

“1848 Beyond the 19th Century: Border Fictions, Peripheral Modernities”

Gibran Escalera

A dissertation

submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Washington

2015

Reading Committee:

Monika Kaup, Co-Chair

Gillian Harkins, Co-Chair

Robert Abrams

Jessica Burstein

Program Authorized to Offer Degree:

English

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Gibran Escalera

University of Washington

Abstract

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Gibran Escalera

Co-Chairs of the Supervisory Committee:
Associate Professor Monika Kaup
English
Associate Professor Gillian Harkins
English

This dissertation analyzes 20th and 21st century border fictions that recreate the meaning of 1848 by disrupting the legacies of colonial modernity, in particular the territorial preoccupation of U.S. expansionism. The dissertation demonstrates that while the consequent border asymmetries have since dictated material formations and social imaginaries of the U.S.-Mexico border these are also challenged via what the dissertation names “trans-temporality.” This term refers to the crucial difference between the border deployed by colonial modernity in terms of a territory to be seized and administered, replete with its own unitary and self-affirming temporality, versus the ways that local border communities imagine and experience time. In order to make this argument, the dissertation reads counter-narratives that are border adaptations of four major modern literary formations, modernism, *neopoliciaco* detective fiction, postmodern metafiction and neorealism. The stakes in doing so are not only that these distinct re-

conceptualizations of 1848 result in unique border adaptations of mainstream literary styles but also how these create the possibility of examining the non-territorial dimensions of space.

In arguing for the significance of 1848 in the present within the context of the literary, this dissertation builds on and moves beyond the Chicano/a nationalist and post-nationalist fiction and scholarship, which pioneered the anti-colonial critique of 1848 by re-imagining the annexed territories as the Chicano/a homeland Aztlán. Further, this dissertation engages borderlands criticism, in particular Debra Castillo and María Socorro Tabuenca Córdoba, Claire Fox, and Jaime Javier Rodríguez. Significantly, the dissertation's contribution is developed by fully exploring the link between the anti-colonial critique of the legacy of 1848 and literary style. Specifically, the dissertation demonstrates that an interrogation of the colonialist logic underpinning the U.S.-Mexico border can actually be gleaned through an analysis of modern fiction. The dissertation shows that the selected border fictions are not only counter-narratives to the U.S. expansionist narrative but in fact generate new aesthetics. This process is revealed through comparative analyses between borderlands fiction—that is written by U.S. and Mexican-American authors—and *fronterizo* texts, written in and about Northern Mexico.

Chapter One examines border modernism by comparing two works that narrate the clash between projects of colonial modernity, imperial modernization, and *mexicano* anti-colonial revolutions of the 1910s, John Dos Passos's *The 42nd Parallel* (1930) and Américo Paredes's *George Washington Gómez* (1990). In *George Washington Gómez*, set in a small-scale border region (South Texas), the conflict is between agricultural modernization and traditional border corrido culture, resulting in sharply defined inter-ethnic conflict. Conversely, in *The 42nd Parallel* the focus is hemispheric. Mexico appears as central rather than peripheral to the U.S. as its modernizing project undergoes a qualitative and geographic shift towards trans-American

scale, defined as much by imperial economic hierarchies as by cartography. Linking these texts is border modernism's adaptation of modernist representational techniques, in particular shifting narrative modes and non-chronological structures.

Chapter Two examines Gabriel Trujillo Muñoz's *neopoliciaco* detective fiction *Mezquite Road* (1995) and "Tijuana City Blues" via what this dissertation terms the "Neo-Private Eye:" a product of the neoliberal border setting of the late 1990s, who is not an autonomous detective but rather a figure for the grassroots pursuit of justice and its necessarily conditional relationship to the neoliberal blurring of the private-public dichotomy. *Neopoliciaco* border fiction thus challenges the core dichotomy of neoliberalism that private interest is the highest public good. In addition to exposing the state as a criminal apparatus the border *neopoliciaco*'s critique of ratiocination counters the legacies of 1848 by showing how border asymmetries are as much a question of discourse and policy as they are territory. By detailing the private eye Morgado's investigation of fifties era urban legends, "Tijuana City Blues" foregrounds how the discursive ruse that private individualism is the highest public good effectively re-produces the border beyond the purely territorial. If "Tijuana City Blues" critiques economic progress narratives, *Mezquite Road* shows how U.S. and Mexican state law enforcement agencies protect and thus sustain neoliberal ideologies. By delineating the complex network of state agencies and border citizens in Mexicali, *Mezquite Road* illuminates how the persistence of the border as a state-sanctioned, and thus legal, geopolitical divider is reinforced, paradoxically, by flouting the law.

Chapter Three analyzes *Instrucciones para cruzar la frontera* (2011) in which Luis Humberto Crosthwaite adapts the postmodern strategies of parody, metafiction and pastiche in order to show how the normalization of borders as unobstructed transit points conceals the racialized logic of securing border zones. Using the array of strategies noted above, the chapter

shows that while the text portrays conditions in which the geographic space of multinational capital is flattened out and borders are less barriers than metaphors, it does so in the service of a historical critique. Thus the accent falls on border in “border postmodernism” not only because, as important as it is, Crosthwaite’s text emphasizes the difficulties of south-to-north crossing from the perspective of *Tijuanenses*. Rather, it is the way in which the metafictional strategies in *Instrucciones para cruzar la frontera* mediate a historical context where the very presence of human life is perceived as a threat so imminently real, however imagined it may be in reality, that capital punishment actually becomes a rational measure precisely because of the U.S. claim to “security.”

Chapter Four analyzes the use of neorealism in Paul Flores’s *Along the Border Lies* (2001) and Ana Castillo’s *The Guardians* (2007) to show that analyses of border violence are flawed in perceiving the U.S.-Mexico borderline as a stable territorial referent. In defining neorealism, the dissertation draws on Kris Versluys, who identifies “mimetic prose” and “verisimilitude” as characteristic features, as well as Robert Rebein, who emphasizes the centrality of character experience. Specifically, the dissertation shows how the historical circumstances of border militarization and narco-trafficking are mediated by each text’s implementation of the neorealist lack of closure in order to critique geographically based explanations of border violence. In *Along the Border Lies*, narco-trafficking occurs between San Diego and Tijuana, yet as the text foregrounds this traffic is less about physical borders than the non-spatial dimensions of border violence, registered stylistically through multi-perspectival narrative accounts. By rendering the character experience of drug trafficking on an increasingly militarized border without resolving a single plotline, the text suggests that border violence cannot be plotted exclusively through geography. Similarly, *The Guardians* portrays a series of

abductions in the borderlands of New Mexico, Texas and Cd. Juárez. The difference however is that resistance to closure is not about unresolved plotlines but a limited interpretive capacity. By constructing an imagined world inhabited by characters where the object of their description, abduction, is in excess of their descriptive and analytic capacity, Castillo suggests an alternative vocabulary with which to revisit the paradigm that border violence is intertwined at both the individual and state levels.

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Introduction: The Futures of 1848 in the 20th and 21st Century

This dissertation focuses on the material and discursive consequences of 1848 beyond the 19th century. Ratified in 1848, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo today constitutes the “oldest active treaty still in force between the United States and Mexico” (Griswold del Castillo “Treaty”). In addition to establishing the border as a geopolitical divider, the Treaty inaugurated the conditions for what this dissertation names “trans-temporality.” This latter term refers to the way in which this local site-specific border stages the conflict between the various articulations of colonial modernity, and its Anglocentric conception of historical time, versus the peripheral modernities of distinct communities displaced by perpetually imposed boundaries. While the term “peripheral modernity” is informed by a diverse scholarship, in this dissertation it specifically refers to the varied counterhegemonic iterations of the modern along the U.S.-Mexico border.¹ In arguing for trans-temporality as a process that registers a series of border asymmetries in a socioeconomic sense, in addition to the unevenness of and disjuncture between historicities, this dissertation invokes the work of Enrique Dussel. Specifically, Dussel’s critical vocabulary is useful in its elaboration of the concept “trans-modernity.” In contrast to the Eurocentric developmental paradigm that postmodernity is the natural successor to modernity, Dussel’s alternative conception provides a mode of accounting for the experience of non-Western people and places. If, according to Dussel, postmodernity emerges “from within” Eurocentric modernity, trans-modernity, on the other hand, “affirms ‘from without’ the essential components of modernity’s own excluded cultures in order to develop a new civilization for the 21st century” (224).² Following this lead, the dissertation theorizes the concept of trans-temporality to show how 1848 signals not only the United States’s largest territorial acquisition but also the start of Mexican-American history. Moreover, this dissertation makes the case that

the trans-temporal dimensions of the Treaty, and the border it authorizes and deploys, must complement analyses of its clearly territorially focused articles. As is demonstrated below, the language of the Treaty, as well as scholarship regarding it, reductively overemphasizes space in a manner that leaves unattended the logic underpinning Manifest Destiny. Undeniably, the ideology of Manifest Destiny is at the core of U.S. expansionism, given its formulation that the single most important locus of power is the claim to and control over space. Furthermore, within the terms of Manifest Destiny, the appropriation of and movement across physical territory is concurrent with advances in historical time. Indeed, theorizing the way in which “‘Time’ became a fundamental concept of coloniality at large,” Walter Mignolo writes that “Geography [is] translated into chronology by the masters of historical time, and time [is] transformed into a colonizing device” (69). Within a U.S. context, the fundamental premise of colonial modernity is that territorial space, in this particular case the U.S.-Mexico border, is a discernible object only by positing U.S. hegemonic formations as the central axis from which all other spatial and temporal coordinates are determined. It is precisely this hegemonic construction of the U.S.-Mexico border as both the ideal and the actualization of Manifest Destiny that this dissertation interrogates. As this dissertation shows, this reliance on spatiality by the Treaty and its subsequent legal and social interpretations constitutes the bedrock of a paradigm which serves as the basis for both historical and contemporary material formations and social imaginaries on and of the U.S.-Mexico border.

This dissertation examines 20th and 21st century border fictions that rearticulate and recreate the meaning of 1848. The overarching claim of this dissertation is that the selected narratives, which variously narrate the legacies of 1848, challenge the status of the U.S.-Mexico border as an episteme. They constitute distinct types of counter-narratives to the U.S.

expansionist narrative underpinning 1848, thus generating new frameworks with which to conceive it. As this dissertation shows the selected primary works are unique border adaptations of four conventional 20th century literary styles (modernism, *neopoliciaco*, postmodernism and neo-realism). Further, as is demonstrated in this project, their modern counter-narratives to 1848 are generated by linking the gesture of taking 1848 beyond the 19th century to a critical appropriation of mainstream literary styles.

By the term “taking 1848 outside its immediate historical context,” the dissertation refers to the different modes by which the texts assembled recycle, refract, and recreate the array of semantic meanings made available in a counter-reading of the language of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and its larger trans-temporal legacy of colonial modernity on the border, which is demonstrated below using Michel Foucault’s concept of “truth regimes.” This is not to suggest that the articles of the Treaty are sequentially transcribed in each subsequent analysis of fictions on and about the border, but that the distinct fictional modes examined in this project variously reconfigure and re-conceptualize 1848. Moreover, by reading the texts as narrative instances that mediate the Treaty’s plural meanings, the dissertation demonstrates how the Treaty continues to frame contemporary discourses of geography (in terms of landscape), territory (in terms of national domain), historicity (that is to say dominant history versus local myth and folklore), and futurity (post-NAFTA progress narratives). Further, with the objective to provide accounts from both north and south in mind the dissertation examines both borderlands and *fronterizo* literature: borderlands literature designates the work of U.S. authors—including Mexican Americans—whereas *fronterizo* literature refers to the texts by writers from Northern Mexico. Before illustrating precisely how border styles recreate and re-conceptualize 1848 it is necessary to explicate the language of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

In its final form, the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was offered as a “Treaty of Peace, Friendship, Limits, and Settlement.”³ Articles I-IV communicate the cessation of warfare and protocol for the withdrawal of troops. While the title of the Treaty’s first two terms, “Peace” and “Friendship,” are simply diplomatic rhetoric, a fact clearly borne out by the history of conflict between the two nations, this dissertation’s point of departure is that the latter two warrant further clarification precisely because of their double meaning. On one level “limits” and “settlement” function as cartographic terms in signifying the treaty’s emphasis on mapping geographic space. Article V is crucial in this regard as it delineates, in no shortage of detail, the parameters of the U.S.-Mexico border: “The boundary line between the two Republics shall commence in the Gulf of Mexico, three leagues from land, opposite the mouth of the Rio Grande, otherwise called Rio Bravo del Norte, or Opposite the mouth of its deepest branch...” Syntactically the article proceeds in this manner, as concatenation, until finally declaring that the endpoint of the aforementioned boundary line is “the Pacific Ocean.” Articles VI through XIX are equally attentive to controlling and regulating territory, specifying that all rivers in the newly acquired lands are freely navigable to U.S. citizens (VI), and that “merchandise” transported via these waterways shall not be taxed without mutual consent (VII). Moreover, this pattern, in terms of prolixity and a focus on geography, is maintained in articles eight and nine. Thus the eighth article announces, “Mexicans now established in territories previously belonging to Mexico, and which remain for the future within the limits of the United States, as defined by the present treaty, shall be free to continue where they now reside, or to remove at any time to the Mexican Republic, retaining the property which they possess in the said territories...” In addition to the promise of land rights, which were never fully realized, Article IX grants the constitutional privileges of national self-identification by stating: “The Mexicans who, in the territories

aforesaid, shall not preserve the character of citizens of the Mexican Republic, conformably with what is stipulated in the preceding article, shall be incorporated into the Union of the United States, and be admitted at the proper time (to be judged of by the Congress of the United States) to the enjoyment of all the rights of the citizens of the United States, according to the principles of the Constitution...” The stipulation in this article is that the Treaty functions transnationally not only as a mode of power but as the basis for civic identity. Hence according to this last claim the abstraction of national belonging, especially tenuous for Mexican natives-turned-foreigners in the annexed territories, is ostensibly thus cemented purely by the U.S. claim to territory. However, while universal citizenship is the declared intent the literary and historical analyses in this dissertation prove otherwise.

To be sure, scholarship emphasizing the consequences of the Treaty in terms of territory is abundant. In his influential study *Occupied America* (1980), which constitutes a landmark in the scholarly counter-narrative of 1848, Chicano historian Rodolfo Acuña writes, “[a]s a result of the Texas War and the Anglo-American aggressions of 1845-1848, the occupation of conquered territory began.” “In material terms, in exchange for 12,000 lives and more than \$100 million,” continues Acuña, “the United States acquired a colony two and a half times as large as France, containing rich farmlands and natural resources” as well as “ports on the Pacific” which “generated further economic expansion” (20). Elsewhere, Richard Griswold del Castillo observes that territory continued to be a primary concern even after the ratification of the Treaty: “[a]mbiguities and errors in the treaty led to boundary disputes, a near renewal of warfare, and the drafting of another treaty, in 1854, that ceded even more territory to the United States” (43). As Holden and Zolov note, this latter treaty, known as the Gadsden Purchase, or *Tratado de Mesilla*, involved the sale of “30,000 square miles of land, the Mesilla Valley, now part of

southern Arizona and New Mexico” (31). Moreover, “The property guarantees of the treaty,” state Raat and Brescia, “continue to shape the lives of the descendants of those Mexicans and Indians who suddenly found themselves residing north of the newly established border in 1848” (82). In regards to the Treaty, therefore, the primary unit of analysis is geographic space. No doubt an emphasis should be placed on the United States’s massive land acquisition, however, as this dissertation asserts, not at the cost of the Treaty’s equally significant but non-spatial dimensions.

While “Limits” and “Settlement” register cartographically there is an alternate level at which they operate as a series of meanings beyond the territorial. This alternate process of signification occurs within the literary, and in particular via fiction that mediates historical contexts in which the U.S.-Mexico border is materially and/or discursively consolidated in a manner that is evocative of, yet distinct from, the foundational act of border-making in 1848. In other words, fiction written from both north and south of the line provides a lens through which to critique contemporary practices of border-making. Furthermore, it is precisely this history of re-producing the border through which its status as a naturalized truth, or episteme, is open to interrogation; if the border were an objective reality, as legal and social interpretations of the Treaty suggest, there would be no need to fortify and reinforce it. Therefore, to return to a key term, Northern Mexican and borderlands fiction work to foreground the trans-temporality of the border and the Treaty through which this geopolitical divide is legitimized. However, to clarify, trans-temporal does not simply mean that the Treaty’s “property guarantees” “continue to shape” modern life at the U.S.-Mexico border. Actually, as Raat and Brescia note, the ownership of disputed territory is determined not by “Hispanic property law” but by “Anglo common law” (82-83). Thus, despite being written as a binational agreement, the Treaty presupposes the U.S.

as the final arbiter of its interpretation. As a result, even though nominally the Treaty ‘continues to shape’ the lives of non-White claimants, in practice these claims are not legally recognized; the Treaty thus is all but obsolete for them and in this sense its present day articulation is muted. In this regard, “Limits” and “Settlement” assume an entirely different set of meanings outside of their territorial definition: for instance they might signify the limits of where one culture ends and another emerges; the contest between histories settled through imperial force and those latent beneath the surface; the ontological state where identity is defined through opposition, and so on.

Viewed from this alternate perspective, and read with these semantic ambiguities in mind, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo is a fundamentally discursive act which functions on behalf of regimes of truth well after its inception in 1848. Michel Foucault elaborates that “régime of truth” refers to “the types of discourses” that are accepted and which function as “true.” “Truth” in the modern era, Foucault crucially adds, is always “centred on the form of scientific discourse and the institutions which produce it” (131).⁴ Further, he conceptualizes “truth” as “a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements.” Moreover, the hypothesized “régime of truth” is “not merely ideological or superstructural” but “a condition of the formation and development of capitalism” (133). Thus Foucault’s term has a threefold significance: the way in which certain epistemologies attain the status of inviolable facts precisely because they are derived empirically; that these ‘facts,’ or epistemes as he names them, pervade the way in which humans order and see the world; and that despite operating discursively these epistemes find concrete expression in distinct capitalist formations. In regards to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, its interpretation by U.S. courts historically favors Whites; in terms of scholarship, if read purely as a question of territory the Treaty is sublimated into a framework which privileges a U.S. perspective. As a

result, the Treaty is subtended by and produces U.S.-centric epistemologies of space and time. Further, these epistemologies govern popular imaginaries of the U.S.-Mexico border; and in turn socioeconomic initiatives to modernize this border, whether as free-trade policies or militarization protocols, are aided and abetted by these imaginaries.

While there is an existing body of research on 1848, this dissertation builds on and departs from it in order to generate new understandings of the U.S.-Mexico border's varied forms of appearance. As is well-known, 1848 was first taken up in the 1960s as the basis for a mythopoetics of Chicano nationalist identity through the concept of Aztlán. By designating the land ceded to the U.S. in 1848 "Aztlán," the Chicano Civil Rights movement provided a viable counter-narrative to the ideologies of U.S. expansionism and Manifest Destiny in symbolically reclaiming the territories annexed in 1848 as the Chicano "homeland." The watershed moment in this history is the 1969 National Chicano Youth Liberation Conference, which produced the seminal document "El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán," written by the Mexican-born poet Alurista, and that ultimately became the preamble to a four-part resolution.⁵ Part poem and part manifesto, "El Plan" linked Mexican Americans to their indigenous heritage and the mythology of a pre-conquest ancestral homeland of the Nahua known as Aztlán. In the language of militant agrarianism the plan asserts, "Aztlán belongs to those who plant the seeds, water the fields, and gather the crops and not to the foreign Europeans. We do not recognize capricious frontiers on bronze continents...[W]e are Aztlán." This declaration is an incendiary rhetorical maneuver that dramatically alters the status of Mexican Americans in relation to lands lost to the U.S. in 1848: from being immigrants and illegitimate latecomers to U.S.-owned territories, they become legitimate natives with ties of belonging to the land that predate those of Anglo-Americans, who in turn are figured as invaders. Aztlán is an anti-colonial cultural mythology that renounces the

second-class citizenship of Mexican-Americans that is rooted in the colonial circumstances of their incorporation in 1848. As Luis Leal writes, “El Plan” “is important because in it the Chicano recognizes his Aztec origins...because it established that Aztlán is the Mexican territory ceded to the United States in 1848; and because, following one of the basic ideas of the Mexican Revolution, it recognizes that the land belongs to those who work it” (11).

Following its creation, and while serving as the catalyst for political mobilization, the Chicano myth of Aztlán would become a key trope in Mexican-American aesthetic production: several pioneering works of the new Chicano literature emerging in the 1970s were organized around the claim to Aztlán.⁶ In the 1980s and 1990s, as Chicano nationalism was subjected to a post-nationalist—feminist and queer—critique, the concept of Aztlán-as-nation was challenged and critically revised. Thus, in her landmark call for a “consciousness of the Borderlands” Gloria Anzaldúa rejected the singular and masculinist conception of Chicano cultural nationalism (99). Instead, Anzaldúa argued, a transformative politics is realizable only by including previously excluded groups, particularly mestiza and queer populations, and taking seriously their “political and artistic contributions” (106). Following Anzaldúa, and recognizing the “institutionalized heterosexism” of “Chicano nationalism,” Cherríe Moraga asserted that “any movement to decolonize” Chicano people “must be culturally and sexually specific” (226). Thus, “‘queer’ Aztlán,” her term for a newly reconfigured imagined community, represents “a nation strong enough to embrace a full range of racial diversities, human sexualities, and expressions of gender” (235).⁷

In *Mythohistorical Interventions: The Chicano Movement and its Legacies*, Lee Bebout convincingly maps out the ways in which nationalist myths of Aztlán as well as later post-nationalist critiques have variously rewritten 1848. This dissertation extends the inquiry of 20th

and 21st century counter-narratives of 1848 and their attendant revisionist border-making practices by analyzing concurrent efforts that are informed by but also distinct from Chicano/a nationalist and post-nationalist periods and disciplinary imperatives. In order to do so, this dissertation first expands the frame of reference to include trans-border north-south comparisons between borderlands and Northern Mexican narratives. Additionally, with the objective to broaden the field of analysis as a guiding principle, the literary archive transitions from the modernist period to the late 20th and early 21st century. Thus, while the dissertation remains politically committed to the anti-colonial impulse in rewriting the border, the iconography of which until recently has most commonly been linked to the Chicano concept of Aztlán, the emphasis is not on 1848 as the ideological framework undergirding the liberation mythologies central to Chicano/a civil rights movements. Instead, the focus is on the way in which 1848 is stylistically adapted and therefore reconfigured within the context of the literary.

In addition to constituting the most recent scholarship on border writing, the critical demand for a trans-border archive is central to this dissertation due to its inclusion of previously excluded Mexican authors and by extension the development of new literary histories. As this body of scholarship demonstrates, the timeline of literary production on and about the border can no longer be restricted to the Chicano Civil Rights movement or the post-nationalist critiques this moment engendered. Among the many trans-border studies currently in circulation, this dissertation draws on Debra Castillo and María Socorro Tabuenca Córdoba's *Border Women: Writing from la frontera*, given its focus on the array of unique and contemporary fictional modes authored by writers below the border.⁸ Castillo and Córdoba convincingly show that analyses of the U.S.-Mexico border are perpetually inhibited by the tendency to privilege U.S. scholarship as well as the prevailing Mexican centrist discourses regarding Mexico's northern

border regions. “Despite numerous elements that would seem to suggest the affinity between U.S. and Mexican border theories and literatures,” they argue, “the asymmetry between the U.S. and Mexico also marks the difference between the two cultural projects” (6). For Castillo and Córdoba, this asymmetry is set within a 1980s context. However, as is demonstrated below, it is more accurate to think of the north-south asymmetry as one of the many effects of colonial modernity. Nevertheless, following their lead in tracking border asymmetries is productive in that it illuminates how these effects are not only economic-political imbalances between the two states, but are also manifested within a literary context such that “writing the border” is mainly a northern project. Further, they state, “the rising trend of Chicana/o based border theory has effectively captured the bulk of critical attention” (5). The issue in this sense is that even when analyzed from the position of Chicana/o scholarship the “geopolitical border” is reduced to a theoretical abstraction. As they observe in their study, scholars such as Claire Fox are currently working to interrogate and revise the tendency that “the border that is currently in vogue in the United States, both among Chicano/a scholars and among those theorists working on other cultural differences is rarely site-specific” (12). At the same time, however, it is important to recognize how the border’s persistence beyond the 19th century can also be enacted through non-material means, as is demonstrated in Chapter One’s analysis of John Dos Passos. Thus, in deploying it this dissertation does not equate the term “site-specific” with “physicality” but instead refers to the fact that the border’s form of appearance in discourse, refracted via border fictions, exists in a conditional relationship to the particularities of time and place. In addition to a lack of site-specificity, within the context of Mexico, its northern region is often misconstrued as a homogeneous zone whose literary output is at best secondary to supposedly more authentic and representative texts from Mexico’s national center (Castillo and Córdoba 19, 24).

Ultimately, Castillo and Córdoba provide a framework which urges recognizing the fact that modern literary production on the border is a transnational if uneven process. The critical demand to rethink the archive and periodization of the border can also be located in Jaime Javier Rodríguez's *The Literatures of the U.S.-Mexican War: Time, Narrative, and Identity*, focusing on the subject of nations and the various narratives by which they are sustained. Specifically, Rodríguez reads texts focused on the U.S.-Mexico war in order to contend that writing about 1848 both disturbs 19th century U.S. nationalism, which he argues persists in the present day albeit configured differently, as well as anticipates the increasingly global subjectivities of contemporary Mexican-Americans. Further, according to Rodríguez, analyzing texts about the war provides a model with which to make sense of present-day "anti-Mexican sentiment." War fiction, claims Rodríguez, is a "hermeneutic" which illuminates that "Mexican Americans endure discrimination...because they are walking, talking proof that the United States, like other nation-states, depends on an ephemeral, always evolving yet still vital national fiction, and what this approaches is the envisioning of Mexican Americans as global avatars" (6).

While the argument of this dissertation is informed by the trans-border scholarship referenced above there are key distinctions that must be highlighted. Due to the fact that the texts analyzed by Castillo and Córdoba range from 1982 to 1996, they read the 1985 Programa Cultural de las Fronteras as the crucial historical moment in their study during which the Mexican government commissioned a "nationalization" effort via "cultural projects," the outcomes of which included the proliferation of northern border literature (19). To be sure, the border literature "boom," as they term it, must be set within an historical context. Yet this historicization must be dynamic enough to recognize both the "singularity of events" and the fact that these are embedded within a broader discontinuous series of socio-historical "emergences":

the border boom of the 1980s and '90s is singular in that it makes immediate the concerns of its material present. However, accounts of this fiction cannot overlook that such efforts to nationalize the border are intertwined with earlier patterns of border-making practices (237).⁹ Otherwise a potential outcome of such periodization is the transmission of a naturalized conception of the border. In this regard, despite the fact that Castillo and Córdoba conscientiously advocate site-specific analyses of the border their work risks presupposing the complex historical production of the border itself. Further, if the border is critically reproduced as a self-evident reality the vast lifeworlds which their selected texts depict are circumscribed by a normative historical frame of reference; they can exist only in relation to a reified border imposed onto them instead of one which is continually negotiated. By contrast, this dissertation argues that even what appear to be the most avant-garde renderings of the border from both Mexico and the U.S. mediate its inception in 1848 as a promissory contract as well as the asymmetries it realized and the set of discourses it engendered. Furthermore, whereas Castillo and Córdoba's analysis of trans-border fiction is situated within a 1980s context of nationalization and pre-NAFTA decentralization, this dissertation examines border fiction in order to argue that such re-consolidations of the border are actually modern day variations of a broader and shifting set of the terms of colonial modernity. Additionally, given that the majority of "short stories and fragmentary texts" they read are published in the 1990s, the account of style they provide is synoptic in comparison to this dissertation's construction of an extended analysis of the forms of border fiction (4). If Castillo and Córdoba realize their trans-border project by reading contemporary fiction, Rodríguez does so mainly by emphasizing 19th century texts. Indeed, this focus is true of all but the final chapter of his study, in which he reflects on 20th century works. Moreover, according to Rodríguez, the unifying element across these texts is

“narratological,” which persists in his study as less a defined term than an implied concept. That is to say, this term is used not in the sense referring to a text’s organization of formal properties and their meaning-making capacities, but in a more general fashion designating a text’s theme or “narrative.” Consequently, given that the critical vocabulary retains a cursory rather than specialized sense, accounts of the study’s key topics, identity and globalization, are primarily suggestive. Unlike the account of 1848 via an exploration of dime novels and sensationalistic literature, a lead first pursued by Shelley Streeby and later adapted by Rodríguez, this dissertation argues that the imperialist logic underpinning the establishment of the U.S.-Mexico border in 1848, as well as the technologies by which it was realized and that continue to circulate in the present day, can actually be gleaned through an analysis of modern fiction. As this dissertation illustrates, 20th and 21st century works—ostensibly far removed from 1848 as the crucial moment of border-making—are actually bound up in it thematically and stylistically. In order to demonstrate how foregrounding 1848 is central to the development of unique border-based styles it is necessary to define this latter term.

This dissertation conceptualizes style as the peculiarity of authorial language and its use in creating narrative structures which mediate the lifeworlds of borderlands and Northern Mexican communities. In this regard, style names a set of representational strategies that refer both to technique in the formal sense in addition to the social imaginaries made possible in and through fiction. Furthermore, this dissertation posits that the many border styles examined below are not enacted in the service of political or social programmes. Instead, they refract the myriad experiences of those for whom daily life is defined by the confrontation between their own local and unique border realities versus the imposition of epistemes, and the materialities to which they give expression, on the border. In thus defining style, this argument departs from an earlier

model of criticism, namely, the work of Fredric Jameson. Jameson's landmark study, *Postmodernism; or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, is no doubt a touchstone for analyses of aesthetic and cultural development. However, his thesis regarding the interrelationship between aesthetics, on the one hand, and multinational capital as a global system, on the other, warrants critical revision. According to Jameson, "[w]hat has happened is that aesthetic production today has become integrated into commodity production generally," resulting in an epoch in which "postmodern culture is the internal and superstructural expression of a whole new wave of American military and economic domination throughout the world" (4, 5). In this line of thinking, because commodification suffuses the world and its circuits of aesthetic production, "style" is 'increasingly unavailable' or more dramatically "fall[s] along" completely (16, 15). There can be no denying the force of global capital. Yet, as many scholars convincingly demonstrate, the intertwined dynamics of modernity, modernization and globalization are neither homogenizing, however uniform their modes of appearance may seem, nor coeval.¹⁰

In contrast to Jameson's declarations on style, this dissertation adapts the version offered by Derek Attridge. Style exists, writes Attridge, in the sense that literary works of art constitute "a performance in which the authored singularity, alterity, and inventiveness of the work as an exploitation of the multiple powers of language are experienced and affirmed" (136). The crucial pivot in Attridge's formulation is not that a work exhibits an original quality, what he terms "singularity," or that this newly singular work is "other" to what previously existed (hence "alterity") but the way in which these elements coalesce in the instance that style is "performed," both in the act of its construction and the experiences of reading it engenders. Therefore, rather than designating a cosmetic uniqueness individual to this or that work, style refers to the way in which an author's selective and ordered use of language changes the way of seeing the world in

question. Moreover, given the vital role of style and the historical interventions it is argued that border styles perform, the critical vocabulary of James Wood also informs this dissertation. The “novelist,” Wood states, “is always working with at least three languages.” “There is the author’s own language, style, perceptual equipment, and so on,” he writes, “there is the character’s presumed language, style, perceptual equipment, and so on; and there is what we would call the language of the world” (34, 35). As a point of clarification, not all the texts examined in this project are novels, yet Wood’s insight on both the layers of fictional language within a text and its imbrication by the language of its social context is central to this dissertation given its textual and historical archive. In each chapter, this dissertation shows how style is not a self-contained attribute within texts, but is emergent in and speaks to its particular border setting. An overview of the primary texts as well as chapter breakdowns is presented in the following section.

The Styles of 20th and 21st Century Border Fiction

In order to track the reconceptualization of 1848 across 20th century fiction and beyond, this dissertation analyzes border varieties of modernism, *neopoliciaco* texts, postmodern metafiction and neo-realism. Each literary mode variously illuminates how the U.S.-Mexico border is naturalized, rather than viewed as constructed, through physical and discursive action. Moreover, this hegemonizing process constitutes the primary and often singular frame through which critical border issues are perceived. Thus, questions of citizenship, law enforcement and legality, economic formations, and forms of individual and state violence, are oriented by frameworks that take for granted the codification of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, and, by extension, the normalization of the border as an absolute. Significantly, however, the above-named fictional modes do not simply transcribe the work of truth regimes but create the possibility of disruption by mediating the historical circumstances in which such epistemologies

are forged. Furthermore, as this dissertation argues, this disruptive capacity, and hence the potential to generate alternative viewpoints, emerges from the fundamental link between the style of these modes and their respective positions situated from and about the border. An overview of their individual stylistic qualities is thus provided below.

Chapter One contrasts the role of border modernism in illuminating both the distinct forms of appearance as well as the projects of modernity and modernization in John Dos Passos's *The 42nd Parallel* (1930) to those in Américo Paredes's *George Washington Gómez* (1990).¹¹ In *George Washington Gómez*, colonial modernity is manifested as agricultural modernization in a small-scale border region (South Texas), resulting in sharply defined intra-ethnic conflict and the affirmation of territorial borders. Conversely, in *The 42nd Parallel*, the modernizing project undergoes a qualitative and geographic shift whose contours are newly hemispheric and defined as much by imperial economic hierarchies as by cartography. Linking these texts is border modernism's adaptation of representational techniques, in particular shifting narrative modes and non-chronological structures, centered in 1848 as a foundational moment that establishes the terms of colonial and imperial modernity. The term "border modernism" is borrowed from Christopher Schedler, whose elaboration of the concept, as is illuminated in Chapter One, is over-dependent on a facile opposition with what Schedler names "metropolitan modernism." According to Schedler, border modernism is stylistically defined by "oral forms of expression" and 'simplicity' whereas "metropolitan modernism's formalist approach to art" is manifested as "'ornamental' elaboration." In addition to its plainness of style, thematically, border modernism's exploration of identity is facilitated through "association" with those groups marked as "other," whereas in metropolitan modernism identity is synonymous with an internal psychic space divorced from external material realities (xiii). In contrast to the oversimplification

of literary modernism's variously political thematics, this dissertation modifies the conception and application of border modernism in order to develop a stylistic account capacious enough for the markedly political fiction of John Dos Passos, both in the sense of the prominent role figures of the "other" play in it, but also its exploration of the link between different social groups, who claim residence in the metropole, to the marginal and abject socioeconomic space of the U.S.-Mexico border. Furthermore, this dissertation adapts the term border modernism to show how Américo Paredes's prose style moves in ways other than what Schedler calls "simplification" and "direct statement" (xiii, 2). As a matter of fact, while the authorial peculiarities of Dos Passos and Paredes results in distinct narrative voices, what defines the prose of border modernism is breadth and volume. Further, this expansive prosaic quality is intertwined with border modernism's effort both to foreground temporal events and nonsynchronous histories in addition to experiments with narration. Thus, a second key feature of border modernism is its combination of realist and modernist narrative modes. Modernism's impulse toward subjectivism appears in border modernism as the periodic but meaningful portrayal of individual consciousness through free indirect discourse and focalization; realism's drive for objectivity is rendered as contrived impartiality regarding historical detail by reproducing it en masse. That is to say, while the mass accumulation of detail is enacted in the service of objectivity, ultimately it is part of a calculated effort to render the text's assessment of prevailing epistemes.

George Washington Gómez provides a local account of how colonial modernity as agricultural modernization fundamentally alters the national self-identification and consciousness of its title character whereas *The 42nd Parallel* allows for a transnational analysis of how U.S. control over oil production during the Mexican Revolution re-defines asymmetrical political-economic relations between the U.S. and Mexico. Set in the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas

and its legacy of conflict, long discursive paragraphs detailing features of the landscape, and the historical processes through which it changed, are characteristic of Paredes's work. As a matter of fact, in order to cover such ample historical and territorial domains Paredes's style must work beyond the "simple" and "direct." Thus, representative passages set in the narrative present describe vast stretches of *chaparral* (or thick brush), flash back to the battles of the 1915 Seditious Rebellion which occurred there, and often in a non-linear fashion depict the stages of Anglo modernization by which it transformed. Paredes does so in order to show the border as both a symbolic rupture of consciousness and as a territorial site. At the close of the novel the titular George believes himself to be a class and race apart from "Mexican Greasers" even as he dreams of joining them in insurrection; and yet he returns to South Texas as part of a surveillance operation against former high school friends whose political dissidence he fears is a threat to the border as a territorial divider. John Dos Passos's fiction, too, displays a formally innovative and thematically wide-reaching ambition. The difference, however, is the specific content around which the narrative style is oriented: within the text any hopes for a transformative politics are countermanded by the rampant commodification overtaking America. Further, this commercialization accrues beyond national boundaries—and the U.S.-Mexico border is a key site in this process of an ever-pervasive capitalism. Regarding Dos Passos's stylistic focus on massification, Miles Orvell writes, "Given such a world of factitious images, of mocking sentiments and mocking falsehoods, given the vast linguistic reservoir of American speech," the central purpose of *U.S.A.* is to "rebuild the language."¹² Dos Passos stylistically registers the intertwined dynamics of aspirations for social change, on the one hand, and the imposition of production for its own sake, on the other, by writing prose that both reproduces the vernacular of a working class for whom the latest trends are perpetually out of reach even as it

itemizes for-sale household products all in the same sentence. Moreover, there is even a kind of formal symmetry between Dos Passos's habit of compressing two words into a single linguistic unit and the sense of often useless products saturating the early decades of American life in the 20th century. Dos Passos thus depicts a context where the capacity for social change is diluted by the spread of market capitalism and its exploitation of language as a technology whose central operation is to accelerate the process of buying and selling; and in Dos Passos's text it is precisely this seizure of language by markets through which capitalist modes of production within a border setting are reproduced.

After examining *The 42nd Parallel* (1930) and *George Washington Gómez* (1936-1940) in Chapter One, each written across the decade of the thirties, Chapter Two moves on to border *neopoliciaco* texts produced in the 1990s. The reasons for this fifty year jump are both archival and conceptual. As demonstrated above, this time period has been amply covered both in terms of Chicano and post-nationalist scholarship as well as related developments in Chicano fiction. By contrast, the intervention of this dissertation is to trace literary-historical connections extending beyond the abundance of Chicano studies emphasizing Aztlán. In order to show the varied re-articulations of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo after 1848 beyond these familiar interventions, it is vital to move across the 20th century rather than stay tethered to one segment of it; hence the selection in Chapter Two and the remainder of this dissertation of textual modes produced in the last decade of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st.

This dissertation makes the case that border detective fiction provides a viable means of re-centering 1848. In terms of literary development, the Anglo-American genre of detective fiction provided the influence for the Latin American *neopoliciaco*, which in turn was further distilled into the border *neopoliciaco*.¹³ Regarding historical context and their major precepts,

scholars such as Charles Rzepka (*Detective Fiction*) note that the cultural logic of Enlightenment modernity, in particular the belief in ratiocination, as well as the ideology of liberal individualism, are embodied in classic detective fiction. This process is enacted by opposing the singular mystery-solving talents of a prodigious detective against a rival and equally gifted criminal. In addition, since its inception in the 19th century, classic detective fiction heavily emphasized the relationship between the state and ideals of justice. Classic detective fiction, therefore, is characterized by privileging the exceptional individual (who is potentially transgressive to the common good if figured as criminal) as well as by rendering the illusion of harmony between justice and the state given its liberal underpinnings: within the terms of the genre the state is but a collection of free and consenting, and not coerced and subjugated, individuals. Moreover, the genre's character structure aids and abets the idealization of justice and the state in that every criminal's act of transgression is ultimately subject to the rule of law safeguarded by a morally sound detective. Classic detective fiction is thus undergirded by a duality where state law is always just and crime must necessarily take place outside its institutions. This harmonization of state institutions and the private individual upholding the rule of law as the preeminent public interest is later exposed as false by hardboiled varieties of the genre: crime occurs within official legal systems subverting the notion that transgressions are possible only outside official channels. As a result, the hard-boiled detective pursues the criminals populating an urban cityscape as well as corrupt officials. The Latin American *neopolicia* likewise portrays a corrupt legal system and also incorporates aspects of liberal ideology, in particular the detective hero as exceptional figure. As Chapter Two demonstrates, the border *neopolicia* adapts the thematic and character traits of the classic and Latin American versions of the genre but also makes significant changes to it. Specifically, the border

neopoliciaco adapts the formula where justice and the state are opposed via an emphasis on the exploitation of neoliberal policies by law enforcement agencies working on the border.

Significantly, however, the border *neopoliciaco* challenges the core dichotomy of neoliberalism which is that private interest is the highest public good. Moreover, in addition to exposing the state as a criminal apparatus, it is precisely the border *neopoliciaco*'s fundamental critique of ratiocination that allows for a distinct interrogation of how the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo operates trans-temporally in terms of the material formations of the border and the epistemes by which these are rationalized. Finally, the account that follows below is not an overview of the border *neopoliciaco* in general, but instead deals specifically with the version crafted by Gabriel Trujillo Muñoz given its emphasis on the border cities of Mexicali and Tijuana; thus the term border *neopoliciaco*.

In terms of style the narrative voice in Trujillo Muñoz's texts facilitates the interrogation of neoliberal epistemologies which is crucial to the project of the border *neopoliciaco*. This voice is laconic in its narration and thus crime scenes, despite the types of violence committed, are described in no greater detail than the layout of a city or the interior of its buildings. The terse depictions, however, do not constitute indifference and in fact the narrator operates within a register of distinct but interrelated dispositions. Thus it is suggested, ironically, that the best way to avoid looking like a "fucking tourist" is to wear sunglasses in crowded spaces irrespective of the weather (*Mezquite Road* 41); potential suspects are viewed not with the cool detachment of an impartial eye but cannily envisioned as belonging to "a scene from 'The Godfather'" ("Tijuana City Blues 13); and a widow's account of her late husband's life and death is wryly labelled a "hagiography" rather than identified as reminiscence (*Mezquite Road* 21). Further, if the attitude of Trujillo Muñoz's narrator is frequently cynical toward people and the world in

which they live, the idiolect of this voice can be described as *Español de la frontera*. Specifically, the narrator's border Spanish is a mix of pop culture references, *pochismos* (Anglicization of conventional Spanish) and folk sayings. As a matter of fact, this stylistic peculiarity is made possible through a genre that by definition is centered on mixture. Thus, Claire Fox notes that the "*novela neopoliciaco*" is "a hybrid combining various strains of left populism and existentialism with elements of investigative journalism, *crónica*, realism, and pulp fiction" (166). This border speech, however, is not restricted to Trujillo Muñoz's narrator but is also characteristic of dialogue across both texts. Yet more importantly, this dialogue is assigned an authoritative interpretive function in his version of the border *neopoliciaco*. In a sense, this feature of the border *neopoliciaco* where dialogue is the site of disclosing case facts is a carryover from hard-boiled detective fiction by authors such as Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler and Ross MacDonald.¹⁴ However, despite the active use of dialogue in their work, these authors constructed private eyes that also narrated the crimes they detected,¹⁵ and this marks a crucial difference between the hard-boiled and the border *neopoliciaco*. In Trujillo Muñoz's texts the narrative is comprised of dialogue and the reporting of an unnamed narrator but never the use of first-person and especially not a detective who also narrates.

The readings in Chapter Two are framed by what this dissertation terms the "Neo-Private Eye" not in reference to an autonomous detective but rather as a figure for the grassroots pursuit of justice and its necessarily conditional relationship to the private-public within the late '90s border setting. Specifically, given that Trujillo Muñoz's *neopoliciaco* texts are set within the context of NAFTA, the private eye Miguel Ángel Morgado's resolution of crime must occur within a social formation lauded by its practitioners as the apex of economic modernization and privatization even while border communities decry its outcomes. As a result, however much his

detection mediates a critique of the neoliberal, Morgado must also maintain a working if fragile partnership with its representatives. Thus, by detailing Morgado's investigation of fifties era urban legends, in particular the rise of a "Third World Las Vegas," "Tijuana City Blues" offers a critique of how the mythification of present-day Tijuana as essentially lawless and violent obscures the historical production of the border through acts of colonial- and imperialism. Moreover, as the reading of this text illuminates, the discursive ruse that private individualism is the highest public good effectively re-produces the border beyond the purely territorial by inscribing contemporary border cities within U.S.-centric teleologies of development. If "Tijuana City Blues" provides a critique of economic progress narratives, *Mezquite Road* shows how U.S. and Mexican state law enforcement agencies serve a key role in protecting and thus sustaining neoliberal ideologies. Within this latter text Morgado's resolution to a homicide case on the border requires his provisional link to law enforcement as well as private border groups that operate outside the law. In thus portraying Morgado's investigation, Trujillo Muñoz shows that in spite of the egregious breakdown of the private-public dichotomy at the core of neoliberalism it is precisely this ideology that subtends the asymmetrical relationship into which the U.S and Mexico are configured. Therefore, by delineating the complex network of state agencies and border citizens in Mexicali *Mezquite Road* illuminates how the persistence of the border as a state-sanctioned, and thus legal, geopolitical divider is reinforced, paradoxically, by flouting the law.

Following the border *neopoliciaco*, Chapter Three analyzes *Instrucciones para cruzar la frontera* (2011) in which Luis Humberto Crosthwaite adapts the postmodern strategies of parody, metafiction and pastiche in order to show how the normalization of borders as unobstructed transit points conceals the racialized logic of securing border zones. Given that in *Instrucciones*

border-crossing is always provisional and site-specific, this dissertation draws on Linda Hutcheon's conception of "historiographic metafiction," which she defines as texts that "are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages" (5). While Crosthwaite adapts these strategies, the postmodernism of *Instrucciones* is distinctly crafted and thus results in a border postmodernism: the prose is ludic but not whimsical; eccentric yet oriented by the collective; self-reflexive but historically situated. No doubt Crosthwaite's text calls attention to its own fictionality through elements such as ostentatious typography and author-reader duels yet never as a mere language game.¹⁶ Instead, allegorical "death of the author" scenarios and absurdist lists about navigating Customs protocols consistently foreground the challenges of crossing the border, through legal or clandestine means, for local *Tijuanenses*. In addition to parody, Crosthwaite also uses the literary strategy of what Hutcheon terms "double-encoding," which is the re-creation of ideological structures and their formal conventions in order to subvert them. As a result, while the text portrays conditions in which the geographic space of multinational capital is flattened out and borders are less barriers than metaphors it does so in the service of a historical critique. Thus the accent falls on *border* in "border postmodernism" not only because, as important as it is, Crosthwaite's text emphasizes the difficulties of south-to-north crossing from the perspective of *Tijuanenses*. Rather, it is the way in which the metafictional strategies in *Instrucciones* mediate a historical context where the very presence of human life is perceived as a threat so imminently real, however imagined it may be in reality, that capital punishment actually becomes a rational measure precisely because of the U.S. claim to "security."

Crosthwaite's border postmodernism shows how much more narrowly restricted the 21st century border becomes as a result of national security as an epistemology. Specifically,

Crosthwaite's adaptation of postmodernist literary strategies to the border, in particular Tijuana, illustrates the way in which national security is no longer registered as nativist paranoia that the border will be overrun by droves of Mexicans, the fear of the title character in *George Washington Gómez*. Rather, in the 21st century, jingoism and xenophobia move from the level of structures of feeling and crystallize into material formations by undergirding the interrelationship between social imaginaries and legal ordinances. In this way, national security becomes a dominant paradigm, or episteme, whose concrete expression is the government sanctioned fortification and surveillance of the border. Ironically, however, this monitoring and regulation of territorial space occurs in an historical context where territoriality no longer obtains: global capital has so drastically shortened the distance between two points that a once-physical landscape is now envisioned as a "worldwide web of spatial threads" (Murphet 130). Therefore, Crosthwaite's text details Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents, and the consequences of racially motivated border policing initiatives such as *Operation Gatekeeper*,¹⁷ on the one hand, and virtual cities and metaphorical borders on the other. By doing so, Crosthwaite challenges the postmodern claim of universal mobility across abstract borders;¹⁸ instead the border in Tijuana is material and real, and crossing it, illustrates Crosthwaite, can be a fatal endeavor.

As is true of the literary conventions and the respective texts which adapt them in the preceding three chapters, this dissertation views the novels in Chapter Four less as paradigmatic instances of, than selective engagements with, the stylistic category "neo-realism." The reason for this is that, as Robert Rebein argues, neo-realism as a "monolithic" and thus singular form simply does not exist; there is instead a "common core of techniques" whose varied applications inform the term's meaning. Further, the prefix indicates that while an array of postmodernist

literary strategies emerged in the postwar era, “the vast majority of American fiction published since 1945,” notes Rebein, “has remained unabashedly realist in its rendering of character, setting and time” (30). Phrased another way, neo-realism draws on its 19th century precursors even as it borrows contemporary representational strategies, some of which may be postmodernist, in order to imagine and mediate the lived experiences of the 20th century and after. In fact, this focus on experience is vital to neo-realism as a set of representational techniques. Moreover, as is detailed below, the neo-realist version of experience is registered by foreclosing the possibility of narrative resolution. Thus, in addition to Rebein’s assertion that a key trait of the neo-real is “a recognition of character as the sine qua non of the fictional enterprise” (30), neo-realism is also characterized by its commitment to “experience,” which Kris Versluys specifies is “the novelistic simulacrum of the real-life variant,” which, significantly, cannot be totalizing because it is always provisional and in this way incomplete. (Versluys 8, 9). Further, this aesthetic re-creation is undergirded by the principles of “verisimilitude” and “plausibility,” in particular by constructing an imagined world where “all the strictures of the experiential world apply” (8). Therefore, in this regard both Paul Flores’s *Along the Border Lies* (2001) and Ana Castillo’s *The Guardians* (2007) adapt neo-realist strategies: narrative structure in each is fundamentally organized around character, each details the external world in order to accurately render the time and place their respective characters inhabit, and in contrast to *Instrucciones para cruzar la frontera* where language is often non-referential, language in both operates mimetically though, as is detailed immediately below, this function is not synonymous with ‘reflection.’

In order to mediate the actual historical context of the U.S.-Mexico border both in terms of the material processes of drug trafficking, immigration and abduction, and the way these

realities come to be perceived, mimesis in *Along the Border Lies* and *The Guardians* must be articulated as refraction. Despite the fact that its proponents convincingly show that realist fiction does more than aspire to hold a mirror up to nature an enduring, and reductive, account still maintains that realism is fundamentally premised on reflecting human life.¹⁹ However, this ascription of a purely reflective quality to neo-realism is incongruent with the use of language in the respective novels of Flores and Castillo. Language in these texts is not premised on imitation for its own sake but on an aesthetic re-creation as the basis for interrogating the way in which select experiences, and the discourses around them, are variously occluded by truth regimes or naturalized as realities. In particular, language is oriented by a depiction of the San Diego-Tijuana region in *Along the Border Lies* and the southwestern corridor of Cabuche-El Paso-Juárez in *The Guardians*. While the lifeworld of each is fundamentally distinct, the unifying characteristic is the fictional resistance to closure rendered most acutely through character experience. Specifically, non-chronological structures and shifting narrative modes foreclose the possibility of narrative resolution and in doing so reveal how analyses of border violence are predicated on a major conceptual flaw by perceiving the U.S.-Mexico borderline as a stable territorial referent.

Along the Border Lies depicts character experience of the San Diego-Tijuana border zone as out of order and devoid of an endpoint in order to stage a narrative impasse and thus suggest the consequences of privileging the border as space rather than also attending to the temporalities that circulate through and across it. In terms of character and organization the novel tracks the intertwined narratives of the Mexican-American Alfredo and the *Tijuanense* Miranda. Neither the accounts of Alfredo's shooting spree, evocative of contemporary U.S. border militias, nor Miranda's exploitation of family connections to, and the material processes of, NAFTA in what

is currently known as drug-running by “narco-juniors,”²⁰ provide definitive endings. As a matter of fact, while *Along the Border Lies* thematically links the narratives of Alfredo, Miranda, and to a lesser degree Miranda’s boyfriend Edgar, the text defers the resolution of their plotlines to a more ambiguous conclusion. On the one hand, the characters are linked in that Edgar’s friend provides Alfredo and his fellow cadets weapons with which they shoot and kill Mexicans crossing into the San Ysidro canyon, one of whom, the text implies, is Miranda’s cousin. On the other hand, the end of Alfredo’s story features him vowing to fight pending criminal charges; Miranda, unaware of how her cousin died, fears she is the target of a cartel-sanctioned execution and elopes north; and Edgar, whose subsection punctuates the novel, fretfully sits in his apartment waiting for a police raid he is sure will come but that readers never actually see. Ultimately, the text’s intersecting but ambiguous narratives illuminate the consequences of assenting to the episteme that the U.S.-Mexico border is a fundamentally and singularly territorial divider between nations. That is to say, the text mediates how space is reductively equated with physical land, excluding the possibility of social space, so that the non-spatial dimensions of border violence, portrayed in the novel as identity conflicts, prescriptive gender roles, sociocultural imbalances and so on, are within the present-day non-literary context excluded completely and impossible to locate. In doing so, the text shows that if the border is conceptualized purely as a spatial divider capable of bisecting lived realities, then violence is reified as internal to border communities rather than understood as epiphenomena of interrelated systemic processes.

Whereas Flores’s novel exhibits a resistance to closure in terms of plot resolution, in Castillo’s multi-perspectival text this takes the form of a limited interpretive capacity. In peculiar ways, each character is linked to local forms of border violence which they cannot grasp in the

U.S. towns of Cabuche and El Paso and Juárez in Mexico. Paradoxically, and significantly, it is precisely these individual accounts which constitutes their shared experience and on a broader level registers the systemic and transnational dimensions of border violence. That is to say, individually the narrative explanations of border violence are inconclusive, but read as a composite they actually foreground how state and popular discourses that overemphasize and misconstrue space undergird the prevailing belief that border violence is endemic to Mexico. In order to do so, Castillo draws on four distinct linguistic registers that belong to the novel's main characters. By thus constructing an imagined world inhabited by characters where the object of their description, border violence, is in excess of their descriptive and analytic capacity, Castillo shows the problem of viewing the U.S.-Mexico border through a singularly territorial frame of reference. Ultimately, this pressure applied to territoriality suggests an alternative vocabulary with which to revisit the paradigm that border violence is intertwined at both the individual and state levels.

Modernism from *la frontera*: The U.S.-Mexico Border in *The 42nd Parallel* and *George Washington Gómez*

Introduction

This chapter makes the case that Américo Paredes's *George Washington Gómez* (1990) and John Dos Passos's *The 42nd Parallel* (1930) adapt modernist stylistic practices in their respective portrayals of the early 20th century U.S.-Mexico border and in doing so generate a set of representational strategies named "border modernism." As the chapter shows, each text's iteration of border modernism re-conceptualizes the legacy of 1848 by variously challenging the spatiotemporal iterations underpinning U.S. colonial and imperial modernity. Specifically, in these versions of modernity the acquisition and regulation of territory unleashes a set of temporalities meant to justify the modernizing project as progress and subordinate those communities that do not subscribe to totalizing notions of time and space. Significantly, however, each text challenges the paradigms of expansionism through their respective foregrounding of what, adapting Enrique Dussel, this dissertation names trans-temporality: the idea that the border is not exclusively colonial but also stages contrasting peripheral modernities characterized by their own time-spaces. Whereas *George Washington Gómez* does so by narrating the arrival of a new wave of colonial modernity in a local border region and the 1915 armed rebellions against it, *The 42nd Parallel* expands the focus from the local to the hemispheric scale, detailing the competing dynamics of labor reform during the 1910 Mexican Revolution versus the capitalist articulation of a de-territorialized border as yet another outpost of a trans-American U.S. empire. As in metropolitan modernism, both novels register the trauma of wars that justify and stimulate formal experimentation, but in the place of World War One, these works feature early 20th century revolutions on and south of the U.S.-Mexico border.

In *George Washington Gómez* the agricultural modernization of a local South Texas border is the concrete expression of north-south asymmetries rooted in the coloniality of 1848. Paredes's border modernism is marked by combining realism's focus on objectively rendering external details with modernism's non-chronological structures and shifting narrative modes. This combination traces how the consciousness of the title character is developed by the re-consolidation of borders and the different generational attitudes to this process. As newly mechanized Anglo farming displaces older *ranchero* practices, the 1915 Seditious Rebellion is waged as a counterconquest by the older generation of "border Mexicans" that potentially will transmit their revolutionary ethos to the new generation "Texas Mexicans." The protagonist is thus born into a double-bind situation between adopting seditious values or assimilating Anglo beliefs. Ultimately, what the text reveals is not that "Guálinto" devolves into the assimilated "George" simply because of an inability to manage the modernist crisis of consciousness, in this case divided between traditional *mexicano* values on the one hand and the ideals of Anglo modernity on the other. Rather, the text, in particular its conclusion, stages the impossibility of mapping out George's consciousness onto a space whose only coordinates are territorial. Throughout the novel third-person descriptions of a landscape regulated by Anglos are set against internal flashbacks via free indirect discourse to a time before the consolidation of Anglo control; and it is these two narrative strands, associated with space and time respectively, which ultimately collide at novel's end. In this way, the irreconcilability of George's private memories of *mexicano* insurrection with the material present-day realities of his profession as a border security agent enact the fallibility of cleaving the temporal, specifically a historical reckoning of the border, from the spatial.

By contrast, in *The 42nd Parallel* the border is figured less as a territory to be secured than as one in an emerging series of hemispheric imperial coordinates during the rise and spread of U.S. market capitalism. The style of what is referred to as Dos Passos's "montage modernism," which this chapter shows is actually the literary distillation of Mexican mural aesthetics, is comprised of four narrative modes: "Camera Eye," a set of stream-of-consciousness narrations; "Newsreels," which are headlines, speeches, and song lyrics in pastiche; fictional biographies; and character sections. This chapter focuses primarily on character sections and "Newsreels" in order to show how language is used as a reproductive technology by which the U.S.-Mexico border becomes a key site in U.S. efforts to export market capitalist structures. By arguing for the role of Mexico in this latter regard this chapter draws from but updates Michael Denning's analysis of *U.S.A.*, and in particular *The 42nd Parallel*. The chapter follows Denning's insightful lead that the trilogy narrates the story of "a republic that became an empire" in documenting the conflict between labor and capital (168). However, unlike Denning, this chapter argues that Mexico is central rather than peripheral in Dos Passos's fiction. Specifically, the chapter tracks the conflict between the labor sympathizer and prospective revolutionary Mac versus the advertising agent, and novel's symbol of capitalist interest, J. Ward Moorehouse. Significantly, while they do so for different reasons, each character travels to and crosses over the U.S.-Mexico border, eventually squaring off in Mexico City, during the period of the 1910 Mexican Revolution. Further, as the chapter demonstrates, the novel's narrative structure is characterized by this very dialectic, the conflict between labor and capital whose point of intersection is the U.S.-Mexico border. By narrating the disintegration of revolutionary politics in the face of economic dependency relations the text foregrounds how the construction and regulation of the border as the latest stage of imperial modernity results in its de-historicization. Consequently,

even as Mac and Moorehouse recede from the narrative what remains constant is the universalization of time and space centered around a newly configured U.S. empire. Unlike *George Washington Gómez's* uneven power relations by way of agricultural modernization, in *The 42nd Parallel* border asymmetries are enacted via economic hierarchies. In this way, the border is de-territorialized yet remains fundamentally a spatial divider between nations.

Re-Mapping Modernism: The Style of Border Modernists

In detailing an alternative literary modernism this chapter incorporates and departs from the work of Christopher Schedler as well as Rachel Adams. The term “border modernism” is coined by Schedler, and as is demonstrated more extensively below, refers to a sparse prosaic quality and an emphasis on orality. Significantly, Schedler’s iteration of border modernism is undergirded by what this chapter shows is a reductive binary between border modernism and what he identifies as “metropolitan modernism.” If Schedler re-situates modernism on the border in his exploration of the literary, Adams does so in her account of visual representation. Specifically, Adams demonstrates that a reconsideration of previously overlooked American women artists illuminates “the spread of a Mexican element in international modernism” (104). This chapter follows Adams’s lead that tracking unexplored circuits of literary production creates fresh “geographies of modernism” (101). However, the crucial difference lies in explicating what precisely Adams means in her account of “South Bank” modernism. The project’s focus, she states, is in tracing the “rise of an American modernism that was specifically oriented toward Mexico but also traveled outward to the continent and the world” (104, 105). Adams does so by examining aesthetic production in “Mexico City and its environs” (104). By contrast, this chapter analyzes the rendering of a local South Texas border in *George Washington Gómez* as well as how the border as site-specific is deterritorialized in the service of establishing a hemispheric

American empire via *The 42nd Parallel*. In thus focusing on a local and site-specific border, this chapter moves away from the centrist discourse of Mexico City as the privileged site of aesthetic development. Before analyzing in detail how each text enacts border modernism an extended discussion on this chapter's use of the term versus that of Schedler's is warranted.

According to Christopher Schedler, "border modernism" names a response to the crises of being and knowledge which are also constitutive of canonical literary modernism. The difference, he argues, in the border modernism variant is both historical and aesthetic; that in border modernism, the relation between text and its historical context, as well as its aesthetic features, are fundamentally and necessarily distinct. Canonical literary modernism is defined by its radical formal experimentation and, Schedler asserts, is embodied most visibly in the works of privileged Anglo writers. Within this conception of modernism the limits of form are pressed most forcefully by stream of consciousness narration;¹ this formal "inward turn," furthermore, runs parallel to the assertion of modernism's avoidance of external historical realities.² In contrast, the prose of border modernism is plainly matter-of-fact and its outlook is resolutely historical. However, in order to analyze and interpret a distinct set of cultural and aesthetic practices as "border modernism" Schedler must elaborate them based on what they are not. That is to say, while Schedler's neologism suggests plurality, his articulation of the term into a fully-fledged concept only comes into relief when diametrically set against what he calls "metropolitan modernism." Aside from risking the polarization of an immense set of texts into an either/or scenario, Schedler's definition-by-opposition also faces the problem of specificity. A border, he writes, is "that marginal space (the frontier, the colonial periphery, the borderlands) beyond the metropolitan center, where distinct cultural groups come into contact and conflict" (xi). This conception of the border is problematic not for its multifariousness but in trying to

contain tendencies which run contrary to one another: the frontier is the imagined, and thus abstract, horizon of colonial and imperial power while “colonial periphery” registers fixed geographic points of colonial violence;³ moreover, “borderlands” is evocative of the theory proposed by Gloria Anzaldúa that Chicanas in the U.S. occupy a liminal social space except that Schedler’s analysis is absent any Chicana authors. The problem, therefore, is not that Schedler’s border is both site-specific and abstract but that it signifies contradictory processes.

In addition to the ambivalent conception of “border,” Schedler’s elaboration of “metropolitan modernism” is based on a misleading dichotomy. “The devices of metropolitan modernism,” Schedler asserts, “are used to express an individual, alienated identity through an internalized view of the urban world” (xii). In order to make this argument Schedler invokes T.S. Eliot’s “J. Alfred Prufrock,” “the quintessential subject of metropolitan modernism” (xiii). Such a reading of modernism assumes that “the internal world of the individual subject” is the definitive site of meaning; by extension geographic location and historical context are secondary at best, but even then are “isolated” from the fictional text (xiii). Given that there is never an explicitly stated definition of “metropolitan modernism” but instead a named trio of Ezra Pound, Eliot and Wyndham Lewis, it is implied that what Schedler has in mind in emphasizing the metropolis is the modernism practiced by a literary and cultural, and Anglo, elite. There is no denying that one strain of modernism *was* produced by white writers, many of whom had connections to people of means, if they were not privileged themselves, and that these artists often self-organized into insular collectives, the most posh of which is ostensibly the Bloomsbury group.⁴ But one misses the mark by assuming homogeneity, and apolitical disposition, among writers that could also be labelled metropolitan modernists.⁵ Clearly these labels can quickly prove troublesome: D.H. Lawrence, whom Schedler groups as a border

modernist (xvi), is also championed as representative of “the great tradition” in English novels and would therefore appear to be part of the canonical modernism that Schedler finds problematic for an increasingly limited worldview whose most severe outcome is resistance to historical awareness.⁶ The point, however, is not to decree a stern set of criteria for who and what is either metropolitan or border modernist but that such an opposition does not leave enough room for nuance. Still in all, despite the means by which Schedler arrives at an alternative account of modernism, following his lead that there is a modernist aesthetic which emerges from within and in relation to borders can prove fruitful.

If the unifying link across all modernisms is an urge for new orderings of language as a means of capturing fundamental changes in human perception imbricated by material and intellectual sea changes,⁷ this chapter’s adaptation of the concept of “border modernism” orients this principle of language innovations around the 1848 inception of the U.S.-Mexico border and its re-articulation beyond the 19th century. 1848 signaled the culmination of one stage of U.S. political and economic conquest and it also established the terms of ensuing border asymmetries. Thus, while border modernism refers to stylistics it also focuses on a particular content. In this regard, and using Schedler’s term as a point of departure, this chapter modifies border modernism to designate a set of representational strategies comprised of both formal and thematic elements. In border modernism the prose is straightforward and often marked by geographically specific vernacular (the speech habits of local communities); typically there is a third-person narrator whose commanding voice is reminiscent of literary realism yet this voice also remains distant. Following Michael Levenson, this chapter understands realism not as “neutral or ‘objective’” but as “finely managed critique” (57). In this regard, the presumed objectivism of realist fiction is actually what Levenson terms “a *detachment* that is at once a

judgment” (57 italics original). Thus, in border modernism objectivity is not a plainly given narrative quality but rather a deliberately created mood achieved through a carefully worked relationship between the presentation of the aesthetic goals of the text and the persona ordering them. The term “persona” rather than “narrator” is used because as will become clear in the following analysis, while the narrator of *George Washington Gómez* is highly involved, however objective they may appear to be, in *The 42nd Parallel* it is not a traditional narrator who orders the text’s aesthetic vision but instead a different sort of narrative force altogether. As a matter of fact, given Dos Passos’s formal innovations across the trilogy in general, and their application to the subject of the U.S.-Mexico border in *The 42nd Parallel* in particular, the border modernist qualities of this text warrant further detail.

If border modernism’s stylistics refract both the historical and contemporary production of U.S.-Mexico borderlines in *The 42nd Parallel*, Dos Passos’s treatment of language clarifies the U.S. role in border-making during the 1910 Mexican Revolution. A more thorough discussion of this role is provided below, but here it must be stated that the border modernism in Dos Passos’s novel highlights the U.S. appropriation of Mexican revolutionary politics for economic profit by de facto control of Mexico’s oil reserves; and by extension the consolidation of U.S. political force via the institution of a pro-capitalist government regime in Mexico even after the fall of Porfirio Díaz. Dos Passos achieves this historical clarity in part by adapting the realist principle of accumulating a mass of external detail as one interworking component of the multimodal structure of *The 42nd Parallel*. In thus drawing on realism, *The 42nd Parallel* is similar to Paredes’s *George Washington Gómez*. The difference in Dos Passos, however, is that the external world is detailed and ordered less by an individual narrator than by form itself—the aggregation of the abovementioned four narrative modes. That is to say, one will not find in *The*

42nd Parallel a didactic assessment of border history as in *George Washington Gómez*. Yet a critique of the U.S. involvement in the Mexican Revolution is nonetheless rendered through the interplay between distinct literary modes, on the one hand, and the angles in which they depict the events of 1910, on the other.

This chapter updates critical readings of Dos Passos's *U.S.A.* trilogy by illuminating how *The 42nd Parallel* adapts the realist emphasis on capturing the totality of historical change on and below the border and combines this strategy with modernist fragmentary form. Indeed, critics frequently remark upon the trilogy's documentary qualities in general and Dos Passos's reportorial style in particular.⁸ To be sure, one of the trilogy's four forms, "Newsreels," is modelled after the journalistic idea of reporting local and global events. While these readings accurately situate the accumulation of historical detail within the context of Dos Passos's grand narrative about the pernicious effects of American capitalism, they overlook the crucial role of the U.S.-Mexico border in the text, in particular its reproduction during the period of revolution. Part of the reason for this omission, as is demonstrated below, is both an overemphasis on and misreading of the montage modernism utilized by Dos Passos.⁹ As a matter of fact, *The 42nd Parallel* (and the trilogy itself) is marked by a formally innovative modernism as well as its adaptation of realism, in particular the calculated organization of immediately visible, rather than psychological, content. Dos Passos, however, modifies this realist strategy by making this organization less about a single narrator than formal and thematic sequencing. Specifically, this chapter analyzes the dialogic action between "Newsreels" and character sections which not only detail the external world but, echoing Levenson above, provide the terms for a critical interrogation of this world.

In addition to these distillations of realism there are also elements of subjectivist narration (not limited to Dos Passos's stream of consciousness) in border modernism, and among these free indirect discourse is key. According to Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, free indirect discourse is a combination of quoted speech with "indirect discourse," that is, speech not marked by authorial flagging (110, 111). As the chapter shows, border modernism is stylistically defined by a commitment to portraying both readily available as well as unconscious thoughts in a mode that, significantly, is bound up in mediating historical processes of border-making. In doing so, the chapter provides a way of re-thinking the literary history surrounding modernism, the stylistics associated with it, and its inextricable relationship to modernity. No doubt an array of distinct historical events and cultural formations influenced the periodization of canonical modernism, yet this timeline continually assumes a European axis.¹⁰ To be sure, these events remain significant within the purview of border modernism yet the crucial distinction is the latter's emphasis on the legacy of 1848 in the early 20th century. Given that border modernism is a new concept it makes sense that its historiography is scant. Surprisingly, however, while the failed European bourgeois revolutions of 1848 have been invoked as constituting the historical basis for the cultural and political transformations which shaped literary modernism¹¹ there remains as yet no theoretical elaborations between 1848 and a modernist aesthetic that emerges from the U.S.-Mexico border. This analysis is not a study of the links between modernism proper and 1848. Instead, the chapter shows how a revised account of U.S. colonial modernity and its history of border-making is both illuminated and productively linked to the early 20th century by tracing the development of distinct border-based modernist aesthetics. Ultimately, the chapter argues that it is these border modernist aesthetic practices which allow for a re-thinking of the time-space paradigms underpinning and colonial and imperial modernity.

Texas Mexican Border History in *George Washington Gómez*

George Washington Gómez is set in and after the 1915 Texas Mexican Seditious Rebellion, where the fictional narrative begins, and depicts its aftermath. The movement initially developed as a grassroots revolt against the Anglo appropriation of Mexican land in the wake of the post-1900 agricultural modernization of South Texas—a second economic conquest that completes the territorial conquest of 1848. This movement was an anti-colonial rebellion whose rationale was the creation of an independent Spanish-speaking republic of the Southwest. This republic would be realized by an armed, pan-ethnic coalition of Mexican, Japanese, Black and Native American seditious (Harris and Sadler 212). However, the U.S. responded with what is now known as “The Bandit War,” a militaristic effort where Texas Rangers operated without impunity for the purpose of “housecleaning” the multi-ethnic seditious and insurgent Texas Mexicans (3). As Paredes’s novel clearly illustrates, the Rangers effectively terminated the rebellion, whose aftermath featured the onset of post-rebellion Anglo land development and the transition it enacted from Mexican cattle ranching to the rise of Anglo agricultural modernity. The commercialization of Texas farming practices required clearing away vast stretches of *chaparral*, the dense brush characteristic of *ranchero* landscape. Further, the removal of *chaparral* also predetermined (and symbolized) the failure of the Seditious Rebellion. The natural topography, a kind of emblem of those indigenous to the land, is entirely wiped out to make room for the consolidation of Anglo modernity.

The border context depicted in the novel is characterized by the colonial efforts of modernization, on the one hand, and a border nationalism resistant to this modernizing impulse,

on the other. This modern, sharply racialized social order in South Texas was largely the result of the aforementioned shift from Mexican cattle ranching to Anglo agricultural practices. As David Montejano argues, the “triumph of commercial agriculture” created a “new society, with new class groups,” and was organized by “racial exclusions” (162, 163). Américo Paredes adds, “for more than half a century Jonesville [the fictional setting of the novel] remained a Mexican town” but “then came the railroad early in the 20th century” and “Mexicans labored with axe and spade to clear away the brush where the cattle of their ancestors once had roamed” (36). The failure of the Seditious Rebellion therefore entailed the uncontested establishment of an Anglo-dominated agricultural order. Paredes mediates this history in rendering a fictional South Texas populated by Anglos, Mexican immigrants, Mexican Americans, and Border Mexicans, those native to the region which was segregated in 1848. As a result, the represented world in *George Washington Gómez* is organized around distinct ethnic groups, class structures, and their varied responses to Anglo modernity. In this way, the text shows how this peculiar version of modernization works to re-articulate territorial borders.

Narrating the Seditious Rebellion: Border Mexican Consciousness amidst Epic Historical Change

George Washington Gómez's shifting narrative modes foreground both the early 20th century second phase of conquest, following the initial colonization of 1848, as well as the internal responses to this historical transformation. Narrated in third-person omniscient prose, the novel's opening scene offers a window into the transformation, and consolidation, of the U.S.-Mexico border by way of the latest modernizing agricultural practices. Structurally, the novel is organized into five sections: Part I establishes the historical context into which the protagonist Guálinto is born; Parts II-IV feature the struggles of his divided identity, during which he

simultaneously internalizes and renounces Anglo culture; and Part V in which the titular character is fully assimilated, self-identifies as Anglo-American, and is textually marked as “George.” Part I, the context for George’s character change, is entitled “Los Sediciosos,” a clear reference to the 1915 Seditious Rebellion, and as Christopher Schedler points out, a “*corrido* of the same name” (110). Moreover, as Ramon Saldívar notes, “*George Washington Gómez* situates us in the midst of the deliquescent historical transformations occasioned by the modernization of the border, changes that had been underway since the middle of the 19th century but were now coming to a head in the early 20th century with the full-blown industrialization of agriculture” (155). By structuring the novel around these broad-scale historical transformations, the social values that will prove formative for George are framed in the context of anti-colonial revolution and rebellion. In a characteristic passage in terms of attention to large swaths of geography Paredes writes,

It was a morning late in June. The flat, salty *llano* spread as far as the eye could see ahead and to the right. To the left it was bordered by the chaparral, which encroached upon the flats in an irregular, wavering line. (9)

Narrative point of view pans across the entire *llano*, or plain, and this attention to geography communicates not only setting but a specific historical moment. The panoramic detailing of the widespread chaparral illustrates that this setting is marked by topographical features characteristic of the U.S.-Mexico border. More importantly, however, the space of the chaparral also provides a temporal marker. Given that the *llano* is covered with chaparral “as far as the eye could see,” the reader is cued in on the fact that characters in *George Washington Gómez* are still in the midst of rebellion and revolution. The urbanization of south Texas, and the failure of the Seditious Rebellion, have not been finalized. In this way, the chaparral performs a historicizing function. The stylistic emphasis on a border locale and the objective external narration thus

glimpses a context in which *ranchero* practices and their Mexican practitioners have not completely been, but soon will be, displaced.

If the first part of the novel is dedicated to illustrating the social context of revolution and rebellion, narrated objectively, Paredes also begins to glimpse the silent, internal thoughts of characters precisely as the Seditonist Rebellion is devolving into its final moments. In fact, fifty pages elapse before the novel significantly engages with the protagonist George, whose maturation is the occasion for the most conspicuous examples of modernist subjective narration to occur. Yet there is also a subtle trace of modernist interiority, the rendering of internal consciousness, in relation to Feliciano, the novel's emblematic Border Mexican. Unlike George, who initially flirts with but ultimately rejects the role of fighting back against Texas Rangers, Feliciano is characterized by a militant nationalism. However aggressive his politics may be though, in the end, Feliciano is powerless to curb the spread of Anglo modernity on his own. Thus, the novel portrays the border space of South Texas as moving into a new temporality where anti-colonial insurrection has been terminated. Paredes writes,

Mormón, Mormón, Mormón, mormón, mormón. Coffee watah! Coffee watah! . . . Shortly after dark the day before, they had reached a shack some ten miles beyond San Pedrito, to meet with Anacleto de la Peña. That had been Feliciano's job as Anacleto's contact man with Lupe. But Lupe had insisted that El Negro go along . . . So now he and El Negro were resting not too far from the road, getting ready to go back and tell Lupe. No more ammunition or horses, or food or money or men. No more Anacleto de la Peña. It was all over. Mormón, mormón; mormón, mormón, mormón. (18)

In this passage, the shifting point of view enables a polytemporal account of the moments during and after the Seditonist Rebellion. The third-person commentary of the unnamed narrator is set against the silent thoughts and memories of Feliciano. In terms of the third-person narration, the passage indicates that Feliciano and El Negro, a fellow seditonist, are "ten miles" from San Pedrito, an actual border city in the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas, and close to Brownsville.

Moreover, this narration provides an historical allusion to secessionist figures as a way of situating the text within specific historical moments. For instance, “Anacleto de la Peña” is a portmanteau term in reference to the historical figures Aniceto Pizaña and Luis de la Rosa.¹² As Paredes writes, “when the American soldiers came, Anacleto de la Peña decided he would rather not be a corpse” and so he quits the rebellion, leaving secessionists like Feliciano to face the completion of agricultural modernization of South Texas alone—a modernization that entails not only physical changes to the landscape but also relegates Texas Mexican natives like Feliciano to the abject role of a “Border Mexican” (19). Within this role Feliciano is a racially profiled, second-class citizen in the eyes of Texas Rangers at the same time that he is an instrument now rendered obsolete within the terms of Carranza’s politics. Despite this obsolescence, however, Feliciano maintains an attitude of resistance.

Paredes thus illustrates a border in transition as resilient but marginalized Border Mexicans like Feliciano cede power to the new generation of Texas Mexicans. This historical transition, first narrated objectively, is here stylistically underscored via shifting point of view. The repetition of “mormón, mormón” (Paredes’s typographic depiction of the Spanish pronunciation of Mormon) which opens and closes the above passage is not an authorial phrase rendered in third-person but a subjectively narrated memory of Feliciano. This repetition situates the narrative in a scene where Feliciano watches Gumersindo, George’s father, speak to a Mormon missionary. As a result, “Mormón, mormón” moves Feliciano into a moment before “the movement for a Spanish-speaking Republic of the Southwest had collapsed” (25). In this time-space, the border is still thick with chaparral and Jonesville is not yet gentrified by Anglo settlement. Next, however, the declaration “No more Anacleto de la Peña” situates Feliciano in the stark present where the rebellion *has* collapsed. In this time-space, U.S. Texas Rangers have

virtually cleared seditionists from the border and soon the chaparral will be as well. Yet the movement from past to present, facilitated by alternating between subjective and objective narrative modes, is not mere nostalgia for what was or fading ambition for what could have been. Instead, it provides a historical memory of partitioning a once unified landscape, and culture, north and south of the Rio Grande. By rendering Feliciano's memories through shifts in point of view, Paredes shows that the border-making of the Seditious Rebellion is the most recent articulation of imposing territorial borders. Thus the onset of Anglo modernity, coterminous with the erosion of seditionist values, sets the context for George's interpretation of what it means to be a Mexican in South Texas.

The New Generation Texas Mexican and the Drama of Divided Identity

In Parts II through IV, the formative period of George/Guálinto's developing identity, his consciousness as a Texas Mexican is conditioned by a pattern of revisionist dreaming initiated at school. The institution of school in this regard is an ideological state apparatus in that it prescribes the terms of George's identity through an Anglocentric epistemology. George thus consents to the notion that the border is not a geopolitical construct developed to further state power but a truth. Initially, George is ambivalent about his relationship to the border but ultimately he makes it clear what this border means to him. During his "dear old gringo school days" George positions himself in relation to the border by simultaneously internalizing normative Anglo history, on the one hand, and folk songs and folktales communicated through the Mexican oral tradition, on the other. Paredes writes,

It was he it was who fought the British with George Washington and Francis Marion the Swamp Fox, discovered pirate treasure with Long John Silver, and got lost in a cave with Tom Sawyer and Becky Thatcher. Books had made him so. He read everything he could lay his hands on. (148)

In school George imagines himself as participating in and therefore rewriting the world of Anglo history and narrative. George dreams of involvement in the American Revolutionary War alongside Francis Marion and his namesake George Washington. In this regard, Paredes characterizes George as associating with the American patronyms constitutive of U.S. foundation narratives. Moreover, George fantasizes about living out the fictional accounts of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* and Mark Twain's "Tom Sawyer" series. George's developing literacy is in this way portrayed as the process of writing one's identity during the formative school-age years. Paredes writes that "George Washington Gómez secretly desired to be a full-fledged, complete American without the shameful encumberment of his Mexican race" (148). On one level, therefore, George's assimilation into Anglo identity is aided and abetted by exposure to national romances codified as official U.S. history.

George's internalization of normative Anglo history is countered, however, by the teachings he receives at home. Immediately after the last sentence of the above quote, Paredes writes, "[b]ut he also heard from the lips of his elders songs and stories that were the history of his people, the Mexican people. And he also fought the Spaniards with Hidalgo," continues Paredes, "the French with Juárez and Zaragoza, and the Gringos with Blas María de la Garza Falcón and Juan Nepomuceno Cortina in his childish fancies" (148). George might be taught through Anglo lessons but Paredes's focus on "stories" and "history" from the "lips" of his people underscores the idea that there are different modes of knowledge at work during George's socialization in school. In this regard, the Mexican oral tradition is an alternative, though one George ultimately renounces, to ordering the world through the conventional Anglocentric means. As George participates vicariously in the American Revolutionary War he also imagines himself struggling alongside Hidalgo in the early 19th century for Mexican Independence,

resisting the French occupation of Mexico with Juárez and Zaragosa in the mid-19th century, and battling Texas Rangers with Cortina and Falcón. On the face of it, George is negotiating two opposite identities, Mexican and American, during his school years. Paredes suggests as much by referring to his protagonist as “Guálinto/George” in this section. In fact, while discussing Anglo history, his protagonist is marked as “George” and when commenting on Mexican history he is “Guálinto.” Yet Paredes also clarifies that George’s story is not simply an assimilationist narrative. “Immigrants from Europe can become Americanized in one generation,” Paredes writes, but “Guálinto, as a Mexicotexan, could not” (148). George cannot so easily assimilate given that the border space of Jonesville is a palimpsest onto which have been transposed the narratives of Anglo and Mexican history. George’s national self-identification as either a “Border Mexican,” like his uncle Feliciano, or as an assimilated Mexican-American, like his namesake suggests, is informed by his absorption, and interpretation, of these histories. In depicting this struggle Paredes illuminates the non-physical aspect of border-making: the re-articulation of the geopolitical border requires George to see Anglo modernity not as colonization but as progress. He must, in other words, perceive the South Texas border not as conditioned by hegemony but as the natural order of things.

The fifth and final part of the novel depicts George’s return to South Texas after college and several years of absence which, although elided from the text, are crucial to its interrogation of colonial modernity. Upon his return, George has become a U.S. military intelligence agent and in this regard his character plays a vital role in safeguarding the reproduction of the means of production. George, that is to say, effectively works to perpetuate the border as a colonial site of U.S. power and thus to reproduce the conditions enabling Anglo modernity. At the close of the novel, George self-identifies as American at the same time that he cannot totally deny his

Mexican roots. This conflict of national identity is enacted in George's dreams and daytime fantasies. Further, these visions counterpoint actual historical events, namely, the U.S. conquest of Mexican territory during the Texas Revolution. From the position of a self-identifying assimilated Anglo-American George involuntarily dreams of undoing colonization. Yet even as he reconstructs Texas-Mexican history to undo conquest his material reality situates him on the side of the conquerors. In the specific instance quoted below the narrative mechanism for expressing such irremediable flux is Paredes's combination of free indirect discourse, free direct discourse, and to a lesser degree third person omniscient. Significantly, Paredes alternates between subjectivist and objectivist narration in order to expose the conflict between George's historical memory and his lived present. After an unspecified number of years away from South Texas George returns home to spy on the political organizing of his former high-school friends. Realizing his job as a "border security" agent, one friend publicly vilifies George as a "*vendido sanavabiche*." George, after all, was to be a "leader of his people." Yet the contrast between George's fantasy of counterconquest and his waking identity as a border security agent is more complex than this assimilationist narrative. Paredes writes,

He is lying on his stomach at the summit of a hill, watching through a spy glass. The battle of San Jacinto has just ended with the rout of Santa Anna's forces and the capture of the dictator in his underwear. The wild horde of land pirates that form Sam Houston's command have satisfied their blood lust on the Mexican wounded and are now gathered in triumph. The time has come. He gives the command . . . Houston is easily captured . . . Texas and the Southwest will remain forever Mexican . . . The third time this past week. Goddam ridiculous, having the daydreams of his boyhood come back to him in his sleep . . . Why do I keep doing this? Why do I keep on fighting battles that were won and lost a long time ago? Lost by me and won by me too? They have no meaning now. (281, 282).

On one level, the shifting point of view registers the irony that George, born on the border of San Pedrito and in this way a Border Mexican, now works as "a first lieutenant in counter-intelligence" to secure the border (299). This irony is communicated in a passage composed

primarily of free indirect discourse. Further, “he is lying” assumes a deictic function, indicating to the reader the time, the now of the dream, and space where George is “lying.” Moreover, the narrative voice in the passage is colored by George’s silent character thoughts. In narratological terms, the text’s narrator is reporting the thoughts of George, the focalizer. “Thanks to free indirect style,” writes James Wood, “we see things through the character’s eyes and language but also through the author’s eyes and language. “We inhabit,” Woods continues, “omniscience and partiality at once” (11). George’s internal silent thoughts are reported to the reader without the typical authorial flagging of third-person omniscient. Yet this passage is not only about irony but the fissures in the identity George has assembled in relation to the border.

Despite the fact that George, at the close of the novel, works to naturalize the border by upholding the false premise that territory is equivalent to space he cannot evade the border’s constructedness and this fact is illuminated through the emergence of combined free direct and indirect discourse. The dream passage is rendered almost entirely in free indirect discourse except for one curious narrative instance. “He gives the command” is a subjective character thought, so presumably it is a continuation of free indirect, except for the present tense (“gives”), which is characteristic of free direct discourse. Rimmon-Kenan defines this latter term as “direct discourse shorn of its conventional orthographic cues” (110). As a result, this sentence is an anomaly in its mixture of free indirect and free direct discourse elements but, more importantly, constitutes a rhetorical turn in the passage. That is to say, the mixed narration highlights a major shift at the level of form as well as content. After this sentence, “Houston is easily captured” with the result that “Texas and the Southwest will remain forever Mexican.” Following the appearance of mixed free direct discourse George noticeably, and radically, rewrites the final and decisive battle in the history of the Texas Revolution—the 1836 Battle of San Jacinto, in which

Texan forces prevailed over the Mexican Army, effectively overturning the U.S. loss at the Alamo, and thereby paving the way for Texan independence. Thus, in contrast to George's dream, the fact of this battle is that Houston is not "easily captured." Moreover, in this battle Santa Anna was not "hanged," as George dreams. Instead, General Lopez de Santa Anna signed a peace treaty which stipulated that the Mexican army leave Texas. Ultimately, the Battle of San Jacinto led to the emergence of the Republic of Texas and is thus central to the history of border-making which crystallizes in 1848. By disrupting the stylistic pattern of free indirect discourse through interjecting free direct, the text upsets the facile separation of time, in particular historical memory, from space, which in this case is the South Texas border. Specifically, the text will not allow the allocation of George's insurrectionist memories, and the tangible realities of his role in state surveillance, onto purely territorial axes; and it is form itself which refuses a one-dimensional account of space. Therefore, although his external reality as a border security agent is to reify the border as a truth of the South Texas social formation, George subconsciously cannot deny that the border is a geopolitical construct.

Paredes's use of interiority reveals George's frustration at, and foregrounds the significance of, what George perceives to be meaningless dreams. There is a clear discrepancy between the outcome of these historical events and the way George fantasizes about them, and this historical alteration occurs after the unit "gives the command." Upon waking, the narrative point of view unequivocally shifts from free indirect to free direct discourse. The passage's narrative transition is clear in the use of the first-person pronoun expressing George's internal questioning: "Why do I keep doing this?" As much as George believes these dreams to be insignificant, however, they are in fact quite meaningful. By using free direct discourse, Paredes is able to glimpse the mind of George as it travels back to the historical moment of 1836. This

flashback underscores the fact that George is actually a *mexicano* born in the lower valley of *Tejas* which became Texas only as a result of U.S. colonization following the Battle of San Jacinto. In his present moment George publicly denies what his mind privately will not allow him to forget: he is and always will be a native of the border. This persistent historical memory is critical in revealing that George's identity is defined in relation to a border that is more than territorial. By alternating point of view, Paredes foregrounds the constructedness of the border which in turn exposes the tenuousness of George's Anglo national identity.

The Mis-Education of Guálinto and the Maturation of U.S. Nativism

The novel's concluding scenes provide an assessment, highly critical, of the final persona "George," his conception of modernity, and the means by which this is achieved. In this final section, the nativist "George" is in direct opposition to the earlier Guálinto and his hopes of becoming a symbolic *corrido* warrior. Importantly, the text's critique of "George" is rendered in the closing sections of the novel through both an engagement with and the excision of material regarding "George's" education. Specifically, narrative attention in the conclusion is focused primarily on the moments leading up to Guálinto's graduation from high school at the same time that his university, and military, training are left out of the text altogether. This excision is all the more striking in light of the stark contrast between George/Guálinto's character during and well after graduation from high school. Indeed, the character shift between the border-based aspirations for revolution, on the one hand, and the complete rejection of these values in favor of an Anglicized identity, on the other, is foregrounded through the text's naming strategy. In particular, before he leaves South Texas for university, Paredes identifies the would-be revolutionary through his "Indian name" Guálinto. Moreover, prior to the dream sequences analyzed above, Guálinto desires to take the resistant nationalism characteristic of the Border

Mexican to its extreme as a result of learning his father was shot and killed by Texas Rangers. Clearly in an aggravated state after discovering the cause of his father's death, Guálinto states, "Why isn't it 1916 right now? . . . Then I could get a rifle and go into the woods and kill and kill and kill" (264). Furthermore, Guálinto not only wants to rekindle the militant nationalism undergirding the Seditious Rebellion but also apparently shares that movement's impulse to challenge the terms of Anglo modernity. Within the fictional world of *George Washington Gómez* modernization proceeds along a single axis and necessarily requires the adaptation and internalization of Anglo cultural values, including acculturation at a university setting. However, as Paredes writes, Guálinto "was adamant about not going to college" (266). Guálinto, therefore, will not ascribe to the terms of Anglo modernity and apparently will reject the institutionalization of university and the military—except that he does not stay but instead leaves and this departure is made possible on the strength of his high school principal's influence, Mr. Darwin, and Feliciano's money.

George's dependence on Mr. Darwin forecasts a transitioning social formation where power is articulated no longer simply through agricultural modernization but in prescribing an Anglocentric middle-class subjectivity. At this point in the novel, immediately before George graduates, the South Texas community is still reeling from the aftereffects of the Great Depression. Thus, the colonial modernity underpinning this particular social formation is characterized not only by physical changes to the landscape. It is also marked, profoundly, by the tension between the industrial capitalism giving way to financial capitalism and their accompanying middle-class ideologies. Schedler, for instance, argues that "By the end of the novel, Feliciano has become a fairly well-off, middle-class landowner with two houses and his own farm" (162). Yet, while Feliciano's land and home ownership situate him within the larger

context of transitioning capitalism he does not share the Anglo-oriented middle-class subjectivity into which the character of George devolves. Rather, this orientation toward an Anglocentric middle-class identity is figured through and facilitated by Mr. Darwin. That is to say, Mr. Darwin does not transmit middle-class values directly to George but actively vouches for George's college acceptance, after which the most radical changes in George's character are portrayed.

The allegorically named character "Mr. Darwin," plays a pivotal role in facilitating George's acceptance to university—the process of what George believes to be inevitable cultural evolution. As is shown below, however, this desire to culturally evolve is actually a skewed development. Initially, George's story appears to be that of a maturation narrative. Regarding Mr. Darwin, George states, "when my grades were not so good this spring, he told me I could still go to college if I wanted to." George adds, tellingly, "he knows some important people at the University. He'll write a letter in my favor. He will also talk to them on the telephone" (279). George thus makes it to university not on the strength of his grades alone but through subscribing to Anglo institutions. After the financial crisis, Feliciano's bank savings are liquidated, yet a "cache" for George's tuition is still available as a result of Feliciano's labor and the money he accumulated in what he sardonically terms "the backward *ranchero* way" during an argument with George (192). However, in addition to this money, George also requires Mr. Darwin's connections to "important people." In other words, whether consciously or not, George has to subscribe to the paternalistic terms of Anglo institutions that dictate who can and cannot accede based not on merit but pedigree. From a biological standpoint, George of course is not white but once he returns from college he unabashedly rejects his Mexican-American heritage in favor of national self-identification as an Anglo-American. Thus, survival of the fittest, as it were, is a

question of abluting *mexicano* and *ranchero* identities, through total immersion in an Anglocentric middle-class subjectivity, and this process, which congeals at university, is entirely left out of the novel.

The omission of George's university training provides a critique, though not a dismissal, of the teleology of progress narratives fundamental to the version of Anglo modernity presented in the text. By leaving George's university experience out of the novel, the text does not suggest that this experience is insignificant, but it does imply that this training is problematic. The negative consequences of this training are foregrounded by the complete reversal in George's character, especially his attitude toward the South Texas border. George returns to Jonesville after "getting his degree and being admitted to the bar" at a university which goes unnamed in the text. Moreover, George is armed not only with a university degree but, at an undisclosed location, "had been trained for almost three years for an assignment in southern California" only to be reassigned to Jonesville (285). While George is in Jonesville under the pretense of working for a law firm, it is only when confronted by Feliciano that he confesses the reason for returning to South Texas. "I am in the Army," George states, and adds, "I'm a first lieutenant in counter-intelligence...My job is border security" (299). This role as border security agent is clearly at odds with George's earlier desire to return to 1916 and "kill." Ostensibly, this change is directly the result of George's training, both as a lawyer and as a soldier. Yet this training is never actually portrayed in the text. Consequently, the text does not suggest the causal relationship that George abandoned the values of a Border Mexican because he was trained at an Anglo institution. Rather, the reversal in George's character is the formal articulation of a de-historicized border. Just as George's present-day identity as an Anglo-American is premised on the false belief in the border as a naturalized territorial divider, Paredes traces "Guálinto's"

devolution into “George” by literally cutting time from the novel. As a result, what was once for Guálinto the potential site of a generationally transmitted resistant border nationalism has instead now solidified as a domain of U.S. state power. Specifically, George’s belief that he is gathering “counter-intelligence” to stomp out insurgencies, real or imagined, is an early instance of the by now oft-cited though much-maligned rhetoric of national security. In this way, by leaving out George’s time at university, the text challenges cause and effect, thus proposing not a static and unchanging border but one which is continually re-articulated.

The end of the novel constitutes an emphatic condemnation of George’s conversion from a potential revolutionary figure into a U.S. government intelligence agent. In these final moments of the text, George no longer thinks that Anglos “were the cause of all evil . . . [that] they came, they took away everything we had, they made us foreigners in our own land” (273). Instead, his face “harden[s]” while recalling that Feliciano encountered many Texas Rangers, the same government agency who killed his father, “over the sights of [his] rifle” (299). Like Saldívar, who observes that the narrative is characterized by “internal contradictions and hierarchical complexities in the mode of irony,” this chapter asserts that in an ironic twist of character development George moves from “hating” Anglos to wanting to be one of them (156). However, Saldívar also posits that in the end, “[h]overing between his view of himself and others’ view of him—each affecting the other continually in the checkerboard of his consciousness—Guálinto Gómez could make nothing absolute of his Mexican or American identities” (188). Crucially, therefore, unlike Saldívar, this chapter contends that the novel’s culminating rhetorical gestures mark George, in spite of revisionist dreaming, as decidedly Anglo-American and anti-Mexican. After his Battle of San Jacinto dream, George is lying in bed and begins to think of his soon-to-be born first son. Paredes’s narrator comments that the “thought” that George’s son “would be

blond and blue eyed” “pleased him very much” (282). In this way, George’s earlier anti-Anglo nationalism has transformed into an admiration of Nordic phenotypic features. Further, George believes that in order for Mexicans to progress socially, to “make something of themselves,” they have to “get rid of their Mexican Greaser attitudes” (300). Significantly, for George this reconstructed and Anglicized identity is defined by his “career” as a “border security” agent. This character shift, however, registers not assimilation in and of itself but the interpellation of a subject who consents to the border as always already there instead of as an imposed coloniality. In other words, the U.S.-Mexico border, for George, is nothing if not an absolute marker of difference and belonging. Those native to the Rio Grande valley were made “foreigners in [their] own land” by the colonial imposition of the U.S.-Mexico border, a process which was subtended by physical violence as much as by Anglocentric epistemologies of space (Paredes 273). The prodigal returnee George, however, conditioned by hegemony to believe that he is both modernizing in terms of “progress,” while also safeguarding modernity, by “securing” the border, cannot see its constructedness. Yet even as George figures the naturalization of territorial borders the character of Feliciano disrupts this reification.

The novel’s concluding rhetorical gestures, provided by Feliciano, reject George’s normative conception of the border and by extension his vision of modernity. “Rhetorical gestures” refers to both the exchange between George and Feliciano as well as the grammatical construction that culminates the novel. In the final showdown between George and Feliciano, for instance, George states, “I am doing what I do in the service of my country.” Yet when Feliciano asks, “[d]oes ‘your country’ include the Mexicans living in it?,” George deflects and cannot respond. This back and forth, as a matter of fact, is characterized less as an equal exchange than as a settling of accounts in which Feliciano constantly has the upper hand. Paredes writes that

George “looked embarrassed,” repeatedly marks him as “impatient,” that he wore “the flustered look of a child caught misbehaving” (298-300). At work in this scene is the border modernism variant of objectivity: third-person narration seems detached but is in fact emotionally charged in working toward a condemnation of George’s newfound allegiance. This judgment comes into relief when set within the larger context of shifting narrative modes, especially the rendering of George’s consciousness. In this sense Paredes’s involved narrator settles any question about George’s potential ambivalence regarding identity. Moreover, this contrast between the “shrewd” Feliciano and the “flustered” George is accentuated by a role reversal in the sense that it is the “backward *ranchero*” and one-time *sedicioso* interrogating the “famous lawyer” and “first-lieutenant,” and not the other way around (292, 299). Finally, Feliciano disrupts George’s conception of the border not only because he gets the better of him in a war of words. Instead, Paredes frames this disruption by returning to an earlier moment of border-making.

Feliciano’s ironic use of a grammatical construction evocative of an earlier pivotal moment of border violence punctuates the novel and constitutes the final denunciation of George. As illustrated above, during the Seditious Rebellion, the failure of which cleared the way for a newly articulated territorial border, Gumersindo was shot and killed by Texas Rangers. His dying words were “My son. Mustn’t know. Ever. No hate, no hate”—the reason that Feliciano raised George according to a policy of appeasement regarding the South Texas history of internecine conflict (21). Specifically, after Gumersindo’s death, Feliciano made it his mission to steer George away from militant border nationalism and toward acculturation via schooling in order to prevent George’s participation in border violence. During the novel’s conclusion Feliciano states, “[t]his is one of those times when I wish I believed . . . in a life after death,” so that he could “sit down” with George’s father and “have a good long talk” (302). George reads

this as an attempt at making light of the situation: “I didn’t know you had a sense of humor.” Feliciano replies, “I don’t,” and these are the very last words with which Paredes concludes his border history. As a negative contraction, Feliciano’s “I don’t” is the rhetorical echo of Gumersindo’s “mustn’t.” Additionally, from a formal standpoint, the interplay between narrative modes is punctuated by a non-approving third-person voice: for Feliciano there is nothing humorous about the fact that George actively participates in the military surveillance of the border under pretense of “watch[ing] for sabotage” (299). Most importantly, the novel’s structural arc of Guálinto/George, and its related mix of exterior/interior narration, reaches an endpoint defined by total irony. According to Gumersindo, George “must not know” hate except that in the novel’s final scene this hatred, borne of an assumed fundamental difference, is all George knows; George hates Mexicans because he fears they will overrun the border. Therefore, by ending the novel with the former seditionist (and symbolic *corrido* warrior) Feliciano stressing “I don’t,” the teleology through which George believes Mexicans can “make something of themselves” is negated as false: “Guálinto’s” emergence as a “leader of his people” is exposed as skewed development—not as maturation and modernization but as degeneration into the chauvinistic “George” and his state-sanctioned policing of the border.

The U.S.-Mexico Border and *The 42nd Parallel*

Moving from the local border site in *George Washington Gómez* to a hemispheric scale in Dos Passos, this second section reveals that the episteme of space-as-territory provides a mode of regulating the border even as the U.S. establishment of pro-capitalist regimes during the 1910 Mexican Revolution operates through de-territorialization. As the section illustrates, the spread of a trans-American empire is an off-site process in that it does not require the appropriation of land, as in *George Washington Gómez*, but operates through the market capitalist process of oil

profiteering on and below the border. Paradoxically, the border is de-territorialized but exhibits a regulatory force in that it is a spatial divider undergirding U.S.-Mexican border asymmetries. Despite the fact that the border's de-territorialization is articulated thematically and stylistically, on one level the border maintains an epistemic configuration in that as the site of an endlessly reproductive U.S. capital it registers a temporality that begins and ends with an imperialist vision of modernity. However, the promise of this fantasy is upset in that the text stops short of fully realizing it through the conflict between revolutionary Mac and capitalist Moorehouse, which results in their mutual dissolution. Significantly, this section demonstrates that in order to make this argument, the text's version of border modernism is inflected by the careful adaptation of Mexican mural aesthetics. Specifically, the novel bridges the realist principles of accumulating a welter of detail and epic scale with the modernist iteration of simultaneity by implementing the compositional strategy of "narrative panorama," a strategy developed in the crucible of Dos Passos's reaction to and experience of Revolution-era murals. In order to understand the aesthetic role of Mexico, and the revolution, for Dos Passos's "modernist counterepic," a discussion of his travels to Mexico and his experiences there is warranted.

One of the most significant aesthetic outcomes of his time in Mexico is the way in which Dos Passos was formally influenced by the vast murals of Mexican revolutionary artists which resulted in the creation of a unique border modernist style. This fact, although ignored in major and contemporary Dos Passos criticism, cannot be overlooked. According to biographer Townsend Ludington, Dos Passos was in Mexico to "dig up dope about various things" (250). Actually, Dos Passos's time in Mexico was more significant than itinerant searching and his consistent travel to and from Mexico between 1926 and 1946 no doubt suggests more than wanderlust.¹³ As a matter of fact, this constant travel south proves crucial, for it led to the genesis

of *U.S.A.* Additionally, Mexico, and its borderlands, provides the setting for a significant portion of *The 42nd Parallel*; also, during his Mexico visits Dos Passos met with people who served as the basis for characters in the novel, and, importantly, experienced Mexican murals. Thus, Dos Passos's frequent visits to Mexico resulted in his borrowing from Mexican muralists with the result that the panoramic aspect of murals operates as an organizational logic in the trilogy. Mexico, therefore, has generative and stylistic consequences for Dos Passos in providing the raw source material for a treatment of empire and revolution as well as undergirding the compositional logic for *U.S.A.* However, according to Dos Passos criticism, the role of Mexico in the novel is markedly different. The consensus in reading this criticism is that Mexico is a passing interest ultimately subordinate to themes such as America's entry into World War One and the subsequent developments of post-war American capital. Yet, as this section proves, critical readings of such developments are decidedly U.S.-centric, overlooking the way in which American capitalism was bolstered, in large part, by traveling outside U.S. borders. The following section thus analyzes Dos Passos's synthesis of modernist form and Mexican mural aesthetics to show how a populist movement for self-determination is co-opted by U.S. hegemony in the interest of securing the border as a site of capital and thus maximizing power through a strategy of dispersal.

Mexico Matters: Empire and the Border Setting in *The 42nd Parallel*

Critical interpretations of the trilogy's formal arrangement primarily rely on machine aesthetics. For instance, Gretchen Foster writes that Dos Passos was "both fascinated and repelled by the machine age," and, "wanting somehow to 'justify the way of machinery to man,' he began to see himself as a kind of movie machine, imaging and recording his times as no novelist had done before" (186). Foster uses cinematic language to argue that the distinct modes

of the text comprise a “vertical montage” where the four forms are “superimposed” onto one another to produce a continuous shot of American life. Elsewhere Michael Denning argues that Dos Passos “fashioned an aesthetic ideology around the figure of the writer as ‘technician,’ the writer as engineer or machinist,” before citing the author’s statement that “a writer is after all only a machine for absorbing and arranging certain sequences of words . . .” (178). Further, Denning uses Dos Passos’s reference to *U.S.A.* as a “four-way conveyor system” as a lens by which to argue that the organizing logic of the trilogy is defined by what Denning calls “an aesthetic Taylorism, a divided and rationalized labor” (170). In this reading, *U.S.A.* is a regimented machine where the four narrative modes churn out different blocks of text. Most recently, Wesley Beal reads the formal composition of the trilogy as an early instance of what is now referred to as “network narration.” In Beal’s reading, *U.S.A.* is defined by the logic of “Fordism,” where distinct formal elements operate “separately” but “contemporaneously,” working in isolation but ultimately integrated as part of a larger narrative machine (4).

While these critiques speak to the established modernist concern with new technologies of the machine age, they also strikingly overlook the peripheral geographies crucial for an alternate set of modernisms. In fact, this preoccupation with machines is symptomatic not only of modernism as urban but as singularly emanating from the canonical metropolises. From this perspective, the accent of Dos Passos’s modernism falls not on style in and of itself but his stylistic renderings of famed cityscapes, specifically, New York. By contrast, this section proves how *The 42nd Parallel* is characterized by a modernism oriented south toward the U.S.-Mexico border. As is illustrated, Dos Passos’s fusion of narrating historical change at an epic scale and Mexican muralist influence in depicting the simultaneity of past and present constitutes the “border” modernism of *The 42nd Parallel*. In doing so, this section adapts Denning’s account of

“the decline and fall of the Lincoln republic.” In its original conception the Lincoln republic was an ideal of government based on horizontal social relationships. In its actual manifestation the Lincoln republic “had been lost to the great robber barons, to Mr McKinley’s wars in the Caribbean and the Pacific, and to Mr Wilson’s war in Europe” (168). The “republic that became an empire” in pursuit of “big money,” Denning argues, is the “heart of Dos Passos’s history” (169, 172). For Denning, the fundamental issue of *U.S.A.* is the way in which American capitalism reaffirmed class divisions. By contrast, this section details how Dos Passos shows that the transformation of America from republic to empire did not occur exclusively within the borders of the contiguous U.S. As a matter of fact, America’s transition from republic to empire is linked to American imperial interests in Mexico leading up to and during the Mexican Revolution. As is demonstrated, the effort to reveal the American republic’s devolution into an empire leads Dos Passos to shift the focus from the national center to the peripheries, setting narration on—and having it cross—the territorial borders of the U.S. and Latin America.

Dos Passos’s account of the way in which American oil interests in Mexico geopolitically linked the two countries and ultimately re-articulated U.S. empire is realized through the strategy of “narrative panorama.” Reflecting on his technique in *The 42nd Parallel*, Dos Passos writes, “*Three Soldiers* and *Manhattan Transfer* had been single panels; now, somewhat as the Mexican painters felt compelled to paint their walls, I felt compelled to start on a narrative panorama to which I saw no end” (69). In explaining this term Dos Passos does not provide a definition. However, his 1927 account of Mexican muralists can be read as signposting a corpus of work from which he adapted to generate his fiction, writing that the work of Roberto Montenegro, Diego Rivera and Clemente Orozco was “a challenge shouted in the face of the rest of the world” (“Paint the Revolution!” 599). He continued this challenge in *U.S.A.* through its multimodal

strategies. Much like the Mexican Revolution virtually appeared everywhere, displayed on walls, vocalized in folk songs, covered in news reports and spread through word of mouth, history is omnipresent in *The 42nd Parallel* via character sections, newsreels, camera eye and literary biography. In particular, narrative panorama is utilized in order to mediate how the devolution of the U.S. republic into an empire is both accelerated by and exerts a newly articulated spatial logic: not colonization but an imaginary in which borders are figured as nexus points in a constantly expanding imperial map.

South Bound for Revolution: Histories of Violence in Borderlands Geography

In order to show how the consolidation of U.S. imperial power depends on a strategy of de-centering, the text underscores that shifting geographies, despite their lack of stability in that they constantly change, nonetheless constitute a historical pattern of hegemony. Even before the narrative begins, key geographic allusions refract the violence of human mapping practices calibrated toward border-making. Specifically, the title of the novel itself announces the historical production of borders through coercion and consent in that it is an allusion to the 1819 Adams-Onís Treaty between the U.S. and the Spanish empire.¹⁴ As Walter Nugent observes, the treaty established “New Spain’s northernmost boundary at the forty-second parallel” (127). Further, this boundary would prove crucial in the U.S. annexation of Texas, which in turn exacerbated the tensions leading up to the Mexican-American War, and therefore is intertwined with the hegemonic process of instituting border asymmetries.¹⁵ In this way, while Mac’s section opens in Middletown, Connecticut, and thus ostensibly in a paradigmatically American landscape of New England, his story is not one of a celebratory nationalism. Instead, it is about establishing and maintaining networks of imperial power by travelling outside of and regulating the borders of the imagined collective that is the nation.

The novel enacts the process of de-centering key to the hemispheric spread of U.S. empire by creating a synchronous relationship between setting and narrative time in its sequencing of character sections and “Newsreels.” Significantly, the relationship between setting and narrative time is not restricted to the fictional world of the text; instead, it figures actual historical timelines. In other words, the link between setting and narrative time is used in order to clock the onset of Mexican Revolution, and thus showcase the tension between U.S. involvement as economically motivated political opportunism versus the resistance to this marketization. By interspersing newsreels that announce revolutionary activity between character sections focused on Mac, Dos Passos foregrounds how Mac’s movement, beginning in Connecticut, travelling across the country to California and eventually into Mexico, is concurrent with the emergence of the revolution. In this regard, the text’s formal arrangement does not suggest an “aesthetic Taylorism” of “divided and rationalized labor,” as Denning states, or a “Fordism” of “separate” but “contemporaneous” forms, as in Beal’s reading. Rather, the organization of the novel suggests that spatialization is not diametrically opposed to historical awareness, a dichotomy at the core of an imperialist conception of the U.S.-Mexico border. As a matter of fact, the closer Mac is to the border the more immediate the Mexican Revolution in the novel. Thus, as the revolution emerges as and changes from a nascent development to a fully-fledged populist movement, labor sympathizer Fenian “Mac” McCreary, whose namesake evokes the struggle for independence, heads south. At the same time, oil-rich Mexico, burdened by the cost of revolution, is both volatile and potentially lucrative for American interests. Those with tenuous economic positions exit north while for others the south becomes a vital site for maximizing American capital abroad and thus solidifying power through dispersal.

The novel makes available a historical context of border-making in which to situate Mac's travel south through temporally specific "Newsreels." At the close of the fourth character section, Mac is somewhere in the Pacific Northwest, and the date is indeterminate, after which "Newsreels VI" and "VII" elapse, and these are key. They provide a specific year, 1907, thus registering the novel's larger temporal arc, but also pinpoint the timeline of Mac's border-crossing during the Revolution. "Newsreels VI" and "VII" respectively announce: "HARRIMAN SHOWN AS RAIL COLOSSUS" and "BIG FOUR TRAIN BLOWN TO PIECES" (63, 67). A characteristic reading of these headlines would be to suggest that they communicate the modernist viewpoint of social life as fragmentary. Charles Marz, for instance, writes that meanings in the trilogy "are not generated by the historical exactness but by the random collision of voices." "The Newsreels," Marz continues, "are composed of unintelligible verbal fragments in agitated motion" (124, 125). No doubt readings such as Marz's are attentive to the political and economic changes in tempo of the early 20th century and thus indicate modernism's concern with speed and pace. The problem, however, is that such readings cast modernism as a project singularly preoccupied with the entropy of modern life, whose epicenter is all too predictably always the city; and in the context of American modernism this version of a metropolitan center is often symbolized by New York. This section argues, however, that instead of reading the newsreels as accidental communicative fragments it is useful to see them as historical signposts, that is, that alongside the novel's multiple forms, they help plot out a particular story. In this specific instance, by alluding to railroads in Newsreels "VI" and "VII" Dos Passos moves the plot, and Mac, closer to revolution and simultaneously invokes the historical production of borders. The "HARRIMAN" headline is a reference to E.H. Harriman, an American railroad magnate who served as director of both the Union Pacific and the Southern

Pacific railroad companies. Additionally, the “Big Four” refers to a rail system operated by various corporations, of which the many executives include Harriman, who actually sold a rail company that later ran trains along this system. More importantly, however, both headlines, aside from their connection to Harriman, are from 1907, which underscores the last years of the Porfirio Díaz dictatorship also known as the *Porfiriato*. In this way, the headlines forecast the eruption of Mexican Revolution in which Mac will participate but also mark the geography through which he travels as mapped out through physical and epistemic violence.

Reading the newsreels as historical signposts necessitates recognition of how the establishment of U.S. railroads, such as the Southern Pacific, requires the forceful control of the borderlands, the dispossession of its people, and the privileging of U.S.-centric spatial epistemologies. As has been illustrated in the fiction of María Amparo Ruiz de Burton’s *The Squatter and the Don* (1885) and Frank Norris’s *The Octopus: A Story of California* (1901), landowners were dispossessed through statutes such as the No Fence Law, the Land Act of 1851 and the Homestead Act of 1862, as well as by large railroad corporations. As a matter of fact, the Mussel Slough Tragedy, resulting in the deaths of seven people over a land conflict with the Southern Pacific, is the inspiration for Norris’s novel. Significantly, therefore, in *The 42nd Parallel*, the Southern Pacific is explicitly mentioned twice in Mac’s sections (61, 98) aside from the previously mentioned Harriman allusion. Moreover, not only does Dos Passos allude to this rail line but actively moves the plot forward through it: by 1910, a date provided by an authorial comment, Mac arrives in California by travelling on the Southern Pacific (98). As Dos Passos writes, “Madero had started his revolution. The fall of Diaz was expected any day,” and it is this context, in which “Everybody talked Mexico,” that sets the stage for Mac’s border-crossing (95). Furthermore, in a narrative panorama rife with American figures known to most students of U.S.

history, Dos Passos also includes Francisco Madero and Porfirio Díaz, perhaps less known but equally important for an alternative history of the U.S. which is attentive to borders. Madero is known to U.S.-Mexico border scholars as the figure who initiated the revolution while exiled in San Antonio via the Plan of San Luis Potosí, which strategized that the Mexican Revolution occur on November 20, 1910. By the time Dos Passos's unnamed narrator states that "the papers carried the murder of Madero in Mexico City," it is 1913 (96). Two weeks later Mac travels from California to Arizona and finally arrives in Mexico on Harriman's railway. As Dos Passos writes, Mac "beat his way along the Southern Pacific" in order to "see the revolution" (98). Significantly, the death of Madero exacerbates a volatile political context which in turn threatens to stimulate the exodus of American capital from Mexico. In order to maintain a firm grip on the lucrative oil trade, therefore, the U.S. government supports Northern caudillos willing to sell Mexico under the allure of modernization. This historical detail comes into relief only through the interplay between "Newsreels" and character sections. By rendering a panoramic account of a trans-American empire and its strategy of de-territorialization, the text foregrounds how the geography of Mac's route takes place across unseen but material lines of force: power is articulated through physical acts of violence such as land appropriation, making realizable the spread of U.S. railroads in the borderlands, and crucially it is also exerted by repressing these border-making histories, thus naturalizing U.S.-Mexico borderlines. At the same time, the institutionalization of U.S. power in revolutionary Mexico is a question of intangible but markedly discernible economic policy.

Entering and Exiting the Imperial Border of the Mexican Revolution: Transnationalizing the Dialectic of American Capital and Labor

Mac's entry into Mexico, concurrent with American capital on the verge of exiting it, figures the border's changing form of appearance resulting from the continued primacy of U.S. oil trusts during the Mexican Revolution. Paul Hart argues that "three main struggles defined Mexico's Revolution": the desire for land redistribution by "peasants and landless laborers," "anarchist inspired revolutionary demands for worker control of production, distribution and profits," and finally the combined demands of "a representative democracy" plus "modernization through government support of Mexican businesses versus powerful, and previously privileged, foreign capital" (8, 9). Moreover, Hart observes that while some demands were longstanding, others stemmed from dissatisfaction with the *Porfiriato* and its preference for foreign economic interests over local needs. In fact, Díaz came to power in 1876 with support from "powerful Americans interested in economic opportunities in Mexico" (9). While Mac is in the borderlands of South Texas about to cross into Mexico, however, it appears that "powerful Americans" are fleeing Mexico and headed north. Dos Passos writes that "the bars of El Paso were full of ranchers and mining men bemoaning the good old days when Porfirio Diaz was in power and a white man could make money in Mexico" (98). The "Juárez" into which Mac arrives in 1913 is therefore characterized by the co-presence of competing factions, from the Mexican "landless laborers" and the "bourgeois" rebels Hart mentions, to the American investors tensely awaiting the revolution's outcome. While American capital is seemingly on the brink of a complete northward return, Mac crosses the border into Juárez on the "international bridge" linking the U.S. to Mexico; the same bridge where the meeting between Colonel A.P. Blockson and

Venustiano Carranza symbolically established Carranza's 1915 presidency, as discussed in the above section on *George Washington Gómez*.

Significantly, if the labor-capital dialectic seems poised to yet again underscore U.S. power, the novel's mural-inspired form suggests the urgency of recognizing peripheral modernities, and by doing so, the capacity for re-writing the border outside of imperial contours. No doubt mural aesthetics function as a larger organizing structure but are also visible at a more local level within Dos Passos's prose, oriented toward the depiction of revolutionary Juárez, and deployed precisely at the moment Mac crosses the border. Hence, it is the use of Dos Passos's border modernist style itself which foregrounds the articulation of a local and non-hegemonic time-space. Mac arrives in Mexico looking for Ricardo Perez, "whom one of the Mexican anarchists in Los Angeles had told him to look up." As Perez and Mac walk the streets of Juárez,

Blue dusk was swooping down on the streets when they went out. Lights were coming out yellow. Mechanical pianos jinglejangled in bars. In a gateway a little outofune orchestra was playing. The market was all lit up by flares, all kinds of shiny brightcolored stuff was for sale at booths. At a corner an old Indian and an old broadfaced woman, both of them blind and heavily pockmarked, were singing a shrill endless song in the middle of a dense group of short thickset country people, the women with black shawls over their heads, the men in white cotton suits like pajamas. (100)

The effect of Mexican murals on Dos Passos's prose is clear at the level of point of view. Like the wide-ranging vista offered in murals the above passage, rendered in third-person, offers a panoramic view of the Juárez cityscape and its people. Further, the perspective becomes increasingly focused throughout the passage. In the first sentence, the perspective is atmospheric as readers see the "swooping" onset of "blue dusk." Next, the focus is directed at the street level and is marked by the contrast between "blue dusk" and the emerging "yellow" lights. In the context of foreign influence and modernization, this light presumably radiates from the newly fashionable arc-lamp lighting spreading through Mexico during the early 20th century.

Christopher Armstrong and H.V. Nelles demonstrate that the Porfirio Díaz government “encouraged the monopolization” of “utilities by foreigners in order to promote rapid modernization” (201). This modernization included the lights of Mexican walkways. Ostensibly, foreign capital is so pervasive that it has trickled all the way down to the particle level. Moreover, similar to the foreign and artificial light illuminating the streets, the music playing from Juárez haunts is “mechanical” and “outofune.” As the passage narrows its focus, even sound is out of place and off key. Punctuating the first half of the scene, in characteristic Dos Passos prose where compressed two-word linguistic units register the ubiquity of commercialization, is the market saturated with “shiny brightcolored stuff.”

However, the adapted mural style of the passage offers a counterpoint to a seemingly pervasive marketization. In the logic of murals, the constituent elements of narrative do not unfold sequentially but are in fact simultaneously present and thus readable all at once. While Dos Passos’s narrative is in the end delivered in literary form, the adaptation of Mexican murals is undeniable. Specifically, the panoramic quality of the passage necessarily orients the reader’s eyes, and ears, to both the tourist market as well as the Juárez inhabitants and their “shrill endless song” all at once. Moreover, the scale of the passage is equally divided into these two portions. By thus rendering the border in the context of empire and revolution, the text’s narrative persona does not privilege either. Instead, the novel’s stance on this historical context is provided through style. In a 1927 review of Mexican murals titled “Paint the Revolution!,” Dos Passos presents Mexican murals as a counteragent to mass culture. Mexico is visually characterized, he argues, by the “markets of Tenochtitlan,” peopled by “Indian women sitting like stone idols behind their piles of fruit or their bunches of flowers” (596). Further, “the painting on pulque shops” lining the market are so optically overwhelming that they “tie you up into such a knot” (596). On the

other hand, the “paintings of Diego Rivera in the courts of the Secretaria of public education straighten you out a little bit.” These paintings, he continues, “give a dramatic sequence to all this brightness and white glitter” (596). Importantly, the paintings emerged, Dos Passos asserts, as a “case of organic necessity” (598). Murals depicting the Mexican history of conquest and revolution are therefore a corrective to the “piles of fruit,” “bunches of flowers” and brightly colored cheap liquor dives which underscore the consumerist logic of pervading capitalism. In the passage above, the market products are not enumerated as textiles, wares or even kitschy craft items: they are simply, uniformly, masses of “shiny brightcolored stuff” meant to attract the eager eyes of tourists. However, if Mexican murals are a counteragent to mass culture, to its “brightness and white glitter,” then in the passage above the “old Indian and old broadfaced woman” counter the gilded marketplace and its indistinguishable pile of “stuff.” In addition to the effects of adapting mural aesthetics, this contrast is highlighted by the rhetorical weight given to the two halves of the passage. The first five sentences essentially convey that the streets of Juárez are replete with beacons of foreign capital and consumer products. At the same time, however, the last sentence, almost syllabically identical to the previous five combined, is about the people of Juárez and their reactions to capital and consumerism, vocalized in the “shrill endless song.”

Ultimately, what emerges from the adaptation of mural aesthetics is less a recording of events than a treatment of U.S. imperial history which throws into relief the casualties of empire figured through the character Mac. Immediately following the passage quoted, Perez states, “they sing about the murder of Madero . . . it is very good for the education of the people . . . You see they cannot get the news in papers so they get their news in songs” (ellipses original 100). Clearly this scene recalls Dos Passos’s assertion that “the people couldn’t read” and thus

“the only thing to do was paint [the revolution] up on the wall” (“Paint the Revolution!” 95). By emphasizing the use of orality, the passage highlights the “organic necessity” of revolution in the face of capitalism, and in doing so stakes out an anti-imperialist stance. Additionally, the announcement of Madero’s death through song emphasizes both the U.S. role in the Mexican Revolution and the dissolution of a republic for economic gain. Michael J. Gonzales writes that U.S. ambassador Henry Lane Wilson “had strong ties to U.S. business interests [and] undoubtedly hoped that a strongman like Huerta would topple Madero and re-create an economic and political climate similar to the Porfiriato” (38). In a Machiavellian scheme, Wilson “pursued secret negotiations with Félix Díaz and Victoriano Huerta,” rivals of Madero. Díaz and Huerta staged a coup and on Feb. 22, 1913, Madero was taken to a “prison courtyard” and shot “behind the ear” (42). With Madero gone, Huerta and Díaz “met with Wilson at the U.S. embassy” and established an “interim government” favorable to U.S. economic interests. Huerta and Díaz, however, were superseded by Venustiano Carranza, who faced his own battles with foreign capital, namely, balancing shaky allegiances to Mexican oil companies and American oil interests. In capturing and thus expressing this array of historical detail, the text makes clear that the story of U.S. modernity in the 20th century is not, as Denning would surmise, strictly the tension of labor versus capital but about how this tension supersedes territorial boundaries into a hemispheric imperial network. Furthermore, this network of revolution, capital and empire echoes Paul Giles’s assertion, lucidly applicable to the form of *The 42nd Parallel*, that “what happens in one location simultaneously impacts the fates of others” (130). In Dos Passos’s novel, this network is rendered through narrative panorama, which unequivocally plots out the way in which U.S. imperialism intersects with the Mexican Revolution. By portraying the conflicted, but interconnected, relationship between Mexico and the U.S., Dos Passos illustrates how the

primacy of American oil interests in revolutionary Mexico effectively works to affirm and mobilize U.S. empire.

J. Ward Moorehouse: Salvaging Networks of U.S. Capital in Revolutionary Mexico

In order to track how the border stages the conflict of a revolutionary ethos, portrayed through Mac, versus the latest version of imperialist modernity spreading throughout Mexico, Dos Passos simultaneously offers the portrayal of J. Ward Moorehouse as the symbol of U.S. capitalist interest. As Mac is in Mexico on behalf of labor, the text's character sections and "Newsreels" make it clear that south of the border is a lucrative, albeit volatile, destination for American business interests. In this regard, if Mac is one half of the bi-directional flow southward across the U.S.-Mexico border immediately after 1910, J. Ward Moorehouse represents the other side. From the outset, Dos Passos emphasizes Moorehouse's representatively American qualities. Moorehouse is born "in Wilmington, Delaware, on the Fourth of July." Upon birth Moorehouse's nurse states that he "ought to grow up to be very patriotic" (138). In a thematic gesture emphasizing this very patriotism, the narrator states that Moorehouse wins a scholarship to "U of P" "on the strength" of a congratulatory letter earned for selling "a hundred consecutive sets of Bryant's *History of the United States*" (138, 139). On one level this characterization of Moorehouse, underscored by fundamentally American historical detail, suggests a celebratory nationalism. In the opening sentence of the Moorehouse section, the first depiction readers get of his character is the parallel between Moorehouse's birth and the birth of a nation. Next, Moorehouse's birth is concurrent with the forecast of his patriotism. In fact, Moorehouse's link to patriotism is further emphasized by his birth in Delaware, the first state to ratify the U.S. Constitution. Moreover, the biographical detail characterizing Moorehouse associates him with foundation narratives. Not only is his birth parallel to the birth of the nation,

he is born in the first state to recognize the legal installation of democratic rights. Additionally, he works his way into a university scholarship by selling Bryant's nationalist history door-to-door. Moorehouse, however, is not simply a paradigmatically American character nor is his story merely that of a populist narrative. In terms of character development, his childhood and adolescence elapse quickly until Moorehouse attains the status of "Public Relations Counsel" (210). Moorehouse's first notable account in this capacity is with Judge Bowie C. Planet, an "unlucky oil speculator" (211). In short, the text portrays the devolution of a boy who earned his keep selling popular history into an advertising agent poised to exercise his industriousness by shaping the discourses which legitimize and are produced by the U.S. establishment of abroad markets.

The text's characterization of Moorehouse makes clear not that he is a figure of American virtue but how the logic of market capitalism is discursively presented as a civic good. Similar to the way in which colonization is imagined as a uniquely American mission, as evidenced in *George Washington Gómez*, the spread of capitalism, in this particular case the U.S. control of oil markets in Mexico, is conceived as a national duty. The difference, however, is the degree to which market logic pervades all aspects of social life, such that the technologies of violence are no longer predominantly material as in Paredes's text. Instead, it is language itself that is used to enact and sustain U.S.-Mexican economic hierarchies. Specifically, this asymmetry is made possible through Moorehouse's appropriation of a revolutionary ethos and its populist rhetoric that social change is realizable by granting workers control over the means of production. As the text foregrounds, the crux of Moorehouse's business practice is the relation between "capital and labor." In fact, Moorehouse states that "capital and labor, those two great forces of our national life neither of which can exist without the other are growing further and further apart" (212).

Hence, according to Moorehouse, the “war in Europe” is “America’s great opportunity” (213). Importantly, however, this emphasis on “capital and labor” is significant not simply for an analysis of World War One. To be sure, U.S. involvement in the war required an immense labor force, vast sums of capital, and for the sheer purposes of armed conflict, oil, a seemingly endless supply of which is ready for the taking just south of the border, according to capitalists like Moorehouse. Therefore, by rhetorically framing war as the great American opportunity, Moorehouse’s character foregrounds not the Marxian realization of labor’s triumph over capital but the establishment of a transnational marketplace in the peripheries of empire such as Mexico.

In this way, Moorehouse represents the justifying voice of American imperialism. While he is not an elected official, he does represent U.S. economic and government “interests,” and the text’s repetition of this term constitutes a key narrative strand in that it becomes inextricable from Moorehouse’s character and vice versa. Consequently, “interests” for Dos Passos is a proprietary rather than affective term. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines “interest” as “legal concern *in* a thing; esp. right or title to property, or to some of the uses or benefits pertaining to property.” Moreover, in the novel, “interests” stands in not only for capitalist ownership but also the way in which U.S. capitalism is intertwined with revolution. For instance, Mac and fellow traveler Ike dream about social revolution: “[o]ughter start right here in America . . . We got free institutions here already . . . All we have to do is get out from under the interests,” and as detailed above, “interests” in Mac’s storyline are figured by the eventual showdown with Moorehouse (ellipses original 49). Further, while Mac is in a Mexican bar, there are murmurs of “an investigator for certain oil interests coming down” from the U.S. (246). Significantly, the “investigator” in question is J. Ward Moorehouse. Merrill Rippy observes that “the estimated value of the total American investment in Mexican oil production in 1914 was around

\$85,000,000 (U.S.).” Further, Rippey states that in 1918 Mexico was the “world’s second largest oil producer.” As a result, the increasing oil supply during the Mexican Revolution, coupled with the demands of the war effort, granted Mexico an especially strategic position to negotiate. The Carranza government, however, troubled this position by demanding high taxes from the oil companies at the same time that he charged them with “financing rebellion against the legal government of Mexico” (155). As Moorehouse states, “I can assure you that the great executives and the powerful interests in manufacturing and financial circles are watching these developments with the deepest interest. Don’t quote me in this; I can assure you confidentially that the President himself . . .” (ellipses original 227). This frequent thematic coupling of Moorehouse with “interests” suggests a language oriented purely toward the reproduction of imperial power. As Shelley Fisher Fishkin notes, “Dos Passos understood that the talents of the new ‘super-public-relations counsels’ were for sale and were thus most likely to end up serving the highest bidder, the big corporations who could afford them” (170). In *The 42nd Parallel*, these “big corporations” are U.S. oil companies, fighting for territory in Carranza-led Mexico. The “difficulties of the oil companies in Mexico,” in fact, are so urgent that Moorehouse travels south for a public relations campaign, which the text implies is sanctioned by both big business and government, in order to keep American capital from totally evacuating Mexico.

De-territorializing the Grand Conflict: Labor vs. Capital in Mexico City

Mac’s movement into Mexico’s capital city precisely at the height of revolution, seemingly an index of pervasive social reform, ultimately suggests the U.S. imperialist project of mapping the world in its own image. Like the form of the novel itself, in which the language of commodification suffuses all four narrative modes, the national discourse mediated by the text imagines the U.S. at the center of, and hence the reference point for, shifting geopolitical

boundaries. Not ironically, therefore, as Mac moves from the border city of Juárez to the interior *el Distrito Federal*, or Mexico City, the first place he enters upon arriving is the “American Bar” (239). Given the authorial comment that “Venustiano Carranza was president in Mexico City,” the time is approximately 1915 (238).¹⁶ In Mexico City, Mac meets “a beefy redeyed man” who is an “oil prospector.” “It’s a hell of a fine country,” the oil prospector says, “but there’s not one of these damn greasers worth the powder and shot to shoot’em” (239, 240). The prospector continues, “every mother’s sonvabitch of ‘em’s a Zapata under the skin” (240). Upon arriving in the capital of revolutionary Mexico, Mac runs into what he least expected: another de-territorialized American who is anti-revolution and is also an American capitalist. Consequently, Mac’s move to *el D.F.* is defined by a succession of Mexican officials vying for power as the revolution dies out, a new regime steps in, and the U.S. strategizes to capitalize on these power shifts. Alfred McCoy and Francisco Scarano, for instance, write that, “as early as 1900,” in Mexico, “two billion dollars in foreign capital exceeded total indigenous capital in Mexico, and half of that was American, more than the British, German, Spanish, and French combined” (76). Further, they describe revolutionary Mexico as marked by a struggle “among the United States, Germany and Great Britain as each supplied arms and money to various revolutionary factions, attempting to use them as proxies to reshape post-Porfirian Mexico in ways that would benefit their national interests” (76). This international context of a shifting political landscape where exerting national power in Mexico means potentially maximizing global power is reaffirmed by the oil prospector in the “American Bar.” The oil prospector clearly takes issue with what he presumes to be closet “sonvabitch” “Zapat[istas].” Despite his fantasy to “smoke ‘em out like vermin,” however, Mexico is still a “hell of a fine country.” Significantly, Mexico is a “hell of a fine country” in spite of its “vermin” because of the capacity to generate increased financial

returns. However, this lucrative condition is less a question of healthy markets than the exceptionalist claim that U.S.-led capitalist modernity is universally salutary. As the prospector states, “d’you know what we’d do if we had a man in the White House instead of a yellowbellied potatomouthed reformer? We’d get up an army of a hundred thousand men and clean this place up” (240). In the fantasy of the prospector, social reform and its agents are entirely liquidated; the single remaining presence is that of the market and its representatives. Mexico City thus does not stage the labor and class changes hoped for by leftist reformers yet neither is it rendered as a total capitalist utopia.

The convergence of the Mac and Moorehouse storylines at an event organized by the “Asociacion de Publicistas” clearly signals the failure of revolution, yet the text does not accept the totalizing logic of imperialist modernity. In a thematic gesture recognizing the power of a newly instituted regime, representatives from both Mexico and the U.S. are unified at a banquet hosted by a Mexican publicist association. The new public relations super counsels emphasized above, and spearheaded by figures such as Moorehouse, are now also at work in the aftermath of Mexico’s failed revolution. Further, the banquet is attended by Mac’s friend Ben Stowell, an “independent oil promoter,” who develops contacts with “some members of Carranza’s cabinet” (247). Significantly, a key guest hosted by the Mexican government is J. Ward Moorehouse, in attendance alongside President Venustiano Carranza. As Dos Passos tellingly writes, the Mexican dignitaries of the banquet “kowtowed to him” (248). On one level, this depiction of political-economic courtship highlights a new era of U.S.-Mexico border asymmetries. As a bargaining tactic to lure the highest bidder, the Carranza government may have created “difficulties” for U.S. oil companies but nevertheless were willing to negotiate with them, which Dos Passos illustrates through the lavish attention given Moorehouse. First, the “Asociacion de

Publicistas” banquet hosts Carranza and Moorehouse, the “big contact man from New York who was wangling something” (248). Further, in an effort to establish a favorable economic arrangement, the text states that the Carranza government also “took one of the streetcars and a table the whole length of it,” including an “orchestra,” and “rode” banquet attendees “through town.” Additionally, while in Mexico, Moorehouse is escorted in “the chief of police’s automobile” (250). Moorehouse even returns home on “a private car” which “the Mexican government put at [his] disposal” (257). In this light, the special treatment afforded Moorehouse emphasizes that the Carranza government, like that of the U.S., is willing to serve the “interests” of “capital,” provided the return is substantial.

On a second level, however, the text critiques the new mode of U.S.-Mexico power relations through its incisive portrayal of the banquet proceedings and its attendees. In Mac’s eyes, for instance, the streetcar ride is devoid of any pageantry and instead “looked too much like a funeral” (248). Stowell, who has a vested interest in the Mexican oil situation, nonetheless admits that it would be a “hellova good thing for Mexico” if a “bomb” were to “go off” during the streetcar ride because “all the worst crooks in town were there” (249). From this angle, the courtship of foreign capital is less an investment opportunity and more a funeral procession of political crooks. Moreover, during a post-banquet party Moorehouse explains that “he had come down to Mexico” in order to “find out what the situation was and just what there was behind Carranza’s stubborn opposition to American investors” (249). Importantly, character reactions to Moorehouse effectively work to reject the notion that his “aims” are purely investigatory. Rather, in this particular scene, Moorehouse is envisioned, and characterized as, a grifter. Thus Stowell quips that Moorehouse has “got a slick cream of millions all over him,” indicating that Moorehouse has both the look, and the slippery rhetoric, of a salesman. In Mac’s eyes,

Moorehouse is a “smooth bastard,” an appellation that, given the context, registers less as praise than the identification of a huckster (250). By thus depicting Moorehouse, literally the representative of U.S. investors, the text recognizes the triumph of capital over labor specifically in regards to the revolution. Within the terms of imperialist modernity, as in the oil prospector’s fantasy, what remains for Moorehouse and other pro-capitalists is the realization of historical time defined by the wholesale absorption of new markets except that this moment never comes.

The cessation of Mac’s revolutionary impulse is concurrent with the demise of Moorehouse’s career and this structural detail constitutes a narrative renunciation of imperialist modernity. As the text shows, in the end, Carranza is murdered. Mac, who on the one hand crossed the border into Mexico in order to “see the revolution” and “join Zapata,” also has moments of potentially “sell[ing] out,” on the other (251). After all, he co-owns a bookstore with Stowell the oil promoter and even “started a bank account and was planning to take on some typewriter agencies” (250). Yet his hopes for becoming a “rich man” never materialize and his last character section sees him remaining in Mexico. In contrast to the emigrated Mac, Moorehouse’s storyline ends ignominiously. Initially, his next task after straightening things out in Mexico is to continue negotiating “interests.” Immediately after the Mexico trip Dos Passos writes that for Moorehouse, “the biggest account of all was Southwestern Oil campaign to counter the insidious anti-American propaganda of the British oil companies in Mexico” (262). Ultimately, however, Moorehouse is on the brink of ruin as the result of an implied affair (271) and his wife’s inclinations to divorce him, a move that would leave him penniless (Dos Passos writes that his father-in-law “was reputed to own a big slice of Standard Oil stock” [198]). In a desperate effort to stay married, and hold on to his wife’s inheritance, Moorehouse joins American efforts in World War One as part of the “Public Information Committee” (280). The

fact that Moorehouse's motivations for joining the war are less patriotic than self-serving is vocalized by Moorehouse himself: "I just wired Washington offering my services to the government. I'd like to see 'em pull a railroad strike now" (279). Here is Moorehouse at the close of the novel; no longer the man with a "slick cream of millions all over him" but one selling his service only so that he may continue to labor. No doubt the Moorehouse character makes it out of the war, across Dos Passos's trilogy, and into its third and final volume. Yet his storyline in that novel is even more tragic than the first. The last and final time readers see Moorehouse, "[h]is face seemed to be collapsing into a mass of grey and violet wrinkles" (*The Big Money* 408). In thus characterizing J. Ward Moorehouse, who literally withers into amorphousness, Dos Passos tells the story of, and critiques, a republic that became an empire. The critique that emerges is not that the spread of imperial power culminates in absolute domination but that each permutation of this empire results in the disposability of its agents.

Conclusion

The consequences of developing the set of representational strategies named border modernism are both aesthetic and historical. In situating the development of modernist representational strategies within the border-making context of the legacy of 1848, this chapter provides a new frame of reference for literary modernism. As a result, American modernism is neither synonymous with nor the privileged domain of the Southwest or the Northeast, domains which, despite their geographic appellations, tend to map modernist aesthetics onto troublingly Anglocentric cartographies. By contrast, this chapter shows that a viable modernist aesthetic is prevalent and active on the U.S.-Mexico border. Additionally, and not insignificantly, the consequences of situating modernism on the border exceed the level of archive and are present at the level of language itself. Specifically, border modernism, in its combination of border-based

Spanish, English, regional dialects, linguistic registers, and so forth, amplifies the literary and thus imaginative possibilities of modern fiction. Ultimately, in terms of aesthetics, there does not exist, and should not, a one-to-one correspondence between 1848 and modernist practice. Instead, border modernism makes available a way of fictively representing the historical memory of 1848, legacies of border-making, and the imaginaries through which the U.S.-Mexico border is simultaneously elided and revealed.

In addition to their aesthetic capacity, border modernist representational strategies are also vital in interrogating the epistemologies governing the ways that the border is perceived and thus managed as a site of power. Both *George Washington Gómez* and *The 42nd Parallel* mediate the pattern of expansionism initially deployed in 1848 via their respective local and broad-scale portrayals of the early 20th century border. By doing so these texts reveal the way in which present-day discursive and material constructions of the border are undergirded by colonial and imperial iterations of space. In its contemporary invocation of how the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo partitioned a once unified landscape the border in *George Washington Gómez* is colonial. Following the conquest and colonization of 1848, the U.S. and Mexico are geographically delimited north and south by the border. A half-century later after the failure of the Seditious Rebellion, this border is reaffirmed and transformed into an internal racial frontier within the U.S. where Anglos and Mexicans now face each other as first-class citizens and second-class colonized subjects. Consequently, the border *mexicano* resistant nationalism of which the Seditious Rebellion was the last expression does not prevail; it is powerless to defeat the forces of Anglo modernity that become newly hegemonic for a contemporary, Anglo-educated generation of Border Mexicans. By contrast, in *The 42nd Parallel* the border marks not the edges of the nation but the dispersal of empire. The dissolution of the Lincoln republic is

both precipitated by and accelerates the diffusion of U.S. capital. As a result, what was once a convergence point of conquest and counterconquest via the struggle of capital versus labor devolves into a crucial node of imperial force manifested across multiple geographies. Significantly, however, what the texts share in common is the representational practice of foregrounding how the sustainability of 20th century U.S. modernity requires that the U.S.-Mexico border be framed through colonial and imperial spatialities. By thus showing the persistence of the spatial logic at the core of 1848 in the 20th century, this chapter offers a new model of periodizing the historiography of the U.S.-Mexico border.

Fronterizo Detective Fiction

Introduction

This chapter analyzes Gabriel Trujillo Muñoz's *fronterizo* detective texts *Mezquite Road* (1995) and "Tijuana City Blues" (1999). "*Fronterizo*" is the name for literary production in Northern Mexico, and in Trujillo Muñoz's case, specifically refers to Mexicali and Tijuana. As the chapter demonstrates, analyzing Trujillo Muñoz's *fronterizo* detective fiction shows how the delineation of national space in the late 20th century requires the physical and epistemic violence concurrent with the dissemination of neoliberal ideologies on the border. This chapter draws on David Harvey in order to define neoliberalism as "liberating entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade." The "role of the state," Harvey continues, "is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices" (1). Additionally, the term "epistemic violence" refers to the work of truth regimes, in particular U.S. and Mexican state law enforcement agencies, in circulating and enforcing U.S.-centric and nativist discourses of modernity and Mexican lawlessness as governing paradigms. Given that both texts are set during the height of NAFTA, the latest stage of imperial modernity in this context is neoliberalism. As a result, the texts portray, in distinct ways, the violence by which this late 20th century version of modernity is subtended. Moreover, as this chapter illustrates, Trujillo Muñoz's detective fiction is well-suited to foreground these modes of violence in its critique of ratiocination as well as its revision of the ideology of liberal individualism and the attendant precept of self-regulating harmony between private individuals for the higher public good characteristic of classic detective fiction. This ideology is elaborated in full detail below yet here it must be stated that in this classic model of detective fiction the social world is comprised of private individuals who

consent to a framework of law and order determined by the state, that, significantly, is safeguarded by a gifted private eye and his singular command of the rational-scientific method of detection. Trujillo Muñoz adapts the private-public dynamic as a fictional theme but must account for a crucial modification given the context of *fronterizo* detective fiction and its border setting: in the late 20th century the deferral of private individualism to support a state-regulated public good is now reversed and constitutes the core logic of neoliberalism. As Trujillo Muñoz shows, the private eye Miguel Ángel Morgado's pursuit of justice is conditioned by the fact that on the post-NAFTA U.S.-Mexico border free-market individualism is the highest public good.

If according to the conventions of the classic model of detective fiction, public order depends on self-regulation, Trujillo Muñoz alters the genre in order to expose and critique how the U.S.-Mexico border's very status as law requires the private illicit collaboration between U.S. and Mexican (public) state agencies. In this way, *fronterizo* detective fiction is a critical site in which Trujillo Muñoz emphasizes a crucial historical formation that goes beyond documenting the failure of neoliberalism on the border. On the one hand, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo obtains in this border setting as a 160-plus year-old law which dictates both the continued existence and legal recognition of a national border. However, on the other hand, the fact that the border actualized by a legally sanctioned promissory contract requires physical and epistemic violence attendant to private-public illegitimate U.S.-Mexico state relations clarifies that this boundary-line, rather than embodying the law, is actually an episteme that is frangible. By mediating this iteration of the border, undergirded by the neoliberal variant of private-public, the chapter reveals a pivotal tension whose otherwise concealed status reproduces the border as a normalized and necessary geopolitical divider.

In order to make this argument the chapter showcases how the texts enact the tension between history as abstract and anti-materialist, on the one hand, and as site-specific and materialist on the other. Ultimately, *Mezquite Road* and “Tijuana City Blues” create the possibility for a site-specific history that is resistant to normative abstractions through a strategy of counter-institutional retelling. In each text Trujillo Muñoz reveals the gaps and contradictions of “official history” by contrasting it to the local version retold by border citizens. In the first instance, *Mezquite Road* is structured as an allusion to a little-known but scandalous 1985 abduction case involving the U.S. DEA, Mexican police and the Guadalajara cartel. In the second, “Tijuana City Blues” allegorizes the border relations of Mexico and the U.S. by integrating the fictional account of a missing person’s case, the details of which were concealed by the F.B.I., with the history of Beat writers on the border. The difference between these texts is not only their literary structure, whether as allusion or allegory, but also the consequences of retelling. In *Mezquite Road*, Trujillo Muñoz fictionally recreates an abduction and murder in order to show how both the U.S. and Mexican states obscure historical records as a means of concealing their illegitimate private-public relations. As the chapter demonstrates, obscuring historical detail effectively functions to normalize the physical violence perpetrated by U.S. and Mexican state agencies and their representatives. Consequently, not only is there a precedent for violence by the state but eliminating the possibility for border citizens to redress grievances positions them to uphold the law in scenarios where violence itself is their only recourse. By contrast, in “Tijuana City Blues” Trujillo Muñoz adapts the biographical account of U.S. Beats to reveal that mythmaking is an epistemic violence which naturalizes the border asymmetry between the U.S. and Mexico. Importantly, the chapter shows that such myths are not only externally imposed onto border cities such as Tijuana but are actually generated internally. The

effect in doing so, however, is not to assert that essentialist myths are willingly and voluntarily produced within the border. Instead, mythmaking is enacted, and refuted, in order to make visible the discursive processes whose concrete expression is the border as a natural divide between the First and Third World.

In analyzing the capacity of *fronterizo* texts to foreground the physical and epistemic processes through which the border spaces of Mexicali and Tijuana are regulated, this chapter draws primarily on the work of Persephone Braham. Braham provides an insightful vocabulary with which to frame the chapter's interrogation of the private-public as well as the contest between local and official history. A detailed account of this chapter's major point of departure from Braham's work is available below. It must be stated, however, that Braham's object of analysis is the detective fiction known as the Latin American *neopoliciaco* produced by writers in Mexico and Cuba whereas this chapter, as specified above, focuses on *fronterizo* texts (a term hereafter used interchangeably with "border *neopoliciaco*"). As a result, the status of "history" in Braham's account, and the way in which the historical is fictively rendered, exhibits a different valence than that analyzed in this chapter. In particular, for Braham the historical in *neopoliciaco* texts celebrates the rare but crucial populist triumphs of Mexican society and culture. By contrast, as the chapter shows, in Trujillo Muñoz's border *neopoliciaco* history effectively functions to indict the collusion between the U.S. and Mexican states. Additionally, realizing the project of a site-specific analysis requires border scholars whose work intersects with but is not restricted to literary criticism. In this regard, the chapter also draws from Humberto Félix Berumen's finely detailed historiography of Tijuana. Berumen shows how the present-day conceptions of Tijuana as a city of vice are actually rooted in 1950s U.S. and Mexican government modernization programs. This chapter draws on Berumen's insight to show the

relationship between the neoliberal variant of imperial modernity and the strategies of border-making. Finally, before close reading the border *neopoliciano*'s interrogation of how the neoliberal variation of private-public entrenches border asymmetries a brief review of Hispanophone detective fiction is warranted.

The Border *Neopoliciano*: A New Variety of Detective Fiction

Mezquite Road and “Tijuana City Blues” are part of the border *neopoliciano* subgenre which is a distillation of earlier Hispanophone crime fiction. The post-Franco Spanish *novela negra* emerging in the 1970s was concurrent with the Latin American *neopoliciano*. In turn this crime fiction borrowed from the earlier hardboiled form of the 1940s and 1950s. The unifying element across these different versions of crime fiction is the challenge to power, in the context of the Latin American and Spanish struggle against authoritarian states and dictatorships—as in Mexico, where it arose as a response to the 1968 student massacre in Tlatelolco. The distinguishing element of the border *neopoliciano* is the vital role of an imperially produced border and the competing histories which it stages. The significance of this literary genealogy is the way that Trujillo Muñoz adapts the stylistics of earlier crime fiction in order to investigate the problems of legal recourse for local border citizens. The border *neopoliciano* borrows features of the hardboiled form, such as what Geoffrey O’Brien terms “the lightness of the writing . . . start[ing] [sentences] in midstream, the use of colloquial language as the fundamental idiom rather than as something added for ‘color’ or humor” (65). As the chapter shows, the use of vernacular in *Mezquite Road* and “Tijuana City Blues” is vital to the argument of each text. Yet there are also significant differences between the border *neopoliciano* and hardboiled crime fiction.

The first primary difference is in the distinct political orientations vocalized by each form. While not apolitical, hardboiled fiction is less about communities of people than a typically solitary hero. Fredric Jameson, for instance, reads Raymond Chandler's stories as "fragmentary pictures of setting and place" rather than as "large scale models of the American experience" (124). Christopher Raczowski argues that "hard-boiled aesthetics often served to buttress a politically ambivalent fantasy of rugged individualism" (878). On the other hand, the border *neopoliciaco* urges a collectivist politics organized via the pursuit of human rights. The second crucial difference is about the idea of justice in the ambivalent space of the nation. Depending on which side of the border one stands, the nation opens out into a global space with the promise of uninhibited latitude or as a rigorously delineated grid marked by rigidly policed zones. For instance, Claire Fox writes that "Mexican detectives place a universal standard of justice into doubt, while those from the United States may bend the rules but still strive for a definition of justice that rests within existing legal systems" (193). It must be stated that while Morgado also bends the rules, he does so from a de-legitimized space, in that he operates outside official channels and on behalf of marginalized groups; and he does so, crucially, not to attain an abstract and institutional form of justice but as a means of accessing and piecing together otherwise concealed information. Further, as Fox notes, "Mexican works assert national popular and anti-imperialist visions through the local, while the U.S. novels take the very category of the national for granted" (193). Importantly, as the chapter clarifies, the border *neopoliciaco* investigates how the distinct articulations of the nation by the U.S. and Mexican states dictate belonging and exclusion, legality and illegality, citizenship and alienation on the border.

In order to generate a counter-institutional archive of historical detail, Morgado's investigation requires the constant modification of the tension between private and public

characteristic of detective fiction. As Braham observes, “the detective genre is a product of the conditions of 19th century modernity,” a context in which a key social principle, and literary feature, is liberalism. According to Sean McCann, “liberal theory” is characterized by the contrast between “personal desires” on the one hand, and the “demands of civil society,” on the other (14).¹ If detective fiction of the 19th century is marked by the liberal notions of the contractual coordination of private persons and the subordination of private interests to the public good, the border *neopoliciaco* stages the reverse. Indeed, Braham notes that one of Hispanophone crime fiction’s “defining characteristics” is “the failure of liberalism and its constituent elements in a Hispanic context” (ix). As the chapter shows, however, *Mezquite Road* does not simply chart the neat contrast between private and public. Instead, there are many possible varieties of the private-public tension, which changes depending on who Morgado is dealing with, and whether he is north or south of the border. In the face of state violence, however, the commitment to recovering lost and distorted historical records as a form of oppositional politics remains consistent.

In portraying a private detective who juxtaposes the official public record of history with the non-sanctioned version, *Mezquite Road* mediates the role of U.S. and Mexican state agencies in processes of violence central to preserving a neoliberal version of imperial modernity. One such process in the text is state-sanctioned kidnapping. As U.S. Special Agent Harry Dávalos states regarding abductions, “[p]ública y oficialmente estamos en contra de tales cosas, pero pagamos, en privado y extraoficialmente, entre diez a veinte mil dólares por cada narco que nos es entregado” (“[p]ublically and officially we’re against these things, but we pay, privately and unofficially, between ten and twenty thousand dollars for each narco delivered to us” [79]). As the chapter shows, this abduction plot is rooted in actual kidnappings practiced by Mexico and

the U.S. but either obscured or denied by both governments. To be sure, *Mezquite Road* is not a story about the dominance of neoliberalism in Mexico and in fact current scholarship exhaustively documents the failures of neoliberalism in Latin America proper.² Yet as is demonstrated, the prevalence of neoliberalism as the latest stage of modernization on the border allows public agencies like the U.S. D.E.A. and the Mexican *judicial* police to kidnap with impunity. As a result, the pursuit of modernity in the form of neoliberalism not only legitimates state violence but naturalizes it as the rule of law. Cops can be criminals and operate with impunity precisely because they do so in the pursuit and establishment of modernity defined from a U.S. imperial perspective.

While neoliberalism touts free markets and individual choice as the highest good this free-market individualism can only exist within an institutional framework that facilitates such freedoms—the apparatus that David Harvey calls the “neoliberal state” (7). This paradox of neoliberalism is parallel to the paradox of private-public in *Mezquite Road*. Miguel Ángel Morgado is a private detective who must provisionally become a state, and therefore public agent, in order to carry out his investigations, while public state agencies like the D.E.A. and the *judicial* must unofficially operate as private rogue individuals in order to reproduce and maintain state power. Consequently, *Mezquite Road* shows how the state exploits the neoliberal dichotomy of private and public to conceal the physical violence attendant to border-making.

***Mezquite Road* in Brief and the Neo-Private Eye**

Miguel Ángel Morgado’s investigation of the gambler Heriberto Sifuentes’s disappearance is both facilitated and challenged by U.S. and Mexican agencies constitutive of the neoliberal state on the border. While Sifuentes’s disappearance constitutes the initial reason for Morgado’s investigation, he is actually an innocent bystander whose death is the collateral

damage of the text's larger mystery. Specifically, Morgado must expose the criminal activity (which Heriberto witnessed and that led to his death) of Mexican federal police kidnapping narcos and holding them for ransom, paid by the D.E.A. Notably, David Harvey writes that "the assumption that individual freedoms are guaranteed by freedom of the market and of trade is a cardinal feature of neoliberal thinking" and a trademark of the neoliberal state. In the neoliberal state, individual freedoms are not actually freedoms at all but instead "reflect the interests of private property owners, businesses, multinational corporations and financial capital," whose principal objective is accumulation (7). This cluster of private actors is in turn managed by governing bodies such as the World Bank, the IMF, the U.S. Treasury, and their attendant policies. Harvey's term is useful in that it illuminates the conflation between private and public where individual freedoms are coopted by larger economic structures. It must also be added that the neoliberal state represents less a static arrangement of private and public than a shifting configuration between public and private actors.

It is therefore critical to distinguish between two types of "private"- "public" dynamics with which Morgado interacts. The first type is that which takes the form of private but that is actually an extension of official power. This type includes the Mexican federal police and the U.S. D.E.A., both of which hold covert "private" meetings but do so in the service of institutional state power. By contrast, the second type is the private which actively resists and undermines state power. In *Mezquite Road*, this type includes the activist motorcycle gang Los Cuervos, Morgado's friend Atanasio, and the leftist newspaper *El Diario 29*. Yet this group of private actors, each in different ways, is part of what can be termed the border-based public sphere. That is to say, while each is made up of private individuals, or in Atanasio's case refers to a single person, they are also complexly linked to the public, institutional framework

conditioned by the neoliberal state. The Los Cuervos motorcycle gang, for instance, doubles as a migrant advocacy group with their own aid center. Yet they are also part of corporate interests on the border in spite of their resistance to state power. As Atanasio notes, they are “cabrones con mucha lana. Más de tres son empresarios en grande y todos ganan buen dinero” (“fuckers with a lot of dough. More than three are big-time impresarios and all of them make good money” [39]). Atanasio himself no doubt is a member of the Ricardo Flores Magón anarchist group but is also a university instructor. He states, “Ésta es otra época. Si me pusiera a enseñarles a mis alumnos cómo hacer una bomba molotov, ellos serían los primeros en mandarme al manicomio o a la cárcel” (“This is a different era.” “If I taught my students how to make a Molotov cocktail they’d be the first to send me to an asylum or jail” [59]). Finally, *El Diario 29* has not been nationalized by the Mexican state and thus maintains a “style” of publishing counter-official content, as editor Federico Lizarraga boasts. Nevertheless, the paper is subject to publishing government leaked disinformation, albeit unconsciously (69, 70).

Significantly, however, Morgado’s ability to navigate the different articulations of private and public on the border results in a third category—the private eye in the age of neoliberalism, or the neo-private eye. As a result of his status as a human rights activist and lawyer, Morgado holds meetings with power brokers in Mexico and the U.S. such as the Mexican federal police and the U.S. D.E.A. At the same time, Morgado works with those committed to undermining state power. In seeking an explanation of Heri’s death outside official channels, Morgado undertakes a grassroots investigation among state officials as well as the distinct non-governmental organizations referenced above. Morgado’s search for an alternative account of Heri’s death therefore represents the novella’s larger goal of constructing a revisionist history.

Drawing on the combined strength of these state and non-governmental Mexicali border sources, Morgado learns of a moving gambling game comprised of Mexican federal police and the U.S. D.E.A. While tracking this game, Morgado discovers a coded message in a back issue of *El Diario 29* listing the name of a U.S. agent as a San Diego State geology student who happened to find three corpses while supposedly investigating a fault line. If Morgado uses this grassroots network to parse out myth from fact in Mexicali, he also uses his role as a member of Amnesty International's board of directors to cross Mexicali's borders into the U.S. and question D.E.A. agent Harry Dávalos. As a result of the exchange, Morgado learns that the D.E.A. and the Mexican *judicial* maintained a working, off-the-books agreement, where the *judicial* kidnapped drug traffickers wanted by the D.E.A. in exchange for ransom money, and that one night, the D.E.A. stood by without intervening while *judicial* Comandante Zamudio killed three men during a forced game of Russian roulette. The investigation ends in Morgado's confrontation with Heriberto's loan shark, who originally ordered Heri's murder, but was pre-empted by an up-and-coming *judicial* agent named Trinidad. This ambitious upstart also happened to be sleeping with Heri's daughter, Eloisa, who ultimately shoots Trini to death after overhearing his confession. Similar to Trujillo Muñoz's narrative, which satirizes the web-of-deception trope, in that everyone's story is absurdly interconnected, the social context of *Mezquite Road* likewise involves a network of complex relationships. On the U.S.-Mexico border, economic processes are intertwined with and consolidated by police forces and juridical mandates. In particular, these institutions, meant to preserve the rule of law in Mexico, are structured by U.S. pressure to neoliberalize Mexico.

Law and Order on the Neoliberal Border: The Merciful and Murderous Los Cuervos

In order to survive a border city where the state's private dealings flout public responsibility, Morgado depends on the hybrid businessmen-activist group Los Cuervos. Indeed, this motorcycle gang occupies an advantageous liminal position in Mexicali. As a cohort of wealthy businessmen, they are privy to the workings of state officials. As a collective of reform-minded activists sympathetic to the Mexicali working class, Los Cuervos club “está al tanto de todo lo que pasa por la zona roja” (“is up on everything that happens in the red light district” [38]). They are therefore an invaluable resource in the investigation of a known gambler whose apparent narco-trafficking career is unknown to all except the Mexican press. As Morgado states, the kilogram of cocaine found on Heri's body is nothing but a “cortina de humo para ocultar al autor de ese asesinato” (“smokescreen to hide the killer's identity” deployed by the Mexican federal police [68]). Given that he is working against a corrupt system, and what appears to be tampering with evidence, Morgado enlists the help of Los Cuervos. If, as their leader Jimmy states, Los Cuervos, and not the police, “own the street,” they are vital to shedding light on Heri's death and his staged narco-career (38).

Indeed, Los Cuervos—like the Tijuana citizens in “Tijuana City Blues”—operate as a kind of group sidekick to Morgado, which is reminiscent of the well-known Sherlock Holmes-Dr. Watson pairing.³ In this way, *Mezquite Road*—as well as “Tijuana City Blues”—adopts the detective-sidekick pairing of classic detective fiction in characterizing Morgado as dependent on Los Cuervos, thus leveling the traditional hierarchy between the detective hero and his sidekick. By featuring a sidekick, the text also departs from the conventions of the hardboiled variant. As Stephen Knight observes, in hard-boiled detective fiction, “[t]he private eye operates alone, judges others by himself, share's no one's values and mores.” Further, “[i]t is through this sense

of isolation that the private-eye story is most innovative, bespeaking a sense that social values, communal mores, have no real values” (112). This notion of autonomy is rejected in Trujillo Muñoz’s *border neopoliciaco*, in that in *Mezquite Road*, Morgado is assisted by Los Cuervos, while in “Tijuana City Blues” Morgado is assisted by Tijuana citizens, many of whom are intellectuals. By creating a private eye whose work requires a collective rather than individual approach to detection, both “Tijuana City Blues” and *Mezquite Road* alter the theme of the solitary figure which Knight argues is characteristic of hardboiled fiction. Significantly, however, Morgado’s sidekicks in “Tijuana City Blues” use intellectual, and not physical force, like Los Cuervos. As Morgado states, Los Cuervos, rather than being armchair intellectuals, or detectives, are a “unique species” (40). Moreover, unlike classic detective fiction where crimes are solved deductively, Morgado is an activist detective. In this regard, as a detective who takes the law into his own hands, Morgado evokes the private-eye of the hardboiled genre. Yet Trujillo Muñoz’s adoption and alteration of these conventions is not used strictly for the sake of creating generic difference but for commenting on the border city of Mexicali where distinctions between private and public, legal and illegal, are never easy.

The very nature of justice, and by extension Morgado’s investigation, is distinct from that of classic and hardboiled detective fiction as a result of the neoliberal border setting. Morgado is operating in a city where the law, figured by the police, and crimes, enacted by this police force, often appear to be the same thing. Importantly, the challenge in distinguishing the two in the Mexicali, which Trujillo Muñoz portrays, is thematized by Los Cuervos. In *Mezquite Road*, Morgado is not trying to apprehend the criminal and bring them to justice as in the tradition of earlier genres, but instead to make visible otherwise distorted or suppressed historical details; hence, the importance of the members-only Los Cuervos club. Unlike the liberal idealization of

justice preserved by self-regulating individuals, the primary function of Los Cuervos is to keep Morgado alive in a city where prying into state affairs too often results in death. This brutal context of exterminating those opposed to official police reports is exacerbated by the unflinchingly calloused wagers placed daily on Morgado's expiration date (54, 102). Though initially tapped as a source of information, Los Cuervos ultimately save Morgado's life twice. Thus, the role of Los Cuervos in finding the truth confirms the point above that Morgado is not a rugged or autonomous individual (like both the classic and hardboiled detective) but a dependent one: the neo-private eye owes his life, not once, but twice, to his sidekick collective. In this way, the text's characterization of the detective-sidekick relationship constitutes a significant modification of the hierarchy of detective and sidekick of the detective fiction genre. However, in order to save Morgado's life, Los Cuervos must become killers. Consequently, while figured as a border charity organization, in Mexicali Los Cuervos operate less as a source of information than as a lethal protection squad (38, 55, 92).

Therefore, while it is no doubt an adopted convention of classic detective fiction, the relationship between Los Cuervos and Morgado reveals what the pursuit of justice looks like for everyday border citizens denied proper legal recourse. As a result of the bureaucracy and patriarchy in Mexicali, the widow Teresa Sifuentes cannot simply go to the police for answers about her husband's murder. According to local police, they already gave their official report, and according to Los Mezquites owner, and Heri's father in law, "¿[p]ara qué tiene que enterarse de esas cosas? Las mujeres son cosa aparte" ([w]hy does [Teresa] need to know about this? Women are another story" [88]). Denied the legal means to do so, Teresa commissions Morgado to investigate, a process which in turn requires the aid of Los Cuervos. The fictional world of *Mezquite Road* is therefore populated by private individuals, like Morgado and Los Cuervos,

whose relationship to the public institutions of the law is tenuous and always changing, oftentimes in ways that do not always add up. In this regard, Trujillo Muñoz's story is one where the resolution of plot requires what—following Raymond Chandler—can be termed contrived character development. In “The Simple Art of Murder,” Raymond Chandler takes issue with the stories of classic detective fiction, arguing that “they do not really come off intellectually as problems, and they do not come off artistically as fiction.” “They are too contrived,” he continues, “and too little aware of what goes on in the world” (56). Further, *Mezquite Road* is not only conscious but is critical of the border context. In this regard, Trujillo Muñoz takes detective fiction as his model and intervenes by writing figures whose actions exceed the boundaries of their expected behavior as characters. In this particular case, these characters are the D.E.A. and *judicial* who behave not as agents of the law but as kidnappers; they are murderous motorcycle gangs that are willing to kill but that also function as immigrant advocacy groups. As a result, in this border setting of institutional corruption and the kill-or-be-killed “ley del oeste” (“law of the west),” as Atanasio terms it, justice is not upheld but is in fact threatened by the law (39).

Mezquite Road ultimately suggests that the problems for border citizens are both physical and structural. Unlike the abstract myths of “Tijuana City Blues” that Morgado locates in print and oral culture, in *Mezquite Road* the sources of border-making are tangible institutions. In the latter text, Trujillo Muñoz shows that in order to protect the idealized version of privatization required by neoliberalism, U.S. and Mexican state governments must engage in illegal partnerships. If in the 1990s the U.S. and Mexico pushed to make neoliberalism the law of the west, then taken to its logical conclusion, the preservation of law on and across the border paradoxically requires its transgression. That is to say, the economic structures of neoliberalism are promulgated as universal freedoms but subtended by imperial violence. Crucially, this

tension between publically affirmed values and private desires reveals the paradox of neoliberalism on the border. Further, the configuration of U.S. and Mexican states results in a border asymmetry where paradoxes make sense—there is nothing absurd about cops as criminals, charitable bikers as murderers, about the legal and illegal being the same thing. This mode of thinking is possible precisely because the very inception of the border in 1848 relied upon an un-interrogated premise. According to this perspective, the epistemic quality of the border is presented and sustained as an objectively given fact through both the rhetoric and the material processes of expansionism. Thereafter, discourses of imperial modernity, informed both by U.S. efforts to modernize the border, and Mexican concessions to do so, worked to maintain this version of the border: a territorial site continuously affirmed via discourses of neoliberalism. Moreover, border citizens are understood to read this imperial version of the border as everyday life, a perspective which informs the worldview of Mexicans as inherently fatalist.⁴ Trujillo Muñoz therefore uses the border *neopoliciaco*'s formulaic quality as a tableau in order to stage the way in which the constructedness of the border assumes the guise of the natural and quotidian. In Foucaultian language, the neoliberal border is a fundamental truth of the late 20th century. By foregrounding this process, *Mezquite Road* shows how physical violence works to naturalize the border as a geopolitical barrier.

Figurations of the National: Dávalos and Morgado as “*un matrimonio mal avenido*”

In order to foreground the novella's key embedded allusion, Trujillo Muñoz thematizes the relationship between Morgado and U.S. D.E.A. agent Harry Dávalos as a private-public arrangement of national power. To be sure, Morgado is not a full-on representative of the state, and in the context of Mexico and its history of oppression, his profession as a human rights lawyer situates him as less an advocate for than a challenger to government institutions.

However, it is crucial to note that while he modifies its conventions, Trujillo Muñoz is working from an established genre and its narrative patterns. In this particular case, a standard narrative feature is that the detective of hardboiled fiction operates outside the law, and rather than a strictly antagonistic relationship to crime, “often becomes personally involved with the criminal” (Soitos 53). In *Mezquite Road*, however, the crucial twist is that the criminal happens to be a federal agent, and one who is central to Morgado’s private investigation. Further, Dávalos’s surname apparently suggests that like Morgado he is of Latino descent. The only difference is that Dávalos is *del otro lado* (“from the other side”); a distinction that proves crucial within the text’s plot but also for the broader analysis of border relationships. Specifically, Dávalos’s persistent use of the pronoun “we” makes it clear that he considers himself fully American, despite his last name. As Dávalos declares of the U.S., “[n]osotros somos los auténticos hijos de esta época. Viajamos en ella como si fuéramos surfers que se deslizan por las olas. We’re the winners” (“[w]e’re the true sons of this era. We ride through it like surfers sliding through waves. We’re the winners” [112]). Tellingly, Dávalos asserts the U.S.’s claim to historical time as justification for its actions. Dávalos’s self-identification, therefore, frames his private dealings with Morgado as an issue of nations. Ultimately, the asymmetry in the Dávalos-Morgado characterization highlights a critical fact about the north-south border asymmetry. Rather than the simple dichotomy of northern superiority versus southern inferiority, the U.S. and Mexico are locked into a shifting but intersecting arrangement. It is, as Dávalos affirms, “un matrimonio mal avenido. Y sin posibilidad de divorcio” (“an ill-assorted marriage. And without the possibility of divorce” [114]).

Morgado’s character, a socially committed detective willing to kill for human rights, is predicated upon a conditional arrangement with the forces of U.S. law, embodied by Dávalos.

This character pairing is central to Trujillo Muñoz's critique of the way in which Mexican and U.S. state agencies administer the law. Dávalos did not kill Heriberto Sifuentes but shares responsibility for his death given that Sifuentes was ultimately killed out of fear that he would snitch on Comandante Zamudio's Roulette stunt. Moreover, given that Dávalos witnessed but did not check this sadism he is therefore an accessory to murder at the same time that he is indispensable to Morgado's investigation. As a matter of fact, it is only through Harry's confession that Morgado learns of the D.E.A.'s illegal partnership with the *judiciales*. This first exchange between Dávalos and Morgado is immediately followed by a chapter in which Comandante Zamudio provides testimony that corroborates the Dávalos account, giving Morgado the information he needs for his interrogation of Doña Matilde. While evoking a private detective linked, rather than directly opposed, to crime is an adaptation of hardboiled fiction, doing so as a political act of recovering border history represents a fundamental departure from earlier American and Mexican versions of detective fiction.⁵

While the Morgado-Dávalos relationship leads to an invaluable clue at the plot level, its larger significance is in figuring the conditional enforcement of the law by public institutions and private individuals. Dávalos and his D.E.A. crew routinely meet at "Los Mezquites" in order to determine ransom prices by gambling. Further, Comandante Zamudio's macabre execution of three men is a direct result of the fact that, according to Dávalos, "los secuestrados no eran gente que nos interesara" ("none of those abducted were of any interest to us" [77]). The "low-level narcos" retain no value in the indifferent eyes of the D.E.A. and therefore can simply be killed. Dávalos's tacit agreement to kill the three makes him guilty by association but his crime is not simply his silence in that single moment. Instead, Dávalos is also guilty by keeping Comandante Zamudio's secret. He does not officially report the murders to any superiors, whether U.S. or

Mexican. Rather, he buries the fact of the murders in a glib newspaper account of three bodies found by nonexistent geology students. If Dávalos is guilty by negligence and obstruction of justice, in Trujillo Muñoz's characterization, Morgado is not exculpated either. No doubt Morgado provides the "exclusive" account of the entire "Los Mezquites" affair to *El Diario 29*. Moreover, this act of publicizing the otherwise hidden details of Heri's death is presented in the text as a small measure of restoring justice for Mexicali residents. After the text's denouement Dávalos presses Morgado to "keep this ordeal between us," to which Morgado sarcastically replies, "[s]i. Entre tú y yo y los lectores del Diario 29" ("[y]eah. Me, you, and the readers of *El Diario 29*" [111]). However, in order to make this information available to a Mexicali readership Morgado must first become an accessory to murder by altering the crime scene to shift attention away from Heri's daughter, Eloisa, who kills Trinidad Rodríguez.

Trini's killing, and Morgado's involvement in it, no doubt represents a form of private justice which must be unofficial because of legal injustices and institutional corruption. As a result, Morgado becomes enmeshed in the criminal world he originally set out to investigate. The ideal of private desires subordinate to the public good which McCann identifies as a feature of Anglophone detective fiction is not realizable in the world of *Mezquite Road*, and neither is the reverse. As argued throughout this chapter, the border *neopoliciano* does not subscribe to the formula of earlier detective fiction where the public is a collection of self-regulating individuals who consent to an institutionally mandated framework of law and order. At the same time, however, it also resists the neoliberal idea that individual private desires are the highest public good by showing the ethical, and fatal, complications of this ideal. In this way, the clean split between private and public central to neoliberalism is impossible on the border.

Morgado's transgression of the law in *Mezquite Road* foregrounds the different binational modes of violence on the U.S.-Mexico border. Though he does not engage in physical violence in *Mezquite Road*, Morgado aids and abets the use of force. He does so by removing the murder weapon from Eloisa and placing it in Trini's hand. In this regard, Morgado distorts the crime scene similar to how the Mexican federal police staged Heri's murder as a drug feud. By contrast, in "Tijuana City Blues," Morgado does not engender or use force. As a matter of fact, once he locates his prime suspect, the latter individual, in racist language, is unabashedly candid in answering Morgado's questions. This difference in plot detail ultimately suggests a systemic intertwined phenomenon on the border. In writing such plot lines, Trujillo Muñoz highlights the intersection between physical and epistemic violence. In *Mezquite Road*, it is not only state law enforcement agencies that are called into question for their use of force in preserving the U.S.-Mexico border. Rather, the fact that Morgado's investigation also engenders force raises the question of how institutional corruption normalizes physical violence as a necessary and justifiable action by border citizens. In turn, this physical violence feeds into the essentialist mythmaking of "Tijuana City Blues" where the border is the lawless west. As is demonstrated in the second half of this chapter, such mythmaking is a form of epistemic violence which reifies the imperial justifications of the border as historically inevitable thereby perpetuating north-south border asymmetries.

Martyrs and Murderers on the Border: Historical (In)visibility in *Mezquite Road*

In order to realize the project of illuminating how the distortion of history is a mode of controlling and regulating the border, the text's plot configuration dramatizes a real-life abduction involving U.S. and Mexican state agencies. Significantly, it is not only that the plot contains this distorted material but the way in which the plot is arranged that is critical. In

particular, the focus of this arrangement is the contrast between the U.S. figures that the text foregrounds as history, on the one hand, and the Mexican figures relegated to the margins, on the other. By focusing on these U.S. and Mexican figures, the text dramatizes the way in which historiographies of the border are developed, and in doing so, creates the possibility of establishing a counter-narrative to U.S.-centric versions of official history. This counter-history becomes available only after a sequence where Morgado visits a Mexicali paper and afterwards a D.E.A. office. Both the *El Diario 29* and the Dávalos chapters begin the same way in terms of sentence structure: “[l]as oficinas del Diario 29, en el centro cívico de Mexicali (“[t]he offices of El Diario 29 in the civic center of Mexicali”) versus “[l]as oficinas de la DEA en El Centro, California (“[t]he offices of the D.E.A. in El Centro, California” [67, 75]). Next, the chapters each provide a descriptive account of interior space. Further, both chapters deal with the media representation of the Sifuentes case. As a result, Morgado border-crosses from Mexicali to the D.E.A.’s El Centro office in order to investigate the coded *El Diario 29* byline. Inside the D.E.A. office, a commemorative photograph of fallen agent Enrique Camarena presides over the lobby. Camarena was a Mexican-born D.E.A. agent abducted on February 7, 1985, and subsequently killed while investigating the Guadalajara cartel. Thus, the narrator observes how Camarena was converted into a U.S. “martyr” of the War on Drugs by the American press following the news of his death (75). Once the characters are outside the office the narrator remarks that in Morgado’s head “reverberaban viejas y dolorosas imágenes: el laberinto de pistas falsas y callejones sin salida en que se había convertido su investigación para esclarecer el asesinato de Manuel Buendía” (“reverberated old and painful memories: the maze of false leads and endless alleys into which his investigation of Manuel Buendía’s assassination had morphed” [83]). Manuel Buendía was a Mexican journalist publicly murdered on May 30, 1984, for writing about the

suspected links between government officials and drug trafficking.⁶ Crucially, whereas the description of Camarena is noticeably didactic the account of Buendía is almost superfluous.

The contrast between the official iconographic rendering of Camarena to the elegiac but fleeting portrayal of Buendía emphasizes the problematic tendency to write the border exclusively from the north. That is, the prevailing image of the border, in both media accounts and the literary imagination, is decidedly U.S.-centric. Trujillo Muñoz enacts this tendency via the narrator who explicitly marks Camarena as a historical figure by describing his photograph as “una estampa religiosa” (“a religious icon” [75]). On the other hand, readers are given only a peripheral reference to Buendía, who could potentially be anybody, and therefore risks becoming anonymous. Significantly, however, Trujillo Muñoz’s chapter organization works to interrogate limited perspectives on the border. By distinguishing Mexican and American sources of information with such emphasis, Trujillo Muñoz critiques the fact that figures like Manuel Buendía and Heriberto Sifuentes receive only cursory representational focus. If the principal actors in the story of U.S. and Mexican state violence are elided, the urgent issue centers around who fills their place, and what becomes of the story. Taken together, the formal and thematic similarities of the chapters, as well as the contrasting narrative depictions of American and Mexican figures, indicate a preoccupation with regulating the perception of the border. Ultimately, Trujillo Muñoz’s style and organization suggest that the borders of imperial modernity can be controlled by manipulating their representation.

Trujillo Muñoz deliberately contrasts the representations of American and Mexican figures north and south of the border in order to exhume the story of Humberto Álvarez Machaín. Álvarez Machaín was a physician by trade, and allegedly played a key role in the torture of Enrique Camarena by keeping him alive enough to prolong his torment. Significantly,

Álvarez Machaín is never directly mentioned in *Mezquite Road* yet is everywhere present in it. As a matter of fact, a major contribution of this chapter in re-writing the way the border is discursively imagined and thus materially regulated is that the plot of *Mezquite Road* is modeled after the Álvarez Machaín story. This retelling highlights the state-sanctioned distortion of history as a means of concealing its abuse of the law in the form of abductions. In order to do so, Trujillo Muñoz adopts the formulaic, heavily regimented structure of detective fiction as a means of disciplining the reader into expecting disclosure. In a textual world where everything is schematized to the last detail, the reader expects that at a certain point, the crime's timeline, and its actors, will be revealed. The reader of *Mezquite Road* must therefore ask, if Enrique Camarena is authorially marked, why is not Buendía? Moreover, why does the story of Heriberto Sifuentes likewise invoke the Buendía investigation's agony of "false leads" for Morgado? In order to answer these questions, the reader must enact their own investigation. Doing so reveals that the story of Álvarez Machaín is one which is ugly and shameful to the U.S. but also vital to its bid for power and therefore likely to be enacted infinitely if left uninterrogated.

This story grossly incriminates Mexico and the U.S. in publically advocating respect for the law while privately flouting it. This structure, in fact, of public legalism and private corruption is fundamental to the respective Mexican and U.S. neoliberal states. As a response to Camarena's death, the D.E.A. arranged for the kidnapping of Álvarez Machaín. Subsequently, in *U.S. versus Álvarez-Machain*, the court ruled that the "forcible abduction" of Machaín did not preclude him from being tried in the U.S. Álvarez Machaín's claim that the D.E.A. violated the Extradition Treaty between Mexico and the U.S., officially known as *31 U.S.T. 5059*, was flatly denied by Chief Justice William Rehnquist, who stated that "[t]he Treaty says nothing about the obligations of the United States and Mexico to refrain from forcible abductions of people from

the territory of the other nation” (*U.S. versus Álvarez-Machain*). Consequently, the Rehnquist decision absurdly and reductively stipulates that whatever is not prohibited is permissible, effectively legalizing the violation of human rights, legitimating kidnapping, and undermining the concept of jurisdiction. In the logic of the Rehnquist ruling, the abduction of Álvarez Machain was not a violation but an enactment of justice. Moreover, the Rehnquist ruling depends on the maneuver of discursive subterfuge which was first unleashed in 1848 and has thereafter been consistently refined. In fact, this sleight of hand has reached levels of sophistication and complexity such that no one questions the fact that discourses of modernity and legality are sourced from a fundamentally illegal act. In this sense, the U.S. public discourse of law and order is grossly, unethically incongruent with its private actions especially when there is an economic system at stake.

Structuring *Mezquite Road* after the story of Álvarez Machain ultimately reveals a fundamental paradox in state efforts to modernize the U.S.-Mexico border. Within the judicial system the U.S., acting on fraternal, us-versus-them instincts, assumes a moralistic stance: capturing the man responsible for attacking one of their own trumps international sovereignty. However, Álvarez-Machain’s ultimate acquittal, decided after strong criticism and Mexico’s threats to freeze international relations with the U.S., raises a fundamental question about priorities.⁷ After hearing sordid details of the D.E.A.-Mexican police partnership which resulted in Heri’s death, Morgado states, “[q]ué fácil evadieron su responsabilidad. Si eso les hubiera sucedido a tres delincuentes gringos en México, ya hubieran roto relaciones diplomáticas con nuestro país” (“[h]ow easily you avoided your responsibility. If that had happened to three delinquent gringos in Mexico, you would have already severed diplomatic relations with our country” [80]). Dávalos replies, “¿Qué quieres? Somos *the number one*. Nosotros decidimos

cómo y cuándo se parte el pastel, y qué tajada le corresponde a cada quien” (“What do you want? We’re ‘*the number one.*’ We decide who gets a piece of the pie, and when” [81 italics original]). Dávalos’s figurative language refers not only to the economic benefits of arrangements such as NAFTA but the ability to monitor and control them by force of manipulating the law: “we’re ‘the number one.’” Situated in the context of neoliberalism and its objective of global expansion, *Mezquite Road* suggests that the viability of U.S. capitalism depends on U.S.-Mexico border spaces. Further, U.S.-controlled neoliberalism as the most recent form of modernization is the only acceptable socioeconomic policy, according to an imperial perspective, and this policy is preserved by and enforced through state violence by Mexico and the U.S. Consequently, establishing and protecting border neoliberalism means that the U.S. D.E.A., with the help of the *judicial*, must agree to kidnap narcos and renege on this agreement when it is no longer expedient.

Significantly, however, a critique of the way in which Mexican and U.S. state institutions enact physical violence is possible in that the *neopoliciaco* subgenre is inflected with local border history. The stakes of this reading are not simply that Trujillo Muñoz departs from hardboiled fiction by writing from a markedly political viewpoint. Neither are they merely that his border *neopoliciaco* is patterned after the lived action of Álvarez Machaín. Instead, through the conventions of detective fiction, Trujillo Muñoz urges readers to be rational about an irrational subject where institutions of law are criminal. This process, like that of the detective, requires the ability to make fine distinctions. It is not brute strength that can help begin changing the border but intellectual force. As much as the world of *Mezquite Road* is drawn from the real-life violence and brutality of the border it is imperative to remember that this work is after all fiction. Trujillo Muñoz is not advocating vigilantism as a solution to border violence but

showing how this process has become the de facto choice for border citizens, and more importantly, how the normalization of this response is a problem. Finally, in writing a detective whose solution is to leak a story, *Mezquite Road* shows that the biggest clue audiences can fail to read is assuming that submissively lying down in the face of border violence is the same as being strategic about fighting it. At its core, this strategy requires an attentiveness to and understanding of history as a series of official and unofficial stories which are constantly written and re-written. From one perspective, fighting border violence is a lost cause. Yet as Miguel Ángel Morgado claims, it is precisely because, above all else, the 20th century has reaped lost causes, that the pursuit of human rights on the border is an absolute necessity (27, 112).

Beats, Myths and the Border *Neopoliciaco*: “Tijuana City Blues”

The first half of this chapter analyzed the way in which border *neopoliciaco* fiction mediates the social conditions of U.S. and Mexican states which occlude physical violence constitutive of neoliberal economic structures. By contrast, in the second half, the chapter examines Trujillo Muñoz’s stylization of William S. Burroughs’s time in Mexico. Trujillo Muñoz uses the biographical fact of Burroughs’s residence in Mexico and adapts it into the fictional world of “Tijuana City Blues” in order to reveal how the U.S.-Mexico border’s form of appearance is undergirded by essentialist discourses. From 1949-1952 Burroughs lived in Mexico and wrote the manuscript which later became *Junky*. Burroughs’s seminal novel is partially set in Mexico and offers a literary rendition of his time there. As has been documented, the fictional portrayals in *Junky* are often mistakenly read as factual descriptions of Mexico and its citizens. In fact, *Junky* is part of a larger representational pattern where in the 1950s Tijuana is imagined purely as a space of impunity meant especially for Americans to enjoy crime without punishment. This perspective emerges in Anglo fiction such as *Junky* and is also well-

documented in the Mexican ethnographic and historical accounts on Tijuana. Drawing on this context, in “Tijuana City Blues” Trujillo Muñoz directly cites from leftist Mexican scholars critical of this essentializing tendency at the same time that he vocalizes this essentialism through different characters in the text.

Trujillo Muñoz structures “Tijuana City Blues” as an intertextual exchange between Anglo myths and leftist historiography. In this way, his text foregrounds the discursive process of border-making and its pernicious regulatory effects. Read in concert, the fictional and critical work that comprises the text illustrates how the U.S.-Mexico border is cast in terms of mythical origins, as if its inception were somehow a timeless natural development, instead of a historically specific and economically-motivated process. Significantly, however, border scholarship is embedded into the narrative structure of Trujillo Muñoz’s text such that the detective story of the plot dramatizes the larger challenge of investigating border myths from both Mexico and the U.S. This chapter contends that the intertextual “Tijuana City Blues” enacts the way in which Anglo and Mexican myths of the border exert pressure on this geographic space and dictate its form of appearance in non-geographic terms. Moreover, these myths abstract the border so that it becomes less a physical place inhabited by people than an imaginary wasteland populated by essentialized archetypes. Consequently, the very tangibility of the border is transmuted into an intangible conceptual space whose form is negotiable in and through letters. The result of this process is that, as in 1848, an artificial border is superimposed onto an already existing local community. This section therefore analyzes the circulation of border myths, on the one hand, and the presentation of leftist Mexican intellectual history, on the other.

“Tijuana City Blues” is not about Burroughs the man but instead utilizes Burroughs the character in order to structure the text as well as to stage a critique of border myths. At the level

of plot, Burroughs functions as a mechanism which allows Trujillo Muñoz to contextualize the fictional world of the character El Güero and the search for his father. Yet beyond the plot the text also shows the way in which border myths come to stand in as social realities. Characters in the novel perceive Tijuana to actually be at its core a space of impunity. Moreover, resolving the case set before him requires Morgado to investigate 1950s Tijuana from his own contemporary moment of the 1990s. In the following analysis, the chapter shows how “Tijuana City Blues” incorporates the structure of dual time frames characteristic of detective fiction. This structure joins two stories, the story of the investigation, set in the present, and the story of the crime, set in the past, which is revealed during the retrospective investigation. While often these stories are set in the same historical epoch, “Tijuana City Blues” stretches the distance between these time-frames to several decades, so that Morgado’s investigation of crime actually becomes an inquiry into a larger historical process of border-making. Specifically, the border-making in “Tijuana City Blues” is characterized by a pattern of emerging border myths set against critiques of this mythologizing. Further, the chapter demonstrates that the materiality of the border is elided by these border myths so that the border becomes moldable to the whims of an imperialist gaze. Crucially, however, the chapter also shows how Trujillo Muñoz intervenes in this process by emphasizing the site-specificity of the border through staging the circulation of border myths as a way of ultimately revealing their limitations.

In border history the period from 1950-1953 is considered vital to the “origin myth of Tijuana.” Humberto Félix Berumen, for instance, persuasively demonstrates that the status of Tijuana as a getaway for North American tourists exploded from 1950-1953.⁸ Remarking on the imagined status of Tijuana as a criminal haven where anything goes, Berumen writes that “toda fundación de carácter mítico requiere de un pasado sombrío (‘mito de origen’) que permanezca

abierto a la fantasía y que, además, pueda servir como campo magnético para futuras representaciones” (“the foundation of all mythologies requires that a ‘dark’ past (‘origin myth’) not only remain open to fantasy but that, moreover, will serve as a magnetic field for future representations” [93]). Thus during the fifties, concurrent with Burroughs’s residence in Mexico, the period is characterized by the “proliferation” of “las cantinas, *cabarets*, clubes nocturnos, hoteles de paso . . . destilerías de licor y algunas fábricas de cerveza” (“bars, cabarets, casinos, night clubs, hotels . . . distilleries” and “breweries” [93]). Consequently, while this period resulted in the growth of the Tijuana economy, it also shaped the Tijuana origin myth, known as “*la leyenda negra*.” For instance, according to Leobardo Saravia Quiroz, this legend posits Tijuana as a “ciudad de paso, un lugar de perdición o burdel ubicuo (“city of transients, a place of perdition or endless brothels”) clichés which “no tienen nada que ver con la Tijuana real” (“have nothing to do with the real Tijuana” [149]).⁹ As the chapter shows, William S. Burroughs is written into the fictional ‘50s era world of “Tijuana City Blues” in order to critique such mythologizing. Further, the chapter argues that the presence of “la figura patriarcal de la vanguardia artística de sus país” (“the U.S. avant-garde patriarch”) writing his first novel in Mexico during the inception of the Tijuana origin myth is critical (Trujillo Muñoz 32). Specifically, this intersection of textual production and foundation narratives highlights the way in which U.S.-based discourses function as the dominant interpretive framework of the border.

If Trujillo Muñoz fictionalizes Burroughs’s real-life residence in Mexico, he also includes actual border scholars in his fiction as a counterweight to exoticizing origin myths. In total, Miguel Ángel Morgado’s investigation is aided by five border specialists, three of whom continue to actively produce border scholarship.¹⁰ Unlike Morgado’s lethal cadre of sidekicks in *Mezquite Road* who wield firearms and Molotov cocktails, Morgado’s partners in “Tijuana City

Blues” are armed only with local historiography. By writing these scholars as fictional characters, Trujillo Muñoz adopts a feature common to the *neopoliciaco* sub-genre. According to Persephone Braham, “*neopoliciaco* writers employ, in particular, a kind of intertextuality that crosses generic boundaries as well as discursive ones, incorporating popular culture, leftist ideology and literary theory, and critiques of national mythologies” (17). While the inclusion of ethnographic and historical accounts within the plot structure of “Tijuana City Blues” is meant to facilitate Morgado’s investigation it also requires him to become a scholar in his own right, even if momentarily. Specifically, in order to investigate Timothy Randolph Keller, the American transplant who disappeared in Tijuana, Morgado must parse myth from fact. On the one hand, there are U.S. perceptions of the border framing Morgado’s view of Tijuana, such as that offered by F.B. I. agent Harry Dávalos, which consider Tijuana “Las Vegas del tercer mundo” (“a third world Las Vegas” [53]). On the other, exist perspectives offered by Tijuana citizens like Leobardo, who states that with or without specialists like Vizcaíno, Ordorika, or Leobardo himself, “Tijuana tiene salvación” (“there is hope for Tijuana” [53, 64]). Morgado, therefore, must constantly separate competing visions of Tijuana in order to realize his investigation. Further, this work is complicated by the fact that even local citizens, and at times apparently Morgado himself, buy into “*la leyenda negra*” and therefore threaten to validate Orientalizing perceptions of the border. In “Tijuana City Blues,” Trujillo Muñoz quotes the venerated Fernando Jordán, author of Baja California’s “biography,” who writes that one does not see Tijuana fully but instead merely a strip where “un cabaret sigue a un bar, al bar una tienda de curiosidades falsas, a la tienda otro cabaret, a ése un bar, al bar un hotel, y luego otro cabaret y otro bar . . .” (“a cabaret sits next to a bar, which is next to a novelty shop, that’s next to another cabaret, which is next to a bar, and another hotel and then another cabaret and another bar. . .”

[163]). If, as Jordán writes, Tijuana appears as “a play-box,” Morgado must discern if this image is propagated by white thrill-seekers from the north, contested and affirmed by local citizens, or somehow a combination of both (162).

As is demonstrated in this section, the Tijuana origin myth relies on U.S. perceptions of the border and its citizens as fundamentally corrupt. The logic behind such thinking presupposes that Mexicans are innately averse to law and reason. As a result, the transgression of the law is considered endemic to the border. Regarding Burroughs’s fatal shooting of his common law wife Joan Vollmer, an unnamed biography which Morgado uses for his investigation states, “[é]sa fue la suerte de nuestro escritor: haber matado a una mujer en un país donde la vida no vale nada y si es la vida de una mujer, mucho menos que eso” (“[t]hat was the fortune of our author: to have killed a woman where human life is worthless, and if a woman’s life, much less than that” [20]). This logic abstracts Mexico, as well as the border and its citizens, into archetypes of violence and indifference. Consequently, the border (as well as Mexico) is imagined as a place of impunity precisely because of the Mexican’s absolute disregard for human life. In effect, this essentialist logic is an extension of the Orientalizing pretenses used to justify 19th century expansionism. Furthermore, the stakes of this essentializing are not simply discerning characterizations of the border but also examining rationales for how it came to be. As a result of reducing border identities into a single essence, imperial history is presented as historical truth. In turn, the border takes on the appearance of an inevitable historical development. From this perspective, the border is not only the result of a violent border-making campaign subtended by racist ideology where Anglo reason is fated to control Mexican savagery. Instead, as a result of this essentializing, the border is inscribed within an expansionist teleology which assumes that the border was destined to happen. This process, therefore, suggests that

even in the contemporary moment origin myths like “*la leyenda negra*” reproduce the border by naturalizing it as always already there.

“Tijuana City Blues”: Counter-Writing the Hegemony of the Border

On one level, “Tijuana City Blues” is simply about a young man looking for a father he never met. Seven months before he was born the man’s father travelled to Tijuana, failed to return to Mexico City, and was never heard from again. Alfonso “El Güero” Keller Padilla lives in Mexico City and contracts Miguel Ángel Morgado to look for Timothy Randolph Keller, his missing father. Prior to his disappearance, Randolph Keller journeyed to Tijuana with Dave Tercerero, who was actually in Mexico with Burroughs during the fifties, and whose experience south of the border constellated less around literary endeavors than the consumption of heroin. In the novel Tercerero is portrayed as a “[t]raficante y distribuidor en Estados Unidos, México y Centroamérica” (“[t]rafficker and distributor in the U.S., Mexico and Central America” [53]). According to El Güero, Randolph Keller was “puro corazón” (“all heart”), a straitlaced “pacifist” history teacher loyal to friends and family, especially to El Güero’s mother, Carmen (21, 20). In his capacity as history teacher at Mexico City college Randolph Keller meets a group of U.S. writers, among them William S. Burroughs. Trujillo Muñoz adapts the fact that Burroughs shot and killed Vollmer in order to establish the motive for Randolph Keller’s travel to Tijuana in the story. The primary cause of Randolph Keller’s Tijuana trip is to hustle money for the destitute Burroughs. In the wake of Vollmer’s death and Burroughs’s incarceration, Burroughs’s lawyer, Bernabé Jurado, manages to get him out of jail after “menos de dos semanas” (“less than two weeks” [Trujillo Muñoz 21]). However, he does so by bribing local officials, and thus tapping Burroughs for what little money he may have had. As a result, Burroughs finds himself penniless, in debt, and “without friends” (21, 22). He therefore enlists the help of Randolph

Keller, telling him to deliver a package and collect money from a mutual friend of his and Tercerero's in Tijuana, named Alan Brod (23).

Morgado, however, discovers that Randolph Keller was not in fact a straitlaced “pacifist” history teacher helping a friend but a “distributor” (58). As a matter of fact, the exchange in Tijuana was not simply to collect money from Brod but actually the start of what was supposed to become a Panama to Mexico heroin pipeline. Tercerero and Randolph Keller were to meet Brod and deliver drugs in exchange for money. Tercerero, however, tipped off Mexican police in order to cut out Brod and Randolph Keller, and sell the drugs on his own. In the ensuing melee Brod dies, and Randolph Keller flees to the U.S. Once there he is taken into custody by U.S. agents but because of “previa cooperación con el FBI” (“prior cooperation with the FBI”) serves a reduced sentence (53). Additionally, Morgado learns that “Randolph Keller” is a false identity, and when Randolph Keller finds out he has a son, can only ask indifferently, “¿[e]starán bien cien mil dólares?” (“will one hundred thousand dollars be all right?” [61]). In the end, Morgado leaves Tijuana thinking that although El Güero’s “dignity” will be “hurt” he is “old enough” to move forward with his life (64).

On a second level, however, “Tijuana City Blues” is more than a missing person’s case. The intertextuality of the text facilitates the use of allegory in critiquing border myths as a way of foregrounding the reproduction of border asymmetries. In particular, the father-son link between El Güero and Randolph Keller, as well as Randolph Keller’s partnership with Burroughs and Tercerero, symbolize the uneven U.S.-Mexico border relations. Just as U.S.-based essentialist notions of Mexico permeate the text, the theme of paternity haunts “El Güero.” Moreover, the notion of Mexico as at its core a violent place and Mexicans as essentially sanguinary dominates the historical and contemporary accounts which Morgado uses to ground

his investigation. As a method of interrogating these accounts, Trujillo Muñoz intersects the arc of his fictional narrative with historical and non-fictional frames of reference. Consequently, the intertextuality of the story is achieved by more than the inclusion of Burroughs.¹¹ Instead, “Tijuana City Blues” is intertextual in that it is organized by a variety of different writing modes: direct quotes from ethnographic and historical accounts, such as Jordán’s, direct references to the site-specific claims of border scholars, such as Sarabia Quiroz’s, and the use of these scholars as characters. Furthermore, Trujillo Muñoz modifies the intertextuality of the *neopoliciaco* by situating his text on the border and therefore including border myths alongside academic border histories. As a result, the border setting of the text allows for the emergence of a dialectic where, on the one hand, the border continues to be written from the north, and on the other, embedded local border history is potentially available as a clarifying force.

Mystique of the Paternal: “El Güero” *tijuanense* and Intransigent American Absence

The plot detail of El Güero as both haunted and abandoned by his father allegorizes the simultaneously explicit and implicit role of the U.S. and its myths on and about the border. El Güero considers his father a “ghost,” “buried” somewhere, yet his life is entirely controlled by the search for his father (23). Similarly, as shown in the first half of this chapter, the U.S. maintains an explicitly controlling presence on the border for economic arrangements such as NAFTA. In addition, however, U.S.-based border myths have become problematically authoritative precisely because of their implicit quality. Fox, for instance, writes that “U.S. visual culture” has monopolized border narratives, informing “the mythological vision” of border spaces “as a no-man’s land sparsely populated by deviants and drifters” (45, 56). While working at the level of abstraction, these myths nevertheless have the capacity to effect material change, and obscuring the site-specificity of the U.S-Mexico border is one such consequence. As Debra

Castillo and María Socorro Tabuenca Córdoba assert, “the border as perceived from the United States is more of a textual—theoretical—border than a geographical one.” By “eras[ing] geographical boundaries,” the capacity for distortion of these U.S.-based myths is maximized precisely because they function implicitly (6). In other words, these border myths function insidiously by concealing the very material effects of U.S. institutions. As a result, by abstracting the border, it becomes both a space where utopian developmental narratives are realized and a site where dystopian fantasies are available as a tourist attraction. In this particular case, the “*leyenda negra*” of Tijuana is premised on the idea that the Tijuana border simply materialized into time and space instead of as a government sponsored capitalist venture centered on tourism. Similarly, El Güero interprets his father’s role in heroin trafficking as less an act of vice than one of materially indefinable qualities of “love and generosity”; El Güero has no concrete instances to substantiate this mythologizing yet believes it to be unequivocally true (21). As a matter of fact, in a telling parallel of the way U.S. mythologies construct the border, El Güero’s belief in his father’s benevolence is so deeply ingrained that he commissions Morgado, initially, not to find his father but his burial plot. El Güero states, “Si estuviera vivo habría hallado la manera de comunicarse con nosotros. . .y estoy segurísimo de que cada mañana que abría la verja de entrada pensaba que iba a toparse con mi jefe, que tarde o temprano él regresaría a casa, con nosotros” (“If he were alive he would have found some way to reach out to us. . .and I’m absolutely certain that every morning my mother opened the front door she believed she would see my old man there, that sooner or later he would come back home, come back to us” [23]). Like “*la leyenda negra*,” a fleeting series of images depicting Tijuana as a seamy underworld that nonetheless persists to this day as the dominant social imaginary, El Güero clings to sentiments he cannot grasp but is convinced are reality. Even the novella’s textual marking of El

Güero, literally “blonde boy,” ostensibly confirms the truth of this paternal mystique: El Güero is living proof that his loving and generous father tragically disappeared rather than abandoned him. Importantly, however, Trujillo Muñoz disrupts the uneven dynamic of power where institutional myths dictate the border’s appearance through the characterization of El Güero’s father.

Trujillo Muñoz uses one of the most venerated Mexican popular culture figures—Pedro Infante—in order to characterize the duplicity of El Güero’s father. As the text emphasizes, El Güero’s only links to Randolph Keller are old love letters and his mother’s wistful stories (18). Consequently, El Güero romanticizes him as a man who was “puro corazón. Como Pedro Infante” (“all heart. Like Pedro Infante”), the fabled Mexican singer and movie star (21). Importantly, this simile relies on the image of Infante to symbolize what a father is supposed to be for El Güero. Yet outside of El Güero’s exaggerated perception, the plain fact is that Randolph Keller willingly left Carmen and El Güero with the intention to never return. The simile is therefore tellingly ironic as well, especially given the prevalent themes of Infante’s discography. Three of Infante’s most celebrated songs are “Corazón,” “Corazón, Corazón,” and “Corazón Apasionado.” The irony in comparing Randolph Keller with Infante, whose catalogue focused predominantly on songs about the heart, is that Randolph Keller’s absolute and conscious disappearance from El Güero’s life precludes the slightest bit of “*corazón*.”

In addition to its ironic undertones, the Infante reference also stresses the ‘50s as a critical moment of border-making through myths. The above Infante songs were written and performed in 1951, 1952, and 1956 respectively. This era is considered the Golden Age of Mexican Cinema and also coincides with the presidency of Miguel Alemán Valdés. As Enrique Krauze writes, in the 1950s, Alemán was “caudillo” of the Mexican tourist industry, which he viewed as “a gold

mine for the development of the country and also, of course, for his own” (521). Indeed, the bedrock of Alemán’s presidency was the idea of an “Institutional Revolution” (530). As Krauze writes, “in 1946, the party that brought the new President of Mexico to power” adopted “a name that of itself implied a contradiction in terms and, therefore, a lie, but a lie accepted as truth, the PRI, *Partido Revolucionario Insititucional*” (529). Under Alemán’s regime, hallmark features were modernization, corruption, and the dissemination of outright lies accepted as truth. Similar to El Güero’s romanticized image of his father, Aleman’s vision of an institutional revolution was promoted by economic elites in strictly positive terms. In this regard, Mexico’s Golden Age relied on myth-making and its reach into border cities like Tijuana. As Berumen demonstrates, Prohibition in the U.S. resulted in a “tourist enclave” along the border controlled largely by U.S. interests (80-85). While Berumen locates the inception of this tourist enclave in the 1920s he also identifies the ‘50s as a major high point. The transformation of border cities into primary tourist destinations controlled by U.S. companies was informed by the myth of Tijuana as a “wide open city” (Berumen 100). Ultimately, however, it was not only U.S. capitalist interests which enabled this change, but the addition of the Alemán-led institutional support. In theory, “institutional revolution” was to be pervasively beneficial, but in practice resulted in the reproduction of border asymmetries by interlinking myth-making with economic hierarchies.

This historical detail of the way in which border myths facilitated ‘50s era state-sanctioned tourism and economic structuring, and therefore material changes on the border, is not incidental to the text but instead an outcome of its dual timeframes. In fact, the emphasis on the ‘50s generally, and the above-named invocation of Pedro Infante specifically, clarifies the relationship between ‘50s myths and the text’s iteration of the contemporary border. From the outset of the investigation, Morgado is immersed in “papeles, amarillentos y crujientes”

(“yellowed and brittle papers”) and “fotografías en color sepia” (“sepia colored photographs”) which he locates in “los años cincuenta, con seguridad” (“the ‘50s, for sure” [12]). Later, Morgado glibly offers social commentary stating that in the ‘50s “Miguel Alemán era presidente y la mordida, dios omnipotente” (“Miguel Alemán was president and bribery an omnipotent god” [14]). The remark is apparently peripheral unless situated in the context of the “*leyenda negra*” when, as Krauze writes, Alemán was overlord of tourism. In this regard, Trujillo Muñoz emphasizes the importance of the ‘50s by writing that El Güero’s case is both a “literary” and “historical investigation” (24). Morgado is as interested in Mexico’s historical past as he is in the present-day discursive constructions of Mexico. This historical detail reveals the way in which state-sanctioned tourism and popular culture provided networks of distribution for the Tijuana origin myth and the role of figures like Timothy Randolph Keller in distributing it.

The revelation of Randolph Keller’s true motives for travelling south of the border punctuates the allegorical component of “Tijuana City Blues” and implicates the U.S. in framing and actualizing the border as a space of lawlessness. Significantly, El Güero’s romanticized vision of his father as a love-struck Marxist history teacher is evacuated in the face of his actual profession. Using his F.B.I. contact, Harry Dávalos, Morgado learns that Randolph Keller’s real name is Thomas Kaul. Further, Morgado locates Kaul’s U.S. address in the posh neighborhood of La Jolla, California and finds Kaul a wealthy man (53). The significance of this encounter between Morgado and Kaul is in showcasing the discrepancy between who El Güero believed Randolph Keller to be and who Randolph Keller actually was. El Güero was looking for a father but in the end discovers that his very existence is purely the result of incontinence (58). In this sense, if “Timothy Randolph Keller” is a sham, Alfonso “El Güero” Keller Padilla has no meaningful ties to the man he so desperately wanted to find and the name he believes to be his

own. Moreover, his namesake is based on a cruel kind of fiction: “Keller” is a construct which exists for the most utilitarian purpose but outside of its function as a cover is entirely meaningless. By his own admission, Kaul “no pensaba quedar[s]e a vivir en México” (“never thought of permanently living in Mexico”). He was simply there “on business.” As for Carmen, El Güero’s mother, Kaul viewed her as little more than “una amante de temporada. Ustedes comprenden, ¿no? *Beautiful* señorita” (“a fling. You guys understand, no? A *beautiful* señorita” [58 italics original]). Writing love-letters to a local Mexican woman and playing the role of soon-to-be father were simply part of his cover story. Morgado’s investigation therefore reveals that Kaul’s border-crossing was never about political asylum but about establishing a drug-trafficking operation.

Read allegorically, the deceptive nature of El Güero’s father symbolizes the subterfuge of U.S. border myths. Importantly, however, Trujillo Muñoz critiques the insistently paternalistic quality of U.S. border myths through El Güero’s unabashed belief in the goodness of his father. From the start of his investigation, Morgado suggests that Randolph Keller did not disappear but simply fled in order to avoid his paternal responsibilities yet El Güero adamantly refuses to accept this theory (29). However, in this allegory of U.S.-Mexican relations, at stake is not simply that the paternalistic U.S. duped the impressionable Mexico. Rather, in clarifying this allegory the nickname El Güero is critical. On one level, this name can simply refer to a light-skinned Latino. But it can also be used to mean “American.” Given El Güero’s parentage both possibilities are available. This ambiguity suggests that El Güero figures the complexity of Mexico’s intertwined yet tense relationship with the U.S. Further, it also suggests that a significant factor undergirding the north-south border asymmetry is national self-identification and not exclusively race. For instance, and tellingly, El Güero is half-white, but self-identifies as

Mexican (20). During the course of the entire investigation the detail which El Güero overlooks is why his father attended fiestas “*de traje*,” (“drug potlucks”), where attendees brought “liquor,” “marijuana,” “opium and heroin.” If Randolph Keller/Kaul did not live the lifestyle of substance abuse then seemingly there would be no reason to join (19). But Randolph Keller did attend and it was at one such party where he connected with Burroughs. Ultimately, El Güero was looking for an American father, one apparently too pure for the Tijuana where good men inexplicably vanish, when he should have been looking for a hustler. Importantly, however, Kaul’s hustle only worked if there were citizens in Mexico willing to actualize the myth of Tijuana as a “wide open city,” which he found in Dave Tercerero. In this sense, as is shown below, the allegorical component of “Tijuana City Blues” reveals how not only are border myths U.S. based but have points of distribution in Mexico as well.

Exhuming the Past: Rewriting the Role of Beats on the Border

Gabriel Trujillo Muñoz rewrites the story of Beats in Mexico as a means of exposing the transnational circulation of border myths and how these undergird social realities. As Rob Johnson notes, Burroughs’s primary reason for leaving the Rio Grande Valley in 1949 for Mexico was his “lawyer’s off-the-record advice” to flee the country and avoid being convicted for possession of a controlled substance (21). It is critical to note, though, that Burroughs was compelled to run not because he feared legal proceedings but because he considered Mexico a “fine free country.” Specifically, the defiant Burroughs was not so much intimidated by the American legal system as he was enticed by his perception of life in Mexico. According to Johnson, “Burroughs loved Mexico for all of the reasons South Texas had taught him to hate the United States: People in Mexico minded their own business, he said, including the police” (21). In this characterization, Burroughs, like many in the 1950s, imagines Mexico as a space where

he is “free” to do what he pleases without consequence. This image of freedom, however, relies on the assumption that people mind their business in Mexico out of sheer disregard for the law. As a result, Mexico is a “fine free country” because it is at its core a space of impunity. Moreover, this perception of anarchy in Mexico is compounded by the Anglo assumption of innate Mexican fatalism. As Persephone Braham illustrates, the stereotype of ““Mexican national character”” reduces Mexicans into an abstraction where they are nothing more than “savage and a friend of death” (66). From a northern perspective, people south of the border simply do not care about life much less the law. This notion permeated American tourist culture in general and was also reproduced in *Junky*.

In order to wage his critique of essentialist mythologies, Trujillo Muñoz combines border facts and fictions. The biographical fact of Burroughs in Mexico and the fictional Burroughs persona rendered in *Junky* inform the plot structure of “Tijuana City Blues” but also perform the very process Trujillo Muñoz interrogates. That is to say, Trujillo Muñoz recreates his own border myth in the text to be held up for scrutiny by drawing on a lesser-known but important friend of Burroughs. Importantly, one of the text’s character’s, Dave Tercerero, is an actual historical figure who simply never gained the notoriety of Jack Kerouac or Neal Cassady, infamous Beats who also found themselves south of the border in the ‘50s. Tercerero, however, was indispensable to Burroughs’s experience of Mexico. The biographical consensus on Tercerero is that his casual acquaintance with Burroughs developed into a friendship out of their shared heroin addiction.¹² In this regard, at the biographical level, Tercerero helped Burroughs live out the myth of Mexico as a space of excess and lawlessness. At the fictional level, resolving the disappearance of Randolph Keller requires Morgado to investigate Tercerero. As a matter of fact, Morgado learns, via Dávalos, that Tercerero was an F.B.I. informant looking to leave Kaul for

dead after their heroin deal (53, 59). Both of these components, Tercerero's biographically documented trouble with heroin, as well as his centrality to Morgado's investigation, are part of the story's intertextual structure. Importantly, this intertextuality demonstrates how Trujillo Muñoz's *neopoliciaco* reimagines the border as overlaid with myths and local histories rather than in purely mythical or fundamentally quotidian terms.

In combining the biographical and the literary Trujillo Muñoz creates an historical mise-en-scène from which to unravel the way border fictions are reified as cultural facts. Specifically, Trujillo Muñoz creates a tableau of 1950s Tijuana in which Morgado carries out an investigation pertaining to both historical and contemporary iterations of the border. Trujillo Muñoz does so through both a change in setting and intertextual references. For instance, Miguel Ángel Morgado's travel to Tijuana is written as travel into the past. During his flight Morgado thinks, "[v]oy a 900 kilómetros por hora rumbo al pasado . . . Tiempo estimado de vuelo: unas cuantas décadas" ("I'm going 900 kilometers per hour into the past . . . Estimated flight time: a few decades" [34]). It is important to note, however, that this travel to the past is not about locating some primordial source moment. In this regard, Michel Foucault's concept of "genealogy" is useful. Foucault writes that genealogy "operates on a field of entangled and confused parchments, on documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times" (139). Moreover, Foucault crucially argues that genealogy "opposes itself to the search for "origins" (140). This same logic is critical in understanding the palimpsestic quality of the border rendered in "Tijuana City Blues." Trujillo Muñoz is not suggesting that the border city of Tijuana retains an inherently atavistic quality such that travelling to the border is synonymous with arriving immediately at the 1950s past. Instead, changing the setting from Mexico City to Tijuana stages the co-presence of multiple local histories and border myths, "entangled and confused

parchments,” which texture Morgado’s investigation of Dave Tercerero. Thus, in Tijuana, Morgado encounters border myths and revisionist histories which he must organize into a clarifying border narrative. Moreover, these revisions counterpoint essentialist mythologies but also allow Morgado to access part of the past. In addition to setting, therefore, Trujillo Muñoz situates Morgado in the 1950s via newspaper clippings and commentary from leftist Mexican scholars. Such commentary occurs either in the form of quotes from scholarly works or in the use of scholars as characters. This strategy not only creates a polytemporality but allows Trujillo Muñoz to rewrite a part of border history.

Rewriting the border history of Tijuana through an intertextual strategy is made possible by foregrounding the primacy of Dave Tercerero both at the level of plot but also as central to actualizing “*la leyenda negra*.” Specifically, Morgado is interested in learning about Tercerero’s role in the December 8, 1951 shootout in Tijuana. Morgado’s first step in doing so is establishing a counter-archive with which to compare U.S. and Mexican accounts of this incident. While in Mexico City, Morgado uses El Güero’s photographs and U.S. biographies to put a name to a face and positively identify “el chaparrito, el de traje holgado” (“the short little man, the one with the loose suit”) as “Dave Tercerero” (14). Yet given the dearth of information on Tercerero, and the discrepancy between El Güero’s account of Beats versus that found in U.S. publications, Morgado’s image of Tercerero remains unclear. In order to discern a clearer picture of Tercerero, Morgado moves closer to source material located in Tijuana. This process is realized in the text by writing the aforementioned local border scholars as characters. As a result, the border historian Aidé Grijalva sets up a meeting so that Morgado is able to collaborate with the journalists Leobardo Saravia Quiroz and Ava Ordorika of the *Tijuana Metro*, a local newspaper.

The significance of this meeting, which takes place in chapter eight, is the discrepancy in the U.S. and Mexican news reports of December 8, 1951. To be sure, this meeting is useful at the level of plot in disclosing case details to Morgado, but more importantly, as shown below, is part of a larger structure of foregrounding myths and counter-myths. Thus, Morgado's visit to the *Tijuana Metro* newspaper foregrounds the availability of a counter-archive which Morgado, initially, does not accept outright. Instead, the revisionist possibilities of this border-based local history are deferred until chapter nine, analyzed below, where the text resolves the tension between myth and counter-myth. In chapter eight, regarding the December 8th event, Leobardo notes that Mexican newspapers reported "lo mínamente necesario porque fue un hecho que ocurrió a la luz del día y en plena avenida Revolución" ("as little as possible because this act occurred in broad daylight in the middle of Revolution Avenue"), infamous for its high volume traffic (37). Further, these reports paint Keller and his accomplice, Alan Brod, as "*narcotraficantes*" and assert that Keller made off with the heroin. By contrast, Leobardo stresses, San Diego newspapers place three men at the crime scene: Keller, Brod, and Tercerero. According to these reports, Tercerero was "un *pusher* que trabajaba en territorio mexicano" ("a *pusher* who worked in Mexican territory" [italics original]) in contrast to Keller who was "sin antecedentes en el negocio del narcotráfico" ("without prior arrests from activity related to drug trafficking" [38]). Leobardo concludes, "[l]a prensa sandieguina practimante exoneró a Keller" ("[t]he San Diego press practically exonerated Keller" [38]).

At stake in the contrasting accounts is discerning the complicity of the U.S. and Mexico in reproducing border myths. In "Tijuana City Blues," one way in which these myths are reproduced is through news reports. The conflicting reports in the text, however, do more than suggest that U.S. and Mexican newspapers wanted to avoid the demonization of their respective

citizens, Keller and Tercerero. Instead, these contrasting reports illustrate that the reproduction of border myths is a process intertwined with the use of popular culture to communicate national discourses as much as it is in discourses of state power. While the subtext of “Tijuana City Blues” is ‘50s era popular culture such as Burroughs’s *Junky* and Golden Age actors like Pedro Infante, this subtext is imbricated by state institutions such as Mexican police and U.S. federal agencies. In “Tijuana City Blues,” Burroughs and Infante figure the way in which the U.S. and Mexican governments maintain power via disseminating and regulating border myths.

Furthermore, the reproduction of border myths involves not only state institutions but individuals on both sides of the border. This process comes to the fore in the text’s conclusion. Given that the ending of the text reveals that Keller is an F.B.I. informant, it is logical that the F.B.I. would want to create as much distance between Keller and drug trafficking as possible. As the first half of this chapter shows, U.S. state agencies are perfectly willing to adopt illegal methods to fulfill their goals. The difference in “Tijuana City Blues” is the open admission of the border’s economic viability as opposed to the pretenses of preserving law and order in *Mezquite Road*. As FBI agent Dávalos observes, Tijuana’s informal economy makes it a major global factor in “capital markets” (52). In other words, the presumed impunity of Tijuana is too lucrative a commodity to compromise so that there can be no link whatsoever between the F.B.I. and malfeasance. Therefore, the role of Keller working for the F.B.I., even as a snitch, must be kept a secret. Hence, as Leobardo puts it, Keller’s “exoneration.” Similarly, the text’s finale reveals that after Keller’s escape and Brod’s death the Mexican police used Tercerero to sell the supposedly confiscated heroin (60). As a result, Tercerero’s name is absent from “official history,” as Morgado states (37). These revelations are possible only after Morgado’s visit to the *Tijuana Metro*. Trujillo Muñoz’s incorporation of newspaper accounts is no doubt a convention of the

neopoliciaco. He modifies this strategy, however, by directing it towards the border in order to show the transnational dynamic of border myths. The pernicious quality of these myths is precisely the fact that they emanate from both Mexico and the U.S. at the same time that they are sourced from citizens of both nations.

The Dialectics of Difference on the Border: Staging and Interrogating “*la leyenda negra*”

Trujillo Muñoz complicates the circulation of border myths by vocalizing essentialist perceptions via protagonist Miguel Ángel Morgado. The notion that the North essentializes while the South provides authentic portrayals of the border is a far too reductive dichotomy. Instead, these essentialist border myths are more productively conceptualized as part of a broad network with points of dissemination in the U.S. as well as in Mexico. If Jordán, as well as Berumen, analyze the way in which the Tijuana origin myth was undergirded by 1950s U.S. economic restructuring, Braham examines the way in which the Mexican government propagates essentialist myths in her critique of “*la mexicanidad*,” or Mexican national character. Drawing on Carlos Monsiváis’s essay “Los viajeros y la invención de México,” Braham summarizes that “Mexican identity is a totalizing construct conceived by foreigners in collusion with the Mexican right” (66). Braham adds, “the discourses of tourism and Manifest Destiny manufactured the necessary barbarous Other, which would be characterized in the imagination of the future by ‘the use of key words: mystery, primitivism, barbarism . . . ’” (67). As shown earlier, the tourism industry was a lynchpin of the Alemán presidency, just as the rhetoric of modernization was central to the 1990s neoliberal U.S. and Mexican regimes. Similarly, Braham’s analysis is useful in connecting the Mexican right’s emergent tourist discourse of the 1950s, undergirded by an imperial vision of modernity, with the 19th century bid for expansionism. The vital historical link which bridges the century gap is the genealogy of border-making through epistemic technologies

such as cultural mythologies. In “Tijuana City Blues,” Trujillo Muñoz uses Morgado as a medium with which to critically and dialectically stage, rather than promote, border myths. This enactment via Morgado occurs in three stages which are presented below. It is characterized by itemization, internal dialogue, and intertextual reference.

In order to enact, and ultimately critique, a genealogy of border myths, Trujillo Muñoz implements a chapter sequence that draws on, but is not structurally identical to, the pattern of a dialectic—in this case by using a sequence of myths and counter-myths. The crucial distinction between the traditional dialectic and the chapter organization of “Tijuana City Blues” is that whereas the former is constituted by the dual elements of thesis and antithesis, in the latter there is a third element, the counter-archive, which is important in establishing the text’s stance regarding border mythologies. Specifically, Trujillo Muñoz provides two myths in chapter seven; a counter-archive in chapter eight (analyzed above) which Morgado does not automatically accept but that will ultimately inform his view of Tijuana; and finally presents a counter-myth in chapter nine. Moreover, it must be noted that while in chapter eight Morgado dialogues with Saravia Quiroz and Ordorika, at the close of this chapter he remains ambivalent on whether or not Tijuana actually is a city of vice (40, 41). Ultimately, however, the chapter sequence allows Morgado to solve his case and more importantly facilitates Trujillo Muñoz’s critique of border myths. The first part of this process, offered in chapter seven, relies on a rote listing of presumably factual characteristics of what is initially described as Tijuana but which the text shows is actually San Diego. During his flight from Mexico City to Tijuana, Trujillo Muñoz provides this supposedly representative list. He writes, “Para Morgado, Tijuana era un puente, una fila de autos, el paso inevitable rumbo al Parque Balboa y Sea World, en San Diego. Una parte de su infancia . . . Otro clima. La brisa del mar. La playa . . .” (“For Morgado, Tijuana was

a bridge, a line of cars, the inevitable step to Balboa Park and Sea World, in San Diego. Part of his childhood . . . Another climate. The ocean breeze. The beach . . .” [33]). The listing here creates the impression that the city is all surface and no depth, merely a string of artificial things like car-packed bridges. In this account, “Tijuana” is little more than a gateway to an idyllic tourist destination. Further, the passage conflates Tijuana and San Diego so that they each seem part of the same picturesque fantasy land of perpetual breezes and vacations frozen in time. Moreover, the use of the past tense, as well as the descriptive marker “part of his childhood” presumably suggests that this is simply a nostalgic and idealized perception of Tijuana. Given Morgado’s role in separating fact from fiction the reader anticipates an alternative account to emerge in chapter seven.

Immediately following the San Diego passage, in chapter seven Trujillo Muñoz provides the second of this two-part border mythology in order to ultimately deconstruct it. Trujillo Muñoz writes: “Pero eso era San Diego. Tijuana era un manchón de cerros y calles serpenteantes en su memoria. Mucha gente de compras. Muchas tiendas de segunda. Anuncios de neon gigantes y calles lodosas” (“But that was San Diego. Tijuana was a patch of hillsides and serpentine streets in his memory. Many shoppers. Lots of thrift stores. Giant neon signs and muddy roads” [33]). Due to the fact that these passages in chapter seven appear in sequence, as well as the syntactic, organizational, and thematic features, the text ostensibly suggests that they are in contrast to one another. Syntactically, the second passage in chapter seven begins with the contrasting conjunction “But.” From an organizational standpoint, because the first passage of chapter seven offers a myth, the reader expects a corrective in the second, especially after the aforementioned conjunction. Furthermore, on a thematic basis, given Morgado’s characteristic

tendency of distinguishing the true from the false, it is logical that a corrective would follow. But on the surface the second passage offers yet another myth.

Whereas the first passage in chapter seven offers a reductionist myth of San Diego as purely a vacation getaway, the second myth ostensibly paints Tijuana as nothing more than a morally corrupt countryside invaded by mass culture. The Tijuana passage in chapter seven starts by asserting the difference between Tijuana and San Diego, and presumably will clarify the distinctions. After the first two sentences, however, the third-person pronouns disappear altogether and the narrative shifts internal dialogue: “many shoppers,” “Lots of thrift stores.” By providing a window into Morgado’s thoughts, Trujillo Muñoz creates the effect of authenticity. In this scene, Morgado presumably is a native informant who possesses an insider’s account of the actual Tijuana because he was born there. Certainly, as Néstor García Canclini convincingly argues, Tijuana contains a mixture of modern and traditional forms.¹³ In “Tijuana City Blues,” this mixture is seemingly illustrated by the establishment of “neon signs” amidst “muddy roads.” Yet for Morgado, Tijuana is not simply a city subject to urbanization. For him, the “*impresión más profunda*” (“most profound impression”) of the border city is that “*todo era un fraude en ella, que no se podía confiar en nadie*” (“everything in it is a fraud, and no one there can be trusted” [34]). This characterization repeats the classically essentializing maneuver of categorizing Tijuana as a city of complete lawlessness. It is the second part of the mythological construction of Tijuana presented in chapter seven. The significance here, however, is that rather than being an external, U.S. account, this perception emerges from someone who, as border-born, can arguably speak on behalf of this border. In this second passage, therefore, the notion of the border as purely commercial and criminal emerges from the border itself.

If border myths are staged in chapter seven, in chapter nine Trujillo Muñoz provides the second half of the myth-counter-myth sequence through the embodiment of local border scholarship. He does so by fictionalizing the late professor Rubén Vizcaíno Valencia, who provides Morgado testimony regarding El Tecolote, the site of the heroin deal gone haywire. Morgado states, “no veo muchas diferencias entre Mexicali y aquí. Sólo que en Tijuana es visible el dinero que circula: en edificios, en ofertas turísticas, en vicios y servicios” (“I don’t see many differences between Mexicali and here. Except that in Tijuana the money flows more visibly: high-rises, tourist attractions, vices and ser-vices” [42]).¹⁴ Vizcaíno replies, “Y de nuevo vamos a lo mismo, a la leyenda negra de Tijuana. . . eso es puro mito” (“And once again we return to the same issue, la leyenda negra de Tijuana. . . That is all myth” [42]). The significance of this passage is the way in which Vizcaíno stands as a figure for potentially disruptive local knowledge. In particular, Vizcaíno offers counterpoints to essentialist border myths which have the potential to produce an alternative image of the border. In terms of textual evidence, these counterpoints are formally registered through dialogue. Notably, on a syntactic level, the dialogue is marked by Vizcaíno’s repetition of the terms “*la leyenda negra*” and “*mito*.” Significantly, Vizcaíno rejects the notion that Tijuana is nothing more than a space subjected to modernization. For Vizcaíno, the mythologizing with which he takes issue is Morgado’s reduction of Tijuana into simply the product of global capitalism. Furthermore, “once again” stresses that this perception is troublingly recurring. By offering this commentary, Trujillo Muñoz sets up a counterpoint to ideas like “Tijuana was a bridge, a line of cars” and Tijuana is “giant neon signs and muddy roads.”

In addition to rhetorically contrasting Morgado’s characterizations of Tijuana, the insistent use of these terms—“*la leyenda negra*” and “*mito*”—also performs a heuristic function,

demonstrated in the second instance of repetition. During his interrogation, Morgado asks Vizcaíno, “¿[p]resenció el tiroteo del 8 de diciembre de 1951” (“[d]id you witness the shootout of December 8, 1951?” [43]). Rather than immediately say no, Vizcaíno replies, “[y]a ve. De nuevo la leyenda negra” (“[y]ou see. Once again la leyenda negra” [43]). Given that Leobardo introduced Morgado as “a lawyer” who travelled “from Mexico City to investigate what Tijuana was like in the 1950s,” Vizcaíno’s reply is curious (42). How can the private investigation of murder by a human rights lawyer reproduce *la leyenda negra*? The thrust of Vizcaíno’s comment is one of scope. He is not asserting that Morgado’s investigation in and of itself reproduces essentialist myths. Instead, Professor Vizcaíno’s comment suggests that investigating December 8, 1951 as strictly another typical Tijuana melee perpetuates *la leyenda negra*. As a matter of fact, during the interrogation, Vizcaíno is quick to point out his own complicity in reproducing such myths by reducing Tijuana into a static image (42, 43). In this scene, therefore, Trujillo Muñoz cautions against such mythologizing by the repetition of discipline-specific terminology. In particular, within the context of *fronterizo* literature “*la leyenda negra*” is a critical term specific to border scholarship. Yet Trujillo Muñoz includes it, and its analogue, “*el mito*,” as part of character dialogue. The effect of implementing this critical vocabulary into the dialogue of “Tijuana City Blues” is that the text exerts a metafictional pressure on essentialist myths. That is to say, the fictional construct of “Tijuana City Blues” breaks the fourth wall, as it were, in order to name theoretical constructs of the present-day material world. In this regard, Trujillo Muñoz’s border *neopoliciaco* explicitly draws attention to essentialist border myths. By providing a language with which to identify border myths through the repetition of these terms, Trujillo Muñoz also creates the possibility of deconstructing them.

The novella's closing scene indicates that if left un-interrogated this transnational mythmaking reproduces the border as a site of imperial power and subjugates border citizens into an abject status. As Morgado is heading for the Tijuana airport, the narrator remarks that "Morgado contempló los cerros cubiertos de casas lámina y autos inservibles, la hilera dispareja de llantas usadas que servían de escalinatas, los muros con pintas políticas y buenos deseos de prosperidad y democracia. El rostro verdadero, multitudinario, de Tijuana" ("Morgado contemplated the hills covered with houses and junked cars, the uneven row of used tires which served as stairs, walls painted with political messages and well-wishes of democracy and prosperity. The true, multifaceted, face of Tijuana" (65). In this passage, the focus is on what is marked as the actual, local, image of Tijuana. The densely packed houses and makeshift trails emphasize a city growing beyond its sustainable capacity in the era of NAFTA. Walls tagged with graffiti evoke the local community's response to official narratives of order and progress. And yet as the taxi wends its way through Tijuana streets, Morgado appears disoriented and unable to recognize the place of his birth. He asks, "where are we?" The driver sardonically responds, "¿[e]n dónde quiere que estemos?. . . En el culo del mundo, en el fundillo de América. Ahí estamos, amigo, y ahí nos vamos a quedar" ("[w]here do you want us to be?. . . We're at the ass of the world, the asshole of America. This is where we are, friend, and this is where we will stay" (66). In the end, "Tijuana City Blues" voices a call to action, whose message is that unless there is fundamental restructuring across the border, on multiple levels, the myth of Tijuana becomes a reality.

Conclusion

Gabriel Trujillo Muñoz uses the border *neopoliciaco* and its inherited generic conventions as an occasion to stage an historical intervention regarding the paradigms by which

the border is imagined and thus articulates how it might be re-structured. In *Mezquite Road* and its alteration of the tenet of liberal individualism, Trujillo Muñoz provides a counter-narrative to the legacy of 1848 as the definitive geopolitical act demarcating the nations of Mexico and the U.S. The world of classic detective fiction, where justice is identified with the state and both are shored up by the talents of a prodigious investigator, is rejected as false in *Mezquite Road*. Given the border setting of this novel, and its 1990s context, the state and its agents are the perpetrators of crime, and this detail necessarily modifies the significance of the concept of “private.” As Morgado’s investigation foregrounds, the collusion between public law enforcement agencies such as the D.E.A. and Mexican federal police, and their cadre of private actors for hire, is oriented by the primacy of neoliberalism on the border as the late 20th century *raison d’être*. Consequently, “private” and “public” are less fixed moral categories (as in classic detective fiction) than hegemonizing denominations organizing a neoliberal base and its superstructure. Moreover, the fundamental antinomy characteristic of border neoliberalism’s iteration of private individualism and public institutionalization is crucially parallel to the rationale justifying the establishment of the U.S.-Mexico border. In using the border *neopoliciaco* as a site in which to critique the Enlightenment process, and privileging of, ratiocination, *Mezquite Road* trenchantly investigates how the border continues to be imagined as a question of legality when its very sustainability requires the transgression of law.

By contrast, “Tijuana City Blues” is less about neoliberal conceptions of private and public than how individual and national discourses essentialize border cities and thus legitimize the border as a geopolitical divider. Drawing on the conventions of the *neopoliciaco*, the narrative of “Tijuana City Blues” is characterized by a productive intertextuality. In addition to characters of his own design, Trujillo Muñoz populates the novella with historical figures like

U.S. writer William S. Burroughs and border scholars such as Leobardo Saravia Quiroz and Rubén Vizcaíno Valencia. As a result, the text's focus on El Güero alters the narrative of Burroughs in Mexico in order to highlight less Burroughs's depiction of Mexican life than how such narratives function as the controlling images and epistemes by which the border is regulated. Furthermore, if these U.S.-based depictions perform the standard Orientalizing maneuver of exoticizing the unfamiliar, the border myths which emerge from within Mexico cast border cities like Tijuana as an anarchic space where even the most violent acts fail to be criminalized. Significantly, therefore, externally produced myths reify the imperial notion of the border as a geopolitical necessity separating the alien from the familiar. At the same time, however, border-based myths effectively work to naturalize the propensity for deviance as characteristic of Mexican behavior. This allegorical and intertextual structure shows how these myths work in concert to produce a false dialectic which in turn discursively reproduces the border. The essentially sanguinary nature of Mexicans legitimizes the border as a marker of national separation; and because there is seemingly no behavior which is taboo on the border, crime without impunity is an all-too-readily available option. Trujillo Muñoz of course is right to point out the flaw in this tautology. He is also not wrong in stressing that these mythologies, and the border they subtend, are actualized as social realities when left unchecked.

Border-Based Postmodernism in *Instrucciones para cruzar la frontera*

Introduction

This chapter is guided by an investigation of claims such as the assertion that Tijuana is the “laboratory” of postmodernity, a construction which frames the city not as a site of local border culture but an axis of U.S.-led developmentalism.¹ As Diana Palaversich notes, “[e]l concepto más difundido de Tijuana como laboratorio de postmodernidad se origina con Néstor García Canclini” (“[t]he most widespread account of Tijuana as a laboratory of postmodernity originates with Néstor García Canclini” [173]). Further, she writes, “[e]ste concepto de la ciudad y la frontera híbrida y multicultural, que Canclini de hecho toma prestado del performista mexicano-chicano Guillermo Gómez Peña, se ha llegado a aceptar con poquísimas excepciones como la interpretación definitiva de la frontera en el mundo académico internacional” (“[t]his concept of the city and the border as hybrid and multicultural, which in fact Canclini borrows from Mexican-American performance artist Guillermo Gómez Peña, has come to be accepted with very few exceptions as the definitive interpretation of the border across the international academic world” [173]). According to the cultural logic of postmodernism, the site-specificity of borders, in this particular case, the border city of Tijuana, is fundamentally metaphorized and de-historicized. Consequently, the way in which national institutions condition and control the everyday life of *Tijuanenses* is obscured by an imaginary which privileges abstract borders.

This chapter argues that *Instrucciones para cruzar la frontera* provides a counter-narrative to this postmodern logic, one which reveals how the nativist ethos of 1848 is reformulated and concretized in the present-day as state control over the juridical, discursive, and cultural domains of contemporary life in Tijuana. Luis Humberto Crosthwaite uses postmodern literary techniques such as metafiction, double encoding and parody, but he adapts these

postmodern devices by combining them with emergent Mexican and border-based expression, particularly *narcoliteratura* and the related popular musical genre, the *narcocorrido*. The chapter's reading of Crosthwaite's use of parody and double encoding draws on Linda Hutcheon's account of literary postmodernism. Hutcheon contends that "even the most self-conscious and parodic of contemporary works do not try to escape, but indeed foreground, the historical, social, ideological contexts in which they have existed and continue to exist" (24, 25). Further, this version of postmodernism is enacted by what Hutcheon terms "double encoding" where the "forms of aesthetic practice and theory both install and subvert prevailing norms" (222). In this logic of double encoding—the inclusive logic of both/and replacing the exclusive logic of either/or—postmodernism is both "intensively self-reflexive and parodic," and at the same time it "attempts to root itself in that which both reflexivity and parody appear to short-circuit: the historical world" (x).

Yet *Instrucciones* combines established postmodern strategies such as parody and double encoding with *narcocorridos* and *narcoliteratura* as a mode of investigating how the local border of Tijuana is both policed as a territorial divider and simultaneously de-territorialized. According to Palaversich, *narcoliteratura* is "narrativa que trata a los narcos" ("narrative which features narcotraffickers"), foregrounding a process wherein traffickers "han logrado trasladarse del margen al centro de la cultura mexicana" ("have managed to move from the margins to the center of Mexican culture" [7]). Beyond the emergent literary genre of *narcoliteratura*, this process has also become the object of critical study by journalists and anthropologists. Further, she adds, "en el transcurso de un decenio hemos sido testigo no solo de la normalización (mainstreaming) del tópico narco, sino también de su consagración y mitificación: lo narco es trendy, es commercial; en fin, se vende" ("in the last decade we have witnessed not only the

normalization (*mainstreaming*) of the narco topic, but of its consecration and mythification: narco is *trendy*, commercial; in short, it sells” [7]).² Similarly, Mark Cameron Edberg notes that while *narcocorridos*, “featuring drug traffickers as protagonists” and “highly popular in the border region and elsewhere,” can be viewed as “narratives of resistance,” they are also “co-constructed by market forces, a significant contradiction to any interpretation that focuses on narcocorridos solely as populist or resistance narratives” (1, 2). In *Instrucciones*, *narcocorridos* initially seem to indicate the total marketization and abstraction of the border but ultimately foreground its site-specificity.

By incorporating these border-based contemporary and commercialized forms, *Instrucciones* emphasizes both the territoriality and historicization of the U.S.-Mexico border in a postmodern context where the border-as-abstraction is seemingly a foregone conclusion. In fact, as is demonstrated below, the combination of border-based and postmodern techniques initially, and surprisingly, presents metaphorical versions of the border. However, this metaphorization is not the result of unresolved contradiction within the text, but instead mediates the construction and naturalization of postmodern spatial epistemologies. Furthermore, the chapter shows how Crosthwaite illuminates the conceptual gaps of metaphorizing the border as a means of highlighting its fundamentally anti-metaphorical status. Consequently, by adapting these aesthetic strategies in his border text Crosthwaite foregrounds the deviation from—and critique of—the late capitalist myth of universal mobility across abstract borders. Notably, the origins of the historiographic and literary paradigms underpinning the discursive representations of Tijuana are locatable in both U.S. and Mexican critical work, which must be explicated before analyzing *Instrucciones*.

The Dominant Narrative of Postmodernism: Revisiting Northern Paradigms in the South Bank

While a number of theorists individually focused on the importance of space in the era of postmodernism, Fredric Jameson's landmark study, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991), organized these individual theories into a larger narrative that continues to serve as a reference point for contemporary analyses of postmodernism. Jameson claimed that the set of aesthetic practices included under the term postmodernism are fundamentally interconnected with the transnational expansion of capitalism. The central thesis in this study is that the "fundamental object" of postmodernism is "the world space of multinational capital" (54). According to this view, the proliferation of the "world capitalist system" had so radically altered human perception that any notion of history dissolved in a world of massification and simulacra. "Distance in general," writes Jameson, "(including 'critical distance' in particular) has very precisely been abolished in the new space of postmodernism" (48). The postmodern conception of space, therefore, is undergirded by the idea of a world system integrated by multinational capitalism. Thus, even as, paradoxically, spatial differences (including borders) are erased, "in the age of the satellite and optical fibre," observes Perry Anderson, "the spatial commands [the] imaginary as never before." Further, Anderson writes, "the electronic unification of the earth, instituting the simultaneity of events across the globe as daily spectacle, has lodged a vicarious geography in the recesses of every consciousness" (56).

This articulation of time and space, however, becomes untenable when situated in the context of the U.S.-Mexico border city of Tijuana. Significantly, the idea of the border as a space conducive to the transgression of limits, rather than as a material barrier, is not restricted to intellectuals from the north but has also emerged from scholars claiming to write from, and

therefore represent, the border. In the context of postmodern theory on the border, the most salient example of this issue is the work of the self-dubbed *Chica-lango* writer Guillermo Gómez Peña. Born in Mexico City (whose inhabitants are colloquially termed *chilangos*) and educated in the U.S., Gómez Peña incited severe commentary for his aesthetic representations of and critical attitude toward the U.S.-Mexico border. In his 1993 work *Warrior For Gringostroika*, Gómez Peña's position ("the border perspective, the only one I know") was that he spoke for the border by claiming metaphysical allegiance to it: "I live smack in the fissure between two worlds . . . [a] fractured reality" where "there cohabit two histories, languages, cosmologies" (16, 37). Yet it was not so much the mystical idea of one's universe ordered by the fractured reality of the border which alarmed critics but Gómez Peña's unabashed metaphorization of the U.S.-Mexico border territory. In a well-known and much-maligned passage, Gómez Peña writes, "we witness the borderization of the world, byproduct of the 'deterritorialization' of vast human sectors. The borders either expand or are shot full of holes . . . The South rises and melts, while the North descends dangerously with its economic and military pincers" (39). In this regard, the site-specificity of the U.S.-Mexico border is evacuated by a theoretical construction which posits the border as universal and therefore homogenous. As a result, Tijuana and San Diego are not divided by a physical barrier but in the "new cartography" are "San Diejuana" (43). Consequently, Gómez Peña's work, while border-based in name, evades site-specificity by claiming that in the era of late capital space is entirely "melted."

In an effort to challenge the abstraction of space typified by the '90s work of Gómez Peña, critics from the South Bank offered new models for analyzing the U.S.-Mexico border. As shown in Chapter Two, the work of Humberto Félix Berumen actively challenges the U.S. mythologizing of Tijuana as a space of lawlessness. In this chapter, the argument draws from

Debra Castillo and María Socorro Tabuenca Córdoba, in particular, their emphasis on “more positioned and polyphonic border theories” (32). This “more positioned” critical stance entails a “rethinking of border theory from within the border area” (4). Moreover, unlike Gómez Peña’s universal and metaphorical border, Castillo and Córdoba persistently emphasize its materiality. As they write, “[t]he U.S.-Mexican ‘border’ popularized by Gómez Peña displaces the actual physical border and all it contains.” Further, they assert, Gómez Peña’s work has “led audiences to think that the border represented by this artist is truly ‘the’ U.S.-Mexican border.” More importantly, Castillo and Córdoba clarify that “local Mexican artists reject his vision with the comment that his border in no way corresponds to theirs” (12). The critical perspective offered by Castillo and Córdoba is useful in emphasizing that a rigorous account of the border must be site-specific, conscious of border representations from north and south of the line, and must consistently foreground a local perspective. In this regard, as a native *Tijuanense* writing from 2011, Luis Humberto Crosthwaite’s *Instrucciones para cruzar la frontera* can offer a more accurate vision of the Tijuana border in the era of late capital.

In *Instrucciones*, Luis Humberto Crosthwaite undermines the normative postmodern conception of de-historicized and de-territorialized space by portraying a site-specific and historically contextualized Tijuana not only through double encoding, parody and pastiche but also through the anti-realist strategy of “baring the device” central to postmodern form, which makes visible the hidden narrative machinery of fiction. In this way, to use Bran Nicol’s terminology, the text “foreground[s] the machinery which perpetuates the illusion of fiction” (37). Furthermore, Nicol’s observes, metafiction “expose[s] postmodernity for what it is: effectively just as constructed, mediated and discursive as the reality we are presented with in the world of fiction” (16). In addition to the anti-realist strategy of baring the device, Crosthwaite

includes a second de-realization strategy via his incorporation of the metafictional techniques of the intrusive narrator and exaggerated author-reader duels. As a result, throughout the text, Crosthwaite insistently calls attention to the world represented in his fiction as constructed. By doing so, the text illustrates how the Tijuana border is less the exclusive space of a U.S.-led postmodernity than one defined by the peripheral modernities of *Tijuanenses*.

In order to clarify how Crosthwaite's text foregrounds the site-specificity of the Tijuana border, *Instrucciones* must be situated in the context of the historical process of nation-building, and the legacy of U.S. expansionism, formalized in 1848. As a way to showcase border-based aesthetic forms, Crosthwaite's version of postmodernism investigates the ways in which the composition of the border as a government-regulated geographical divider, most associated with 19th century nationalism, is still in place in the present moment. The chapter illustrates that a prevailing sense of nationalism, albeit reconfigured as national security in the era of postmodernity, undergirds the border in the present day. This can occur even when the nation-state is not the primary form of social organization. Following Benedict Anderson, the nation is understood here as an imagined community which disguises race, gender and class hierarchies as horizontal relationships.³ While the version of the nation portrayed in the text exists less as a material object than as an intangible concept, it nevertheless affects tangible change through the government institutions of social control. In *Instrucciones*, these institutions are marked by the use of "double encoding." On the one hand, Crosthwaite explicitly names institutions such as Immigrations and Customs Enforcement and its border agents tasked with enforcing the U.S. sanctioned Operation Gatekeeper. On the other hand, these institutions appear in the text indirectly through their officials, such as in the unnamed "*comandante*" who doles out murder instructions to his underlings. Yet as shown, this refusal to specifically identify the institutional

locus of power indicates not the dissolution of the nation as an apparatus which orders social life but the nation's dispersed form of appearance in the era of late capital.

Structurally, *Instrucciones* is organized as a series of vignettes in which form is constantly changing. The first part of the text is comprised of an introduction, a conclusion, and eleven sections in between. The second is a "Bonus Track," organized under the title "*Misa fronteriza*" (Border Mass), which contains twelve subsections. The following sections will focus on individual vignettes from Part One as well as "*Misa fronteriza*" in order to highlight the text's emphasis on site-specific borders. While the text is a composite of hybrid elements, its distinct forms can be grouped into three formal categories. These take the form of the list, dialogues, and standard paragraphs followed by indented lines. The categories, and compositional breakdown indicated above, exist less as objective features of the text than this chapter's own classificatory approach. The goal in doing so is not to impose a framework but to suggest that however fragmentary the text appears there is a consistent unifying element. Specifically, the theme that unites the different sections is the way in which the experience of living in and crossing through the border city of Tijuana is determined by the uneven struggle between the U.S. and Mexican states to regulate and control the border as a national space. By organizing the text around a site-specific, rather than abstract border, Crosthwaite is able to come closer to a local account of what border living means for Tijuana citizens. This attention to the daily lifeworld of *Tijuanenses* is central to the text's interrogation of the late capitalist paradigm of facile border-crossing.

(B)ordering the Nation in the 21st Century: A Parody of National Security

Luis Humberto Crosthwaite's border-based postmodernism both foregrounds and suggests the border-making initiated in and following 1848. This action of zooming in and zooming out, as it were, indicates not a peripheral focus on 1848 but rather the logic of double

encoding defined above. This logic is first presented in an epigram comprised of lyrics to a *norteño* song which states: “[q]uiero recordale al gringo, yo no crucé la frontera, la frontera me cruzó” [12] (“I want to remind the gringo, I didn’t cross the border, the border crossed me.”) In this epigram to “*Recomendaciones*,” which is the first vignette presented, Crosthwaite uses the pop cultural form of *norteño* music in order to situate the text in the historical context of 1848. Cathy Ragland defines *norteño* music as contemporary renditions of Mexican folk ballads. Additionally, she notes, this music is performed by bands featuring “a three-row button accordion; a bajo sexto, which has twelve strings with six double courses; an electric bass; and drums” (1). As a result, the function of the *norteño* lyric is to evoke the 19th century’s redrawing of border lines and to suggest that this emphasis on national borders persists to this day. The lyrics, from the popular band Los Tigres del Norte, are a pointed reference to the coloniality and mobility, not of populations, but of the border itself that harks back to the historical lessons of border modernism in *George Washington Gómez* (12). Significantly, in the present moment, the border is yet again mobilized in that it is “pushed out” through both the rhetoric and the concrete expressions of national security.⁴ While the invocations of 1848 in sections following the first are not as explicit, what remains consistent is a focus on the intertwined relationship between border-making and border-crossing as the daily reality of *Tijuanenses*. By foregrounding the expansionist logic of 1848, the list of “recommendations” which open the text situates the reader not in a virtual dehistoricized space but in a militarized border which exists as a marker of national control.

In order to critique the way in which the border is policed by government institutions designed to preserve the idea of the nation, Crosthwaite uses the exaggerated list characteristic of postmodernism. Importantly, the absurdity borne out through the list effectively parodies the

legalist methods of border control. Further, this parody not only satirizes such methods but underscores the social conditions in which they exist as a means of initiating a critical examination. In arguing for parody as a mode of critique, this chapter draws on Hutcheon's assertion that parody is the "mode" of the "ex-centric," of those who are marginalized by a dominant ideology" (35). Moreover, this critique as parody is enabled by the technique of double encoding, where material is presented only to be subverted. In the list of recommendations, Crosthwaite projects the tenets of dominant ideology back onto the ideological structures themselves, that is, those sites from which dominant ideology emerges. In this particular case, one such site of dominant ideology is the U.S.-Mexico border and its militarized border checkpoints, monitored by the federal agency known as Immigrations and Customs Enforcement.

The parodic nature of the list satirizes the ICE pretense of safeguarding the border as a legal imperative manifest in the rhetoric of national security. Each bullet point contains instructions about the legal procedures of border crossing followed by language which undermines this fixation on legality. The first bullet point, for instance, begins plainly enough by stating that "[s]e require que portes un documento que acredite tu nacionalidad y tus intenciones" ("[i]t is required to carry a passport which verifies your nationality and intentions" [13, 14].) Yet later, the very same bullet ends by stating that one should cross "para realizar faenas que no comprometen el statu quo de la sociedad que visitas" ("to perform works which do not compromise the *status quo* of the society which you visit" [14 italics original]). As a matter of fact, this organization, legal specifications undermined by absurd propositions, represents the larger pattern of "Recomendaciones." While it begins with instructions on legal crossing, the rhetorical punch "ultimately" suggests subservience and assimilation. As the bullet points progress, the language becomes increasingly ironic, as when the narrator urges the reader not to

be pleased if a K9 dog urinates on their tires. The final bullet begins by stating, “[w]hen you come to the guards have your passport ready and your mind blank” (15). This apparently plain statement is then followed by a “typical dialogue” between border agent and border crosser:

-¿Qué trae de México?
 -Nada.
 -¿Qué trae de México?
 -Nada.
 -Tiene que contestar ‘si’ o ‘no.’ ¿Qué trae de México?
 -No.
 -Está bien. Puede pasar. (16)

(-What are you bringing from Mexico?
 -Nothing.
 -What are you bringing from Mexico?
 -Nothing.
 -You have to answer ‘yes’ or ‘no.’ What are you bringing from Mexico?
 -No.
 -All right. You can pass.)

In this dialogue, the violation of standard habits of communication reveals the breakdown of legality as pretense. Specifically, the border agent’s inability to communicate at the level of normal speech shows the fissure between “protecting the homeland” and “enforcing federal law,” the supposed primary goals of ICE.⁵ As a matter of fact, “No” is a grammatically incorrect and illogical response to the question “what are you bringing from Mexico?” In this scene, however, the aspiring border-crosser is not subject to the rules of grammar and logic but to legalist protocols of interrogation. The ICE agents are not concerned with detecting whether border-crossers have “droga” or “fruta” (“drugs” or “fruit”) in tow as the narrator initially suggests (14). Instead, the narrator ultimately states, “[l]o más apropiado es estar convencido de que ellos son seres omnipotentes, deidades, césares caprichosos capaces de arrojarte de su imperio” (“[i]t is best to be convinced that they are omnipotent beings, deities, capricious

Caesars capable of ousting you from their empire” [16]). Therefore, the recommendations for navigating procedures like customs inspections turn out to be a set of tips on appeasing the all-powerful but arbitrary gatekeepers of the kingdom. By showing the absurdity of these procedures, Crosthwaite reveals that the “law” is a pretext for the more insidious project of naturalizing the border and the nationalist ideologies which subtend it.

The deliberately constructivist quality of the list stylistically mirrors the idea of order which undergirds the reciprocal projects of policing the border and preserving the mythical idea of nation-as-homeland. Just as the list form itself is predicated on the idea that there is a rationale to hierarchies, the nation form presupposes not simply that dominant-subordinate relationships are comprehensible but that they are, in fact, reasonable. As a result, the intrusive narrator, who claims to have crossed the border over one thousand times, not only calls attention to the constructed nature of the list but also of the nationalist laws which it vocalizes (13). Historically, the impulse for nation-building via territorial control was unleashed in the 19th century as Manifest Destiny. In Crosthwaite’s text, this tendency toward national control persists only that it is set in the context of the 21st century. Despite this context, however, the border between the U.S. and Mexico is ordered, albeit unevenly, by the national institutions of the U.S. and Mexico. Lauren Berlant thematizes this idea of order through her term “National Symbolic,” a concept which, she argues, produces “the ‘law’ in which the accident of birth within a geographic/political boundary transforms individuals into subjects of a collectively-held history” (20). In this regard, the U.S.-Mexico border is used by ICE as an ordering symbol which, from a nationalist perspective, delimits the U.S. homeland from outside territories and the alien beings that inhabit them. This obsessively policed border under constant surveillance on both sides of

the border is material proof of the ICE ideal to impose methods of national security impermeable to those who “upset the status quo.”

Structuring the list of *recomendaciones* as a parody of the nationalist impulse for order provides a formal analogue for a border history which does not make sense but has attained the status of a regime of truth. While each of the bullets begins as instructions on navigating the legal customs required for border-crossing, thus privileging the significance of the law, they ultimately end in absurdity. Customs agents are deities; border agents will only take “yes” or “no” answers even when their questions warrant otherwise; border-crossers are exhorted to take no pleasure in coprophilia. The narrator of the list thus frames their satirical commentary as legal instructions in order to undermine the very notion of legality itself. Further, Crosthwaite’s parody shows that this turn to legality is actually a nationalist strategy used to enforce nativist policy. As a result, the application of the law as an ordering principle on the border is rendered as a farce. The relation between legality and border-crossing, literally staged as a set of legal procedures, does not add up. In this light, Crosthwaite provides a list of laws that are not actually laws at all but regulatory mechanisms of an ideological construct, the nation, which presents itself as what Berlant would term “the inevitability of a natural law”; of what Michel Foucault identifies as a regime of truth. In short, it is precisely the transformation of a collectively-held narrative into a paradigm that orders and conditions life materially and conceptually which makes it possible for the popular discourse on immigration to rationalize lethal force because immigrants are ‘breaking the law.’ As a result, by double encoding, in this case displaying a list that is both a set of laws as well as a series of absurdities, Crosthwaite illustrates that the border continues to be governed, and reproduced, by the politics and protocols of national security in the guise of jurisprudence.

The Dark Side of the post-NAFTA Border: Rationalizing Undocumented Deaths and Disappearances through the Discourse of Gatekeeping

This section discusses the fourth vignette of *Instrucciones*, “*Muerte y esperanza en la frontera norte*” (Death and Hope on the Northern Border). In “*Muerte y esperanza*,” Crosthwaite’s metafictional use of fictive newspaper clippings both undermines the causality of labor as the sole determinant of border crossing and initiates a critique of the tactical pursuit of border crossers. In particular, this section demonstrates that labor discourse is intertwined with the discourses on and use of military technology to hunt those seeking to cross the border of Tijuana. In addition, the repetition of “Gatekeeper” in the fictive reports foregrounds the critical link between discourse and border violence. Not insignificantly, the same institutional mechanism designed to deter immigration—the Department of Homeland Security—is also responsible for counter-terrorism efforts. Thus, Peter Andreas writes, “[a] once obscure term, ‘homeland security,’ became part of the everyday security discourse” (154).⁶ Furthermore, the neoliberal ruse of globalization as a universal good effectively works to legitimate border militarization protocols such as Operation Gatekeeper. As Joseph Nevins writes, Operation Gatekeeper is “an enhanced boundary enforcement strategy begun on October 1, 1994, to reduce unauthorized migrant crossings.” Further, writes Nevins, this strategy “attempts to thwart migrants from entering the United States . . . through the forward deployment of Border Patrol agents, and increased use of surveillance technologies and support infrastructure” (2). “*Muerte y esperanza*” is thus a critical exposé of the dark underside of neoliberal free trade: in the same year of the implementation of NAFTA, which would ostensibly fulfill the late capitalist ideal of open borders, the U.S. mobilizes a strategy to militarize and “secure” the border between the U.S. and Mexico.⁷ By analyzing the vignette of border crossers, rendered in the form of

newspaper clippings, this section shows how the discursive representation of border crossers as aspiring participants in U.S. global capitalist economy corroborates the normative viewpoint that death by border crossing is the result of Mexico's failure meet its citizens's labor demands.

"Muerte y esperanza" first traces the account of Mexican nationals who travel to Tijuana and hire a *coyote*, or smuggler, to help them cross the border, except that the *coyote* abandons the group to fend for themselves. Next, "Muerte y esperanza" presents a series of fictional news clippings dated April 3 to April 11. As a result, the vignette is comprised of two distinct sections that utilize two different discourses in a mode reminiscent of John Dos Passos: the first, a form of fictional omniscient narration in paragraph form, and the second, documentary style in the form of dated newspaper headlines from either Mexican or U.S. outlets. In the opening paragraph, the repetition of the phrase "they had been told" thematically communicates the promise of the American Dream at the same that it structurally keeps this dream in perpetual delay. According to this dream, entrance into America, and by extension its economy, is concurrent with upward mobility. For example, aspiring border-crossers "had been told that in the United States there were great work opportunities" (45). While the passage's content makes it clear that "they" are immigrants it is less clear who "told" them. As the passage continues, the insistence on "they had been told" gives way to "nobody had mentioned," and here this phrase is ambiguous as well. This refusal to attribute "they/nobody" to a specific person, group, or even geographic area, indicates that the discursive representations of the border exist less as the result of one site than the interaction between sources, both human and institutional. In other words, the form of this vignette, a fictional version of news reports, suggests the way in which the discourse that crossing the border is synonymous with realizing the American Dream is communicated through word of mouth as well as the institutions of print culture such as newspaper outlets. At

the end of the paragraph, beset with inclement weather, the *coyote* tells his *pollos* (the people he is smuggling) that they will have to return and try again, to which they refuse (46). Like many others before them, this fictional group decides to keep going, and as often happens, many in this group die. The tale of border-crossers who die chasing a dream, however, is less an elegy than a structural analysis. As Javier Cercas writes, *Instrucciones* is “a collection of stories . . . full of feeling but orphaned of sentimentality” (31). Therefore, in a documentary style, and via a literary rendition of the newspaper medium, the text portrays these stories not to mournfully observe that border crossing means certain death. Instead, these stories suggest that the normalization of immigrant death is a symptom of the way in which the primary cause of border crossing is discursively represented as the fundamental desire to realize the promise of the American Dream.

In the second, “documentary” section, the discursive representation of border crossing is mediated, and critiqued, through the alternating U.S. and Mexican news reports on immigration. Crosthwaite stages these reports as a response to the paragraphs on border-crossers of the first half of “Muerte y esperanza.” In total there are eight reports, typographically displayed in chronological order from “*Abril 3. Sabado de Gloria*” to “*Abril 11.*” The reports either come in pairs, that is, from both the U.S. and Mexico, or from one country alone. To be sure, this metafictional integration of fictive news reports as pastiche is a common postmodernist aesthetic. However, unlike Jameson’s assertion that pastiche is a “neutral practice,” the “play of random stylistic allusion,” in *Instrucciones* the stylistic is resolutely historical (17, 18). In this regard, Crosthwaite’s text shares the emphasis of what Hutcheon terms “historiographic metafiction.” She writes, “what historiographic metafiction suggests is a recognition of a central responsibility of the historian and the novelist alike: their responsibility as makers of meaning through representation” (84). Crosthwaite’s metafiction, therefore, shows that the border crossing

presented through the medium of the news report, although premised on objectivity, nonetheless presents a constructed reality. It is precisely this conception of the real, flawed in its reduction of complex reasons for population movement into crudely economic terms, which the text critiques.

The evidence of this constructed and U.S.-centric reality is the tautological structure of “Muerte y esperanza.” From an organizational standpoint, and not insignificantly, the first section’s opening statements appear verbatim as the final news clipping. In particular, the entire first paragraph (as well as the opening lines of the second) constitutes the “*Abril 11. Sabado*” entry. As a result, the American Dream narrative, a social construction characteristic of neoliberalism, is given the status of an objective fact in that it appears as a news article. Furthermore, the illusion that crossing the U.S.-Mexico border to become a laborer is equivalent with upward mobility is reified as a social reality by a medium that, by definition, reports actual events. By using this metafictional strategy of transmuting rumors of “great work opportunities” into journalistic accounts of the Tijuana border, Crosthwaite shows that the complex needs of local Tijuana citizens are inscribed within a tautological progress narrative. If Tijuana citizens want the American Dream they must cross the border. Crossing the border results in the American Dream. Except that, as the deaths of the border-crossers makes strikingly plain, it does not. By enacting this tautology, the text foregrounds the limits of framing border-crossing within a purely socioeconomic framework of labor demand.

The discursive representation of border-crossing therefore enables and is enabled by a logic which reduces the need to cross into purely economic terms. This logic is highlighted in the “*Abril 8*” news report, for instance, which is presented as an “Editorial” and attributed to the “North American press.” The report states, “[I]a desesperación hace que los migrantes ignoren las leyes. Nadie culpa a los trabajadores. Si México no puede satisfacer sus necesidades de

trabajo, los más necesitados recurrirán a los Estados Unidos, desafiando al clima y a la naturaleza” (“[m]igrants ignore laws out of desperation. Nobody blames the employers. If Mexico cannot satisfy its labor demands, the most destitute turn to the United States, braving nature and the elements” [48]). In this metafictional news report, the single cause of border crossing is the identification of a critical Malthusian breaking point, the “desperation,” which is purportedly endemic to Mexico. Moreover, in Crosthwaite’s metafictional presentation of the border, Mexico and the U.S. are diametrically opposed as economically ‘unable’ (“cannot”), and ‘able,’ respectively. In doing so, the effect is not to mirror this dichotomy as the actual social condition of the Tijuana border. Instead, as Patricia Waugh asserts, metafiction creates the possibility of exploring “the fictionality of the world outside the literary fictional text” (2). In other words, metafiction provides a critical lens enabling the examination of the discursive and material conditions through which social realities are forged. In this way, Crosthwaite’s fictive news reports uncover the duplicity of globalization discourses. Specifically, Crosthwaite shows how the myth that people cross the border for the abstract American Dream disguises the myriad historical and social factors which engender border crossing. As a result, the identities available to Tijuana citizens are circumscribed within a framework where global capitalism is the preeminent cultural logic. If the border-crosser is reduced to the status of laborer, any semblance of personhood is entirely dissolved in the process of discursively framing human beings as “*indocumentados*.”

The use of the term “*indocumentado*” in both the Mexican and U.S. metafictional press bulletins reifies the above-named distorted notion of the legal in addition to creating a discursive space where lethal violence is permissible in the absence of personhood. Couched in the form of the news report, this rhetoric of “*indocumentados*” appears not merely as nationalistic but as the

lived reality of the phenomenal world. That is to say, Crosthwaite's literary representation of the medium of print journalism instantiates the nativist ideal that the people crossing the border, so called "*indocumentados*," are actually illegal. Furthermore, this logic stipulates that their very existence is a qualitatively illicit form of being that reaches its critical threshold in the decisive moment that they cross the border. As a result, because they are discursively represented as "*indocumentados*" in violation of U.S. law, the violence directed at them is not a form of state terror, since terror presupposes subjectivity.⁸ According to U.S. immigration law, "*indocumentados*" are "aliens," a term itself which presupposes that they are the abject other. Consequently, this violence is framed not as a physical process but is abstracted as the organizational logic of the state. Within this configuration, state power is not concentrated in a national center but rather is distributed across an imagined cartography of an equally imaginary, but no less formidable, world-system. The "*indocumentado*," therefore, transgresses the postmodern order not because they are "illegal" but because their very status as border-crossers highlights the restricted-, and not open-ness, of borders. As a result, these news reports work to naturalize violence against border-crossers by classifying them as "*indocumentados*," in addition to the repeated mention of "*Operativo Gatekeeper*."

The significance of "*Muerte y esperanza*" is the way in which it reveals the process of manufacturing national consent via the militarizing discourse of "*Operation Gatekeeper*." As Stuart Hall writes, the modern state "is where the bloc of social forces which dominates over it not only justifies and maintains its domination but wins by leadership and authority the active consent over those whom it rules" (19). In this light, the exigency of this particular vignette is not in its sober presentation of death as a daily possibility for *Tijuanenses* but in suggesting that the culpability for these deaths is systemic, shared by political-military forces as well as those

who consent to imagine and thus sustain the border as a barrier against “*indocumentados*.” According to “Muerte y esperanza,” one way of doing so is by enacting militarization protocols such as “Operation Gatekeeper.” As a result, immediately before the last fictional news report which completes the tautology of “Muerte y esperanza,” the “*Abril 9*” entry quotes the “director” of the “INS” as stating, “hemos descubierto los elementos básicos para que funcione nuestra frontera” (“we have discovered the basic elements for our border to function” [49]). Crucially, as a means of illustrating these elements vital to the “functioning” border, the report mentions “thousands of undocumented arrested,” the “majority” of whom are deported. If this is the case, then by contrast, those not deported are the “*muertos*” who go unnamed but whose deaths are announced in nearly every single news report. Despite its rhetorical formulation of a military engagement where selfless American patriots defend a vulnerable homeland from Mexican invaders, “Operation Gatekeeper” is fundamentally a surveillance protocol, undergirded by white supremacy, where lethal force is standard behavior. To clarify, initiatives such as “Gatekeeper” are no doubt militarization efforts; crucially, however, they frame agents of violence as defenders, and civilians as aggressors. Even the critical language surrounding the analyses of such initiatives reflects this dichotomy rooted in an imagined internecine conflict: Nevins’s definition of “Gatekeeper,” for instance, reflects the “forward deployment of Border Patrol agents” (2); Peter Andreas refers to it as a “deterrence effort,” an “immigration control initiative,” (4, 111). Moreover, presented alongside the essentialism of border crosser as both laborer and combatant is the text’s insistent focus on the deaths caused by Gatekeeper: “siete indocumentados muertos . . . Ocho muertos de frío . . . Nueve muertos” (“seven undocumented dead . . . Eight die of exposure . . . Nine dead” [46, 47, 48]). Not insignificantly, in these examples the death count steadily rises, in contrast to the earlier promises that in America

immigrants will build a new life through labor. In this way, the rhetorical structure of the news reports is organized around the presence of both those seeking the United States's "great work opportunities" and the border militarization protocols of "*el operativo*." Crosthwaite's use of metafiction, therefore, reveals the pernicious dichotomy which naturalizes border violence: the American dream is realized by crossing the border and at the same time a 'functioning' border is one in which "*indocumentados*" are either arrested or "*muertos*."

The Sonic Space of Tijuana: Shooting Down Virtual Borders via *Narcocorridos*

This section discusses the fifth vignette of *Instrucciones*, "*Mínima historia*" ("Minimum Story"). The vignette tracks the account of four assassins, generically named "*Líder*," "*Chofer*," "*Vigia*" and "*Acompañante*" ("Leader," "Chauffer," "Lookout," and "Escort"), who wait for "*Sujeto*" and "*Mujer rubia*" ("Subject" and "Blonde woman") outside a Tijuana airport in order to murder them. Further, as the following reading shows, while the text does not overtly refer to them as such, it does suggest that the assassins are state agents. Ultimately, the assassins follow "*Sujeto*" and "*Mujer rubia*" from the airport to a hotel and kill them while at a Tijuana intersection. Importantly, moreover, Crosthwaite enacts and then deconstructs the image of Tijuana as a postnational space by grafting themes of the *narconovela* and the related *narcocorrido*, in this particular case evocative of Chalino Sánchez, onto an assassination plot.⁹ Significantly, the plot details of "*Mínima historia*," where state agents are assassins, mirrors the actual circumstances of Sánchez's death. In 1992, Sánchez was pulled over and detained by men who identified themselves as officers of the law, after which he was found dead. To clarify, as summarized above, Diana Palaversich identifies the Mexican *narconovela* as a genre which emerges "in the early 1990s" and highlights the intersecting themes of drug trafficking, violence and "government corruption." Moreover, these narratives often "take place either partially or

entirely in the Mexican north, the region where most narco dealing is concentrated” (87).¹⁰

Related to the *narconovela* in its focus on these themes is the *narcocorrido*, a revival of the earlier *corrido* but popularized by norteño bands such as Los Tigres del Norte and Los Tucanes de Tijuana (Edberg 25). These narco texts are thus helpful in their site-specific context. Further, both the *narconovela* and the *narcocorrido* trace the erosion of government power in Mexico’s northern states due to the rising economic viability of drug trafficking. As a result, state power is no longer centralized but instead is dispersed among and negotiated with drug cartels.

Specifically, this arrangement is characterized by shaky and constantly shifting alliances between national institutions and organizations, like the cartels, which operate outside the law, all of which occurs in a postmodern and supposedly postnational context.¹¹ In this way, Crosthwaite’s adaptation of these narco themes is part of a strategy of double encoding. On the surface, space is rendered as abstract such that Tijuana appears as a postnational space free of borders and the institutions which police them. At bottom, however, the invocation of these narco themes shows that this space is not borderless and postnational but instead how national space is reconfigured in the era of late capitalism.

Initially, the image of a postnational and abstract Tijuana is reproduced through dialogue, character names and setting. The name of the city is never explicitly mentioned, nor are the peculiarities of the city detailed, and as a result, the fictional space rendered is not Tijuana at all. It is instead an abstract space comprised of types rather than specific human agents. The text opens “Dos pm en el aeropuerto. Vientos Fuertes, calurosos. Vigía sospecha que Sujeto no llegó solo” (“2 PM at the airport. Strong winds, hot. Lookout suspects that Subject did not arrive alone” [51]). In what is a representative pattern throughout the text, this quote illustrates that characters are identified not by a uniquely given name but by the function which they perform.

Moreover, the fragmented speech of the narrator is also characteristic of dialogue between the characters where a typical exchange is as follows: “[L]íder llama a Expedition: Se nos perdió el paquete. Voz contesta: Bajando la loma, frente a central de autobuses” (“[L]eader calls Expedition: We lost the package. Voice responds: Descending the hill, in front of bus depot” [53]). In this regard, the cell phones by which the murder details are communicated is parallel to character dialogue that sounds like Nextel walkie transmissions, an ever-present accessory in *narcocorridos*. This dialogue thus illustrates what Jameson terms the “neutral and reified media speech” emblematic of the late capitalist era (17). Significantly, moreover, it is not that language is grossly neutral but that it transcodes a postmodern space where the distance by which spatiality, and thus any notion of the historical, is all but obliterated. The “Leader” gives commands, the “Lookout” reports their observations and the “Subject” never speaks. As a result, the language by which characters see and know the world is reduced to the utilitarian bare minimum and is always commercial in that it is always about the job. If meaning is hollowed out at the level of language, the material world which it names is veritably gutted by the imposition of an illusory space.

The absence of concrete topographic and spatial markers reinforces the impression of a virtual city. All of the city’s features, such as its buildings and roads, are either never directly named or named in the most general way. Further, the spatial idiosyncrasies within a city, such as the local food vendors or the seedy hotels used for clandestine encounters, are named generically and ironically. The airport, for instance, from which the “Subject” is followed is simply named “*aeropuerto*” (51). On the day of his murder, the “Subject” stops at a motel to have sex with “Blonde Woman” at a place named “*El Paradero Motel*,” literally, stopping place motel (52, 55). In this way, any cues that might indicate the setting to the reader are entirely

foreclosed by a postmodern spatiality that refuses specificity. Consequently, what Henri Lefebvre terms the “indefinite multitude of spaces,” that is, the simultaneous presence of the “geographic,” the “demographic,” the “national,” is not realizable within this specific postmodern worldview (8). Unlike the conscious materialization of space in the earlier vignettes, marked by government-regulated border checkpoints and anti-government *coyote* directions, in “*Mínima historia*,” space is completely abstracted such that institutions of national power or government control are presumably unthinkable.

However, the intertextualization of Chalino Sánchez and the related narco themes allows Crosthwaite to clarify that the space rendered in the text is in fact Tijuana and by extension highlight a newly configured national order. Additionally, the overt references to Chalino Sánchez’s murder establish a historical time frame for the setting of the text. In this way, narco themes function as a counterweight to the earlier virtualization of space in that they are historically- and site-specific aesthetic strategies. While waiting for “Subject” to leave *El Paradero Motel*, “[c]hofer enciende el radio: cambia de una estación a otra hasta que se topa con la voz de Chalino” (“[c]hauffer turns on the radio: changes from station to station until encountering Chalino’s voice” [56]). Ostensibly, referring to an artist by their first name and the implication that listeners are bound to “encounter” them on the radio emphasizes the “commodity fetishism” of late capital and its attendant virtual postnational spaces (Jameson 9). The voice is, after all, readily available on the radio for immediate consumption. Yet Crosthwaite adds, “[c]orrige: No, no es Chalino; es uno de los copiones” (“[h]e corrects: No, no it is not Chalino; it is one of the copycats” [56]).¹² Significantly, the “Chauffer’s” identification of the tendency toward imitation is possible because he is part of a specific *norteño* border community, a term used to define the sound of *narcocorridos* but also to designate their prevalence along and

across the border of northern Mexico.¹³ In this way, only listeners familiar with the *norteño* sound of Chalino Sanchez's version of the *narcocorrido*, and his "voice," can make such distinctions. Further, the identification of a specific border locale is coupled with the references to Chalino Sánchez, which situate this space in the '90s era. As "Leader" states, "Sólo hay un Chalino, güey; Bueno, había; se lo chingaron, ni pedo" ("There's only one Chalino, fucker. Well, was. They clipped him, and that's that" [56]). As a result, the reference to Sánchez's posthumous notoriety situates the text in the context of the post-90s given that he was murdered in May of 1992, and the recognition of the "copycats" who emerged a decade later following his death. If this intertextualization situates "Minima historia" in post-90s Tijuana, this border locale is also highlighted through Crosthwaite's thematic foregrounding of assassins operating with the local government's blessing.

Crosthwaite's depiction of the assassins, in tandem with the consistent emphasis on narco themes, indicates the negotiation of power between government institutions and illicit operatives on the Tijuana border. Tellingly, "Subject" leaves from the airport in a "Mercedes Benz" not because capital has permeated every corner of the world but because of Mexican national law (52). According to this, law public taxis are prohibited from picking up passengers at Tijuana International Airport.¹⁴ Consequently, while "Subject" cannot catch a cab the narrator states that "[l]ookout will leave in a taxi" (52). This seemingly peripheral detail is actually quite significant in that it contextualizes the story but also emphasizes the collusion between local government and the assassins. Given the law, it is implied that this will not be any random cab but rather a government-leased taxi, the only kind permissible. Further, a "Security Agent" notices the suspicious group but is quickly despatched when "Chauffer" flashes "credentials" (53). In addition to these "credentials," the text emphasizes "[l]eader's" preoccupation with satisfying the

“Comandante” (53, 57). As a matter of fact, pressed with doubt after their time-table is disrupted, “Leader” makes a call to an unnamed voice who states, “[t]iene que ser hoy, ya te dije” (“[i]t has to be now, I already told you” [57]). In a context where character names refer less to three-dimensional figures than the actions which they perform, it can be inferred that the only other person to whom “Leader” would answer to is the “Comandante.” As a result, the hit squad’s flouting of national transport law, in tandem with the “credentials,” and the authorization of the “Comandante,” suggest that the assassins have clearance to wait outside a Tijuana airport from the local government. Otherwise, the “Security Agent” would be forced to remove them. Further, the group is able to essentially loiter until they spot the target of their assassination not simply because they have clearance but also because, as a government-sanctioned group, they are in the familiar territory of a government-regulated, and militarized, airport. Tijuana International, also known as General Abelardo L. Rodríguez International Airport, is the city’s only airport available to the public at the same time that it is actively used by the Mexican military. Crosthwaite thus shows that the assassins, though clearly an illicit group, operate with impunity because they are on their home turf in Tijuana.

In challenging the abstracting logic of postmodernity through intertextualization and double encoding, Crosthwaite also calls attention to the reconfiguration and indirect appearance of the nation attendant to postmodern space. In the postmodern equation à la Jameson, the spatial predominates over the temporal such that timespace is nothing more than the endless reproduction of the image. Yet the problem with this formulation is its overemphasis on “spatial consciousness” which necessarily precludes historical awareness (Murphet 116). Thus, to use Linda Hutcheon’s language, time and space is reduced to a question of “either . . . or” instead of the more lifelike “both . . . and.” However, as Crosthwaite demonstrates, the inclusion of the ‘90s

star Chalino Sánchez and the newly emergent narco themes discloses the border as a material site inhabited by illicit but government sanctioned operatives even if both appear indirectly. In this depiction, Tijuana is, in fact, the site of postmodern technologies wherein the tendency is to virtualize space. Crucially, however, these do not predominate but are set against local border-based expressions of *narco-cultura*. In this way, the border city of Tijuana stages a peculiar trans-temporality, defined by the peripheral and site-specific modernity of *norteños*, and its co-presence alongside the national institutions of a postmodernity whose cartography signifies less discrete territorial units than interlinked domains of power.

Postmodern Border Metafiction: Arming Readers of *la frontera* and Analyzing its

Discontents

This section discusses “*El hombre muerto pide disculpas*” (“The Dead Man Asks Forgiveness”) and “*La silla vacía*” (“The Empty Chair”), the two vignettes in *Instrucciones* that most overtly resort to postmodern metafictional techniques of frame-breaking. In “El hombre muerto,” Crosthwaite merges *narcoliteratura* and metafiction as an ironic means of emphasizing that the literary representation of the border must be dialogic, as much about cultural production as those who consume it. In particular, “El hombre muerto” dramatizes a showdown between an author and a reader who is an aspiring, but frustrated, author in his own right. Immediately, this reader identifies himself as a *sicario*, that is, a paid assassin who has accepted the job of murdering the author, but will not do so before expressing his readerly admiration (35, 36). Yet the conclusion of this showdown, a presumably lethal encounter, results in parody rather than tragedy: followed by the reader yet without being intercepted, the author unhurriedly walks to his car and drives off, watching the reader-would-be-assassin recede through his rearview mirror. As a result, this witty vignette takes the postmodern concept of the death of the author and the

concomitant primacy of the reader to an absurd and literal level by combining the theme of murder for hire with the metafictional foregrounding of an author's dependence on language and on the reader. As Roland Barthes writes in his iconic 1968 essay "The Death of the Author," "it is language which speaks, not the author," ultimately claiming that "the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author" (143, 148). Despite the literalization of the author's death, however, "El hombre muerto" is ultimately a literary rendering of the reciprocal relation between authors and readers. In this way, Crosthwaite shows how border representation is never a question of an individual author or a specialized reader. Instead, "El hombre muerto" offers a border-based subversion of universalizing postmodernism by exploring the death of the author and the increasing significance of the reader.

In order to accomplish this subversion, Crosthwaite adapts and modifies the themes of *narcoliteratura* by using language ironically. If *narcoliteratura* typically dramatizes the transit of violence across borders, Crosthwaite alters this theme by ironically characterizing a reader of border fiction paid to assassinate a border author. In fact, this dynamic between reader and author is crucial in demonstrating that this vignette operates not as *narcoliteratura* proper but also as metafiction. As a result, in the text the key figures of *narcoliteratura*, the *sicarios* and their "weapons," do not function in the traditional sense, but instead call attention to the practice of writing and reading fiction. In this way, the term "assassination" demonstrates the "non-literal usage of language, where what is said is contradicted by what is meant" (Nicol 13). Like some mainstream earlier postmodern metafiction, Crosthwaite stages an encounter between reader and author to underscore the fact that representation is never innocent or natural but always constructed and fabricated. Unlike such earlier author-reader encounters, however, the theme of paid assassination offers a literary means of suggesting that a comprehensive border

representation is available only through the interplay between author and reader and not the privileging of one over the other.

The text's organization around, and thematic focus on, the reader as would-be *sicario* offers a parodic mode of critiquing the idea that only the specialized reader can discern the meaning of border fiction. This notion of a privileged reader implies that meaning is singular. As a result, only the specialized reader of border fiction can locate *the* meaning of the border. While the title alone, "El hombre muerto," evokes Barthes, this vignette also cautions against reducing the author's death into a mere binary where the reader simply replaces the author as the lone source of meaning. Presumably, the text indicates that it is not language that speaks but rather the privileged reader who alone determines meaning. For instance, Crosthwaite affects this impression by contrasting the author's silence with the reader's vocalicity. The entire text is comprised of the narrator's (and author's) silent thoughts set against the reader's direct speech, both rendered in first-person and present tense (35-44). Further, the portrayal of the reader emphasizes his literary specialization and thus suggests that he is a privileged reader. He states, "Muy a pesar de lo que podría considerarse, yo soy un hombre culto, y le puedo asegurar que mi rango de lectura no se reduce a sus libros. He leído much más que eso, obra clásica y contemporánea" ("Despite all appearances, I am an educated man, and I can assure you that the level of my reading is not limited to your books alone. I have read much more than that, both classic and contemporary works" [37]). However, the reader confesses that he "ended [someone's] life" because they read "his writing" the wrong way—a clearly exaggerated response to literary criticism (38). Therefore, while the reader is characterized as the text's focal point, this characterization is ultimately parodic.

By staging this potential murder as a dialogue, “El hombre muerto” foregrounds that it is not, in fact, the reader who is the lone source of meaning, because at the most fundamental level the reader’s speech is always in relation to the author. As a matter of fact, on a structural level this speech is available only through the narrator’s reporting. Further, the reader’s presumed specialization is undermined by the very fact that he must talk about rather than demonstrate it. Additionally, the confession that the character “reader” murdered another reader because of a misinterpretation is the thematic means of taking the critical act of interpretation to its extreme. In “El hombre muerto,” therefore, interpretation is not the sole province of the specialized reader yet neither is it realized through the titular declaration to eliminate the author.

The ironic characterization of the weapon used to kill the author suggests not only that a representative border fiction must be multidimensional, but that this process requires new analytic tools. Specifically, in order for border fiction to approximate the lived realities of Tijuana citizens, meaning can never belong to either readers or authors but instead is borne out through transit between the two. Consequently, Crosthwaite draws on parody by framing the vignette as a story about the death of an author except that the author does not die; weapons do not function as weapons in the literal sense. As a matter of fact, there is never any indication of the precise shape, size or type of weapon used by the reader, but instead it is generically referred to as “*el arma*” (“the weapon” [36]). Consequently, the reader does not know if “*el arma*” is a handgun, an AK-47 like those used by the hit squad in “*Mínima historia*,” or even a knife. Rather, the narrator describes the weapon as “un objeto insólita, una herramienta inconcebible” (“an unusual object, an inconceivable tool” [36]). While the narrator remarks that the weapon is “inconceivable,” it is also enigmatically labelled a “frontera,” or border, twice. In the first passage, the narrator states, “[p]ienso en el arma, un bulto imperceptible, una frontera que insiste

en separarnos y señalar nuestras desigualdades” (“I think about the weapon, an imperceptible mass, a border that insists on separating us and signaling our differences” [40]); in the second, “[s]u arma divide mi vida. En realidad esa frontera me aísla, me separa del resto, me deja solo” (“[h]is weapon divides my life. Actually that border secludes me, separates me from the rest, isolates me” [41]). This depiction of the weapon, therefore, presumably suggests an inconsistent use of symbol if one remembers the reader’s claim to have killed with the very same weapon that now operates in contrast to its literal meaning.

Yet the significance of this depiction is not that “*el arma*”/“*frontera*” is used both literally and metaphorically. Instead, it is the way in which “weapon” is an ironic mode of foregrounding fictionality itself. That is to say, “weapon” signifies the capacity latent in fiction to make meaning. According to Barthes, the author figuratively dies when the reader comes into being during the act of reading. He writes, “there is no other time than that of the enunciation and every text is eternally written *here and now*” (145). Certainly, the reader is crucial to this process but meaning-making is never a given and moreover requires the text itself, which presupposes an author. Thus, in “El hombre muerto,” what “separates” the author from the reader is not a literal weapon or a metaphorical border, but the potential meaning-making of writing fiction and interpreting it in the process of reading. Moreover, in a context where the border is abstracted and concretized, in fiction as well as in military-political efforts, border analytics must parse the distinctions between these representations. As the conclusion of the text demonstrates, where the living author is conscious of the reader, this meaning-making must always be plural. This vignette, therefore, shows that the “weapon” which “kills” is an ironic way of suggesting that making meaning can be stymied by an overemphasis on either the reader or the author. By commenting on literary representation in this way, Crosthwaite emphasizes that the discursive

formations which undergird and actualize the border's form of appearance, as a militarized zone that is pushed out, or as part of a "worldwide web of spatial threads," must be oriented by border-based cultural production and its audiences (Murphet 130).

The other demonstratively metafictional vignette in *Instrucciones*, "La silla vacía," personifies the Tijuana border and by extension endows it with consciousness in order to critique the dualist language by which the border is perceived. If the metafiction of "El hombre muerto" stages a confrontation between author and reader, the frames of "La silla vacía" are explicitly foregrounded through what Patricia Waugh terms "ostentatious typography" as well as organization (21). In particular, this vignette is organized as a dialogue between patient and therapist whose statements are typographically indicated as "ZZZ" and "AAA" respectively. Further, using the "empty chair" technique of Gestalt psychology, the patient is asked to imagine and speak to the border. In this technique, patients address their speech to an empty chair, which can symbolize another person, a feeling, or even themselves. The patient "ZZZ" addresses the chair, and as a result, via personification, Crosthwaite adds a third character, "Frontera," or "FNT," which 'speaks back' to the patient. Given this stylistic arrangement, Crosthwaite shatters the illusion that the story-teller, as well as the means of story-telling, simply provides a window, albeit concealed, of the world as it actually is. In this way, as Waugh writes, the frames of narrative are readily "perceptible" and present not the world as is but the world as constructed (30). By staging a psychological analysis of the dualist construction of the border as either a "material" or an "imagined limit," the metafiction in "La silla vacía" constitutes an intervention in contemporary border scholarship and its polemic of abstract versus site-specific theorizations (84).

The structure of “La silla vacía” as an “empty chair” dialogue between patient “ZZZ” and doctor “AAA” suggests that the U.S.-Mexico border is ineffable and by extension ostensibly privileges the language of abstraction. Key to Gestalt psychology is the way in which perception occurs: an object can never be viewed in terms of its constituent elements before first viewing the object in its entirety. Given the linguistic system by which humans make sense of the world, perception is always therefore tied to the question of language. Patient “ZZZ,” however, cannot perceive the border because he cannot describe it in language. Doctor “AAA” states, “Háblame de esa Frontera” (“talk to me about the border”) but patient “ZZZ” cannot. He states, “Te dije que es imaginaria, que no puedo hablar de ella” (“I told you that it is imaginary, that I cannot talk about her” [84]). This response prompts the doctor to ask, “¿[n]o puedes hablar de lo imaginario?” (“you cannot talk about the imaginary?”) but “ZZZ’s” answer to this is silence indicated by an ellipsis (84). Further, the doctor picks up on the patient’s feminization of the border and thus asks, “¿[t]e sientes presionado por una mujer?” (“[d]o you feel pressured by a woman?”) Patient “ZZZ” quickly replies “no” but adds, “[s]ería más fácil si fuera una mujer. Te podría hablar del color de sus uñas, de sus aretes, sus pulseras, sus anillos. La manera en que se viste: falda, pantalón. Sus zapatos” (“[i]t would be easier if it was a woman. I could talk to you about the color of her nails, her earrings, her bracelets, her rings. The way she dresses: skirt, pants. Her shoes” [85]). Not insignificantly, therefore, in contrast to the itemization of the abstract woman and the precise attention to detail down to the color of her nails, the border, at least for the patient, is completely indescribable. The doctor asks, again, “[h]áblame de ella, de la Frontera. Descríbela por dentro. Imagínala” (“[t]ell me about her, about the Border. Describe her from the inside. Imagine her” [85]). Yet for the patient, the border is beyond description. He replies, “No puedo. No tiene...” (“I can’t. She doesn’t have. . .”). Further, “No se puede hablar de ella. No”

(“She cannot be spoken of. No” [85]). Consequently, in this formulation, the border is unutterable and inconceivable. Sentences die out in mid-form and the patient both cannot find, and does not have, the words with which to describe the border. If the patient can neither describe nor imagine the border, he must direct his comments to its symbolic representation, which is “la silla vacía.”

In order to set up the text’s stance on theorizations of the border, an emphasis is placed on the patient’s dialogue via proxy, which highlights the construction of the border as both imagined and as a limit. Speaking to the chair-as-border the patient states, “[t]e conozco desde años, desde la infancia” (“I have known you for years, since infancy”). He adds, “[t]engo una memoria vaga de nosotros jugando en el jardín de mi casa. Yo era un niño solitario. Tú eras una Frontera solitaria. En ese tiempo eras mi Frontera favorite, no conocía otra” (“I have a vague memory of us playing in our house’s garden. I was a lonely boy. You were a lonely border. Back then you were my favorite border and I knew no other” [87]). In the patient’s memories, the border is personified as capable of feeling, albeit lonely, and playing. No doubt the border is personified but more importantly in the sentence quoted, as in the entire sub-section, the patient’s address to the border is in the past tense. In this way, the border referred to is not the border of the patient’s here and now but that of a remembered, and thus imagined, past. In addition to being imaginary, however, the border is also a limit. The patient states, “Eras una demarcación” (“You were a demarcation”). He also says, “[e]ntonces yo necesité libertad, requerí espacios más amplios para desenvolverme” (“[t]hen I needed freedom, I required wider spaces in which to develop” [87]). In this account, the border is stifling and restrictive by closing the patient off and inhibiting his development. Doctor “AAA” suggests calling the border a different name but patient “ZZZ” is adamant. He claims, “Una Frontera es una Frontera, es un límite, es un confín;

no puedo llamarla Margarita o José Agustín. Tengo que llamar las ideas por su nombre, ¿no me dijiste eso alguno vez” (“A Border is a Border, a limit, a confinement. I cannot call it Margarita or José Agustín. I have to refer to ideas by their names, did not you say that once?” [89]). In this regard, there is a marked ambivalence in the patient’s account of the border. If the border is imagined it is therefore malleable but since it is a limit it is also intransigent. These accounts where the border is both a limit and is imagined are presented as a means of staging a conceptual impasse parallel to the modern-day conflicting theories of the border and more importantly serve as a point of contrast from which the text departs.

By personifying the border and therefore allowing it to speak back, the text shows how the intellectual stance of analyzing the border in the language of duality is fundamentally untenable. For instance, Doctor “AAA” asks “FNT” whether patient “ZZZ’s” accounts are “fair,” to which “FNT” states, “he oversimplified” (93). According to “FNT,” “ZZZ” provided a reductive view of the border because “[n]o ha visto su participación” (“[h]e has not seen his participation” [93]). Tellingly, “FNT” is pressed to clarify and responds with a dualist conception of the border that does not actually function as such. That is to say, on the face of it, the language used by “FNT” suggests that the very existence of the border is undergirded by a fundamental duality. At bottom, however, “FNT’s” formula that the border’s existence is dependent on the “participation” of border crossers does not hold. “FNT” states, “No hay Frontera si no existe la necesidad de cruzar.” (“There is no border if the need to cross does not exist” [94]). Further, “el límite prevalece porque hay quien desea traspasarlo. Toda Frontera existe solo en la imaginación del que desea franquearla. Es un invento del que vive enfrentándose a ella. Un binomio perfecto” (“the limit prevails because of he who desires to

transgress it. Every Border exists only in the imagination of those who wish to cross it. It is an invention of those who live confronting it. The perfect binomial” [94]).

The problem with this duality, or “binomial,” however, is that it cannot perform the function by which it is defined. To be sure, “FNT” labels the border a “binomial” but it actually cannot function as such given “FNT’s” formula. By definition, a binomial is the expression of two unlike terms which can be evaluated. Yet when held up to this definition, “FNT’s” perfect binomial, “[t]here is no border if the need to cross does not exist,” is inoperable. An evaluation of the expression illustrates this fact such that the perfect binomial can be rewritten as follows: subtracting the desire to cross the border results in the cancelling out of the border itself. This dualist thinking, of course, is a fundamentally untenable formulation given that it presupposes a world of static and immobile populations. In this way, the text suggests a rethinking of the spatial paradigm that the U.S.-Mexico border exists as a necessarily state-sanctioned barrier designed to keep out border-crossers. Doctor “AAA” recognizes the problem with “FNT’s” account, and in an effort to make this problem known, restates “FNT’s” “thesis.” He states, “Percibo que tratas de decir que todas las Fronteras están en la cabeza, producto de uno mismo” (“I understand you are trying to say that all Borders are in the mind, the product of oneself” [94]). “FNT” affirms and Doctor “AAA” replies, “[e]so es cierto en algunos casos; en otros, las Fronteras son reales (“[t]hat is true in some cases; in others, Borders are real” [94]). Yet for “FNT,” “real” does not have meaning but is “incomprehensible” (94, 95). As soon as “ZZZ” re-enters the dialogue, however, the border takes on markedly real dimensions in the material sense. Doctor “AAA” asks, “¿Te impide moverte?” (“Does the border impede your movement?”[99]). “ZZZ” simply replies, “it is a border.” This terse response suggests that for “ZZZ” it is clear that by definition borders inhibit movement. Further, according to “ZZZ,” the border exhibits such a repressive

force that it not only inhibits his movement but “asphyxiates” him (99). As a result, unlike the flawed perfect binomial of “FNT,” borders for “ZZZ” gridlock any movement and by extension are not the products of one’s imagination but are in fact tangible barriers, evidenced by the sheer inability of those who fail to cross them.

The contrasting accounts of “*la frontera*” in “*La silla vacía*” can be read as the literary representation of the larger critical debates on analyzing the U.S.-Mexico border given the function of metafiction. Foregrounding the machinery of narrative, in this case the text’s organization as, and typographic emphasis on, a Gestalt dialogue about the border, illustrates how the everyday reality of the border is determined by what Waugh terms “narrative codes.” These “‘literary’ or ‘social’” forms “artificially construct apparently ‘real’ and imaginary worlds in the terms of particular ideologies” (22). In this particular case, the imaginary perfect binomial set against the asphyxiating border-as-limit dramatizes the contemporary tension among scholarly accounts of the border as either an abstraction or as site-specific. Moreover, the absurdity of the border as an imaginary plaything, and the failure of the perfect binomial, is an outright refusal of border analyses in the vein of Gómez Peña where the border is both metaphor and universal condition. Instead, “*La silla vacía*” shows that the border is never simply the product of one’s imagination. By extension, its discursive representation, and the way the border is critically analyzed, must rely not on dualities but on dialectic structures, one of which, this chapter argues, is trans-temporality. Significantly, recognizing the historicities of distinct lifeworlds changes not only the conceptions of the border in the collective imagination, where personhood constellates around the border as a limit or as artificiality. Rather, it entails altering the political imaginaries, and conditions, which enable the classification of people as alien or as citizen.

“Misa fronteriza”: Challenging Orthodoxy through *arte Tijuanaense*

This final section turns to the second part of *Instrucciones*, “Misa fronteriza.” Through parody and metafiction, Crosthwaite structures “Misa fronteriza” as a liturgical ceremony, where the sequence of vignettes parallel the sequence of the Catholic Mass, in order to give a representative account of the everyday Tijuana border without subscribing to the notion of an authentic Tijuana essence. The rhyming name “Misa fronteriza” is literally “border Mass,” yet despite its title, the text is anything but sacred. It is instead a formal deconstruction of the perspective that a universal, and therefore abstract, border identity is locatable by reference to an equally abstract construction of border culture. Further, this characterization of border culture, often ascribed to those not writing from the border, has troublingly become synonymous with late capitalism. As Claire Fox writes, “[t]he recent rise in border imagery in both mass media and academic writing is directly connected to the development of ‘transfrontier metropolises,’ or twin cities along the border.” The problem with this “popular” border theorizing, Fox argues, is the way in which “U.S.-Mexico border cities became an emblem in the media of all that free trade implied for inhabitants of the future trade bloc” (2). Put another way, the commodification of border cities as a result of late capitalism, in this case Tijuana, emblemizes the “borderization of the world” (Gómez Peña 39). It is this view of border identity which Crosthwaite challenges in “Misa fronteriza.” He does so via parody as a critical lens which is enacted through the formal arrangement of the text. Additionally, the text is marked by the intrusive narrator, who calls himself “*Luisumberto*,” leads the Mass, and self-identifies as “*fronterizo*,” that is, border citizen. In thus arranging “Misa fronteriza” as a metafictional and parodic liturgical ceremony, Crosthwaite “installs” and “subverts” the notion of an authentic and therefore consecrated border identity (Hutcheon 222).

In order to undermine the notion of an authentic, and thus sacred, border identity, the narrator suggests that a liturgy of the border is available in the music of the venerated and iconic corrido singer José Alfredo Jiménez. Paradoxically, Crosthwaite's "Misa fronteriza," thematically focused on the increasingly transnationalizing border city of Tijuana, does not draw on the more contemporary *narcocorrido*, which, as demonstrated above, is a markedly cross-border form. Instead, he uses Jiménez's early brand, popularized more than half a century ago. As Carlos Monsiváis, one of Mexico's foremost cultural critics writes, "[d]esde los cincuentas . . . José Alfredo ha sido—no nos fijemos en la calidad literaria sino el poder expresivo—uno de los poetas más significativos de México" ("[s]ince the fifties . . . José Alfredo has been—not in terms of literary quality but expressive power—one of the most significant poets of Mexico" [96]). Further, writes Monsiváis, "[e]l hombre que desarticuló una prédica del machismo y legitimó y promulgó las 'lágrimas de los muy hombres' es ya una institución perdurable" ("[t]he man who articulated a sermon about machismo and promoted and legitimated the 'tears of the most masculine' is now an enduring institution" [97]). The text thus creates, and critiques, the impression that the figure of Jiménez is the paradigmatic singer of essential Mexican identity by splicing together "*Luisumberto's*" narration with lyrics from Jiménez's most well-known *corridos*. This essentializing is clearly marked from the outset by the phrase "[l]ectura del evangelio según Luisumberto. Donde se habla de la música como pista sonora de la vida. Amén" ("[s]tory of the gospel according to Luisumberto. Wherein is discussed music as the soundtrack of life. Amen" 163)].

It is precisely this sermon of innate Mexican character as both masculine and maudlin which Crosthwaite parallels in his presentation and deconstruction of Tijuana identity. The self-proclaimed *fronterizo* "*Luisumberto*" begins his border liturgy by stating, "[e]n el principio fue

José Alfredo Jiménez. Y José Alfredo estaba junto a Dios, y José Alfredo era Dios” (“[i]n the beginning was José Alfredo Jiménez. And José Alfredo was with God, and José Alfredo was God” [163]). This statement is, of course, a parodic rewriting of John 1:1. The Gospel according to John stipulates that existence itself is contingent on the belief that Jesus exists. In the Gospel according to “*Luisumberto*,” however, the existence of life on the border is contingent on the prevailing belief in José Alfredo Jiménez’s “hymns” (163). Further, in the typically reductionist manner, these hymns essentialize Mexicans as drunken sentimentalists. Crosthwaite writes, “‘*Me cansé de rogarle, me cansé de decirle.*’ El mexicano cansado rogó y rogó, pero nunca dejó de hacerlo. Abandonado, olvidado en el rincón de una cantina, el macho de los machos, icono de la mexicanidad puede llorar porque el maestro Jiménez le da permiso” (“*I got tired of begging her, I got tired of telling her.*’ The Mexican tiredly begged and begged but never stopped. Abandoned, forgotten in a corner of a bar, the most macho of machos, icon of Mexican-ness can cry because Jiménez the teacher gives him permission” [164 italics original]). Significantly, the italicized portion is from Jiménez’s “*Me cansé de rogarle*,” in which the hypermasculine but effete speaker finally admits defeat at the hands of a woman. In this way, “*Luisumberto*’s” border liturgy emphasizes the characteristics of sentimentality and alcoholism as paradigmatically Mexican qualities. Moreover, readers of the Bible will also recognize the label “teacher” as an ironic parallel of the same word used to describe Christ. Yet if Crosthwaite installs an essentialist version of Mexican, and in particular Tijuana, identity in the subsection “*Evangélium*,” he ultimately subverts this identity in the following section “*Homilia*” and across the rest of “*Misa fronteriza*.”

In order to show that there is not one but many social realities in Tijuana, Crosthwaite uses the strategy of the intrusive narrator who recounts both legal and illegal crossing as

characteristic of everyday border life. As Linda Hutcheon argues, “[h]istoriographic metafiction asks both epistemological and ontological questions,” or phrased differently, asks questions about being in the world and the languages with which humans see and know this world (50). In this regard, the metafictional exposure of narrative framework is significant in its possibility to illuminate truths about fictional and phenomenological worlds. Consequently, the “frame-breaking” enacted by “Misa fronteriza’s” intrusive narrator is a mode of foregrounding that it is not representative, but rather individual, experience which constitutes the realities of daily life in Tijuana. For instance, the narrator’s repetition “[m]i nombre es Luisumberto” (“[m]y name is Luisumberto”) is always paired with assertions that the border defines him. He states, “mi religion es la frontera” (“the border is my religion”) and later, “cargo la frontera en mis bolsillos, hecha pedazos” (“I carry it with me in my pockets, in tiny little pieces” [167]). As a result, this border identity is less sacred than individual and peculiar to the narrator. He remarks that as a child, “[c]ada domingo visitábamos a las tías, cada domingo comenzaba el peregrinaje y la enorme fila para cruzar al norte y el pasaporte y el sabor de los dulces que tanto me gustaban” (“[e]very Sunday we visited my aunts, every Sunday began the pilgrimage and the enormous line to cross north and the passport and the taste of the candies which I liked so much” [168]).

This nostalgic account of routine and premeditated legal crossing, with passport and candy in tow, is in stark contrast to the illegal crossings of the narrator’s present day. He states, “Hoy en día el gran río continua separando a dos países; sin embargo, donde antes era tela de alambre ahora es un muro imponente” (“Today the great river continues to separate the two countries; nonetheless, where once it was a chain link fence now there is an imposing wall” [169]). Further, “si logras cruzar ese muro, hay otro, más grande; y si logras cruzar ése, más vale que te echas a correr porque los guardianas te están buscando con sus helicópteros y sus

camionetas y sus radars y sus macanas y sus pistolotas” (“if you manage to cross that one, there is another, even bigger one; and if you manage to cross that one, you had better run because the guards are looking for you with their helicopters and their trucks and their radars and their clubs and their huge guns” [169]). Significantly, the weekly legal crossings of the narrator’s childhood are replaced by illegal crossings that are a matter of chance, where crossers must manage to get past a series of walls, then somehow evade border security agents. No doubt, the distinct crossings are based on the narrator’s fictional experience, and in this regard demonstrate the fact that “nothing is natural in a narrative” (Nichol 27). Clearly, “*Luisumberto’s*” account is presented as one which he has selected and organized based on memory and experience. Yet it is precisely the foregrounding of narrative machinery, the text’s insistence that it is “*Luisumberto’s*” story of a story, which provides insight into the daily life of Tijuana *fronterizos*. By exposing “*Luisumberto’s*” role in creating a border fiction, the text suggests that the clarifying potential of any analysis of border realities is intertwined with an uncompromising recognition of local border-based aesthetic production.

Through the strategies of an intrusive narrator and a parodic organizational structure, the text emphasizes the fact that Tijuana is not a world border shot full of holes, as Guillermo Gómez Peña (and NAFTA pundits) would have it, but a physical barrier. By extension, the text undermines the notion that borderlessness creates a universal and authentic identity. As a matter of fact, the presumed sanctity of “Misa fronteriza” becomes increasingly absurd as the reader moves through the text. The savior “Jesus” of Christian theology is replaced by “*Luisumberto’s*” version of the Eucharist where “Jésus” is a migrant worker beaten to death by border security agents (187). Moreover, the ostensible piousness of “*Luisumberto’s*” phrase in the conclusion, “[e]n el principio fue José Alfredo Jiménez” (“[i]n the beginning there was José Alfredo

Jiménez”), contrasts with the pretentiousness of the reported comment, “[s]orry, en este hogar solo se escucha a Lady Ga Ga” (“[s]orry, in this home we only listen to Lady Ga Ga” [199 italics original]). To be sure, the reference to the globally popular Lady Ga Ga might very well provoke a repetition of the thesis that what defines Tijuana above all else is its essential hybridity. Yet Crosthwaite’s final section emphasizes a more sober assessment. The section titled “Despedida” (“Farewell”) is structured as a *corrido* in terms of its rhyming structure and lyrical refrains. Significantly, the musicality of “Despedida” reminds the reader that although the Tijuana border “limits,” “restricts” and “challenges,” they should continue to “cross, cross, cross” (201). In this way, it is not hybridity-as-essence but the coterminous narratives of open postmodern spaces and borders as state-sanctioned militarized zones which characterizes *la vida fronteriza* for the *Tijuanense*.

Conclusion

The *fronterizo* postmodernism of *Instrucciones para cruzar la frontera* foregrounds a panoptic border undergirded by a resurgent nationalism evocative of 1848 in its coveting of territory at precisely the historical juncture in which territoriality is presumably evacuated from the postmodern iteration of space. On the one hand, the represented world of the text mediates the social conditions where the U.S.-Mexico border, configured as a militarized zone of state surveillance, effectively functions as a mode of population control.¹⁵ Thus, for instance, the text’s clinical presentation, in the detached tone of daily news reports, of death-by-border-crossing. On the other hand, the text not only metaphorizes the Tijuana border but constructs the city as yet another simulacrum of a postmodern order characterized not by mechanical but virtual reproducibility, where once local-regions are now the replicable images of a 21st century world-space. In order to render Tijuana as both abstract and site-specific, the text incorporates the

postmodernist strategies of double encoding, metafiction and parody. Crucially, however, these strategies are presented alongside uniquely border-based aesthetics, in particular, aspects of the *narcocorrido* and *narconovela*. By doing so, the text offers a critical reflection on the border that is distinctly posed from the vantage point of Northern Mexico. Moreover, the text creates the conditions of possibility for *Tijuanense* art to generate imaginaries that counterpoise the U.S.-centric paradigms through which the border is defined. Specifically, the process which rationalizes the incongruity of the border as existing simultaneously as a marker of national separation and as a space of universal mobility is de-historicization as the fundamental hermeneutic of the present moment. In this framework, the border is not the consequence of a provoked military aggression in 1848 but the material proof of an ageless U.S. sovereignty. Consequently, the significance of the text's adaptation of postmodernism is the historicization of a time and space, the contemporary Tijuana border, perceived as de-historicized and de-territorialized in both popular imaginaries and critical discourses.

Peripheral Neo-realisms from the Borderlands: Paul Flores and Ana Castillo

Introduction

This chapter analyzes the use of neo-realist strategies in Paul Flores's *Along the Border Lies* (2001) and Ana Castillo's *The Guardians* (2007) in order to critique the geographically based interpretive frameworks surrounding border violence in the form of drug trafficking and abduction. While a detailed review is provided below, the significance of neo-realism for this analysis is its portrayal of character experience as a strategy of mediating the lived realities of those in the border locales of San Diego-Tijuana, as in *Along the Border Lies*, and Cabuche-El Paso-Juárez, as in *The Guardians*. As a result, the representational strategies of each text constitutes the use of peripheral neo-realism, a fictional project anchored by the recognition of how local communities imagine and construct the times and spaces of the border in everyday language, rather than subscribing to dominant versions of these categories. In this particular case, U.S.-centric discourses frame the border as a territorial space whose boundaries are under siege by the illegal, both in the form of immigrants and narcotics. Further, according to this paradigm of invasion, which, in spite of its reductionism, is a guiding regime of truth of the 21st century in North America, the U.S.-Mexico border's preeminence as a legal geopolitical barrier, and the modes of force attendant to it, requires no explication precisely because it exists in opposition to the illegal. That is to say, both immigrants and narcotics are framed as qualitatively and irrevocably Mexican, and thus illegal, forms of being. Consequently, the reality of the border is that drug trafficking and abduction are sourced from, and internal to Mexico, rather than systemic processes which occur along material and discursive lines involving the U.S. Significantly, however, in their distinct articulations of peripheral neo-realism, the novels analyzed in this chapter provide counter-narratives to the discourses on border violence which

effectively work to implicate Mexico and exculpate the U.S. On the one hand, in *Along the Border Lies*, the text's structure of multiple narrators from both San Diego and Tijuana, in tandem with the deferral of plot resolution, functions to critique the territorial premise that border violence is mappable along purely geographic lines. On the other, *The Guardians* is structured as a multiperspectival series of explanations of border violence, occurring across three cities, which remain disparate at novel's end. By staging a series of interconnected accounts of border violence, enacted in different locales, and which are ultimately inconclusive, Castillo foregrounds how discourses of violence as intertwined require analytic frameworks that go beyond territory as the primary unit of analysis in studying the border. Thus, while they do so differently, both novels selected here are linked in their emphasis on the trans-temporality of the U.S.-Mexico border, which is another way of saying that a vital, but to date, missing element in analyses of border violence is the legacy and significance of 1848 in the 21st century.

Along the Border Lies creates the possibility of re-periodizing 1848 and the U.S.-Mexico border through a multi-modal strategy of distinct narrators in first and third person, articulating non-sequential timelines, from both San Diego and Tijuana. Significantly, the cluster of narratives which comprises the text is not flagged by organizational mechanisms, such as titling each section via character name, as in *The Guardians*. Instead, the identification of the speaker, and thus the varied accounts of border violence, emerges from language itself, that is, from the particular idiolect and thus mode of refracting the world specific to each character. Moreover, while the array of storylines constellate around a common plot, the narratives consistently shift between past and present. As a result, the text resists the unilateral development of plotline. Additionally, and tellingly, there is a distributive relationship between first and third-person on the one hand, and the setting of either Tijuana or San Diego, on the other. Importantly, by

allocating first-person to Tijuana and third to San Diego, the novel does not suggest that the ‘real’ truth of the story lies in Mexico, a maneuver that would result in the very essentialization under scrutiny by the text. Rather, the text’s attribution of first-person to those speaking from the geographic setting of Tijuana is a mode of suggesting that the missing subject in accounts of border violence is locatable by attending to the experience of those communities on and below the border. Crucially, however, it is not simply that the text urges site-specificity but the recognition that across the San Diego-Tijuana border there is an imaginary of the historical that may prove clarifying when set against normative historiographies. By calling attention to these local temporalities, the text challenges the status of the border as a foregone historical conclusion and thus the capacity to naturalize ethnocentric discourses of border violence.¹

Whereas *Along the Border Lies* invokes the legacy of 1848 by disrupting temporal sequence, *The Guardians* enacts the failure of an interpretive model which spatializes border violence into discrete territorial sectors in order to stress the urgency of a trans-temporal historicization. Castillo’s text is comprised of four narrators who report their individual experiences of border violence in Cabuche, New Mexico; El Paso, Texas; and Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. Unlike Flores’s novel, where geography is not authorially signposted but must be discerned through individual and often first-person speech habits, *The Guardians* consistently foregrounds its setting through the explicit geographical references in the characters’s third-person reported speech. Additionally, in contrast to the structure of Flores’s novel, where characters reside in Mexico and the U.S., in *The Guardians* all of the characters are U.S.-based. Thus, as a result of the violence which they experience, border crossing for the characters in Castillo’s novel is less a choice than a necessity. Furthermore, while the characters are all familiar with one another at the level plot, and the episodes of violence intersect from an

organizational standpoint, the novel ends without a discernible link between, or identifiable cause of, the different iterations of border violence. As a matter of fact, from the outset the text implies the status—deceased—of a character subject to border violence. However, the exact cause of, or reasons for, this death are unknown. Moreover, while in the conclusion there is a criminal case involving a second death from border violence, the defendant cannot explain why they killed. In this way, the text provides disclosure without offering narrative resolution: bodies are found and perpetrators are criminally prosecuted and yet border violence remains inexplicable. By portraying the consequences of drug manufacture and abduction which resist interpretation, *The Guardians* mediates the present-day gaps of analytics which overly spatialize border violence and thus overlook domains whose lived realities are in excess of the territorial. While borderlands criticism, glossed below, situates *Along the Border Lies* and *The Guardians* as representative of the “*narconovela*” and “trauma” fiction of the “post-Gatekeeper” era respectively, less attention has been paid to the way these texts variously invoke peripheral neo-realisms, to which the chapter now turns.

In “Contemporary Realism,” Robert Rebein argues that postwar American fiction is not exclusively defined by postmodern formal experimentation “but rather has remained unabashedly realist in its rendering of character, setting and time” (30). Indeed, this contemporary (or neo-) realism is both a carryover and a modification of earlier realist strategies. According to Kristiaan Versluys, for instance, neo-realism is characterized by the re-creation of experience through “verisimilitude” and “mimetic prose,” by which he means “prose writing and narrative strategies in which the implicit contract between writer and reader is not broken on purpose” (9). While narrative frames are not made explicit in neo-realism as they are in postmodern fiction, Versluys also notes that neo-realist fiction is a “rigorous, rule-governed

language game.” Third-person narration, for example, is a common feature of neo-realism but not a definitive rule. For example, *Along the Border Lies* uses a combination of first- and third-person narrative strategies, whereas *The Guardians* features silent internal character thoughts reported by an unnamed narrator. In addition to the different narratives modes and the mimetic prose identified by Versluys, Rebein argues for “the recognition of character as the sine qua non of the fictional enterprise, a tendency to focus on material drawn from the margins of society” as well as “a concern with the accurate representation of a region or place, and a preoccupation with matters of race and ethnic identity” (30). In this way, the sediment of earlier realisms, such as emphasizing the “margins of society,” the attention to vernacular, and a focus on regionalism, are clearly present in neo-realism. Yet Rebein also writes of the “unselfconscious mixing of the realist mode with other complementary modes” (30). This mixture of formal modes is applied to a border setting in the texts of Flores and Castillo where first-person narrators are heard alongside those in the third, organizational strategies produce the effect of simultaneity, and plotlines develop non-chronologically, features reminiscent of literary modernism and postmodernism. In doing so, Flores and Castillo practice verisimilitude of character but also ethnicity and region, borrow modernist narrative techniques of interiority, and yet stop short of postmodern metafictional strategies, the result of which is a peripheral neo-realism of the border.

Echoing Versluys and Rebein in asserting the contemporaneity of realism, Jed Esty and Colleen Lye posit “a new realist turn,” and significantly, update claims about the newness of realism by characterizing it as foregrounding the peripheral (276). This latter term, write Esty and Lye, refers to “the extension of realism beyond a Euro-American provenance” (279). Further, situating realism on the periphery, both in terms of geography but also of intellectual traditions, allows for an interrogation of “the epistemic capacity of literature to describe global

effects on a wide range of emergent or historically submerged subjects” (279). In the case of *Along the Border Lies* and *The Guardians*, the represented subjects in question are those living in the border cities of San Diego and Tijuana. Significantly, these subjects are historically submerged by a normative and expansionist construction of 1848, whose trajectory within a developmental narrative necessarily underwrites border violence as the residual effect of underdevelopment; and yet they are crucially emergent as the latest generation of border citizens whose experiences may constitute a counter-reality with which to re-frame otherwise dominant paradigms of border violence. Importantly, moreover, a primary function of “the new realist turn” is its function as “a method of theorizing artistic mediation.” Specifically, “[a] realistic mode of representation is meant not to reproduce reality,” Esty and Lye assert, “but to interrupt the quasi-natural perception of reality as a mere given” (277). It is what one might call a critical (rather than an affirmative) realism. In *Along the Border Lies* and *The Guardians*, this process of mediation is enacted through an emphasis on character experience, particularly, where the lifeworlds of border citizens are defined by a context in which the global market economy is imbricated by abduction and drug trafficking. Thus, the allure of peripheral realisms is that “a peripheral vantage point discloses a local instance of world-system effects” without “domesticating those effects in a naturalized scheme of national reality” (283). In this way, both *Along the Border Lies* and *The Guardians* mediate how reality is discursively and materially constructed by framing the U.S.-Mexico border as the site of U.S.-led development and a geopolitical defense against singularly Mexican violence.

Writers of Mexican-American fiction have responded to this context of a border defined both by a world-system of increasing marketization and militarization in promising ways.² For instance, Diana Palaversich situates *Along the Border Lies* as a U.S.-based variation of the

narconovela. Given that the *narconovela* is a recent development mostly authored by writers from Mexico and Spain, the Mexican-American writer Paul Flores's text is unique in offering a U.S.-based perspective. Unlike *narconovelas* written in Mexico, which either "glamorize" narcos or "moralize" against them, Palaversich asserts that Flores's "view on border issues is more complex than that of authors who write from a greater geographic distance" (101). Moreover, the novel portrays both vigilanteism and drug trafficking on the border between San Diego and Tijuana by depicting characters from these respective locales. In this way, Flores offers a "dual perspective" on drug trafficking "as an inseparable part of the complex border relations between Mexico and the United States, where the issues of illegal immigration, drugs, and racism are entwined in a complex way" (101). Drawing on Palaversich's account, this chapter analyzes the representation of the border as a convergence point of drug trafficking and immigration in *Along the Border Lies* in order to theorize the development of an historiography which foregrounds the legacy of 1848 so that border violence is situated within a trans-temporal framework rather than the current binary model divided along an axis of North-South.

Whereas Palaversich reads *Along the Border Lies* as an instance of the *narconovela*, Marta Caminero-Santangelo reads *The Guardians* as testimonial fiction. Analyzing "post-Gatekeeper border fictions," Caminero-Santangelo appropriates the term "disappearance" from its context of state violence in Latin America (304, 306). In particular, she argues that in *The Guardians*, tracing the consequences of "migrant disappearances" on kinship networks "directly implicate U.S. labor dynamics, inhumane border enforcement and racial hegemonies in a larger landscape of border disappearances." Central to this argument is the idea that *The Guardians* is a form of "testimonial fiction" which narrates the "cultural trauma" of "losing a beloved family member to disappearance at the border" (308). This chapter expands the study initiated by

Caminero-Santangelo in order to focus on disappearance less as a question of affect than on how the inexplicability of border violence in *The Guardians* provides an occasion for re-conceptualizing the spatiality of the U.S.-Mexico border. Crucially, this new concept of space that goes beyond the territorial is undergirded by a temporality that consistently invokes the legacy of 1848 in the present-day.

Along the Border Lies

Set in the late '90s, *Along the Border Lies* traces the interconnected stories of Mexican-Americans and Mexicans from San Diego and Tijuana. The cast of characters on the U.S. side include Alfredo, a junior ROTC member and border vigilante; Edgar, a local San Diego artist who becomes enmeshed in drug trafficking; Tavo, a low-level pusher and Edgar's high school friend; Gabe, newly released from prison and an aspiring criminal; and Captain Aguilar, a border patrol agent and Gabe's father. On the Mexican side there is Miranda, a wealthy Tijuana socialite who becomes a drug trafficker; Julián, Miranda's cousin and business partner; and Los Reyes, a powerful Tijuana family with multi-million dollar businesses, and political clout, who are also the kingpins of a drug cartel. While these characters reside in either San Diego or Tijuana their lives are characterized, in unique ways, by crossing the border.

The novel's central theme is the link between the self-loathing Alfredo and the blasé but curious Miranda. The text is divided into four major sections—"Silhouettes in the Flag," "Blood on the Razorwire," "Two Birds, One Stone," and "Dark Energy"—and within these are sub-sections narrated by the different characters listed above. No doubt in terms of quantity Miranda and Alfredo command the most narrative sub-sections. Yet the very structure of the text as a series of narrations suggests that one character is not more important than the other. In order to

tell Miranda's story, Alfredo's must be told as well, which requires the story of Gabe, and so on down the cast of characters. The central storyline, then, is as follows.

Alfredo, along with a group of junior ROTC cadets, plans an "operation" to shoot down border crossers on the eve of Memorial Day (14). They conduct the operation, killing one man and wounding another and a woman. Subsequently, they are caught, detained and interrogated by border patrol agents. During the interrogation, agents discover that most of the weapons used to murder the man were provided by Gabe. Additionally, the same night that he sold these weapons, Gabe also met with Tavo, Edgar and Miranda as part of a cocaine transaction, which Miranda was selling to make quick cash before fleeing from Los Reyes. Her once-employers were now pursuing her because Julián, her cousin, was "double-dealing," that is, selling Los Reyes's cocaine as his own instead of simply delivering it. As a result of his actions, Julián is murdered by Los Reyes hit men, a fact that is made clear to the reader but not to Captain Aguilar until the close of the novel. The captain discovers a body in the San Ysidro canyon and suspects that Alfredo and his border vigilantes are the killers. Thus, the thread which connects the novel's different narrative strands is the link between efforts to stop immigration, on the one hand, and the ambitions of profit by drug trafficking, on the other.

With His Pistol in His Hand: The New Border War in San Diego-Tijuana

The goal of this section is not to pursue a comparative reading between *George Washington Gómez* and *Along the Border Lies* but to show how armed conflict as a crucial feature of Mexican-American identity creates the possibility of re-historicizing the border and thus re-theorizing border violence. Consequently, this reading takes up Américo Paredes's trope of the *corrido* warrior, detailed in the 1958 study *With His Pistol in His Hand*, and modifies it to show how in "Silhouettes in the Flag," Flores's character Alfredo is the 21st century anti-*corrido*

warrior. In particular, this section demonstrates that *Along the Border Lies* updates the symbol of insurrection first in that Alfredo's gun is physical and not metaphoric, as is Feliciano's once the Seditious Rebellion fails, or even the anticipated new generation *corrido* warrior who devolves into a U.S. nativist "George G. García"; second, Alfredo actually kills; and third, this violence takes place in a late 20th century context of drug trafficking and NAFTA. To clarify, *With His Pistol in His Hand* is both the title of Paredes's *study* as well as a symbol of the *corrido* warrior. In particular, *Pistol* details Texas-Mexican armed resistance to Anglo injustice and the concurrent rise of the border ballad. Yet this symbol of resistance is skewed in the conclusion of *George Washington Gómez*, where in a reversal of the militant nationalism of Paredes's essay, the protagonist metaphorically stands pistol in hand except he is fighting Mexicans instead of Anglos. Therefore, by reading Alfredo as an updated version of the Mexican-American "with his pistol in his hand," this chapter shows how the novel foregrounds the lack of and need for historical memory outside of a 20th century context. Further, the chapter demonstrates that illuminating the links between the historiography of the border, its literary and discursive representation as a geopolitical divider, and border violence, requires situating the novel as an extension of the colonial modernity instituted in 1848.

The fact that Alfredo's border vigilanteism is not restricted to the present but is framed as an act of memory indicates that Alfredo is a figure of historical irruption. Crucially, it is not the memory of his dead father, Corporal Gerald Scott Peterson, but the border-making of colonial modernity that is breaking into the 20th century context of the novel. For Alfredo, "Operation Black Flag," which is scheduled for "the eve of Memorial Day," will "resurrect the spirit of Corporal Gerald Scott Peterson" (14). In this regard, Alfredo believes that his "operation" to kill people crossing the Tijuana-San Diego border is both a service to his country and a form of

commemorating his dead father. However, while Alfredo views his campaign as a commemorative act dedicated to his father, the novel actually links his militancy to an earlier border history evocative of the *corrido* warrior. Flores writes, “his grandfather, Alfredo Guadalupe, had carved his way from Michoacán to el norte with a mahogany-handled machete; he now kept this ridiculously folkloric weapon in his closet.” Flores adds, “He himself would use more powerful means to destroy all doubts about who he was and where he came from” (14). The “more powerful means” in question refers to a Remington rifle Alfredo sneaks from his stepfather’s closet (14, 24). However, even as Alfredo literally buries his links to the past, and derides them as “ridiculous,” he cannot evade the memory of border history, in this instance symbolized by his namesake “Alfredo Guadalupe,” a phenomenon not unlike that experienced by the title character in Américo Paredes’s *George Washington Gómez*. At the close of this novel, George, who once aspired to be a *corrido* warrior and is now a border security agent, declares, “I am doing what I do in the service of my country” (302). Yet the novel ends with George unable to define who exactly is included in ‘his country,’ even as he fully believes himself to be Anglo-American. Similarly, in *Along the Border Lies*, Alfredo Moreno Burns is certain that his country does not include “fucking wetbacks” even though, as his mother states, “we all crossed the river . . . high or dry” (15). Like George, Alfredo is haunted by a persistent racial shame. Unlike George, Alfredo’s “biological father,” he believes, is a white Vietnam War-era soldier killed in action (23). Consequently, by positing an Anglo national identity that depends on guarding the U.S.-Mexico border—an act that for Alfredo can only be realized by killing—the novel takes the theme of Mexican-American armed resistance to its ironic and critical endpoint by figuring Alfredo as the anti-*corrido* warrior.

In order to figure Alfredo as the new generation anti-*corrido* warrior and thus suggest a return to a historical moment outside of the immediate present, the novel emphasizes the tension between the synchronic fictional world, on the one hand, and the insistent diachronic quality that defines Alfredo's character on the other. Specifically, this tension is thematized by calling attention to Alfredo's imagined but critical link between the Vietnam War and his present moment. Importantly, the central defining feature of Alfredo is not racial shame or that he is willing to kill because of it but that he believes himself the inheritor of a cultural war that is at its core about living as a Mexican-American on the U.S side of the border. What is remarkable, however, and a detail that the novel ultimately highlights, is that Alfredo cannot distinguish between the politically charged 1960s and the similarly volatile but qualitatively distinct 1990s on the border. As a matter of fact, his only connections to his father's era are a picture, his mother's mythologizing, and a copy of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. No doubt this assortment of material is tenuous as the bridge to preserving the memory of his father but for Alfredo it is the key to his identity.

Alfredo's connection of the Vietnam War to his present moment is both presented and deconstructed through third-person omniscient narration. At the same time that this narrative strategy illustrates Alfredo's connection to the past it also highlights the untenability of this connection. For instance, Flores writes of Alfredo, "[h]e wanted to teach the illegals that this was indeed a war. His father would have done no less; therefore, Alfredo could accept no less than blood for blood" (14). In this passage, the narrator makes it clear that Alfredo believes himself to be fighting a war just like Corporal Gerald Scott Peterson, syntactically emphasized through dependent clauses separated by a semi-colon and the relationship of cause and effect—"therefore"—which exists between these linguistic units. Yet the causality of the passage breaks

down when set against the details of plot. In Alfredo's mind, his father would "teach" the "illegals" and "therefore" so too must Alfredo. Significantly, however, the fatal lesson Alfredo is certain his father "would have" taught cannot be an absolute certainty, not because Alfredo never met his father but because he has no substantial links to him. Thus, the premise that because his father would have murdered so too must Alfredo is rhetorically presented by the narrator as a deductive logic which does not actually function as such beyond Alfredo's distorted fantasizing. In Alfredo's mind, however, he has constructed a legacy which he believes it is his duty to honor by using lethal force to eliminate those who cross the San Diego-Tijuana border. This fact is clear in the way in which the narrator portrays Alfredo's admiration of the lone picture of Peterson:

The rigid jaw stood out the most, shiny and clean, as if the man had swallowed an iron. Round cheekbones. Ice blue eyes, determined and solid. Blond hair severely cropped beneath a shiny dark blue bill pulled low over his square brow. Alfredo admired the multicolored, many-sized squares and badges over the heart of the blue coat. He wanted his uniform to look the same one day. (21)

Given that the passage is in third-person it is also significant that there are shades of meaning that cannot be attributed solely to the narrator. Peterson's jaw may very well be rigid and his brow square but the "as if" phrase is clearly the embellishment of a proud son. In this regard, the rhetorical construction of Peterson's toughness and hyper-masculinity is in excess of the physiological traits contained in the photograph. Further, Alfredo aspires to be a decorated officer "one day" but in the meantime can only masquerade as a soldier by wearing his junior ROTC "green camouflage fatigues" and watching border-crossers from afar in the night (14). Thus, while for Alfredo he is undeniably carrying out a soldier's duty, the text highlights the spuriousness of his connection to the stark realities of the Vietnam War. Consequently, by exposing this link as false, the text also foregrounds the intrusion of the historically charged past

into the no longer self-contained present. That is to say, the social context portrayed by Flores is not one in which heightened border security as a countermeasure to immigration is an objective reality of a historical present that is always already there. Instead, Flores suggests that this present is actually undergirded by a genealogy of violence in reversing the symbol of armed insurrection and therefore implying the significance of the past. Alfredo's character, though he is misguided, figures the link between the 20th century and the processes of 19th century colonial modernity.

Alfredo's misreading of a late 19th century text invokes the absent but crucial history upon which the neo-colonial modernity of the present-day border is founded. In Flores's text, *Heart of Darkness*, which Alfredo reads as parallel to his own war, is not a link to the 1960s but to a larger process of 19th century colonization. Certainly it begs the question that colonial processes and experiences are varied and distinct and there are crucial differences between the colonization of the Belgian Congo and the U.S.-Mexico border. Yet, as this section demonstrates, Flores's continued emphasis on *Heart of Darkness* in relation to Alfredo is a mode of highlighting that the open/closed border which Alfredo obsessively patrols must be situated in a 19th century context of colonization. In fact, Alfredo's plans for his commemorative mission are constantly paired with references to Conrad's novels. Yet Alfredo's failure to make period distinctions between different texts shows that it is not the '60s which are alluded to but a different historical moment altogether. Flores's narrator reports Alfredo's thoughts as he lies in bed with *Heart of Darkness* in hand:

It had been a difficult task to read last night . . . In any case, he thought, *Apocalypse Now* was better. He was supposed to write an essay comparing the two; he had a hard time getting over the fact that there was no mention of the Viet Cong, gooks, or Communists in the book. He really didn't know who Conrad thought the enemy was supposed to be. Nonetheless, Alfredo had begun to imagine himself as Marlow in search of Kurtz, the father figure. He had been

dreaming of going up river . . . until a wailing mariachi had jolted him out of sleep. (16)

Alfredo's internal thoughts show that he reads *Heart of Darkness* and *Apocalypse Now* as the same text only in different mediums. Thus, he is frustrated as a reader about why Conrad's novel does not "mention" the "Viet Cong, gooks, or the Communists." Further, his confusion regarding the "enemy" is less an observation on Conrad's stance towards colonization than back-reading militaristic terminology onto an earlier historical context. Yet this misreading is not sheer anachronism but a form of historical irruption enabled through characterization and point of view. The third-person report of Alfredo's thinking shows not that he is a poor student of history. Instead, by foregrounding the gaps between what Alfredo believes to be true and what the objective narrator describes as the lifeworld of the border, the novel suggests that the context for the present-day border war lies elsewhere. This re-thinking of historical context is implied via the discrepancy between Alfredo's interpretation and the specific historical details surrounding each text, as well as the third-person narrator's authorial commentary. Despite the issues with Alfredo's reading, the narrator states that "nonetheless" Alfredo's fantasizing persists—a mode of rhetorically flagging insistence on a particular and imagined past in spite of the inaccuracies by which it is maintained. Consequently, for Alfredo, there are no identifiable links between racial slavery and Cold War conflict. Nonetheless, like Kurtz, with whom he identifies, Alfredo is in fact central to a kind of framed narration, only not in the way he imagines. In his vicarious re-living of the past through what he believes is a war story, and in his obsession with commemorating his dead father by murdering border crossers, Alfredo's character actually suggests that the story of "border war" is framed by a 19th century context of colonization. Thus, not insignificantly, it is a "wailing mariachi" which "jolt[s] him out of sleep," and this unique

cultural expression foreshadows that the memory he struggles to resurrect belongs to an ethnicity and culture which he denies.

The novel's suggestion that historical memory is delimited by geographic space, along with the revelation of paternity, indicates that the memory Alfredo commemorates is that of the 19th century and in particular the legacy of 1848. During Captain Aguilar's interrogation of Alfredo the latter states, "[f]or Memorial Day I wanted to do something for my father . . . I wanted something in exchange for his memory. I wanted to bring his memory back to the canyon, near the border" (179). In this passage, Alfredo envisions the border as a space capable of recapitulating the historical memory of "Corporal Gerald Scott Peterson." As a matter of fact, Alfredo insists, Peterson "deserves a memorial," and as Alfredo declares, "[s]o I gave him one the only way I saw fit" (179). In this regard, the border is not merely evocative of nostalgia but actually functions as a type of living memorial, albeit in a strangely macabre logic, by serving as the battleground of a 20th century border war—a theme reminiscent of the U.S.-Mexico war of 1846—yet crucially, waged in this particular case as one teenager's mission to kill border crossers. However, this theme of border-as-memorial takes on an entirely different significance than Alfredo imagines after the revelation of his biological father. As he continues to asseverate—"I was fighting a war"—his mother Dora interrupts. She states, "That's enough Alfredo! There is no Marine Corporal Gerald Scott Peterson. I made that name up!" "I made it up," she continues, "so you wouldn't have to regret being born the child of a drunk gringo sailor who followed me to the bathroom one night at the Arrow Club and raped me" (180). Importantly, therefore, if Peterson is a fiction concocted to hide illegitimate birth, then the persona which the border memorializes is thrown into question. Furthermore, given that the theme of memory is at odds with Peterson's fictitiousness, the novel suggests the possibility for a

different meaning of both “memory” and “border war.” Significantly, after Dora’s confession, the narrator states that “Alfredo wanted to return to the canyon and finish his work . . . Alfredo could manipulate time there, between past and future” (181). In this construction, it is the materiality of geography (i.e. “canyon”), and thus the Tijuana-San Diego border, and not Peterson, which is the object of memory. Further, though at this stage Alfredo’s capacity to manipulate time is called into question, the suggestion that the temporality of the border can be manipulated and is thus non-linear is telling. Specifically, this non-linearity suggests that the 20th century Mexican-American standing pistol in hand ready for border war is the avatar of an embedded history of 19th century U.S. colonization of the territories ultimately ceded via the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Thus, not incidentally, after a forensic analysis confirms Alfredo as the shooter he asks, “[d]o you think before I go to jail someone can bring me my copy of *Heart of Darkness*?” (182). Even as the consequences for enacting the modern border war are imminent, the violence of colonial history continues to break into the present.

Updating Transnationalism in *Along the Border Lies: Drug Trafficking Goes Upper Class*

Whereas historical irruption is figured in the character of Alfredo, the “Miranda” section suggests the inability to construct an intelligible narrative of an opened/closed border within a strictly 20th century context.³ Miranda’s section details the rise of the narco-juniors, aka “yummies,” “Young urban Mexicans raised with money,” who are “[s]ons and daughters of mayors, politicians, and rich businessmen” (60, 61). This new class of Tijuana high society who run drugs represents the latest stage in narco-trafficking. As Diana Palaversich observes, the “meteoric rise of the Tijuana cartel” is linked precisely to “the narcojuniors, whose privileged social, political and economic position has allowed them to mediate with state officials on behalf of the Tijuana cartel” (107, 108). Flores thus takes the setting of a militarized and restricted

border that is paradoxically open to the mobility of capital, and fictively renders it as the setting for the emergence of a new class of drug-trafficker and their transnational movement. For instance, in the novel Miranda's initial success as a drug-runner is due in large part to her family's business connections which allow her to use a "commercial pass," a reference to NAFTA border policy (101) As a result, in her inaugural foray as a drug-runner, and loaded with a "kilo" of cocaine, Miranda can "go through U.S. customs, while claiming to be [a] member of the Board of the International Commerce Committee of San Diego" (101). Moreover, while Miranda initially carries drugs across the border as a favor to a friend, her narco-trafficking becomes less sporadic than a conscientious effort to be part of a "wired-down operation" (104). Miranda's section thus traces the interrelated stories of an incipient NAFTA policy and new developments in narco-trafficking except that in the text these stories appear out of order.

The text's resistance to sequentiality is a narrative means of challenging the assumption that analyzing border violence is a matter of charting this violence along a North-South axis of socioeconomic development. This resistance is formally registered through non-chronological first-person narration, and shows that the emergence of free trade, as well as the rise of narcojunior trafficking cannot be plotted on a single timeline. In terms of the fictional sequence of events, the penultimate scene of Miranda's story is the material with which her first-person account begins. This first subsection is a transcription of a 911 call while the second depicts the transport of cocaine before Miranda begins her first-person narrative in the third subsection. Further, while there is a temporal discord between the subsections, there is also a markedly non-chronological feature within them as well. For instance, though the novel is set in the late '90s, Miranda's narrative actually starts, in the third subsection, with an overview of her family's emergence in the Tijuana business scene of the '80s. She states, "My family comes from El

Centro de Tijuana. Downtown Revalooshun Avenoo” (58). Further, “[b]ack when my grandfather Cascabel started his produce business, which became the famous CascaMax supermarket chain, La Revu was pura tienditas y gente cachanilla” (“nothing but stores and people from Mexicali”). While Miranda apparently foregrounds the past in recalling the story of her grandfather, there is a noticeable lack of order in her narrative. For instance, there is no discernible link between the 911 call that initiates the section as a whole and the emergence of Miranda’s narrative voice in subsection three. Moreover, while the material about her grandfather presumably sets up an account of how she inherits the family business, the story that develops highlights her deviation from and rejection of this legacy.

In addition to a lack of order, any facile link between past and present is undermined by the language Miranda uses to describe her grandfather’s past. “Revalooshun”—Miranda’s Anglicized pronunciation of “Revolución”—is a typographic way of alluding to the influx of both American tourists to the border and its peculiar but constant Americanization. Further, if her first description alludes to the Anglo influence of the landmark street the second, in its abbreviated form (“La Revu”), registers the idiolect of Tijuana youth. Thus, her casual mix of Spanish and English and her vernacular (“pura tienditas y gente cachanilla”) is more the language of the Tijuana yummy than her grandfather’s era. Moreover, she adds, “My grandfather died in 1987, around the time when things were really bad in Mexico” (59). In this way, even though the first time Miranda speaks in her present moment it is about her family history and the ‘80s economic crisis, it is the gaps between, and not the links across, these two moments which is emphasized. Furthermore, the very next section begins with a flashback: “I should start by going back five years to when I met Platón” (62). Yet this “start,” which details the first encounter between the already established narco Platón, and the soon-to-be trafficker Miranda,

occurs *after* the narrative has in fact begun. In this way, in Miranda's story, details like "start" and "end" are actually qualified terms. To be sure, the novel is set in the context of free trade; drug trafficking is the central theme of Miranda's story; and together these constitute the setting in which she is immersed. However, given the temporal disarray by which her narrative is characterized, the start and end of Miranda's story, and thus the historical context of her lifeworld, is from the outset called into question.

Whereas Miranda provides a Tijuana-based perspective, Edgar's narrative also challenges a stable chronology but from the U.S. side of the border in San Diego. As a matter of fact, when they are not about Miranda or her family, the chronological ruptures in Section Two, "Blood on the Razorwire," are always about Edgar. By chronological rupture, the chapter is referring not only to flashbacks but the narrative's constant challenge of the links between past and present. For instance, the 911 call which opens "Blood on the Razorwire" occurs in Edgar's apartment and the sub-section following this opening narrative features Edgar in a scheme to transport cocaine across the border from Tijuana to San Diego. In this way, the text highlights a new cross-border network of trafficking that features Mexican and Mexican-American youth. As Palaversich writes, many of Flores's characters, "thanks to their white skin and social status and the fact that their parents run an export and manufacturing business, cross the border faster and more easily than the poorer and darker-skinned traffickers" (102). This north-south border crossing is also distinct from that depicted in the work of Luis Humberto Crosthwaite, where the struggle to navigate the border is primarily the struggle to cross north. Yet the larger significance of the Edgar-Miranda pairing is not the intersection of plotlines, nor is it that the drug cartels have yet again exploited the conditions of free trade. Instead, it is the structural pattern where the

advancement of Miranda's narrative detailing her action in Tijuana is consistently interrupted by temporal rifts highlighting the world of Edgar in San Diego.

These persistent chronological disturbances of the intertwined Miranda-Edgar plotlines foreground the limitations of situating the border and its attendant violence within a North-South geographic framework. In terms of their portrayal as privileged youth who use their status to traffic drugs, the characters of Miranda and Edgar thematically intersect. Additionally, the Edgar-Miranda pairing is a narrative device in that it enables Flores to fill in detail which in turn allows the reader to make sense of the plot. For instance, Flores fills in the detail surrounding what first appears as an abrupt 911 call by Miranda in a later section focused on Edgar, where he convinces her to contact emergency services (95). Significantly, therefore, while this pairing allows the reader to piece together an otherwise fragmented plot, the Edgar-Miranda narrative closes without any resolution. Importantly, this resistance to closure requires not simply an alternative geographic model but a new chronology altogether.

As a matter of fact, the open-endedness of the Edgar-Miranda pairing is the formal rendering of a binary North-South border geography as an organizational and narrative device which cannot provide conclusions. At the close of the novel, Miranda escapes what is to be witness protection and is certain she will drive north, yet this plan is framed less as a clean break than an uncertain future. Flores writes, "North meant escape. But Miranda was tired of running . . . Who was to say she wouldn't always be driving from one place to the next? Like a moving target" (189). While the start of the passage figures "North" as the evacuation of border violence, the very next sentence suggests that for Miranda this violence is "always" a looming possibility. In this regard, Miranda's Tijuana-based storyline of immersion in, and later attempts to run from, border violence remains unfinished. Similarly, the San Diego-based story of Edgar,

which closes the novel, ends by resisting narrative closure. On the one hand, regarding Edgar's involvement in Miranda's drug running, Flores writes, "[h]e had been lucky she had left him out of her story" (206). Given that Miranda intentionally withheld information from the police, any trace of Edgar's involvement in trafficking is potentially dissolved by Miranda's subterfuge. Hence, Edgar is ostensibly a free man. On the other hand, however, authorial commentary suggests that the legal consequences for this trafficking seem imminent. As Edgar awaits his fate, Flores states, "[i]t was better to paint than explain. He would have plenty of explaining to do when the detectives came" (207). In this way, Edgar's "luck" at being omitted from Miranda's police account of her active participation in a Tijuana cartel is at odds with the suggestion that the police in fact are coming to apprehend him north of the border. This resistance to closure, however, is not a formal shortcoming but a rhetorical strategy. To use the language of Amy Kaplan, this resistance is the "narrative articulation of an ideological problem" (5). While Edgar and Miranda structurally and thematically intersect this link only goes so far. By stopping short of resolving their storylines, Flores emphasizes that analyzing the contemporary dynamics of drug trafficking in the context of free trade requires thinking beyond the Tijuana-San Diego border as a geopolitical divider whose contours were cemented in 1848. In doing so, the novel suggests the ways in which a trans-border historical imaginary might be developed by discerning and analyzing how the legacy of 1848 continues to function beyond the 19th century.

Los Reyes de Tijuana: Unravelling Drug Trafficking and Free Trade

The portrayal of Los Reyes as both lawful and criminal shows that re-historicizing the Tijuana-San Diego border is challenged by the inability to extricate drug trafficking from free trade. To be sure, free trade policy has in fact allowed cartels to transport increasingly higher quantities of narcotics.⁴ The problem, however, is that aggregating drug trafficking as a process

coeval with free trade perpetuates the misrepresentation that the border is merely a geopolitical divider and circumscribes the border within a U.S.-centric teleology of capitalist development. In the novel, Los Reyes are headed by “Congressman Bernardo ‘Bardo’ Reyes” and his son Bardo jr (72). Importantly, a fundamental characteristic of popular discourse regarding the border is that drug trafficking is not only one-directional but residual. In particular, the idea that drug trafficking is an effect caused by an open border via free trade is a logic reproduced by a strictly geographic and synchronic conception of the Tijuana-San Diego border. Significantly, therefore, the characterization of Los Reyes is a telling allusion to the Tijuana-based Rhon family, whose political influence is as notorious as its alleged control of the Arellano-Félix drug cartel.⁵ As Palaversich writes, “[t]hose who know Tijuana well will recognize in the figure of Reyes Jr. the eccentric multimillionaire Jorge Hank Rhon, son of one of the wealthiest politicians and a close collaborator of president Carlos Salinas and his brother Raúl” (103). The figure of “Los Reyes” is thus the fictional recreation of the lived reality in Tijuana where impunity is granted to those with political ties and economic influence. For instance, Los Reyes are characterized by their ownership of “Reyes Industries” as well as “the whole complex known as the Hipódromo, which included not only the racetrack, but the neighborhood of residences and small businesses there above Boulevard Aguas Calientes” (72). In this regard, Los Reyes operate profitably within the bounds of the law. Yet the first appearance of Los Reyes in the novel is not as a legitimate business company but as a murderous organization. In Miranda’s 911 call, she exclaims to the operator, “[s]omeone from Los Reyes drug cartel is going to kill me if I don’t talk to the police right now!” (48). Furthermore, throughout the text, Los Reyes are responsible for the murders of Julián, Rudy, and even attempt to assassinate Miranda and her daughter. This characterization of Los Reyes as both legitimate and criminal is a consistent feature throughout the text. As Miranda

states, Los Reyes are marked by “[c]orporate power. International reputations. An incredible regime. All of it backed by their connections in Congress. At least 50 percent of the cocaine that was crossing the Mexican border came through Los Reyes” (112). Further, despite the fact that Detective Dennis, a U.S. officer, has “[x]eroxed copies of men from Mexico City and Guadalajara wanted by the FBI,” among them “Bardo Reyes, Junior,” Los Reyes are never charged, caught or arrested. The novel ends with the Los Reyes “regime,” both in the sense of the drug organization as well as the legal corporation, fully intact. By modelling Los Reyes after the Rhon family, its well-documented corporate wealth and alleged ties to drug trafficking, the novel critiques the way in which the material and discursive legacy of 1848 engenders the primacy of capital as the dominant social formation on the border and its corollary that drug trafficking is a residual effect. Thus, if in the world constructed by Flores, the free trade and trafficking that define the border cannot be plotted along a single timeline, these processes apparently cannot be separated either.

However, the portrayal of drug trafficking and free trade as seemingly inseparable is not a reflection of reality but rather shows that the persistence of border violence is due in part to a multilayered criminal network in excess of sheer cartography. While “Los Reyes” refers to a Tijuana-based cartel, the “narcojuniors” are as much a U.S. as a Mexican phenomenon. As a matter of fact, none of the criminals in the novel are strictly Mexican nationals, but are either from the U.S. or are Mexicans with dual citizenship. Further, it is precisely this citizenship in both countries which allows Los Reyes to thrive as a cartel. As Miranda states, “The connections Julián had in San Diego and Tijuana made for a wired down operation. Someone from Los Reyes would deliver coke to CascaMax in La Mesa,” and then, she continues, “either Rudi or I would pick up the coke and cross the border, waving the NAFTA badge at the customs agent” (104). In

this passage, it is not simply the “NAFTA badge” that makes the operation so successful but Julián’s “connections.” Indeed, as Flores writes, the head of the “International Commerce Committee” is “Uncle Baruch Goldwasser,” who “went to high school with [Miranda’s] father” (102). Flores therefore shows that the inseparability of drug trafficking and free trade is not an objective fact but an imagined reality sustained by a persistent, systematic and deliberate refusal to acknowledge the trans-temporality of the border.

In writing a non-chronological account of characters from both Tijuana and San Diego whose interconnected stories leads them to cross the border, Flores emphasizes a historical translocation. As has been argued throughout this dissertation, the naturalization of the border as the privileged site of colonial modernity—rather than as one which stages peripheral modernities—is not a 20th century process but begins much earlier in the 19th. As a result, Flores’s allusion to Jorge Hank Rhon and his portrayal of Alfredo highlights that the dominant narrative of the border as a geopolitical marker designating North-South cartographies in and of itself functions as a mode of hegemony precisely because of its resistance to an historical awareness of how local border communities imagine and experience the time and space of the border. As Captain Aguilar surveys the desert in the wake of shootings by Los Reyes and Alfredo, Flores writes, “[t]he more people talked about the border being a barbaric frontier, the more Captain Aguilar had to accept the fact that being a Border Patrol Agent was like being a soldier on a tour of duty” (168). Ironically, while the border of Aguilar’s present-day is framed in the context of war, the decisive event enabling and mobilizing the processes of colonial modernity—the U.S.-Mexico War—is absent from Aguilar’s ruminations. However, like Alfredo’s confused tributes to non-existent war heroes, Captain Aguilar’s inability to recognize, and come to terms with, border violence is not an act of historical suppression but actually

demonstrates why a new historiography is needed. Thus, while *Along the Border Lies* takes place on a 20th century “barbaric frontier,” Flores uses the strategies of peripheral neo-realism not only to show how border violence is naturalized but to suggest the possibility of creating new social realities.

The Guardians: Border Violence as the Reality of the Southwest

Whereas *Along the Border Lies* depicts the north-south movement across borders, the violence which accompanies this transit in *The Guardians* does not result from border crossing in and of itself but from border communities linked by topography and infrastructure. The Franklin mountains featured in *The Guardians* splice together New Mexico and Texas, while the I-10 highway connects Cabuche, New Mexico; El Paso and Tornillo in Texas; and Cd. Juárez, Mexico. To be sure, both the mountain range and the highway are contiguous with the border, yet in Castillo’s novel not a single character dies from crossing between Mexico and the U.S. As a matter of fact, whether it is gang violence, femicide, which is the systematic killing of women, or migrant disappearance, the different forms of violence portrayed in the text all occur stateside. If *Along the Border Lies* details the fictional lives of Tijuana-San Diego residents who take advantage of NAFTA, whether by enacting vigilante plots or profiting from drug trafficking, *The Guardians* interrogates the ways in which communities in the southwest create and are affected by latitudes of violence made possible through living alongside the border.

By latitudes of violence, this chapter is referring to the fact that every violent act in *The Guardians*, in one way or another, is borne out through the contiguity of three states. On the surface, this violence is directly tied to a motive for profit. However, Castillo’s intervention into the analysis of border violence is not to suggest that monetary gain is the primary cause. In fact, as the chapter shows, the organization of the text ultimately rejects such causality. To be sure,

coyotes in the novel operate at a hefty price, women are abducted and either mutilated for their organs or used as sex slaves, and local youth are allured and ensnared by the get-rich-quick lifestyle of gang culture. Yet the focus of the novel is not that there is money in violence but on how gangs, femicide, and migrant disappearance coalesce into a complex of systemic violence. Time and again the novel, through unabashed rhetorical questions, plot, or character development, interrogates the historical conditions in which multiple forms of border violence are all part of the same narrative. Specifically, the novel challenges the logic that simply residing on the border is synonymous with exposure to border violence. By using neo-realist strategies such as attention to place, a focus on character as a primary narrative element, and attention to vernacular, *The Guardians* investigates how it is possible that the social reality of those living on the border means confronting death as part of daily life.

The Guardians is set in the 2000's and recounts the interrelated story of four characters living in New Mexico. Regina is a widowed teacher's aide with legal status living in the fictional town of Cabuche with her nephew Gabo. Gabo is a high-school student and aspiring Franciscan monk who does not have legal status in the U.S. and whose father, Rafa, went missing after his latest attempt to cross the border. Regina is called one day by a woman representing a *coyote* who demands ransom money in exchange for Rafa. With the help of Miguel, a local teacher who self-identifies as Chicano, Regina tracks down the house from which the woman called. Regina and Miguel encounter the suspected *coyote* but cannot enter the house. Once El Abuelo Milton, Miguel's grandfather and longtime El Paso resident, learns of the disappearance, he begins canvassing the southwest. As a means of learning the whereabouts of his father, Gabo befriends a local gang member, Jesse, who claims to have ties with the Arellano cartel of Nuevo Laredo, a group which specializes in kidnapping. Actually, in what is a noticeable plot twist, Jesse and his

crew abduct Crucita, Miguel's ex-wife, hold her captive in a Tornillo house, and demand ransom. The climax of the novel is when Miguel, El Abuelo Milton, and Gabo find Crucita in a meth house which doubles as a brothel. As he is leaving the house Gabo is stabbed to death. In the aftermath, the novel finally confirms what Regina had long suspected: that her brother is dead. Rafa, who had been in an El Paso house all along, died a week before Gabo.

The Voice of Regina: Fleeting Stories in a Fateful Landscape

Regina's wandering narrative prose foregrounds the text's refusal to isolate the landscape as the singular cause of border violence. To be sure, given the first-person narration of Castillo's novel, and the neo-realist convention of emphasizing vernacular, the narrative style of Castillo's characters sounds less like prepared speech than a conversation with gaps, pauses and multiple asides. Donna Seaman, for instance, praises the "distinct and musical voice" of each narrator and their easy mixture of Spanish and English ("Dividing Lines"). Thus, while narrative style provides a rendering of a regionally specific vernacular, Regina's voice also registers the larger focus of the text, which is an interrogation of the idea that for those in the southwest death is a social reality by sheer virtue of living on the border. Regina initially suggests that landscape is the primary cause of death on the border but deviates from this point and later offers a different explanation for border violence altogether. For example, the novel begins by emphasizing a landscape which apparently is unforgiving and does not distinguish between human or animal. Regina's dog, "la Winnie" has "one eye now" because "[s]he got it stuck by a staghorn cactus that pulled it right out. Blood everywhere that day" (3). Further, "los Franklins" not only act as a barrier by separating Rafa from Regina and her "fifteen-year-old nephew" but are personified as treacherous and potentially lethal (3). As Regina states, the Franklin mountains loom "like giants," increasing the difficulty of border crossing by "tak[ing] the sun and play[ing] with

people's eyes" (5). Additionally, as Abuelo Milton states, "there ain't nothing inviting about them" (128). In this way, it is the materiality of the land that creates a geography conducive to violence. Yet Regina never finalizes her thoughts to explain how it is exactly that the land is accountable for her brother. Instead, she can only declare, "[b]ehind the fog are los Franklins. Behind those mountains is my brother. Waiting" (3). In this construction, while the mountainous landscape is initially targeted as the reason for Rafa's disappearance, the idea of indeterminacy is formally registered and emphasized in the third sentence. Moreover, the single unit of meaning—"waiting"—not only constitutes the entire sentence but is singularly about an indefinite delay. Furthermore, while the novel begins by emphasizing the land, Regina's narrative dovetails into a middle-aged single woman's anxiety over appearance—"thirty years of being widowed, you better believe I dress for comfort"—and her strained relationship with her mother who "had a way of turning things around . . . to see them in the worst light possible" (3). On the surface, in suggesting the innately violent quality of the landscape only to leave this account unfinished, Regina's narration opens up the possibility of identifying specific human agents and their role in border violence. However, this process of positing a reason for violence only to suggest an alternative theory is part of a larger narrative pattern.

While Regina hesitates to confirm the landscape as producing border violence, her idiolect similarly results in an inconclusive account of migrant disappearance as a conscious act. It is not that Regina's narration is merely desultory but rather that the language she uses to render the world around her is borne out through her experience as a Mexican-American woman whose nephew is undocumented and whose brother is missing. Therefore, while she speaks with conviction about migrant disappearance this speech is also indeterminate. Of her brother she states,

He's been back and forth across that desert, dodging the Border Patrol so many times, you'd think he wouldn't even need a coyote no more. The problem is the coyotes and narcos own the desert now. You look out there, you see thorny cactus, tumbleweed, and sand soil forever and you think, No, there's nothing out there. But you know what? They're out there—los mero-mero cabrones. The drug traffickers and body traffickers. Which are worse? I can't say. (4)

In this account, the desert is primarily marked not by its natural features but the tyranny of “coyotes” and “narcos” that lay claim to the landscape. At the same time, however, the “unmerciful desert” appears limitless so that the sheer vastness of “sand soil forever” is also a potential culprit of migrant disappearance. Regina thus offers competing proposals regarding the fact that Rafa is missing. Next, however, the use of Mexican-American idiomatic expressions ostensibly provides a conclusive statement. In terms of the decisive factor in migrant disappearance, primacy is attributed not to the desert, but the “narcos” and “coyotes” given the term “los mero-mero cabrones.” Yet this explanation again is indeterminate, in this case as a result of the latter term's ambiguity. “Mero-mero” by itself connotes the idea of first among many and *cabrón* may serve as a term of endearment among familiars. Therefore, on the one hand, this phrase signifies an exemplary quality and carries a positive connotation in that it can be translated as ‘the main men.’ On the other hand, however, it also has a negative connotation in that it can mean ‘those motherfuckers exactly.’ Given that the term comes from Regina, its connotation in this context is pejorative. Ostensibly, therefore, Rafa's disappearance is the result of the maligned “los mero-mero cabrones.” Yet the problem is that, paradoxically, both the drug and body traffickers are first among many and thus somehow the main men. That is to say, while Regina speculates that traffickers kidnapped her brother, she can only propose that it was drug or human traffickers, but cannot identify which. In this way, the passage ends with Regina's self-proclaimed inability to specify the worse type of “cabrón” and thus establish a viable account of border violence.

Regina's travels from Cabuche to El Paso suggest that *coyotes*, "body traffickers," are no longer interested simply in smuggling people across the border but in sustaining an amorphous black market corridor alongside the southwest border. Significantly, trafficking is not simply about the money but reproducing a multifaceted informal economy whose terms are constantly shifting. To be sure, as Alicia Schmidt Camacho notes, "[c]ontracting with 'coyotes' has become vital for migrants" in a time when "the movement of people becomes more and more lucrative" (298). Yet in Castillo's novel, facilitating Rafa's south-north crossing to work as a day laborer, presumably to "work the pecans," is not the most lucrative option for *coyotes*. As a matter of fact, Castillo's implied definition of "coyotes" as "body traffickers" suggests the co-presence of different types of coyotes which David Spener argues are actually separate and qualitatively distinct. According to Spener, "*Smuggling* and *trafficking* are often used interchangeably in public discourse, in spite of their different definitions in international law." "Smugglers" are those who help what Spener terms "autonomous migrants" whereas "traffickers" involves forcible transit (xii-xiii). Yet for Castillo both possibilities are contained within her definition.

Portraying Rafa as a field laborer initially suggests that *coyotes* function primarily as smugglers of human cargo. The plot first moves in this direction, where the transaction between *coyote* and migrant concludes after payment, yet ultimately deviates from this model. As Regina states, "Eight days ago we got a call. It was a woman's voice. She said in Spanish that Rafa was all right and that he was coming in a few days so we had better have the balance of the money ready" (4). Yet immediately after, it occurs to Regina that the *coyotes* might not be interested in crossing Rafa over the border but using him like Rafa's wife, who seven years prior was found in the desert along with three other women "mutilated for their organs" (4). In this sense, Regina imagines the *coyotes* responsible for Rafa as organ and not body traffickers interested in

extorting the families of victims for ransom money. However, with the help of Miguel, and the number left on her “caller-ID box,” Regina learns the El Paso location from where the *coyote* call was made (13). Additionally, she travels to this house in “El Segundo barrio,” “close to the customs bridge going into Juárez,” a total of three times (14). Moreover, she actually speaks to the woman who placed the call on her first visit there. Thus, given the proximity of the El Paso house to the border, and left in the custody of the unnamed woman, the text suggests that the *coyotes* that helped Rafa cross are simply awaiting payment. Yet Regina’s encounter with this woman indicates that the interest of the “coyotes” operating out of Texas does not stop at human smuggling in the sense of traffickers facilitating the transnational movement of autonomous migrants. After Regina asks about her brother, the woman states, “[y]our brother must be dead, stupid. Why else do you think you never heard anything again? Do you think they come and tell *me* what goes on out there . . . They come here until there people pay what they owe” (15).

This account of how the El Paso *coyotes* and the business of human smuggling functions, however, is inconsistent with the earlier ransom demand. Significantly, given that the woman’s call to Regina was strictly about demanding payment it is telling that she denies knowledge of Rafa’s whereabouts. Ostensibly, lying to Regina could be a bargaining ploy to increase the ransom price. Yet the woman does not demand more money during their face-to-face meeting. In this regard, her explanation of the *coyote* process, “they come here until their people pay what they owe,” cannot account for Rafa’s disappearance (15). Further, Regina’s narrative depictions of this woman and her husband plainly mark this couple not as *coyotes* but as drug pushers. She states, “It was like a movie. In movies about drug traficantes they have women like that, in their nightgowns in daytime in gloomy rooms . . . And they have guys like the one who drove up just as we were leaving, wearing a big anchor on a chain around his neck and a diamond earring in

one ear. They . . . looked like they were right out of a bad drug video” (15). As a result, if earlier Regina worried that Rafa may have been the victim of organ trafficking, in this scene she fears that he is somehow enmeshed in drug running. Furthermore, Regina’s account of the couple as the stuff of “drug videos” is in contrast to her earlier assessment of the holding house: “[i]t was a little house like others on that block, nothing special about it” (14). Consequently, what appeared to be a nondescript El Paso residence is now the shadowy site of “drug traficantes.” Thus, while Regina continually identifies the people who took her brother as *coyotes*, they do not actually operate as such. If the *coyotes* in Castillo’s novel appear to not even be *coyotes* at all, then Rafa’s disappearance, the novel suggests, cannot be the result of a large-scale yet botched smuggling operation.

Drug Manufacture and Abduction North of the Border: Pockets, not Empires, of Violence

The emphasis on place in the text suggests that border violence is pervasive in the southwest not as the result of large-scale criminal organizations but the local communities which enact and sustain it. Unlike the allusions to the Tijuana cartel in *Along the Border Lies*, Castillo focuses on the people and places that go unnoticed in the national discourse of border violence but that are nevertheless vital to its reproduction. In doing so, *The Guardians* plays an important role in what Julia Monárrez Fragoso identifies as a problem of representation where “violence is a Mexican border phenomenon that stops once you cross the Río Bravo (Rio Grande in the United States)” (24). If *Along the Border Lies* portrays Tijuana as the central transit point for cocaine trafficked into the U.S., *The Guardians* shows not how violence is centralized but dispersed across towns north of the border. This quality of dispersal is illustrated in Gabo’s encounter, and association, with the gangster Jesse Arellano. Gabo first meets Jesse at a basketball court in Santa Teresa which, as Gabo states, “is the town between Cabuche and El

Paso.” “It also shares la frontera with México. The Santa Teresa border isn’t used for a lot,” Gabo continues, “except the business of narcotraficantes” (44). Whereas Paul Flores’s geographic emphasis is on the internationally recognized border city Tijuana, Castillo focuses on an actual New Mexico border town of less than five thousand. As a matter of fact, the Santa Teresa setting is important in that it stages the meeting between Gabo and Jesse, who plays a crucial role in helping Gabo learn about his father, but also as the chapter shows later, is the site of revealing details about Miguel’s missing ex-wife Crucita.

While Gabo first describes Santa Teresa as a town whose central role is to serve as a transit point for “narcotraficantes,” Castillo shows that it is actually defined by low-level New Mexico gangs, and in this way emphasizes the local sites of border violence. Jesse introduces himself to Gabo as “Jesse Arellano as in *the* Arellanos, ese” (43). He states further, “[m]y older brother is El Toro Arellano . . . You know the guy who helped start Los Palominos back in the day?” (44). Ostensibly, Jesse is part of “the notorious Arellanos from Nuevo Laredo” whose exploits are so well known that, according to Gabo, “[e]veryone along the borderlands has heard about esos narcos” (44). Yet this fixation with the “Arellanos from Nuevo Laredo” is incongruent with the contemporary social reality of the border. According to Ricardo Ravelo, while the death of “longtime leaders” Ramón and Benjamín Arellano Félix—kingpins of the cartel alluded to in *Along the Border Lies*—signaled a changing of the guard, control stayed within the Arellano family who operate out of Tijuana (74). By contrast, Nuevo Laredo—the purported site of the Arellanos according to Jesse—was formerly part of the “Tamaulipas transfer points” under the control of Osiel Cárdenas Guillén until a hostile takeover by the organization known as Los Zetas (Grayson and Logan xix). In this regard, Jesse’s tie to the Arellano organization is clearly an embellishment. As a matter of fact, Gabo points out that

Jesse's name-dropping is not an outright assertion of belonging to the Arellanos but an implied statement "so that you might come to that conclusion yourself" (44). Moreover, even though Jesse romanticizes his link to "carteles grandes," his character is more than anything defined by his ties to the local gang Los Palominos, an affiliation he can claim because of his brother. Therefore, in portraying a southwest marked by border violence, Castillo foregrounds not the "narcotraficantes" that "reign over the borderlands," as Gabo states, but the "penny-ante gangbangers" that inhabit it (44).

If Gabo recognizes that Jesse and Los Palominos are penny-ante gangbangers in Santa Teresa, his portrayal of this group nonetheless demonstrates that their capacity for violence is a formidable threat to border communities. Given that Gabo is an aspiring monk, and his narrative sections are written as letters to God and saints, his narration is often sycophantic and hyperbolic so that even the mundane seems divine. For instance, he trades a pair of shoes for information about his missing father and subsequently describes his feelings: "[y]es, I was filled with anguish about my deal with Jesse. Yes, I feared the embers of Inferno. But most of all, San Pio, I was ashamed, because I knew that God was watching" (82). In Gabo's mind, the act of giving up his shoes agonizingly signifies the path towards the fire and brimstone of hell. Gabo therefore often overstates the case, except that his account of Los Palominos and their penchant for violence is tellingly accurate. He reports Jesse's explanation of initiation rites for females as follows: "[w]hen a chava gets brought into the gang it is truly a tragic fate cast upon a female. Except in the Old Testament I had never heard of such barbarism, Su Reverencia. He did not say rape. But that is what it is." Gabo continues, "[w]hat he said was that a girl throws a pair of dice and whatever number comes up, that is the number of guys that will have sex with her that night" (45). In this particular context, the comparison of Los Palominos with ancient barbaric rituals is

not an exaggeration. Further, if gang rape is already a sordid detail, Gabo adds that prospective members also have to be “jumped in.” Crucially, and deplorably, allegiance to Los Palominos requires submitting to sexual and physical violence for its female members. Thus, while they are “penny-ante gangbangers” who do not have the notoriety of drug cartels, Gabo’s commentary on Los Palominos shows that their effect on border towns can be just as devastating.

Gabo recognizes the brutality of Los Palominos yet relies on them for help, and this dependence on the Santa Teresa gang suggests that the expansion of violence along the north side of the border intersects with and yet is distinct from that which occurs on the south side. Unlike the violence in *Along the Border Lies* that features cartels with ties to the Mexican presidency and that execute hits in broad daylight, the violence in *The Guardians* occurs on a lesser scale. Using the same method as Regina, Gabo locates the El Paso house “where the coyotes live” and travels there with Los Palominos (83). Tiny Tears, a female gang member, sneaks into the house. She is given this name as “part of the Palominos’ code” where “each tattoo tear represents a life taken” (82). Further, according to the group’s leader El Toro, “she got some information for us” (86). Importantly, as opposed to the shadowy world of conspiracies and narco-politics of Flores’s Tijuana, in Castillo’s southwest the focus is on a group of mostly teenagers whose crime in this specific instance is the misdemeanor breaking and entering. Nonetheless, as a result of Tiny Tears’s trespassing, El Toro is able to report that “[t]hose coyotes that got hold of your old man are with los Villanueva—a small but very powerful family. Ambitious. They’re into pushing meth, kids, females, all kinds of sh—” (87). While little is known about this group, Gabo assumes that they are part of the “narco familias” along the border (87).

However, like the earlier mention of the “Arellanos from Nuevo Laredo,” the reference to “los Villanueva” is secondary to the text’s emphasis on Los Palominos, in particular, Tiny Tears. To be sure, El Toro speaks in awe about the cartel exploits such as their “AK-47 wars with the police in Juárez,” processes which are no doubt part of contemporary border violence. Yet Castillo’s focus is less about machine gun wars waged by drug cartels than on the ordinary gangsters of small New Mexico towns. As a matter of fact, as a police officer comments to Regina about El Toro, “[h]e pretends he’s with the Arellano family cartel of Nuevo Laredo. But he’s only a local petty thief” (194). Yet however petty their thievery, local gangsters like Tiny Tears enact a “life of crime” on the border (84). For instance, whereas El Toro drives away once the group reaches the house, Jesse “scurries off,” and Gabo hides in a “garbage bin,” the “cholata” Tiny Tears is the only one to successfully learn anything about the group responsible for Gabo’s father by breaking into the *coyote* house. Moreover, Tiny Tears also learns the location of the “meth labs” that El Toro and Los Palominos will try, but fail, to take over. Therefore, while los Arellano and los Villanueva are infamous names, no doubt mythologized by characters such as Jesse and El Toro, Castillo shows that it is criminally ambitious but petty gangs and their seemingly insignificant member that contribute to the reproduction of violence along the southwestern border.

Making Sense of Crucita’s Abduction: The Fallacy of Location

In order to question how the normalization of violence creates the conditions where death is a social reality of living on the border, Castillo merges the story of Rafa’s disappearance with the story of Crucita’s abduction. Indeed, the text’s depiction of the border as an “unmerciful desert” parallels the non-fictional descriptions of this geographic space as what Joseph Nevins terms a “landscape of death” (144). Significantly, however, whereas “disappearance” evokes the

modes of violence attendant to migrant border crossing, abduction in this particular case is a gendered form of violence which, moreover, is not the result of clandestine entry because of a delegitimized status like Rafa's—Crucita is a U.S. resident—but emerges from a voluntary and willful act of crossing into Juárez. Yet just as Regina's sections enact the refusal to single out either drug or body trafficking as the cause of Rafa's disappearance, Miguel's narrative sections are similarly ambivalent regarding the cause of his ex-wife Crucita's abduction. As a matter of fact, the organization of the plot development suggests a rejection of causality. Readers first learn that Crucita is missing not via Miguel's first person narration—a detail which might be expected given her established history with Miguel—but through commentary in Regina's section. Local police visit her house one night because, as Regina reports, “[t]he Sheriff had an idea that Tiny Tears, or at least the Palominos, might have something to do with the kidnapping of Crucita Betancourt” (180). Consequently, Los Palominos, and in particular Tiny Tears, are thus again implicated in border violence. If earlier it was *coyote* hideouts and meth labs, now it is abduction yet only as a possibility, not a certainty, and thus in this scene the text stops short of directly linking the gang to kidnapping. By staging the inconsistency of explanatory models in the first-person accounts of both Regina and Miguel, Castillo not only rejects the idea of death by sheer virtue of living on the border. She also shows that this violence is sustained in part by the way it is perceived and analyzed.

The linear thinking implicit in causality is altogether disrupted by the fact that it is Regina, and not Mike, who first discloses the plot detail of Crucita's kidnapping. Regina and Crucita only meet once at a family party where all the characters are present and thereafter never meet again. In fact, the only times Crucita is mentioned in the novel, aside from the party scene which Regina narrates, occur in Miguel's sections. Further, in the section following the sheriff's

visit to Regina, Miguel provides his own account of how he learned about the kidnapping but at this point, that plot detail has already been established. As a result, while the text initially creates a narrative pattern of coupling Miguel with Crucita, and thus suggests that information about her only comes from Miguel, the novel ultimately strays from this pairing. Therefore, by deviating from the pattern of consistently pairing details about Crucita with Miguel's sections, Castillo suggests that Crucita's abduction cannot be accounted for by one-to-one correspondences.

This critique of the explanatory models applied to border violence is crystallized in the rhetorical questions that precede the revelation about the location of Crucita and Rafa. While the geography of and proximity to the border, and causal explanations like migrants kidnapped for organs are proposed by the characters, these explanations are in the end abandoned by them. The local Sheriff visits Regina to notify her about Crucita and immediately after Regina wonders, "*Kidnapping?* . . . First one person's loved one has gone missing and before you find him, someone else goes missing. Things that terrible don't just keep happening to people, I thought. To what people? Just people. That's when I imagined the canyon" (180 italics original). While Regina stops short of mentioning Cabuche, her hometown, Sunland Park, where Miguel lives, or even El Paso, and thus does not initially link geography with border violence, neither can she understand how such violence is apparently a human condition that affects "just people." As a matter of fact, Regina's impulse that violence, in this particular case kidnapping, is universal and thus normal, is internally refuted within the last sentence of her first-person speech. Regina once again can only turn to the geography of the border, "as treacherous as [she] could visualize it" (180). Yet, as is characteristic of her wandering prose and itinerant thinking, Regina drops the geography of the border and instead tries to grasp a different kind of spatiality altogether: "I wasn't born in the Copper Canyon But I exist in a different kind of canyon I am sure

not everyone in this canyon is condemned to stay down here with no way out his whole life” (180). To be sure, the canyon is a metaphor, though it is not entirely clear what it symbolizes; whether it be an ethnic identity, an abject social status, a subjectivity marked by violence, perhaps all, or none, of these. Ultimately, Regina’s internal questions foreground a process of inquiry that lacks a foreseeable conclusion. Moreover, for Miguel, who tries to understand border violence, he can “only ask [him]self, With so much money involved, how can anyone expect this savagery to stop?” (184). Yet as this chapter showed earlier, “money” is an inconsistent and thus insufficient explanation. Miguel in fact forgets “money” and next raises the issue of “snuff film theories” and “theories about rich sadists,” yet never follows up on this theory (185). The characters therefore move from locating the specific cause of border violence to the challenge of trying to think through it.

The ambiguity surrounding Crucita’s abduction and the character responses to it ultimately show the limits of trying to geographically frame and interpret the U.S.-Mexico border and its attendant modes of violence as if it were capable of functioning as a purely territorial divider. From the very moment of its inception, the U.S. imposition of the border was never a question of landscape in a strictly physical sense but rather a series of justifications for coloniality in various guises: expansionism, agricultural modernization (as in *George Washington Gómez*), the hegemony of law enforcement agencies in a purportedly stateless context of neoliberalism, the rise of state security, and so on.⁶ Consequently, while the text’s borrowing of modernist technique highlights interior character thought, and thus provides unrestricted access to their thought processes, Castillo also shows that characters can neither think through nor account for border violence because their explanations presuppose the border as mappable along the lines of a U.S.-centric epistemology. That is, they seek explanations about

a site-specific process whose very existence as a geopolitical barrier was from the beginning never strictly about territory but was rather marked by trans-temporality. As a result, developing a genealogy of violence that might establish a pattern with which to frame, and potentially eliminate the characters's respective experiences of disappearance and abduction is entirely out of the question. For instance, after speculating about "how little girls and young women fit into the equation of omnipotent kingpins' power," Miguel offers a series of hypotheses regarding Crucita's abduction (184, 185). First, he recounts the explanation of the Chihuahua governor who "blamed" the violence on border women, "stating they had asked for it by being out at night"; next he invokes the theory of the Egyptian national who emigrated to Mexico "because of sexual assault charges" and was temporarily held in custody but later released; third is the "conjecture" of "organ harvesters"; and finally he mentions the lurid story of "maquila bus drivers" whose route was really a grotesque murder ride (185). Further, Miguel even tries to classify this species of border violence as a kind of scientific notation by labelling it "*Femicide*" (185 italics original). To be sure, this is a critically used term that appears in non-literary analyses, yet in the novel it is italicized similar to the Linnaean system of classification. The problem, however, is that in contrast to the typography which suggests a basis in science, Miguel clumps the various theories together so that "*Femicide* is the term that's been given to all of it"—state violence, sex offenders, organ harvesting, and sadism at its most extreme (185). Importantly, however, rather than this totalizing definition, femicide is more aptly characterized as a process that, as Rosa Fregoso argues, "makes evident the overlapping power relations on gendered and racialized bodies" which cannot be explained by reference to macro-processes or accounted for through emphasis on singular causes like "nonnormativity" (2). In other words, while all of the theories in Miguel's list could potentially be designated as femicide, the

application of this term is contingent on a crucial detail: femicide is anchored in the elimination of a feminine subjectivity as the primary motive for violence. Therefore, like Regina's account of migrant disappearance which floats the possibility of "body traffickers," "drug traffickers" and organ harvesters as potential explanations about the missing Rafa but is never decisive about any, Miguel's hypothesizing, even when drawing on critical vocabulary, albeit inaccurately, cannot yield conclusive results. Though he has a number of theories, Miguel cannot reason through the cause of Crucita's abduction on the border. He ends his list by glibly and frustratedly saying, "[a]nd the murders continue" (185).

In highlighting the indeterminacy surrounding border violence, Castillo suggests that the missing interpretive framework is less about rationalizing the border by tracing how different forms of violence intersect across a geopolitical border than a re-historicization that emphasizes the colonial underpinnings of this border. On one level, Miguel's hypothesizing illustrates the frustrated attempts at understanding the world around him. Yet on a second, this list is actually a literary transcription of non-fictional critical work on border violence. Specifically, embedded into Miguel's fictional narrative are the various theories noted and interrogated by the filmmaker Lourdes Portillo and the scholar Rosa Fregoso. Moreover, the list provided by Miguel is identical to the different explanations of border violence Portillo critiques in her documentary *Señorita extraviada*. Significantly, Portillo's critique of these explanations is in precisely the same order as that which is presented in *The Guardians*. Additionally, in her analysis of border violence, *MeXicana Encounters*, Fregoso reiterates and takes to task this series of explanations, stressing the need for "frameworks of intelligibility" (24). By intertextualizing non-literary work into *The Guardians*, Castillo frames her neo-realist portrayal of character interpretations not only as a plot detail but a hermeneutic possible beyond the fictional world of the novel.

However, the difference among these literary and non-literary texts is that whereas Miguel provides a list of possible causes with which he can only conclude that “the murders continue,” Portillo and Fregoso situate the border as a space which stages the economic imperatives of neo-colonial modernity. In other words, understanding and thus creating the possibility of challenging border violence requires a broader historical framework than the characters’s preoccupation with the immediate present. Importantly, Miguel glimpses the possibility of such a framework when, after his comments on “*Femicide*,” he states, “[i]t wasn’t the Magonistas who brought anarchy to the border. There is no cohesive center where a line divides. Anarchy is its natural result” (186). To be sure, Miguel’s character is a radical activist writing a manuscript on “dirty wars,” and in this sense his interest in anarchist figures is understandable (32). Yet referencing this material immediately following his commentary on femicide is a more than abrupt aside. In referencing the Magonistas, Miguel is referring to the anarchist movement led by Ricardo Flores Magón, whose anti-dictatorial protest emerged at the turn of the century. As a matter of fact, the 1915 Seditious Rebellion featured in Américo Paredes’s *George Washington Gómez* was influenced in part by the Magonista movement. In thus referencing the Magonistas, Castillo’s allusion to border history parallels Flores’s foregrounding of the *corrido* figure underpinning Alfredo’s character in *Along the Border Lies*. However, while a common thread linking both texts is the engagement of border history, this historicization is posed differently in each. Unlike Flores’s continued emphasis on the 19th century and the deliberate organization of the novel within a non-chronological schema, in *The Guardians* the urgency of this historicization is registered through its very absence. By declaring anarchy the natural result of the border, Miguel is not simply remarking on plot where the southwest is chaotic because of murders committed without identifiable motive. Instead, his

comment that a dividing line is inimical to a cohesive center is the literary expression of an extra-literary issue: there can be no cohesive interpretation of the border unless it is consistently situated within the context of colonial and neo-colonial power. As a result, throughout *The Guardians*, characters enact the struggle, and ultimately fail, to make sense of border violence by working from the flawed proposition that the southwestern U.S.-Mexico border is singularly a geopolitical barrier.

Conclusion

Paul Flores uses neo-realist techniques in *Along the Border Lies* to interrogate the notion that border violence is a residual effect of the socioeconomic modernization along the Tijuana-San Diego border. On the surface, this text shows that the tension between the free market logic of NAFTA on the one hand, and the security imperatives of the U.S. border patrol on the other, invariably result in border violence, specifically, vigilanteism and cartel-ordered assassinations. Undocumented immigrants of course cannot pass through government-regulated checkpoints so they must find alternate routes, which in this text is the San Ysidro canyon, an area that for Alfredo is inconveniently too close to home. Further, the Border Patrol's inability to realize its security protocols, according to Alfredo, justifies his murder of border crossers. On the other side of the border in Tijuana, Miranda is quick to join Los Reyes drug cartel even while she is aware of their brutality, and only tries to defect when her life is at stake. In either case, whether in San Diego or Tijuana, border violence is directly tied to the present-day configuration of the border as a point of convergence between capitalism and state security. At bottom, however, this formulation is undone through the lack of closure across the character sections. No doubt the plot of Alfredo's narrative is resolved in that he is caught by the authorities for his crime and faces imprisonment. Yet his obsession with safeguarding the border actually turns out to be the marked

emphasis on a history which he unknowingly figured. Thus, while the narrative arc of living on the present-day Tijuana-San Diego border is completed, its conclusion suggests that the story of Alfredo's mission be situated in the 19th century. Miranda's narrative, on the other hand, is tellingly open-ended as she heads away from the border and turns north while Edgar waits for an arrest that is in limbo. Flores therefore shows that although the new breed of traffickers who retain U.S. and Mexican citizenship capitalize on the present-day configuration of the borderline, a more careful discerning of the relation between drug trafficking and immigration necessitates a recognition of how social processes in Baja California do not unfold along an axis of capitalist development but are rather emergent in the trans-border modernities of Tijuana-San Diego.

Whereas the foregrounding of these peripheral modernities allows for illuminating the lifeworlds of the Tijuana-San Diego border, in *The Guardians* Castillo shows how the normalization of violence persists in the absence of a historical framework limited to the 21st century and the episteme that the southwestern border is always already there. In staging the critical impasse of analyzing border violence as a readily defined social reality of the 21st century, the novel foregrounds the limitations of suppressing the border's trans-temporality. As a result, in the fictional world of the characters, the present-day real life of the border is one in which people simply vanish without explanation. Regina is harassed to make payment to *coyotes* who later deny any knowledge about Rafa and never bother to ask for money again; Miguel is threatened with a ransom note—"A THUOSAND DOLLARS FOR YOUR WIFE. DON'T CALL THE POLIC"—by kidnappers who never collect their ransom. While Crucita is eventually found, there is no clear motive for her abduction, and Regina only learns that Rafa died in El Paso but not why. Thus, in the novel the forms of violence are somehow interconnected but without a definable motive, beginning or end. In New Mexico and Texas,

reality is purportedly “[i]nnocent gente disappearing into thin air,” as Abuelo Milton states (197). Yet Castillo’s fiction challenges the nature of this reality and suggests that it may even be alterable. In the final words of the novel Regina states, “[t]he thing about those bad videos they make about our lives out here is that you can rewind. Like, you can rewind to just before someone beautiful dies. And press stop. You can’t do that in real life” (211). Regina’s comments about stopping time like in a movie is less a fantasy than a critical imperative. She is speaking not of the ability to manipulate time but the cessation of a pernicious historical disavowal: until there is serious recognition of the southwestern border’s trans-temporality and thus an awareness of the historical context in which the border was and continues to be imposed, border violence will play on.

Closing Arguments

In proposing that 20th and 21st century border-based fiction re-conceptualizes the significance of 1848, this dissertation is as much political as it is aesthetic. Specifically, the dissertation has argued that the material configurations of modernity (colonial, imperial, neo-liberal, post-NAFTA) are inseparable from and dependent on a particular set of discursive constructions in which the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and the U.S.-Mexico border are intransigent, inalterable, and unassailable. Indisputably, the most clear instance of this fact in the present moment is the frequency, and conviction, with which state and popular discourses classify human beings as “undocumented,” and as a result legitimize their military pursuit, prosecution, deportation, and in many instances murder, precisely because these border-crossers are “breaking the law.” In addition to preserving the U.S. claim to the rule of law, the border is inextricable from the reproduction of U.S. economic interests and their naturalization as crucial to a process of modernization which is increasingly transnational. Consequently, the story of modernity in the U.S. is impossible without the border—in this sense it is vital—and yet it is the work of truth regimes to regulate the material conditions of the border and its representation in discourse in ways that undergird, but do not bring to the surface, U.S.-centric epistemologies of spatiality and history. In other words, the historical and existing patterns of domination staged through and enabled by U.S. control of the border must always be made to seem the natural order of things.

While the border has, in this regard, functioned as the privileged domain of U.S. expansionism and nativism, it has also remained an enduring cultural artifact for U.S., Mexican, and Mexican-American authors. Importantly, despite its codification in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, and its backing by the full sanction of Anglo common law, for borderlands and

fronterizo authors, the juridical structure of the border—both as the site of state power and as the basis for popular discourses—is anything but settled. In this regard, by “cultural artifact,” this dissertation refers to the fact that the urgency of the border for these artists is its potential distillation of innovative and distinct literary forms. Thus border modernism exhibits subjective narration and documentary-style reporting; the border *neopoliciaco* features a collective protagonist and the revelation of fact rather than the apprehension of a criminal mastermind; in postmodern border metafiction language games are as trenchant as they are playful; and the represented worlds of peripheral neo-realism are less stable and plainly intelligible than a series of disordered impressions. Crucially, however, in elaborating the relationship between aesthetics and the object of their representational focus—the U.S.-Mexico border—the dissertation purposefully uses the language of “refraction.” In fact, any suggestion that the colonial establishment of the border as a geopolitical barrier necessarily resulted in a formalism of the border subordinates the aesthetic, and in particular fiction, to the crude status of a blunt instrument. Conceived in this manner, border fiction would be purely reflective, and incapable of cutting past hidebound tradition and value (in the literary and non-literary sense) to reveal any meaningful truths. Instead, as the prior analysis has shown, literary form and the border are held in a dialectical relationship, and in this way create the possibility of meaning-making.

Key among these possibilities realizable in and through border fiction is the recognition of, and sustained engagement with, peripheral modernities. To be sure, the representation of the border is contingent on the time and place in which it is imagined, which is another way of saying that cultural production on the border is imbricated in historical and material conditions. In this sense, “peripheral modernities” names a series of social and political-economic practices occluded by a U.S.-centric framework but vital to the experiences of local border communities.

Importantly, borderlands and *fronterizo* authors refract their distinct versions of modernity not singularly as the result of political orientation but to strategically alter and re-direct the reaches of fiction and literary form. Thus, while it designates material practices, as this dissertation has shown, the term “peripheral modernities” also refers to social imaginaries. Specifically, these imaginaries foreground the multiple historicities emergent on, and the manifold localities of, the U.S.-Mexico border. Furthermore, in fictively rendering “peripheral modernities,” borderlands and *fronterizo* authors provide a divergent and alternative frame of reference with which to examine questions of national belonging and territoriality (border modernism); the pursuit of social justice on a neo-liberalized border (border *neopoliciaco*); fashioning modes of personhood in the era of state-security (postmodern border metafiction); and the basic human right to life regardless of class, gender or ethnic identity (peripheral neo-realism). Significantly, as this dissertation has proven in its close readings of textual forms, the development of these critical border-based social spaces is activated and maintained in and through creative orderings of literary language.

In arguing for the intersections of the legacy of 1848 and literary form, this dissertation has implicitly and actively drawn on existing trans-border scholarship. While not cited at length due to their period focus on 19th century texts, the respective of work Kirsten Silva-Gruesz’s *Ambassadors of Culture* (2002), Shelley Streeby’s *American Sensations* (2002) and Anna Brickhouse’s *Transamerican Literary Relations and the Nineteenth Century Public Sphere* (2004), provided the critical impetus to theorize a transnational literary archive during the preliminary stages of this dissertation. Additionally, Jaime Javier Rodríguez’s *The Literatures of the U.S.-Mexican War: Time, Narrative, and Identity* (2010) was useful in suggesting the possible links between 1848 and the present moment. The dissertation also drew actively from

Claire Fox's *The Fence and the River: Culture and Politics at the U.S.-Mexico Border* (1999), as well as Debra Castillo and María Socorro Tabuenca Córdoba's *Border Women: Writing from la frontera* (2002). However, given the historical basis of 1848, in addition to the stylistic emphasis on a series of literary modes that span three quarters of a century, this dissertation has also had to invent interpretive frameworks where they did not exist, and in this regard more work needs to be done.

One area in which the newness of the critical links between literary form and 1848 is apparent is the textual archive analyzed in this dissertation. To be sure, these texts are not the first, or only, to explore in meaningful ways what has been termed the legacy of 1848. As the dissertation has demonstrated, however, the texts were selected not only for their insightful portrayals of living on the U.S.-Mexico border but in how this thematic engagement modified, and was itself altered by, the adaptation of conventional literary forms to produce unique border-based varieties. Nonetheless, every act of inclusion and classification is necessarily political—it represents staking out a particular claim whether implicitly or explicitly—and for every text selected in this dissertation there exists a potential alternative. Without a doubt, one aim of this dissertation is to develop a line of inquiry which, importantly, is not (and should not be) restricted to this author, that tracks the conduits between 1848 and modern fiction. In fact, a desired outcome is that this dissertation generates further research into this area and by doing so develops an ongoing critical framework. Possible texts which may prove fruitful in this regard (and which intersects with but is distinct from the future project envisioned below), to name a few, are Ito Romo's *El puente/The Bridge* (2000), Alicia Gaspar de Alba's *Desert Blood: The Juárez Murders* (2005), and David Toscana's *El ejército iluminado* (2007).

In addition to expanding the textual archive to develop a more representative sense of how 1848 continues to be imagined in fiction, a second area for further development is the critical vocabulary utilized in and foreclosed by the research aims of this dissertation. Specifically, the historical analysis of how 1848 and the U.S.-Mexico border constitute guiding epistemes of U.S. modernity is an argument made available through an array of fictional modes. Yet tracking major developments in these fictional projects has also required the dissertation to contend with the border's changing form of appearance. For instance, the dissertation's focus on the early 20th century in Chapter One emphasizes both the rise of capitalist markets in post-Porfirian Mexico as well as the onset of agricultural modernization, each taking place in a historically specific border setting. Thus, within the first chapter, the very concept of territory, in addition to its representation in literary forms, is distinct, and as the dissertation moves through the 20th century and into the 21st, the valences of territoriality are thrown further into relief. In the border *neopoliciaco* analyzed in Chapter Two, for example, the U.S.-Mexico border is as much a domain of state law enforcement agencies, and in this way a juridical rather than strictly territorial space, as it is about landscape. Moreover, Chapter Three analyzes Tijuana-based metafiction and what the dissertation names "the spatial logic of postmodernity," which is the idea of universal mobility and an increasing sense of borderless-ness in the era of global capitalism. This focus on the latest stage of capital is also the setting for the novels analyzed in Chapter Four, which tracks the different modes of border violence in Tijuana-San Diego, and Cabuche-El Paso-Juárez, respectively. However, despite overlapping historically—the novels were published six years apart and are both set in the late 20th century—each renders space, and in particular geography, distinctly. Consequently, while the research aims of the dissertation

remain poised on the literary, the particular arrangement of texts analyzed, in addition to their individual portrayals of the border, requires a fluid use of the above-named core terms.

A future installation of this research project would thus refine the terminology used to examine border fiction with a critical attention to questions of space. Key texts in this regard are Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (1991); David Harvey's *Spaces of Global Capitalism* (2006); and Claudia Sadowski-Smith's *Border Fictions: Globalization, Empire, and Writing at the Boundaries of the United States* (2008). As with the fictional archive, the assembly of critical texts can never be complete, and the versions signaled here, both in the dissertation's current form as well as its future iteration, are no different. Their selection as illuminating the pursuit of a specialized account of border fiction is less a proscriptive act than a choice animated by their clarifying potential. Finally, while this dissertation has specifically focused on the literary, an extended version of the project would perform a comparative reading between "*narrativas del norte*," the most recent form of border fiction produced by Mexican writers, on the one hand, and the use of the U.S.-Mexico border and border culture in popular U.S. television series such as *The Bridge* and *Breaking Bad*, on the other.

In "Negro y Azul," an episode from *Breaking Bad*'s second season, the scene opens featuring three men dressed in black, in a desert setting, strumming green, white and red guitars. They sing, "La ciudad se llama Duke/Nuevo México el estado/Entre la gente mafiosa/Su fama se ha propagado/Causa de una nueva droga/Que los gringos han creado" ("The city's called Duke/The state's called New Mexico/Among the gangsters/The gringo's fame is inflated/'Cause of the new drug created"). As the episode opens, the camera cuts to a political map displaying the tri-state border of New Mexico, Texas and Mexico. The band is Los Cuates de Sinaloa, and the song they sing is a narcocorrido. Yet the protagonist of this border ballad, unlike those

featured in Chapter Three of this dissertation, is not a Mexican, but a “gringo” named “Heisenberg” who has cornered the methamphetamine market. Additionally, this narcocorrido reverses the typical theme in which drug cartels gloriously commit crime in that it is the “gringo” who is the agent of violence. To be sure, the series traffics in its share of ethnic stereotypes, yet it also avoids the dichotomy of Anglo jurisprudence and Mexican corruption. Thus, the appearance of a narcocorrido, a paradigmatically border form, in what is considered one of the most-watched U.S. series of all time is more complex than Anglo cultural appropriation. Instead, the prominence, and significance, of the border and of border cultural forms in U.S. television might be illuminated when set against *narrativas del norte*. While nominally referring to literary production in Mexico’s northern border region, as Diana Palaversich makes clear, this term does not refer to a “homogenous northern bloc” (“La Nueva Narrativa” 11). Rather, *narrativas del norte* update accounts of *fronterizo* literature, which Palaversich argues peaked in the nineties, and provide a useful point of comparison with Chicano “Border Writing” (10). Crucially, the author of this dissertation posits that *narrativas del norte* are an urgent critical practice not only because they challenge the model of Northern Mexican writers as in constant opposition with the center, Mexico’s capital city, as Palaversich observes (24). Instead, they might allow the development of a critical vocabulary with which to critique and perhaps change power relations. As the latest of a diverse set of border fiction, *narrativas del norte*, when set against U.S. visual culture, might also help re-define the centrality of the U.S., both as an arbiter of political life and cultural representation, in relation to those living on the south side of the Mexican border. Finally, the performance of this future comparative analysis might engage areas left unanswered in this particular dissertation, and crucially, generate new lines of inquiry with which to examine the border, its art, and citizens.

Notes to Introduction

¹ Arjun Appadurai's study (1996) provides a helpful vocabulary. He argues that "displaced, deterritorialized and transient populations," believed to be outside the time-space of the modern from an orientaling perspective, actually experience "time, temporality, and modernity" not "coeval" with the West but in a manner that is both disjunctive and conjunctive (199, 204). Elsewhere, while the work resists the notion of modernity as a totalizing concept Dilip Gaonkar's "Alternative Modernities" essay (2001) nonetheless declares that "One can provincialize Western modernity only by thinking through and against its self-understandings" (15). In her account of "peripheral modernisms" (2009) Benita Parry urges a recognition of "the distinctive experiences of modernity in spaces outside Western Europe and North America, but within an imperialist world-system" (27). The underlying link between these works, and a key concept regarding this dissertation's treatment of the modern, is neither a wholesale rejection of modernity nor an admission of its status as an objective and inescapable truth. Instead, it is that however opposed or incongruent peripheral and 'central' modernities might appear they are at bottom engaged in a provisionally emergent and dialectic relationship given the material and discursive hierarchies that exist between them.

² As Dussel writes, "This 'trans'-modernity should adopt the best that the modern technological solution has to offer—discarding anti-ecological and exclusively Western aspects—and put it at the service of differentiated valorized worlds, ancient and actualized, with their own traditions and ignored creativity" (236). By drawing on this terminology the dissertation joins to ongoing critical debates of post-coloniality in a Latin American context. Specifically, the dissertation adds to these debates by investigating how modernity is articulated and experienced in the lifeworlds above, on and below the border.

³ The treaty was signed by representatives of both nations on February 2 then underwent a series of ratifications until, in what might be termed a second birth of the U.S., James Polk officially proclaimed the treaty on July 4, 1848.

⁴ This centering on scientific discourse is one of "five important traits" that characterize the "political economy of truth." However, this dissertation lists only the first because while Foucault's terminology is invaluable to the project at hand the use of his terms is not meant as a template but instead as support for an original line of inquiry. In fact, by Foucault's own account, the elaboration of "régimes of truth" is meant as "suggestions to be further tested and evaluated" rather than as a prescriptive set of "firm assertions" (133).

⁵ Luis Leal notes however that before its dissemination to a large-scale audience Alurista was already discussing the concept of Aztlán in 1968 "in a class for Chicanos held at San Diego State University" (11).

⁶ These works include Alurista's poetry anthology *Nationchild Plumaroja* (1972), as well as novels such as Miguel Méndez's *Peregrinos de Aztlán* (1974) and Rudolfo Anaya's *Heart of Aztlán* (1976).

⁷ For an extensive review of the "Chicano movement and postmovement" see Lee Bebout's *Mythohistorical Interventions: The Chicano Movement and its Legacies* (2011). Significantly, Bebout clarifies the internal differences within the Chicano movement and between its various representatives. Thus, Bebout stresses that "[t]he concept of Aztlán, through its emergence at the 1969 conference, functioned as a commitment mechanism, allowing activists engaged in

different strategies and struggling towards disparate goals to rally around a singular, if often multivalent, concept” (4). In an additional work, Bebout notes the appropriation of Aztlán by White nativists in order to induce panic regarding an immigrant invasion from south of the border (2012).

⁸ Castillo and Córdoba approximate this dissertation’s emphasis on style and are therefore cited at length though the critical imperative to establish a trans-border archive can also be found in Kirsten Silva Gruesz’s *Ambassadors of Culture* (2002), Shelley Streeby’s *American Sensations* (2002) and Anna Brickhouse’s *Transamerican Literary Relations and the Nineteenth Century Public Sphere* (2004).

⁹ In “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” Foucault argues that history is not a question of “origins” but of “emergences,” which he conceptualizes as the consistent but dispersed “entry of forces” (77, 84). In other words, “history” does not name unilateral development but the emergence of a multiplicity of events. Further, an “event,” he clarifies, is not “a decision, a treaty, a reign,” but instead refers to “reversals,” “haphazard conflicts” and “entanglements” (88, 89). The unifying thread in Foucault’s elaborations on history, and the crux of this dissertation, is a mode of thinking about history genealogically, that is, both synchronically and diachronically.

¹⁰ For an account of the unevenness of modernity and modernization in the context of Latin America see Néstor García Canclini’s *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (1995).

¹¹ The text was written from 1936 to 1940 but not published until 1990.

¹² In using this phrase Orvell is referencing “Camera Eye” 49 of *The Big Money*: “rebuild the words worn slimy in the mouths of lawyers districtattorneys collegepresidents judges without the old words the immigrants haters of oppression brought to Plymouth how can you know who are your betrayers America.”

¹³ In addition to the work of Persephone Braham (2004), cited later in this dissertation, Glen Close (2008) provides an overview of the changes across classic, Latin American and *neopoliciaco* detective fiction.

¹⁴ See 3:43-6:05 of <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rwBrr7-Tr1E> for Trujillo Muñoz’s interview with the Mexican publication *PERIPLO*.

¹⁵ While Hammett’s most famous work, *The Maltese Falcon* (1929), is written in third-person this was more often the exception than the rule. Hammett’s “Continental Op,” Chandler’s “Philip Marlowe,” and MacDonald’s “Lew Archer” all narrated in first-person, a stylistic feature that does not apply to Trujillo Muñoz’s “Morgado.”

¹⁶ One of the most infamous formulations of postmodernism as sheer game is of course Jameson’s declaration that the postmodern is “the play of random stylistic allusion” (18). However as John Duvall notes a theory of “the serious possibilities of ludic narration” can be found in Hutcheon whose work is cited above. (3)

¹⁷ For a detailed account of this initiative to militarize the border, the strategies of which include the use of lethal force, see Nevins (2010).

¹⁸ More detail on this assertion is provided in Chapter Three but here it must be stated that the claim of abstract space and immaterial borders is a corollary to a particular conception of globalization proposed by theorists such as Guillermo Gómez Peña. In the era of the global, he asserts, the U.S.-Mexico border is not only “shot full of holes” but has altogether dissolved (1993). However, as is also covered in this chapter, more recently, scholars attentive to a non-Anglocentric perspective such as Debra Castillo and María Socorro Tabuenca Córdoba have re-

emphasized the site-specificity of the border (2002). Thus it is this latter conception which informs the textual strategies crafted by Crosthwaite.

¹⁹ On the representational aims of literary realism Amy Kaplan writes, “To conceive of a more dialectical relationship between literature and society, I approach realism as social construction in a double sense: realistic novels construct the social reality they present as ‘the way things are’; yet this process does not take place in a linguistic vacuum because realism as a theory and a practice is itself constructed and reconstructed by society, as it was at the end of the 19th century and in each subsequent generation of novelists and literary critics” (164, n36). In other words the scale of realist representation must constantly be adjusted across historical changes in distinct contexts; reality and fiction in this way are engaged in an asymptotic relationship. Thus in *A Concise Companion to Realism*, Rachel Bowlby clarifies that “Realist works can disturb or please or educate us by showing reality as not what we think we know, by showing realities we have never seen or dreamed, or by making speakable realities that might previously have seemed only idiosyncratic or incommunicable” (xxi). Nonetheless, despite assertions that literary realism is in fact not about a static imitation of the real it largely remains characterized in this regard. Hence Bran Nicol’s account of postmodern fiction, as useful as it is, missteps by conceptualizing realism as at bottom a practice of “reflection”: “Postmodern writing recognizes, either implicitly or explicitly, that it is no longer possible to indulge in the kind of pretence about the possibility of ‘transcription’ which is central to realism” (18, 23).

²⁰ As Diana Palaversich notes the drug traffickers in Flores’s novel are not “rough campesinos and working poor” but young upper-class *Tijuanaenses* (102).

Notes to Chapter One

¹ However this characterization of Modernism in the singular as invested in rendering consciousness is misleading; it is of course accurate for a particular version of modernism, against which Schedler bases his definition, but it overlooks modernists invested less in interior depths than the complexity of exteriors. For instance, in a 1958 interview Ernest Hemingway suggested that his mode of “conveying experience” was built on “the principle of the iceberg.” “There is seven-eighths of it underwater for every part that shows,” and according to Hemingway, “Anything you know you can eliminate and it only strengthens your iceberg” (13). In this conception of literary form experience is thus not rendered by accessing hidden mental reserves but through detailing latent content manifested on surfaces.

² The term “inward turn,” coined by Eric Kahler in his analysis of exemplary narrative forms dating from antiquity to the eighteenth century (1987), now signifies modernism’s stylistic preoccupation with character consciousness in ways that oftentimes assumes a disavowal of historical context. Astradur Eysteinnsson contemplates this facile but problematic one-to-one correspondence between formalism and dehistoricization and writes that “modernism is felt to signal a radical ‘inward turn’ in literature, and often a more thorough exploration of the human psyche” yet “this inward turn is largely held to have ruptured the conventional ties between the individual and society.” This rupture, Eysteinnsson notes, has become a paradigm largely as a result of the Lukácsian thesis that “modernism basically negates outward reality, and equates man’s inwardness with an abstract subjectivity” (26). The modernist subject is therefore unmoored from social and historical context and subjectivity is purely a question of a total and uncompromising interiority. For further critical studies which register the language of turning

inward, see also Peter Nicholls's *Modernisms* (1995), and *The Cambridge Companion to the Modernist Novel* (2007).

³ Benita Parry offers a clarifying vocabulary by suggesting that although peripheries may exist "beyond capitalism's cores" they are nonetheless plotted "*within* an imperialist world-system" (27 emphasis original). As a matter of fact, it is only by postulating an imperial center, subtended by both physical and epistemic violence, that a colonial periphery comes into being in the first place.

⁴ Pericles Lewis writes, "The group had no formal existence but quickly came to be seen by other intellectuals and the reading public as the leading center for mainstream modernism in England" (91). Yet Lewis also notes that authors such as Virginia Woolf were too easily considered "elitist, perhaps because they were so effectively promoted to the status of 'canonical' writers by a generation of postwar academics or because of the association between modernism and literary formalism" (244).

⁵ As a matter of fact his binary collapses when applied to modernist writers whose texts and contexts resist this classification. For example, aside from Eliot's corpus of work perhaps the other most well-known figuration of modernism is James Joyce's *Ulysses*. If Prufrock is the quintessential modernist subject, Joyce, writing from the Dublin metropolis, and responsible for the modernist text *par excellence*, is arguably the quintessential metropolitan modernist author. Undeniably however Dublin is the colonial periphery of a British empire whose epicenter is England. In this aspect Joyce could just as well be labelled a "border modernist."

⁶ See F.R. Leavis's *The Great Tradition* (1948).

⁷ For a useful account of the ways in which cultural and intellectual movements shaped the course, and inflection, of modernism, see Bradshaw (2003).

⁸ Allen Belkind, for instance, declares that "In the 1920s and '30s the technique of vividly recording historical events and shaping them into an esthetic form that usually conveyed a radical and critical viewpoint was called 'reportage'; and Dos Passos became known as the master of the reportage novel" (xx); in her analysis of *U.S.A.* as historical fiction, Barbara Foley argues that the social totality rendered maintains primacy over the fictional lives of characters: "Not merely representative historical trends, but externally verifiable historical events, furnish the structure for the narrative, and the fictional lives which constitute the focus of interest in the classical historical novel are relegated to subordinate status" (91, 92); Donald Pizer observes that the trilogy is "both a documentation of the failure of the American capitalistic ethic and a demonstration of the naturalistic thesis that individual lives are controlled by the conditions of social life" (82).

⁹ Gretchen Foster, noting the influence of filmmakers on Dos Passos's fiction, writes that the "four kinds of writing" in *The 42nd Parallel* "contrast and combine in an overall montage upon which the structure and meaning of the novel depend" (189); In Dos Passos's own words regarding the technique developed across *U.S.A.*, "I took to montage to try to make the narrative stand up off the page" (Chametzky 394).

¹⁰ While there is no universally agreed upon start and end-point to literary modernism typically it is dated as running from 1890-1945. This is the date offered by Morag Shiach (2007); for Malcom Bradbury and James MacFarlane it is 1890-1930 (1976) while David Bradshaw suggests 1880-1939 (2003). Further, these different accounts cite various historical-cultural benchmarks with which to define their respective sense of a modernist era though the common events tend to be the rise of Symbolism, post-Impressionism and the two World Wars.

¹¹ Nicholls opens his study by asserting that the “traces of modernism” can be found via a “return to Paris in the early 1840s” (1). By contrast, for Lewis, this trace is less about a burgeoning poetics than political mobilization: “[c]rucial to the social and political background of modernism was a crisis of political liberalism that had its roots in the radically transformed nature of social relations in the nineteenth century” (11); further he locates these crises in “the 1848 revolutions across Europe” (20).

¹² Pizaña, for instance, was originally born in Rancho del Sombrento, what is now a locale of Cameron County, also home to Brownsville, Texas (or “Jonesville” in the novel.) Moreover, Pizaña personally dealt with E.P. Nafarrete, general of Venustiano Carranza’s army. Nafarrete provided Pizaña with weapons and ammunition who in turn distributed these to seditionist forces. In the novel, Feliciano fictionally represents seditionist forces benefiting from Nafarrete’s, and thus Carranza’s, aid. However, as indicated previously once Carranza’s presidency was solidified, Carranza, and his army, terminated their relationship with the seditionists. See also Ramon Saldívar’s *The Borderlands of Culture*, p. 152-153 (2006) for a gloss on Pizaña and de la Rosa.

¹³ See “John Dos Passos in Mexico” by Rubén Gallo.

¹⁴ Unlike the mistaken belief that Dos Passos borrowed the title from a quote in W.W. Hodgins’s *American Climatology* (1865) which, as Paul Giles notes, may very well have been a Dos Passos invention. “There is in fact no evidence,” states Giles, “that Hodgins or his book ever existed” (130).

¹⁵ See Walter Nugent, *Habits of Empire: A History of American Expansionism* (2009), pp. 127-153.

¹⁶ While Carranza was not officially elected president until 1917, two years earlier he became the self-appointed head of the “pre-constitutional government,” recognized by U.S. President Woodrow Wilson. For more detail see Enrique Krauze’s *Mexico: Biography of Power* (1997).

Notes to Chapter Two

* All translations provided by the author of this chapter.

¹ McCann, however, also notes the difference between what he terms “classic liberal theory,” in which “society as a whole benefited when individuals heedlessly pursued their personal desires,” and what he identifies as the “more frequent” version, discussed above.

² See Néstor García Canclini’s *Hybrid Modernities*.

³ In a conversation between Atanasio and Morgado, Trujillo Muñoz reproduces his own version of the oft-repeated phrase of Conan Doyle’s stories when, as a reply, he writes, “[e]lemental, mi estimado Holmes” (“elementary, my dear Holmes” [43]).

⁴ Persephone Braham argues that the detective novel “contests the nihilistic rhetoric of the ‘Mexican national character’ as savage and a friend of death.” This rhetoric, she notes, emerges from “the discourses of tourism and Manifest Destiny [which] manufactured the necessary barbarous Other” (66, 67).

⁵ Unlike Persephone Braham, who reads the neopoliciaico’s efforts to recuperate history as “excavating and retelling the morally pure ‘sequences’ of Mexican history,” the history recovered in the border neopoliciaico is of the impure and sordid (84). As a result, this revisionist history cannot be celebratory. No doubt Braham locates a critique of the way in which the Mexican state suppresses history in her reading of Paco Ignacio Taibo II’s detective fiction. Yet this muted history often revolves around what Braham terms “populist scenarios” which inspire

hope and therefore have an air of positivity to them. In contrast, Trujillo Muñoz's fiction targets ugly and shameful historical detail. In the context of Mezquite Road there is nothing hope-inspiring about Heri's death. Instead, this silenced history incriminates both the U.S. and Mexico in murder and abduction plots for the sake of preserving the status quo.

⁶ Anthony Collings notes that the "first senior investigator to arrive on the scene was José Antonio Zorrilla Pérez, head of Mexico's equivalent of the F.B.I, the DFS (Dirección Federal de Seguridad)." Crucially, Collings adds that on June 11, 1989, "senior investigator Zorrilla Pérez himself was charged with masterminding the murder" (69).

⁷ See Marjorie Miller, "Mexico Attacks Ruling; Halts Drug War Role", *L.A. Times*, June 16, 1992, A1.

⁸ Also useful in this regard is Fernando Jordán's *El Otro México: biografía de Baja California* (1951), which is cited in "Tijuana City Blues."

⁹ It must be noted that this quote is originally in Spanish and the translation here is my own. As a result, "real Tijuana" must be taken in context as suggesting the everyday Tijuana of its citizens rather than a Tijuana essence, or what Saravia Quiroz terms the "stereotyped" Tijuana.

¹⁰ These border specialists include scholars such as the late professor Rubén Vizcaíno Valencia. Also included is Aidé Grijalva, trained at the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California. In "Tijuana City Blues" Grijalva directs Morgado to Fernando Jordán's comprehensive study of Baja California titled *El otro México*. Further, Grijalva arranges a meeting between Morgado and Leobardo, "*el director de Tijuana Metro*" (35). This character is an unadulterated reference to the aforementioned Sarabia Quiroz, who has served as editor of three Tijuana newspapers and edited an anthology of Baja California *neopoliciaco* authors titled *En la Línea del Fuego* (1995). Outside of his work in criticism and editorial responsibilities Sarabia Quiroz has also written crime fiction. During this meeting Morgado also meets Ava Ordorika, who also served as editor of local Tijuana publications.

¹¹ The title itself, for instance, is an allusion to Jack Kerouac's "Mexico City Blues." For the epigram to the text Trujillo Muñoz uses a section on "law" from William Carlos Williams's *The Desert Music* (1954). In a conversation with Morgado, Vizcaíno critiques Morgado's description of Tijuana as repeating "*la leyenda negra*," a term prevalent in border scholarship (40). Tercerero is not just a character but an actual person who endeared himself to Burroughs while in Mexico.

¹² See Ted Morgan's *Literary Outlaw* (1988); *The Letters of William S. Burroughs*, ed. Harris (1993); and *Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg: The Letters* (2010), eds. Morgan and Stanford.

¹³ Chapter seven of Canclini's *Hybrid Cultures* reviews the simultaneous presence of traditional and modern forms in Tijuana.

¹⁴ The dash here is the chapter's own emendation to the text. This dash has been added to try and maintain some of what is lost in translation. In Spanish *vicio* and *servicio* are nearly audibly identical. However, when translated into English, the "i" in "vice" is pronounced ai whereas in "service" it is "I." The difference in pronunciation results in obscuring the play on words Morgado makes, where "vicio" and "servicio" seem like the same thing.

Notes to Chapter Three

* All translations provided by the author of this chapter.

¹ To be sure, the border city of Tijuana does register hybridity and multiculturalism; it is not these terms in and of themselves which is troublesome. Rather, the issue is in discursively

constructing the border, and the city's, complexity into a narrative reducible to only these terms, as if these captured a supposed essence.

² Palaversich also notes that while its origins can be traced to “1963 con la publicación de la obra *Diario de un narcotraficantes*, de Pedro Serrano” (“1963 with the publication of *Diario de un narcotraficante*, by Pedro Serrano”), the “verdadero auge de la narconarrativa se produce, como es de esperarse, en la segunda mitad de la década de los noventa, con el advenimiento de la visibilidad de los narcos gracias al estallido de una serie de escándolos políticos” (“real boom of narconarrative is produced, as can be expected, in the second half of the decade of the nineties, with the advent of the visibility of narcos thanks to an outburst of political scandals” [7]). Thus, the rise of *narcoliteratura* is intertwined with the public exposure of state corruption.

³ See Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1982).

⁴ This phrase, “pushed out,” is taken from the title of Joe D. Morton's sworn testimony on May 18, 2004, before the House Judiciary Committee, Subcommittee on Immigration, Border Security, and Claims. At the time of the testimony, titled “Pushing the Border Out on Alien Smuggling: New Tools and Intelligence Initiatives,” Morton was Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Diplomatic Security. See <http://2001-2009.state.gov/m/ds/rls/rm/32567.htm>

⁵ According to their statement of purpose, “ICE's primary mission is to promote homeland security and public safety through the criminal and civil enforcement of federal laws governing border control, customs, trade and immigration.” See <http://www.ice.gov/overview>

⁶ Andreas also notes that “the consolidation of various agencies under a new cabinet-level Department of Homeland Security” constitutes “the largest reorganization of the federal government in half a century.” These agencies, moreover, which had once operated discretely, “were now expected to reinvent themselves to play a frontline role against terrorism” (154).

⁷ Crucially, Nevins adds: “As Operation Gatekeeper and the persistence of concerns about unwanted immigrants demonstrate, the modern territorial state is far from disappearing, despite the forces of globalization. Rather, the state is diversifying and developing... Transnational processes such as migration have helped to transform the state, while making it increasingly difficult for the state to manage extraterritorial processes and, thus, what enters national territory. Yet despite the evolution of this increasingly transnational world, modern states tend to cling to the concept of national sovereignty when it comes to immigration” (143).

⁸ In their analysis of the ways in which the U.S. has conditioned and managed the use of terror in Latin America, Cecilia Menjívar and Néstor Rodríguez write “state-sponsored terror is part of a modern political system based on the same rationality that characterizes modern bureaucratic societies.” Importantly, they add, “the occurrences of state terror” are “outcomes of a common policy affected by a larger system of interstate relations concerned with maintaining and reproducing a particular political and economic framework that governs the Latin American region” (4, 6). Thus, as Menjívar and Rodríguez intuit, the focal point of this form of terror is not individual but systemic.

⁹ Elijah Wald writes, Chalino Sánchez is “the figure who set the style for the *corridos* of young Sinaloan gangstas who dominate the scene from here to Los Angeles” (70). In addition, Sánchez worked “with his brother Armando, trafficking drugs and people across borders.” “In 1984,” Wald continues, “his brother was gunned down in Tijuana, and it is said that Chalino wrote his first *corrido* shortly after to preserve the memory of his brother” (71). Thus, as Wald notes, Sánchez became a “martyr” by living out the themes of his *narcocorridos*. On May 15, 1992 he

was abducted by men touting Mexican police identification. A day later he was found blindfolded with two bullet holes in his head.

¹⁰ Palaversich adds, “En contraste con la sicaresca colombiana, sobre la cual existe un significativo corpus crítico, la narconovela mexicana ha sido poco examinada hasta la fecha, un hecho que sorprende si se compara con la abundancia que existe de la obra crítica sobre los narcocorridos mexicanos” (“In contrast to the sicaresca colombiana [fiction featuring *sicarios*, or assassins], of which there is a significant critical corpus, the Mexican narconovela has to date been understudied, a fact that is surprising when compared to the abundance of critical studies on Mexican narcocorridos” [FN1 p. 7]).

¹¹ Theorizing the link between “narconarratives” and “state formations,” Herman Herlinghaus writes: “narconarratives designate a multiplicity of dramas expressed in antagonistic languages and articulated, in Latin America and along the hemispheric border, through fantasies that revolve around the depravity and deterritorialization of individual and communitarian life worlds caused by various factors.” “Among these factors,” Herlinghaus suggests, are “the deterioration of traditional, social, and democratic civic relationships, new scales in the mobility and spatial experience of common people, together with the drastic increase of urban informal economies, and the rise of the transnational narcotics economy appear as surface indicators” (4). Significantly, therefore, while “narconarratives” foreground “illicit global flows” they also recognize that any notion of “deterritorialization” and its relation to the state is “fantasy,” though not without tangible consequences. To clarify, the purchase of Herlinghaus’s insight is not that deterritorialization is incongruent with reality. The global flows which he identifies are an undeniable fact of modernity. Rather, it is the emphasis on how state formations, remain active and viable, rather than dissipate into inefficacy, in a postmodern context where spatiality tends to be divorced from the territorial.

¹² Wald writes: “Chalino has been dead for almost ten years, but his voice is still heard from Sinaloa to Los Angeles. Or at the very least what sounds like his voice. In the drug trafficking reginos of the west coast, the nineties were the decade of “*chalinitos*,” hundreds of young men tried to sing, dress, live and move like their idol” (85).

¹³ Sam Quiñones writes, “Chalino renewed the Mexican *corrido*... In Chalino’s hands, the *corrido* came to reflect the modern world. The *corrido* became the *narcocorrido*,” and crucially, “because of Chalino, Los Angeles, an American city, is now a center of redefinition for the most Mexican of musical idioms” (12). In this way, Sánchez’s *corridos* are not only a *norteño* but trans-border sound.

¹⁴ See <http://www.tijuana-airport.com/transportation.html>.

¹⁵ According to the University of Arizona’s Binational Migration Institute, “segmented border militarization has resulted in the funnel effect, or the redistribution of migratory flows into remote and dangerous areas such as southern Arizona” (11). The consequence of this militarization is a reduction in the population of those trying to cross the border. Data offered by the U.S. Border Patrol corroborates this account: In 2011, 375 people died crossing the border; 477 in 2012; and 445 in 2013 (“Southwest Border Deaths by Fiscal Year”).

Notes to Chapter Four

¹ Rafael Luévano comments on this process of naturalization in his account of “the culture of violence.” He states, “The culture of violence discourse reaffirms that we should understand feminicides and everyday violence as interrelated. . . The discourse acknowledges various factors

that impose structural and physical violence on the people of Juárez, and that these factors are so prevalent that civic life has assimilated violence to the point of making it a normative and acceptable course of action for the average citizen. In such a culture woman-killing is permitted” (47). If Juárez is apparently a space in which gendered violence is a matter of course, its uncontested narco-violence as a commonplace is now a required element in international news. María Socorro Tabuenca Córdoba, for instance, notes that Juárez is “a staple for local, national, and international media” given “the cyclical violence perpetuated by drug lords and members of organized crime, whose victims include drug traffickers as well as innocent bystanders” (83).

² This context is defined not only as one in which capital has mobility and labor does not. Rather, the use of militarization strategies to reduce and monitor human border crossing occurs at precisely the moment when black market products have carte blanche and are freely trafficked. As Peter Andreas writes, “the tightening of border controls has happened at a time and place otherwise defined by the relaxation of state controls and the *opening* of the border” (xv).

³ Maria Antònia Oliver-Rotger writes, “*Along the Border Lies* needs to be contextualized in the moments of highest border tensions in the United States during the 1990s. Although these tensions are also present today in the post 9/11 era, Flores’ novel is set in the mid-1990s, right after the fortification and militarization of the border in 1994 during Bill Clinton’s presidency and the almost simultaneous implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) (15).” Importantly, however, Oliver-Rotger also reads the Tijuana-San Diego divide as a “patrolled (post)colonial border,” and in this regard aligns with Paul Flores’s view of the border: “Flores has stated that he views the border as a (post)colonial space because most of the territories on the United States side of the border were occupied by this country in 1848 and came under its cultural and political dominance. For people of Mexican origin this political hegemony resulted in racial, cultural, economic and political grievances whose consequences are still in place today” (14).

⁴ According to Tony Payan, “The large cartels now ride the formal NAFTA economy. There are nearly 5 million semi-trucks that cross the U.S.-Mexico border every year. . . . Over time, the four large cartels have come to rely on trucking as the primary conveyor belt of illegal drugs across the border.” “Tons of marijuana, cocaine, heroin, and now methamphetamines,” adds Payan, “ride hidden in the millions of trucks that cross the border. These same millions of trucks also move the drugs on U.S. highways to the major metropolitan areas throughout the country” (34).

⁵ In a profile titled “Family Tree: The Hanks,” Lowell Bergman writes, “Carlos Hank Gonzales is considered to be one of the most powerful billionaires/politicians in Mexico.” “He has two sons,” notes Bergman, named “Jorge Hank Rhon and Carlos Hank Rohn.” Additionally, “In the early ’80’s Jorge Hank Rhon assumed local control of the family’s Agua Caliente Racetrack in Tijuana and related off track betting locations throughout northern Mexico. Once the preserve of a Sicilian-American with close ties to the Mafia, the Hank family took over the once lucrative franchise in the late 1970’s.” However, the Rhon family’s ties to organized crime are apparently more than urban legend. Bergman states, “With the rise of the Arellano-Felix Organization in Tijuana, it is widely believed that Jorge Hank provides money laundering facilities for the cartel.” In fact, this link between the Rhon family, specifically Jorge Hank, and drug trafficking, was all but confirmed when a report by the National Drug Intelligence Center was leaked, and subsequently quoted, in both Mexican and U.S. newspapers. For instance, in a May 31, 1999 article for *El Financiero*, Dolia Estévez quotes the report as stating, “These individuals oversee a large number of people and operations that help the drug trafficking organizations in Mexico to

launder money and transport big loads of drugs into the United States.” Thus, while the Rhon family has yet to be convicted in either U.S. or Mexican courts, public discourse remains unequivocal about the family’s corruption. See also “Prominent Mexican Family Viewed as Threat to U.S.” by Douglas Farah.

⁶ In using the term “coloniality,” the chapter refers to material processes, such as the above-listed examples, as well as to the way in which these processes are imbricated by specific modes of knowledge. As Walter Mignolo writes, the “coloniality of power” is marked by “an energy and a machinery to transform differences into values.” He adds, “[i]f racism is the matrix that permeates every domain of the imaginary of the modern/colonial world system, ‘Occidentalism’ is the overarching metaphor around which colonial differences have been articulated and rearticulated through the changing hands in the history of capitalism (Arrighi 1994) and the changing ideologies motivated by imperial conflicts. The emergence of new areas of colonization that had to be articulated within the conflictive memory of the system” (13, 14).

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