, más bien, como ‘traidores’ a la patria” (3). It should be of no surprise that this notion tends to be applied to any person of Mexican origin lives on this side of the border, regardless of whether they maintain their “Mexicanness”.

Now, to much the same degree, Rosario Sanmiguel demonstrates another point of view in regard to Chicano/Mexican-American/Mexican identity. Depicting conflicting labels through a historically relevant example, Sanmiguel’s “Moonlit in the Mirror,” part IV, which is dedicated to the story of Arturo’s grandfather (Arturo is the spouse of Nicole, the Mexican-American lawyer who defends the undocumented migrant workers in El Paso, Texas), demonstrates (like Villaseñor) one of the historic reasons for migration across the northern border and the idea of labels for those who come from that lineage. Don Manuel Alcántar, Arturo’s grandfather, “watched with disgust as the first hordes of campesinos fled from hunger and gunfire. The immigrants were subject to a humiliating sanitary inspection by the North American authorities” (94). This image contrasts that of Arturo’s grandfather: “This man from Chihuahua, who had moved north of the Bravo to protect family and fortune from the instability of the armed movement, disdained everything around him. He lived obsessed by the memory of the world that he had left behind: Chihuahua” (94). In these passages alone we are exposed to two groups of arrivers: the rich and the poor.

The problem with collective identity labels, such as those within the Mexican-American community, is that like many different groups (Cuban-Americans, German-Americans, Dominican-Americans etc.), a “one-size fits all” label does encompass the diversity and plurality of the group. For Arturo and his family, Mexico isn’t synonymous with personal tragedy and

hardships as it is for others. Needless to say, while growing up in the US, Arturo, felt this dichotomy among his peers [Mexican-Americans] being that he came from an affluent family:

His mother tongue was Spanish, but the majority of the time he communicated in English. He expressed his emotions better in this language, either because of its flexibility or simply because he related his emotional life with his concrete and immediate experience in the Anglo world. His university years provided him with a degree that he didn't appreciate because it was a time he had spent in limbo. It was the seventies, Chicanos were organizing in political grouping and Mexicans in an association of foreign students. He didn't fit in either of the two. Arturo thought himself Mexican without being one completely: he had been born and had grown up in the United States. That didn't mean that he understood the way that Chicanos perceived the world or their love-hate relationship with the colonizing society in which they lived. He had never felt discriminated against and much less exploited. For him, those were other people's experiences. Neither did he identify fully with Mexicans, rich or poor [...] Arturo lived in an existential borderland. A step away from belonging, but at the same time separated by a line traced through history. (99)

Although this short story is from a Mexican author, the goal of this work is to expose different consciousnesses from the border that take into account the physical one, but expand it to that of an existential nature. As indicated in the preceding passage, the Chican@ movement was largely considered a project of cultural nationalism based on the constructions of "difference" (Velasco 203).

The Chican@ "difference" was centered around the themes of race, discrimination, civil rights, and cultural affirmation. In order to achieve a counter-hegemonic discourse, "*la raza*"

(“the people/race”) frequently moved in masses (i.e. through student groups and protest) and spoke with a collective voice that aided in constructing an identity representative of the common cultural denominators associated with a past connection with Mexico (as well as *Aztlán* and Mesoamerica). It wasn’t until later that the Chican@ voice began project a multi-voiced aesthetics that represented further divisions (or shall we say “branching out”) within the community as we have reviewed with Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands*, where we are transported into a pre-Colombian, Spanish and Mexican past, as well as the present.

At the same time, Anzaldúa and Richard Rodríguez’ homosexuality further diversified a commonly referred to conservative voice that represented the Mexican-American community. According to Johnson and Michaelson, the model of Chicano studies that follows the Calderón/Saldívar notion, is one based on resistance for which there is no ultimate goal of assimilation. They also state that it is this “enables Calderón and Saldívar to discount the political Right’s embrace of Richard Rodríguez as a Mexican-American spokesman. He isn’t one of ‘us’”(18). The cultural production of Chican@s (also Xican@s) at the present time have begun to embrace not only their Mexican heritage, but also their indigenous one. In this respect, globalization has rooted itself into the Chicano identity and has strived to also rid it of the notions of “nation.” This doesn’t imply that “nation” is not a factor, because that would be mistaken, as the quest for “Mexicanness” still exists as we will discuss further along.

An additional point to expand on with Sanmiguel’s example of Arturo, is one of having multiple labels. In the case of Arturo, correct labels to describe how he felt about himself in relation with other Mexican-Americans didn’t exist; yet, for Mario Bósquez, the author of *Chalupa Rules* included in the epigraph for Chapter 4, all of these labels are valid. He discusses that his climbing the professional ladder led to inventing the “*la escalera*” (ladder) Chalupa

Rule: “It was born out of several experiences in my life that put the focus directly on who I am as a Latino, as a brown-skinned person trying to make my way through the United States’ working environment [...] I am extremely proud to be Chicano and carry that heritage with me everywhere I go” (31). Interestingly, he self-identifies with both the term “Latino” and “Chicano.” The difference of his usage of the terms is implied by context; in the first example with “Latino,” we find that he discusses himself in relation to the rest of the United States, while in the second example, “Chicano,” is used in terms of heritage. It is as if the term “Latino” were an idea, whereas “Chicano” served as a qualifier of nationality.

To complicate matters even further, Bósquez discusses the case of his nephew Maximilian Alberto Pittman, who asked him why he (nephew) and his uncle (Bósquez) were brown and his brother and cousins white. To this inquisitive question, Bósquez comments that his nephew will someday “learn of his Native American, Mexican, and Anglo-American history” (32). This example is a good analogy for why cultural labels will most likely become redundant in the future as the population intermingles, or will people, in fact, retain a consciousness that includes all aspects of their heritage?

In fact, a valid argument could inquire as to why he wouldn’t have said Latino-American or Mexican-American (instead of just Mexican), or have qualified the Anglo part of the “Anglo-American” expression- at what point did “Anglo” replace another identity based on a nation? How long will we the US keep engaging in self-identification, and at what point does one stop being Native American, Mexican or Mexican-American, Anglo-American (or the further categorizations such as German-American and Irish American)? If one encompasses all of the above “heritage” and “ethnicity,” as is entirely possible (now or in the future), perhaps the bigger

question will be if that “definition” will be accepted as a valid “heritage” on the “race and ethnicity” forms that were mentioned earlier.

Representation a la Tortilla Soup

Instead of taking the label-oriented approach, the language style of Cisneros’ writing demonstrates that the wittiness and the wholeness of who she *is*, speaks louder than who she *is not*. Richard Rodríguez also takes the same approach to labels, but is a bit more aggressive at disqualifying the usage of certain terms and ideas. Regardless, they are both engulfed (or at least one would imagine given the quantity of books that each has written) in their heritage, ethnicity, language and culture. Each defines who they are by a different art form. Cisneros does so with her writing of short stories that speak to windows of her past. The impression that one gets while reading these vignettes is one of flashbacks. The short anecdotal stories provide a glimpse into the life of a Mexican-American reality that is full of vivid imagery and experiences that maintain the culture in a way that it becomes a part of the daily realities as seen in chapter 71 “The Great Divide” where she unforgettingly describes bad experiences with Mexican foods from Halstad Street in Chicago. This story and many others in her novel express several experiences and memories that revolve around things such as the Mexican *telenovelas*, barrio stories from Chicago, trips to Mexico, good food, nasty food, family heirlooms (*rebozos*), neighborhood fights over soccer among Mexicans and Mexican-Americans, and much more.

Richard Rodríguez, on the other hand, has an entirely different approach to addressing his past, or the one that others live and die by. In *Brown*, he questions the nostalgic, misguided representations of what it means to be “Hispanic.” Rodríguez takes issue in the “we” attitude that is created out of terms that are “oxymoronic” if they are used in the following context:

“America’s largest minority” (103), or in the idea that “What Hispanic immigrants learn within the United States is to view themselves in a new way, as belonging to Latin America entire – precisely at the moment they no longer do (117). This view is, for some, the equivalent of that of the far right. For instance, Benjamin Alire Sáenz, self-proclaimed Chicano who talks about identity politics, recognizes that Rodríguez’ fame for being basically anti-Chicano is at the very expense of playing the identity political game by using his identity. In that respect Sáenz comments that he reads Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera* frequently and that he approves of her political agenda; however, he also compares it to the writing of Rodríguez whereby he declares his writing as a rightist agenda (84). This Chicano [Sáenz] doesn’t embrace the attitude that Chabram-Dernersesian’s “uninvited possibilities” idea toward an approach to Chicana/o studies. This is one of the flaws of the idea of inclusiveness; it is more often than not, just an idea, and not a reality as it becomes a question of self-identification and an issue of a politic nature.

Avoiding the label and identity politics all together, at least for the most part, are some of the movies such as *Tortilla Soup*, *La misma luna*, *Al otro lado*, and *Babel*. One possible explanation is that as commercial productions, they need to cater to a broader audience that will not be offended by the label and identity politics “game.” On the other hand, with the exception of the first of the movies just mentioned, all deal with current migrants; therefore, there isn’t a “game” to be played since they have an identity that is not jeopardized by US identity politics – they are *Mexican*, and only *Mexican*. For *Tortilla Soup*, the only time we really see anything identity related as far as terminologies is at the end of the movie when they name the restaurant “*Nuevo Latino*,” as will be explained below.

In Maria Ripoll's *Tortilla Soup* (2001), for the Naranjo family comprised of widower father Martín and adult daughters Leticia, Carmen and Maribel, this fascination with family heritage is an integral part of life through one main theme: food. The opening scenes show the quintessential Mexican food of *chiles*, *aguacates*, *nopales*, *adobo*, *sopa de flor de calabaza*, *frijoles*, *plátano frito*, and *helado*, all prepared the traditional way, by hand (with the molcajete and manual ice cream maker).

Tortilla Soup revolves around the concept that food is the most important part of life as the family only converges at the sacred mealtime, the only time when the daughters take a break out of their hectic lives of living in East Los Angeles. Food represents tradition and unity through the role of the father, while for the daughters, it represents a rigid institution that provides little room for alteration. When Martín's wife Ana died, he lost his sense of taste and needed to rely on his Cuban friend, Gomez, to taste all of his prize-winning dishes at his restaurant. Since Martín is no longer as active at the restaurant, he spends more time at home taking care of his daughters who cope with a traditional Mexican upbringing in a world where they are eager to venture off and try new things.

For his daughter Leticia, the conservative chemistry teacher, it means breaking from Catholicism and to become a protestant whose prayers are not understood by her father, who at one point asks her "why are you praying so hard?" For Carmen, it means becoming a completely independent business woman ready to compete in what appears to be a "man's" world as she fights to the top and becomes so successful that she doesn't even consult her father about a major purchase of a new condo, something that would never have happened in the "old" world as we gather from Martín's reaction. Finally, for the youngest daughter Maribel, she is the one who embodies "American" (US) youthfulness of wanting to move out of the house with her Brazilian

boyfriend to find out who she is and what it is that she wants to do with her life. The three daughters reach a mutual agreement of “enough is enough” by singing and breaking dishes – two symbolic activities that represent liberation of the culinary umbilical cord that ties them to the traditions of their loveable, but rigid and “old school,” father.

The typical mealtime ritual involves conversation that is frequently interrupted by the phrase “Spanish or English?!?” since Martín doesn’t approve of his daughters code-switching. Another custom is to make announcements, but every time there is one, the family appears to be faltering since the family is no longer as important as the family member’s individuality. This movie shows the painful, but necessary process of assimilation by a Mexican family who lives in the United States. However, in this case, assimilation does not mean forgetting the past; it just means modifying it to the context of the contemporary world. This is most apparent in Carmen’s character as she rejects a job offer at the last minute to take over her father’s restaurant and do what she knows how to do best: run a business and cook hybridized food. She is able to cook foods not typical to Mexican cuisine, like lobster, and make it “Mexican-style” to the point that even her father is willing to accept. Even though *Tortilla Soup* is a “feel-good” type movie that basically has a fairy-tale ending for all the couples, the movie does give us a close view of the cultural negotiations that take place on a daily basis in the households of Mexican-Americans.

Sandra Cisneros also mentions food, not as a constant in her novel, but randomly as she describes foods that were in the street stands in Mexico or some of the foods that they had at home. Her images are almost always filled with mixed emotions, as not everything was something worth remembering:

Breakfast: a basket of *pan dulce*, a Mexican sweet bread; hotcakes with honey; or steak; *frijoles* with fresh *cilantro*; *molletes*; or [...] Because we are sitting outdoors, Mexican

dogs under the Mexican tables. –I can't stand dogs under the table when I'm eating, Mother complains, but as soon as we shoo two away, four other trot over. The smell of diesel exhaust, the smell of somebody roasting coffee, the smell of hot corn *tortillas* along with the *pat-pat* of the women's hands making them, the sting of roasting chiles in your throat and in your eyes [...] Every year I cross the border, it's the same – my mind forgets. But my body always remembers. (18)

For Cisneros, identity is not just about memory; it is also about the senses. It is not a mere game of label and identity politics, it is one of an existence. A union of present and past that Bhabha indicates isn't just based on nostalgia, but is rather necessary to be able to live in the present (10). It doesn't matter if the tacos are repulsive: "*Barbacoa* reminds me too much of that one Sunday I bit into a *taco* and found a piece with hairs on it. What part of the cow head did I get? The ear? The nostril? An eyelash? What disgusted me most was the not knowing" (349).

"Mexicanness"

Cisneros' *Carmelo* is book that unites the past with the present and does so in a way that although sometimes offensive, is just the way it is, or is perceived to be. In her analysis of what Mexican "looks" like, she provides us with a laundry list of differences that basically discard any preconceived notions of the physical connection with "Mexicanness" as she tells some boys who were teasing her for not looking Mexican:

There are the green-eyed Mexicans. The rich blond Mexicans. The Mexicans with the faces of Arab sheiks. The Jewish Mexicans. The big-footed-as-a-German Mexicans. The leftover-French Mexicans. The *chaparrito* compact Mexicans. The Tarahumara tall-as-dessert-saguaro Mexicans. The Mediterranean Mexicans. The Mexicans with

Tunisian eyebrows. The *negrito* Mexicans of the double coasts. The Chinese Mexicans. The curly-haired, freckled-faced, red-headed Mexicans. The jaguar lipped Mexicans. The wide-as-a-Tula-tree-Zapotec Mexicans. The Lebanese Mexicans. Look, I don't know what you're talking about when you say I don't look Mexican. I *am* Mexican. Even though I was born on the U.S. side of the border. (353)

Through a series of generalizations and some truth in the quote mentioned above, Cisneros stays true to her vignette #72 that she titles "Mexican on Both Sides" and a disclaimer to the title: "or *Metiche, Mirona, Titotera, Hocicon* – *en Otras Palabras, Cuentista* – Busybody, Ogler, Liar/Gossip/Troublemaker, Big-Mouth-in Other Words Storyteller." In essence, she describes the physicality traits of the ethnically and racially diverse Mexico. She also calls to attention that in the United States, to be Mexican is related primarily with color, at least on first encounters.

Now on a more on a nationalistic sense, Cisneros writes about how, after watching a soccer match with a Mexican from Mexico team and a Mexican (from the US) team, they started fighting over why the Mexicans (from the US) and their families came to the US. After ending in a fight over this never ending quarrel between two groups who will most likely never see eye to eye, she writes: "the Mexicans from over here more American than anything, and us Mexicans from over there even more Mexican than Zapata. And, well, what more can I tell you? Here I am" (217).

As Rodríguez, Cisneros, Ramos, Bósquez, Villaseñor, Novaro and Ripoll demonstrated, at all levels of discourse on the US-side (and Mexican side for Novaro's Chicana in Tijuana) of the Mexican border, there is a continuous debate on what it means to be Mexican-American, Chican@, Latin@, Mexican or the other terms of the pejorative nature (*pocho, cholo, chango*) that abound in some of their texts. Part of the debate is solved in self-identification, but at the

same time, that self-identification is under the radar of others (such as Richard Rodríguez). In this respect, the way to stay Mexican or keep one's "Mexicanness," involves some degree of maintenance since through time, traditions are usually lost. Not all of the "Anglo-Americans" to which Bósquez referred probably even spoke English two hundred years ago, or even 100 years ago, not to mention their culinary practices, myths, symbols of ethnicity, family heirlooms etc. To that end, what is it that will maintain the culture at the highest level once it is lost in translation in the globalized world that has so many participants oscillating between one identity and another (and possibly *another*)? The answer, "Let's have a parade!" Seriously.

Culture and identity can be consumed in many ways.⁹² In today's society there is cable TV to stay connected to the Mexican *telenovelas* offered on *Univisión* (as Cisneros points out); there are the (*narco*)*corridos* that basically "castrate" the government and revert to a transnational identity that nobody (or no government) can touch, as well as other Mexican musical genres that may appear on *Premios Juventud* or the *Latin Grammy's*; there are books to read the stories of thousands and thousands of migrant journeys and family stories; there are the religious symbols of Mexico at the store in the form of a candle that can indicate that there is still a strong connection with *La Virgen* (de Guadalupe); there are movies to watch in English, Spanish and Spanglish; there are politicians that promote a Mexican-friendly agenda; clubs and organizations that one might join to fight for a cause (Xicanos) or promote "Latino" unity; Mexican food and drink at the local *tiendita*, there are quinceañeras to be celebrated, festivals to attend, and finally, celebrations like Cinco de Mayo.

At first glance, Cinco de Mayo festivities appears nothing more than a Mexican-style fiesta based on food and drinks whereby the local chain stores stock up on hot-selling avocados,

⁹² *Brown is the New Green* (2007) is a documentary that speaks exclusively about consuming identity in the Latino community.

limes, tortilla chips, Coronas (Mexican beer), and tequila to accompany a wide array of margarita mixes. While the may certainly be the case, it is possible that Cinco de Mayo may never achieve a more sophisticated cultural encounter than that for some. In contrast, another reality is that these festivals are growing in economic and cultural importance, as can be seen across the US, not just in the major metropolises of the Southwest and in Chicago and New York. According to Durand and Arias in *La vida en el norte: historia e iconografía de la migración México-Estados Unidos*, one way to maintain a tradition and have migrants get together is to celebrate a “fiesta,” normally of national character, in diaspora, as it also allows for a commemoration without discrimination or distinction of social status (199). The two examples that they provide are Cinco de Mayo to commemorate the Battle of Puebla of 1862 and Mexican Independence Day to celebrate September 16, 1810. The question is, of course, how and what exactly is celebrated on these days, and what role do these celebrations have in constructing and maintaining identity.

My observations for this section are of a personal nature since I attended the Cinco de Mayo celebration on three occasions in the *Distrito del Sol* community of West St. Paul, Minnesota, where locals are encouraged to participate in what is called “La fiesta más caliente de Minnesota” (“Minnesota’s Spiciest Celebration”). The description that the Riverview Economic Development Association that is responsible for the celebration publishes the following description of the festival on their webpage:

The Cinco de Mayo Fiesta in District del Sol on St. Paul's West Side features Entertainment Stages, a Lowrider Car Show, a Children's Area, a Cinco Sports Zone, a Community Wellness Village, a Cinco de Mayo Fiesta Parade, a People's Choice Salsa Tasting Contest, a Photo Contest Area, a History Area, craft vendors, and plenty of

authentic food. We welcome more than 100,000 attendees and we look forward to seeing you in District del Sol! Please take some time to explore our site and learn more about Minnesota's Spiciest Celebration. The links above will help you learn about the many unique and exciting aspects of this one of a kind fiesta! Cinco de Mayo does not celebrate Mexican Independence Day, as many people believe. It marks the anniversary of Mexico's "Battle of Puebla" in 1862 when a fledgling Mexican army defeated the larger, better-equipped invading French forces. Cinco de Mayo festivals throughout the United States honor this historic part of Mexican history, and also celebrate Hispanic/Latino culture and tradition.⁹³

How, then, can a celebration honor the history, culture and tradition of such a diverse group (Mexicans, Latinos, and Hispanics)? How does the dance of the *cascabeleros* coincide with the procession of La Virgen de Guadalupe and a group of bankers from Wells Fargo? Who decides how to organize the event? How will the money be generated? Who gets to participate in the event other than the public? What message is to be disseminated? How will the celebration be advertised? To whom? Why? Will this bring together a community that at times has internal conflicts due to gang activity in the neighborhood or in nearby Minneapolis? Who will decide what *history* will be shown? Is it going to represent all Latinos, Hispanics and Mexicans? How much money will this generate? Who will want to sponsor the event? How will the community react to the event?

These questions raise some very important points when discussing identity and culture and are not necessarily meant to be answered verbatim, but are merely important inquiries that serve as a reflection to an event that is a regionally important display of culture and community.

⁹³ Source <http://www.districtdelsol.com/docroot/cincodemayo.html> (30 July 2011)

If an event of this magnitude has bad publicity or offends a sector of the Latino, Hispanic, Mexican, and/or Mexican-American crowd, what will be the consequences? Canclini helps us understand what these consequences might entail, or at least gives us insight into how culture is no longer produced in a unilateral sort of way:

La evolución de las fiestas tradicionales, de la producción y venta de artesanías, revela que éstas no son ya tareas exclusivas de los grupos étnicos, ni siquiera de sectores campesinos más amplios, ni aun de la oligarquía agraria; intervienen también su organización los ministerios de cultura y de comercio, las fundaciones privadas, las empresas de bebidas, las radios y la televisión. Los hechos culturales folk o tradicionales son hoy el producto multideterminado de actores populares y hegemónicos, campesinos y urbanos, locales, nacionales y transnacionales. [The evolution of traditional festivals, of production and sales of handicrafts, reveals that these are no longer the exclusive work of ethnic groups, nor of the country populace, nor of the agrarian oligarchy; those who also intervene include the Ministry of Culture and Commerce, private foundations, beverage companies, radio stations and TV. The folk or traditional cultural facts are today the multidetermined product of public and hegemonic representatives, country folk and urbanites, locals, nationals, and transnationals.]

(Canclini 205)

This raises the question of *who* has the most influence in determining the leading factors for such an event. It also shows that culture at this level is no longer shown in its “genuine” or “natural” format and that everything recreated may or may not be part of a political, economic, cultural or private agenda.

In the article “America’s Growing Observance of *Cinco de Mayo*,” author Alvar Carlson coins a term to describe this cultural event: “ethnocommercialism.” Carlson recognizes a growing nationwide trend that has seen a substantial increase in festivals due to its growing ethnic diversity. He states that they function as catalyst for tourism purposes, but also acknowledges that these festivals “reinforce an ethnic group’s cultural heritage and identity” (7). Seen in this light, I pause at the word “reinforce” and wonder how and why is “reinforcing” necessary if the traditions are ones that are a part of daily life? As Alvar also states, these festivities are seldom seen in Mexico and can be limited to Puebla and Mexico City (8), while they are well over 100 cities and towns that celebrate it in the US (9).

The answer, simple in one way, and complex in another, is that the festivals in the US, unlike the ones in Mexico, are needed to “consume” an identity that needs “reinforcement.” This is not to say that Mexico doesn’t celebrate its traditions, as that would be completely erroneous, but, as opposed to the Mexican, Mexican-American festivities that occur in the US, there is already a daily coexistence that doesn’t require as much preservation. For Mexican-Americans, the concept of identity for Bahbha is one based on the past-present need of the moment that isn’t based on nostalgia, yet at the same time, we can also inquire as to how much of the past is needed for that relationship and at what point does it become nostalgia? At one point, it becomes a question of different pasts: a more recent one vs. a more distant one. For the more recent past, it is the food, music and celebrations of contemporary Mexico, while for the more distant past, it is indigenous practices and colonial: dances, rituals, foods, language, vestment, and religion.

In regard to festivities, a question that repeatedly comes to mind in the mixing of culture, especially cultural identities and their representations, is how and why do sponsors of transnational corporations (at the West St. Paul *Cinco de Mayo* celebration) like Wells Fargo

(banking), Coca Cola (beverages), Univisión (media), Mc Donalds (food) and others help people “recuperate” their identity? The same scenario is true for national or regional sponsors such as Target (retailer and grocery store), Comcast (internet/TV), Monster Energy Drink (beverages), and more. On the positive side, one would like to think that corporate sponsorships help promote a sense of community, but after further investigation, however, one is able to uncover ulterior motives: marketing. In order to familiarize myself with the topic, I consulted two books, among many, on the topic of business practices with Hispanics: Jim Perkins’ *Beyond Bodegas: Developing a Retail Relationship with Hispanic Customers* (2004) and ed. Elena del Valle’s *Hispanic Marketing & Public Relations: Understanding and Targeting America’s Largest Minority* (2005).

The first question that came to mind was the use of the term Hispanic in both books, as it was the preferred term for all people of a Spanish-speaking origin. Del Valle’s book does address the term Latino, but does so interchangeably throughout the study. In general terms, much like the census of the US, these two books recognize the economic importance and population growth of this population, which is why so much attention has been given to the subject. To reiterate what was said in Chapter One, the goal of a capitalistic system is to continue on the model of increased revenues by way of seeking out new opportunities. Since globalization has impacted and increased global migration and marginalization, and nation-based government leaders are no longer the driving market forces, the transnational corporations now possess the tools needed to take advantage of identity in such a way as to increase revenue and continue on a path towards economic prosperity through capitalism. In essence, living in the transnational corporations era is a two fold process by which first it undermines the power of the state and national identities, increasing instability and fragmentation, and secondly re-

appropriates it through sponsorships at cultural events meant to help “recuperate” identity based on an economic model.

Why, then, did Cinco de Mayo become relevant when it comes to corporate sponsorships for festivals that are nation-based. As Laurie Sommers acknowledges in her article “Symbol and Style in Cinco de Mayo,” in San Francisco (and most likely in other cities), the first years of celebrations of Cinco de Mayo until the latter part of the 1950s involved private dances and celebrations organized at the local level. Today, however, she recognizes three distinct styles represented at Cinco de Mayo festivities which include: *lo mexicano*, the Chicano and the pan-Latino (476). She also states that at the time of the Chicano movement in the 1960s, leaders and organizers were looking for something that would “serve as a focal point for public display on the issues and cultural icons of the Movement,” as they [Chicano leaders] “drew parallels between the colonizing intentions of the French and the internal colonial status of Chicanos at the hands of the latest dominant power, the United States” (478). The latest phase of Cinco de Mayo, then is that of the Pan-Latino. For this tendency, Sommers notes that the new celebrations retain many of the expressive forms of the Chicano style, but in keeping with the new pan-Latino theme, Latin music styles such as *salsa* and *nueva canción* mingle with the requisite mariachi, and one sees *folklóricos* from Central America as well as Mexico.

In summary, what started as a Mexican tradition quickly became a cultural icon for the Chicano movement in showing resistance to European dominance. At the same time, as increased migration took place (and continues to do so), Cinco de Mayo has come to represent a day for all. For this reason, what better celebration is there than this nation-less specific celebration of *Pan-Latinidad* which ultimately reflects the culture and nature of the corporate

world, who implementing the notion of business savvy, is able to take advantage of identity politics for increased profitability.

In order to increase business, Perkins offers several tips for researching Latino customers that range from knowing demographic trends, to engaging in cultural activities such as: joining the local Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, attending a bilingual Catholic church, eating at Mexican, Cuban, Salvadorian and other restaurants, mystery shopping to analyze best business practices and social interactions consulting the internet and other successful companies who have catered to the Hispanic/Latino population (65). In this sense, while companies are being culturally sensitive on the one hand, they are also targeting on the other. One piece of advice that Perkins gives is to “target specific Latino holidays and celebrations” (89). To much the same effect, del Valle’s book speaks explicitly in one section titled “Marketing to Hispanic Children” (22) which addresses the complexity and diversity of this group as opposed to other minority groups.

In any case, culture when used for business becomes a commodity. Not only does the transnational, national, regional and local business take advantage of its profitability, so do the local festival organizers and businesses. In *Beyond Bodegas*, one interview that demonstrates the relationship that local communities have with businesses is with Martha De la Vega, the Associate Director of La Villita Chamber of Commerce in Chicago (Perkins 35). After briefing Perkins on the history of Pilsen and La Villita (the two most prominent Spanish-speaking areas of Chicago), Martha recognizes that big businesses are attracted to the area for the purpose of a financial benefit; however, she also claims that they [Pilsen and La Villita] are also engaged in selling culture (36). Despite frustration with some of the big businesses since they believe the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce should provide instructions for operating in these areas even

though they normally don't operate within the community, many big corporations do sponsor the parade" (36).

One example of a multinational corporation sponsors for the Cinco de Mayo celebration for St. Paul's Distrito del Sol parade was Wells Fargo. Perkins gives an analysis as to the ways in which banks connect to the Hispanic (Latino) community:

Many banks understand the need to cater to the Hispanic consumer. Bank of America has a fully bilingual website. Harris Bank of Chicago has Spanish-language ads, and many other banks are making it more convenient for Hispanics to bank. They have increased their lending for Hispanic businesses and made it easier to transfer money to Mexico. They have introduced new products geared to Latin customers, hired more bilingual employees, and introduced Spanish-language marketing literature and educational programs. They have added Latin-themed décor to their branches and even play appropriate Latin themed music in the background. (83)

Interestingly, the increase in access to transfer money and bilingual services speaks to a community of people who both Del Valle and Perkins view as un-assimilated, or as they preferred to call it, are "un-accultured." At the same time, the different degrees of acculturation deserve different levels of services, such as a more general ambiance-specific décor or music which may be as effect with all audiences, or the use of long benches for kids to wait on since customers frequent certain businesses with their children (Perkins 101). In this manner, Wells Fargo became what Perkins claims to be "one of the first banks to cater to the loan needs of Latinos" (84). For this reason, Wells Fargo has entrenched itself in the cultural festivities of Cinco de Mayo, just as other who are not only willing, but eager to access a growing community through community partnerships who, by attending their cultural fairs, hope to win over their

business by giving away free toys such as telecom company Comcast, or free energy drinks to a social class that is taken advantage of by companies who prey on their work-intensive lifestyles and know that they represent profitability.⁹⁴

In conclusion, Mexican-Americans, Chican@s, and Latin@s represent a complex voice of global citizens who, like those in Northern Mexico, have struggled to break through the cultural hegemony of their respective countries; however, as we have revealed in Chapter 4, marginalization and migration, while part of a reality for both countries, is viewed differently in both countries as the cultural productions have demonstrated in their thematic approach towards history, marginality, memory and the globalized world of cultural consumerism, all of which ultimately affect identity from Ramos' "*México de acá*."

⁹⁴ Here I refer to what I have seen firsthand by migrant farmworkers' consumption of Red Bull and Monster Energy Drinks. It is supposed that they will work faster and be more productive in harvesting crops, for which they are paid in piece work (typical of intensive agricultural practices of produce).

CONCLUSION

Human movement has been a constant throughout history. Each migratory pattern is comprised of varying historical, demographical and geographical traits. In times of war, droves of people have been displaced by means of exile and mass exodus for reasons of persecution or a threat to personal security, while for others, relocation has been attributed to famine, drought, or a dismal economic or political situation. Another category outside of the realm of war and crisis concerns those who are classified as self-exiles based on a conflicting belief system which leads them to leaving their homeland for a new beginning in another land. Whichever may be the case for one's uprootedness, what mostly characterizes the displacement in the present-day context of the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries is a time of intensified global interactions linked to a question of economics as revealed by migrations from Mexico to the US.

In Chapter 1 of this dissertation, we contextualized what it meant to live in a globally connected world defined by Harvey's analysis of the capitalistic characteristics of globalization, Bhabha's consideration of subjects as being "in-between" and "beyond" national identities, as well as Beck, Martín-Barbero, and Canclini's assessment of transnational subjects that have hybridized existences. Likewise, Appadurai's notion of -scapes ultimately illustrated the global landscape for a more comprehensive understanding of the participants and factors pertinent to today's reality: ethnoscaples, technoscapes, financescapes, mediascapes, and ideoscapes. These interwoven concepts have altered the spatial and temporal variations unknown to previous generations and have placed identity at the forefront of a world that remains more connected than ever across borders, oceans and walls.

The spatial and temporal variations have allowed for certain entities, namely large businesses, to thrive at the expense of people, politics and governments. As a topic that has been

at the vanguard of national interest, migratory reform has largely remained at bay since those who benefit, or have too much at stake in the issue, such as politicians or undocumented workers, are unwilling or ineffective in making any significant progress. Regardless of one's position on the matter, the current system criminalizes undocumented migration and allows for people and companies to keep participating in a retrograde policy, or lack thereof, whose victims are the poor.

Since governments and corporations have done little to thwart the demise of the marginalized people and have instead opted for neoliberal policies that, at least in the short-term, appear to be detrimental to rural and impoverished areas in rural areas throughout Mexico, there has been, since the late twentieth century, a steady increase of undocumented workers attempting to cross the border (with the exception of the years of the Great Recession). The economic and political changes invoked by the passage of NAFTA exacerbated the already noticeable asymmetries that existed between Mexico and its northern neighbors (Canada and the US). In this sense, the creation of NAFTA, much like the creation of the European Union or any other entity at a level that no longer considers at a solely national level, has provoked the decentralization of the concept of nation and identity as the marginalized face the prospects of displacement through migration which, in fact, reterritorializes people in a way that they suddenly become subjected to a process of acculturation.

In Chapter 2, the state of Mexico in terms of national and international migration demonstrated the way in which the last two decades have had larger impacts internally on Mexico than other historically relevant periods such as the Mexican-American War, the California Gold Rush, the Mexican Revolution, the *Cristero* Wars, the Great Depression, the Braceros program, the undocumented phase, as well as the Peso Crisis and the passage of

NAFTA in 1994. New participants have evolved due to the militarization of the border region and have converted Northern Mexico into a bastion for migrants, *coyotes*, cheap laborers at the *maquiladoras*, *narcotraficantes*, law enforcement, as well as others. In this sense, the literature of Northern Mexico breaks with Mexico's cultural center and has developed, as seen by novelists Toscana, Crosthwaite and many other writers, into a regionally specific tendency that speaks of the victims, many times woman and children, or in the case of Toscana's novel, the *cirqueros*.

Toscana's novel *Santa María del Circo* showed up how to laugh at a situation that resembles a carnival. His humoristic approach to an anti-religious and anti-patriotic theme is an innovative way of dealing with the pitfalls of migration. In much the same way, Crosthwaite also pokes fun at morbid issues such as the harsh climate of the desert, death, and violence. The film representation from this chapter *Al otro lado* and *La misma luna* exposed the newest victim of global migrations whereby members of the immediate family migrate while they leave the children behind with other relatives.

As a continuation to Chapter 2, Chapter 3 highlighted how the carnivalesque atmosphere of the North is even further intensified in Mexico's border cities. For this contact zone, exposure to a chaotic world of tourists, *maquiladora* workers, rural and urban people from all parts of Mexico (including indigenous regions), English, Spanish, Spanglish, different types of music, and food, has created a new identity based on converging extremes. What is characteristic of this region is a voice that reinterprets Mexicanness from the periphery and highlights its uniqueness in the scheme of Mexican literature. In this chapter, we reviewed two film representations *Babel* and *El jardín del edén* to show how the border affects lives of both sides of the border. From the narrative selection of the chapter, *Idos de la mente*, *Bajo el Puente: relatos desde la frontera* and "La gaviota," we are exposed to the crude realities of border towns. These novelists narrate the

daily lives of the people with an aesthetics that mimics orality typical of the northern border region. As the protagonists carry on with their daily routines, the reader is immediately transported to the cantina, the cabaret, the border bridge, and the streets of Tijuana and Ciudad Juárez. As the geography along the border region is described, the more one comes accustomed to the idea that the architecture, daily activities and interactions are as important as the protagonists themselves.

In the Chapter 4, we establish that borderlands are not always represented in the same way. Although the work of Mexican-Americans preserves a connection with Mexico and divulges a transnational characteristic, their cultural productions are tied to a national reality of residing outside of actual Mexico. In this sense, both film and literary productions are preoccupied with themes seldom touched by Mexicans in Mexico: nostalgia and an affirmation of Mexicanness, for example. Even though transnational possibilities to maintain ties with Mexico exist by way of television, computers, food, music, newspapers and travels, Mexican-Americans, Chican@a, and Latin@s deal with being part of a larger cohort of people that are in constant need for affirming an identity that is threatened by normal processes of acculturation and assimilation whereby one loses language skills and acquires a new way of living as we saw in the film *Tortilla Soup*. In the narrative selections from Sandra Cisneros, Victor Villaseñor, Richard Rodríguez and Mario Bósquez, we were able to see how the voice of Mexican-Americans varies greatly as it negotiates the present in terms of the past as Bhabha notes in his statement that this does not refer to nostalgia, but rather a necessary aspect to go about daily life being that they live, according to Gustavo Pérez Firmat, on the hyphen.

The final point of Chapter 4 was the role of a celebration like Cinco de Mayo in regard to identity politics. As a well-rooted celebration in the history of the United States and Mexico,

Cinco de Mayo has developed into festivities meant to rekindle a relationship with Mexico, at least for a day. In order to help a person do so, there are several corporate and transnational business sponsors that, in all actuality, are part of those responsible for causing migration to take place in the first place due to the global inequities caused by their business practices. By targeting culture, they are also manipulating it and incorrectly prescribe to fix notions that, although culturally sensitive in their eyes, can be harmful, hurtful or erroneous, hence perpetuating stereotypes that are antiquated and not really a part of Mexican culture, but a perceived Mexican or Mexican-American culture built on myths.

This dissertation contemplated globalizations effect on identity: the creation of new ones, and the divisions and fragmentation of old ones. Northern Mexico and Mexican-American cultural productions reflect transnational realities that speak of the scale of migration's effect on both nations, but their way in achieving a voice to articulate this is different due to their proximity to the border and the country in which they reside. Even though we live in an era of dwindling nation-based identities, the fact that identity still has a base in the idea of nation is virtually inescapable. However, as Toscana, Crosthwaite, Bósquez and Cisneros narrate their ideas, we find that it is possible to do so in a lighthearted way, even in times of displacement and marginalization. The following two questions serve as further investigations in an area that will stay prevalent for years to come: 1) How do corporations, churches, political leaders and other special-interest groups take advantage of the identity and ethnicity to cater to an audience that can have its cultural needs met, at least in part, by the law of supply and demand where the supply can be any product associated with identity such as food and drink, music, faith, dance, newspapers, magazines, event sponsorships, art, vehicles, and even telecommunications, while the demand is transnational diaspora culture that seeks to maintain ties to the homeland through

the recreation of certain conditions and the omission of others? And , 2) how do diverse cultural mediums achieve different goals? For instance, if a (narco)corrido is the subversive expression of popular culture, what, then, is the goal for a celebration like Cinco de Mayo? Do Cinco de Mayo celebrations also subvert hegemonic culture? Do they achieve this differently? In what way does it challenge nationalism and the concept of “nation”? Do both expressions carry out a “transnational” tendency? What is the future for these mediums and what will be other future forms of expression that could function in the same manner? What will be the role of the institutions (government and private) in relation with popular culture?

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