Border Poetics De-limited

Edited by

Johan Schimanski and Stephen Wolfe

Wehrhahn Verlag

Gedruckt mit Unterstützung der Humanistischen Fakultät
der Universität Tromsø.

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über http://dnb.ddb.de abrufbar.

1. Auflage 2007
Wehrhahn Verlag
www.wehrhahn-verlag.de
Gesetzt und gestaltet durch den Verlag
Cover photo of Sculpture by Sabine Müller-Funk
Druck und Bindung: Prisma Verlagsdruckerei, Saarbrücken

ISSN 1863–8392
ISBN 978–3– 86525–030–8

Contents

Johan Schimanski and Stephen Wolfe
Entry Points: An Introduction 9

David Newman
The Lines that Continue to Separate Us:
Borders in Our "Borderless" World 27

I. ÆSTHETICS

Rüdiger Görner
Notes on the Culture of Borders 59

Wolfgang Müller-Funk
Space and Border: Simmel, Waldenfels, Musil 75

Svend Erik Larsen
Boundaries: Ontology, Methods and Analysis 97

II. MEDIA

Debra A. Castillo
Borders, Identities, Objects 115

Reinhold Görling
Topology of Borders in Turkish-German Cinema 149

Lene Johannessen
De-Symbolization and the Cultural Act 163

III. ZONES

Malene Vest Hansen
Public Places–Private Spaces: Site-Specific Blurring of Boundaries in Sophie Calle's Jerusalem Projects 177

Jane Aaron
Border Blues: Representing the Welsh Borders in Twentieth-Century Anglophone Literature 199

IV. READING

Johan Schimanski and Stephen Wolfe
Imperial Tides: A Border Poetics Reading of *Heart of Darkness* 217

Index 235

Contributors 253

Debra A. Castillo

Borders, Identities, Objects

> Si no puedo vivir en Puerto Rico, porque allí no hay vida buena para mí, me lo traigo poco a poco. En este viaje traigo cuatro jueyes de Vacía Talega. En el anterior un gallo castrado. En el próximo traeré cuanto disco grabó el artista Cortijo. [If I can't live in Puerto Rico, because there is no good life for me there, I'll bring it little by little. On this trip I'm bringing four crabs from Vacía Talega. On the last, a castrated cock. On the next, I'll bring all the disks recorded by the singer Cortijo.]
>
> –Luis Rafael Sánchez, *La guagua aérea* (17)

Sieve/Song

As Jorge Durand and Douglas Massey note,

> when it comes to migration [...] the event, the move, requires the crossing of an intangible line that exists mainly on a map and is often invisible in space [...] In the final analysis, drawing a line and specifying under what circumstances crossing it is meaningful are arbitrary exercises and are therefore subject to a host of purposeful manipulations. (2)

While some border crossings are more fraught with meaning than others, Durand and Massey's insight is an excellent one–we create and impose meaning upon the borderline precisely because of its arbitrariness, and these various and frequently incompatible manipulations of meaning are most powerful when they touch upon that contingency, even if they shy away from interrogating it. Some exercises may be banal, others more profound. In this study I want to look at examples drawn from US Latino cultures where the experience of crossing that arbitrary line into the United States has a profound effect. Whether the individual defines him/herself as exile, migrant, immigrant, transnational, or even a multi-generational citizen, in the stories I will be sharing here, the crossing of that arbitrary line, coming to the US, marks and shapes the individual in important ways, sometimes traumatic, generally nostalgic, often (but not always) accompanied by mourning. Most signally, it indexes

a stripping and condensation of identity compensated in a condensation of affect around a few highly charged cultural remnants.[1]

Yet the distinction defined through a traversal of international boundaries is not enough in itself. A more fine-grained analysis would have to show that within the experiences of migration there are dramatic differences not only by national origin, but by gender. For instance, recent studies have shown that national-origin based social clubs in the US are dominated by men, while immigrant women generally seem to have different priorities (Jones Correa, Smith, Goldring). Likewise, other scholars have noticed that circularly migrating men are also more likely than women to orient their lives around status-giving hometown organizations, at least in Mexico, concerning themselves deeply with local politics, and contributing in important ways to public works in their country of origin (Goldring, Smith). More work is needed to parse out these findings, which suggest that men by-and-large find immigration more culturally challenging than women.

González Viaña's story, "El libro de Porfirio", the first story in his collection, *Los sueños de América*, is a familiar one, and powerful because it speaks so eloquently to the most familiar version of this profound subjective experience of dislocation and potential restitution, exploring the issue of cultural loss and mourning in circumstances that, even when freely chosen, can only be lived as traumatic. It offers, thus, a kind of ur-narrative about immigration. González Viaña's narrator comments about a family of undocumented recent immigrants to the United States:

1 Of course, not all Latinos are recent immigrants, and a nontrivial percentage of them outdate their Caucasian counterparts in the US by several hundred years. Nevertheless, the political and social discourse around la latinidad tends to focus on migration of undocumented workers, especially from Mexico (the ancestral home of over 60% of Latinos in the US), and secondarily from the Caribbean and other Latin American countries. The movement of people across the border, then, very much conditions the dominant understanding of Latino identity, and becomes, therefore, a significant factor in the Latino' self-presentation, as measured against this engrained stereotype. The Latino is overwhelmingly interpellated as immigrant, and the history of one's migration, or the explanation of why one is not an immigrant, serves as the point of departure for all too many social exchanges.

> Lo importante es saber cómo fue que a los Espino se les ocurrió entrar a este país cargando con un burro cuando todos sabemos cuánto pesan el miedo y la pobreza que traemos del otro lado. La verdad es que todos hubierámos querido traer el burro, la casa, el reloj público, la cantina y los amigos, pero venir a este país es como morirse, y hay que traer solamente lo que se tiene puesto, además de las esperanzas y las penas. (12)
>
> [What is important to know is how the Espinos got the idea of loading themselves down with a donkey when they entered this country, when we all know how much the fear and poverty we bring from the other side weigh. The truth is we would all have liked (?) to bring our donkey, house, public clock, bar, and friends, but coming to this country is like dying, and one can only bring what one has on, along with hopes and grief.]

In this way, González Viaña focuses on the psychological context of geographic dislocation, the efforts to restore psychic wholeness, and the consequences for social organization.

This fable of the little donkey's improbable arrival and doings in the US allegorizes the costs of immigration by highlighting both the intangible and the material elements of culture that the family brings with them to the new country, reminding the reader of the fundamental challenge to identity posed by displacement across a seemingly arbitrary line. This is a special kind of mourning, what Ricardo Ainslie calls "cultural mourning", which involves working through not only the loss of loved individuals, but also familiar cultural forms. Just as significant objects provide a symbolic bridge when one mourns a deceased person, so too restitutive attempts to establish/maintain such object/bridges with the homeland of origin ease the immigrant in the perpetual process of mourning.

Yet, objectively speaking, this highly resonant story is not entirely accurate. It relies for its impact on a dominant US cultural frame of reference, within which, generally speaking, the immigrant's dual loyalties and dual identity are supposed to gradually wither away with time in the US, until such extra-territorial yearnings fade in succeeding generations and all that is left is the memory of loss. US history, however, has on the one hand underplayed or ignored the other, equally valid story, that of the very high percentage of immigrants to the US who have always returned to their countries of origin, either permanently, as was often the case with European immigrants as well during the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries, or periodically, as is frequently the situation in contemporary times. With Latinos, whose countries of origin are more geographically contiguous, the high incidence of return

migration, and retention of a dual frame of reference within US, shape what from the dominant culture perspective is perceived as a worrisome incomplete assimilation by "resident aliens" who have not made a full commitment to this country. Just as migrants move back and forth across borders, sometimes maintaining bi-national households and social relations, a fuller understanding of US Latino culture would also take into account continuing exchanges of people, material objects, cultural values. And, of course, on the other hand, the familiar story of assimilation leaves out of the equation unstated assumptions about ethnicity, by which Latinos are always already defined by immigration, even when they can trace a direct line of descent for four hundred years in what is now US territory.

The buzz about the Latino Boom in the USA has been active at least since the mid 1990s, when Latinos overtook African Americans as the largest minority in New York City and when California became a majority-minority state. It was further consolidated after the 2000 census, when it became clear that with over 40 million people, Latinos are now the second largest ethnic group (after non-Hispanic Caucasians) in the country, and that the United States is poised to become in the near future the second largest Spanish speaking country in the world, after Mexico. Concern, as evidenced by US "Homeland Security" activities and organized vigilante groups on the one hand, and, conversely, the celebration of marketing opportunities on the other, have maintained a high profile for Latinos in the popular media.

Once again, contradictions abound. Xenophobia seems to be reaching panic proportions; but at the same time, the popular media outlets have been rapidly developing a diverse set of offerings for this growing demographic: access to Latin American cable stations that feature programming from countries of origin; growth of other stations, like the US-based NBC affiliate Telemundo, that emphasize development of original Spanish-language programming for the US market, as well as their popular MTV-like spin-off network, "Mun2", with its "lifestyle" programming (music, videogames, interviews, comedy) targeted to the bicultural, bilingual 18-34 year old Latino youth. And, of course, there is a proliferation of internet companies offering foodstuffs and authentic national craft items for sale at modest prices to homesick immigrants.

Mike Davis would add:

> the idea of the Latino is quite fertile precisely because it is problematic. It complicates how Latin Americans think of themselves now that constant migration between American border zones makes it hard to demarcate between Latinos and Latin America [...]. Conversely, the influx of Latin Americans to the United States affects historical Latino groups, inching them closer to national roots [...] (xv)

As recent immigrants spread out from traditional population centres to new homes in middle America, bringing their families or intermarrying with people from other ethnicities, settling in towns with lower densities of fellow Latinos, the always slippery relation between displacement and retention of coherent cultural projects becomes richer, more complicated, more strained.

Since the September 11, 2001 attack, both the number of, and consciousness about, undocumented immigrants from Latin America in the US has grown dramatically. Unfortunately, the US government and many private citizens have engaged in a low-intensity border war with the intention of sealing US borders, intensifying the aggression with which the issue of undocumented migration continues to be demonized. Nevertheless, as serious studies like the Mexican Migration Project (MMP) find, these efforts have been fundamentally flawed, and rely on a popular misunderstanding of the nature of migration from Latin America to the US, as well as ignorance about the typical migrant's aspirations and intentions. Mexico is not a poor country, these authors argue, but rather one of the richest in the developing world, and the Mexican migrant has traditionally come to the US with very specific goals and for short stays (as suggested by the fact that historically the vast majority of migrant workers have been men, who leave families and dependents in Mexico, and confirmed by MMP studies of families in Mexico): "Left to their own devices, most Mexican immigrants would work in the United States only sporadically and for limited periods of time. [...] [Until recently] 85 percent of undocumented entries were offset by departures" (6). The attempt to close US borders since the attack on Washington and New York has, they find, "proved worse than a failure; it has achieved counterproductive outcomes in virtually every instance." Paradoxically, then, because of the current difficulty and danger of crossing into the US, workers are reluctant to follow their former seasonal and circular patterns, transforming what used to be "a circular movement of workers affecting three states into a national population of settled dependents scattered throughout the country. [...] It has not deterred Mexican immigrants from coming to the United States, but it has kept them from going home" (12-13). It can be argued, then, that the cultural investments and alliances of US Latinos are currently in a state of considerable flux, as more and more

migrants come to the US with great difficulty and expense, in conditions ironically far closer to the familiar image captured in the story of the illegal immigrant donkey and his culturally-severed family, than ever previously in US history.

Unsurprisingly, the number of green card marriages (marriages of convenience with citizens or permanent residents for the purpose of obtaining legal residence) has also dramatically increased (Durand and Massey 90), suggesting that within a few years we will also be observing dramatic changes in family structure as new social units struggle with combined ethnicities and evolving life plans. Arjun Appadurai's comment that "as groups migrate, regroup in new locations, reconstruct their histories, and reconfigure their ethnic 'projects' the *ethno* in ethnography takes on a slippery, nonlocalized quality" ("Global" 191) has never seemed more pertinent or more prescient than in today's USA.

In the new land, moreover, difference and distance is often condensed by the question "where are you from?" The question, and the fact of its being asked, and asked persistently, even in its most innocuous form assumes that the interlocutor's roots are in a (singular) place, the home(land), the land that is not this land, and that identification of that place will tell us something important about the person. Yet, while the answer to this question is often expected in terms of reference to a nation-state, e.g., "I'm from Mexico", neither the stereotypical question nor the talismanic answer have any real revelatory power about the individual. Partly, as Robert Smith has found, national origin is not always an adequate category for identity claims: "This is reflected in the Mexican word *oriundo*, an affective word that describes someone from a particular place that can be the locality or even the state, but never the nation, of origin" (202).

A parallel conversation is set up by the Spanish version of the question. In *La guagua aérea*, Luis Rafael Sánchez's classic text on how migratory patterns affect parameters of Puerto Rican identity, "¿de dónde es usted?" figures prominently. A fellow passenger initiates a conversation with the narrator with this question and, after clarifying for her that he is from the city of Humacao, the narrator asks the same question of his neighbor:

> Me contesta–*De Puerto Rico.* Lo que me obliga a decirle, razonablemente espiritista–*Eso lo ve hasta un ciego.* Como me insatisface la malicia inocente que le abunda el mirar... anado [...] *Pero, ¿de qué pueblo de Puerto Rico?* Con una naturalidad que asusta, equivalente la sonrisa a la más triunfal de las marchas, la vecina del asiento me contesta–*De Nueva York.* (21)

> [She answers–*From Puerto Rico.* Which obliges me to tell her, reasonably spirited–*A blind man can see that.* Since I'm dissatisfied by the innocent maliciousness of her gaze, I add–*But from what town in Puerto Rico?* With a terrifying naturalness, her smile equivalent to the most triumphal march, the woman in the neighbouring seat answers me–*From New York.]*

Sánchez's humorous exchange plays on expectations about homologies of language, culture, and the proper place of origin. The woman's "triumph", her ability to surprise the native Puerto Rican with an unexpected response, reminds the reader that the San Juan-New York "airbus" flies both ways, expanding the understanding of the Puerto Rican community.

To some extent, then, the tangle of affects suggested by origin-home remain untouched by the category of national origin, even when national origin is the first and most expected response. What the question does highlight for us, thus, is not any intrinsic relation to the state, but rather how places get produced with reference to relations of like and not-like. "¿De dónde es usted?" in Sánchez's text is a conversational gambit, meant to open a dialogue among co-nationals sharing a common experience of dislocation and circular migration. In contrast, the familiar query, "Where are you from?" says most importantly, "you are not from here", often implicitly suggesting a coda: "unlike me". "Unlike me" in two senses: "you are unlike me, sparking the question", and "unlike me, you are not from here". At the same time, in the best of circumstances, the question is also an invitation to narration, to tell the story of difference, of the not-here, the not-us. If only because immigrants are so frequently defined by this kind of interpellation into necessarily transnational social fields, it can be no surprise that they actively maintain and (re)construct ties to place of origin even after making a commitment to settle in the US. Furthermore, the calling into that transnational identity is supported and buttressed by other affectual qualities for the immigrant. As is the case with the social clubs, oftentimes, the appeal to the not-here offers a positive value that may include considerations of social status, relative hierarchy, and powerful alternative constructions of ethnicity.

For Michel de Certeau "an economy of the proper place" rules the practices of everyday life; yet, he asks, what happens when the link between practice and place is disrupted, as is so often the case in our contemporary societies (30). While his main focus is the contrast between traditional and technocratic societies, his question holds even greater force for the immigrant, whose condition is by definition an ambivalent one, defined by the border that s/he

has crossed, a non-place, a political line in the sand. New immigrants from Latin America, even if they were to wish it, are seldom welcomed unquestioningly into the culture defined by third (as well as earlier and later) generation Caucasians. Thus, the experience is a defining one; the immigrant in the new country is never quite in his/her proper place. The original place recedes in time and space; nevertheless, in the new space the immigrant is inherently an outsider, and for the immigrant qua immigrant, the new homeland can never quite become the proper place, the place that grounds cultural practice–even when, as is the case with the United States, the country defines itself fundamentally as a nation of immigrants. Identity derives from a particular kind of shared cultural remembering: unquestioned everyday practices, language and foodways that are valued and have powerful affective links.

In his 1994 article, "Dialogical Strategies, Monolingual Goals", Bruce-Novoa identifies a crucial paradox in the construction of ethnicity in the United States. In the process of adaptation to the US, he suggests, the immigrant struggles mightily to maintain contact with the originating nation, through increasingly ritualized interaction with elements of "the now distant 'authentic culture'": food, language, material objects, social customs, festivals. Likewise, Appadurai speaks of the markets created by immigrants' need for continuous contact with the homeland, and finds that "these invented homelands, which constitute the mediascapes of deterritorialized groups, can often become sufficiently fantastic that they provide the material for new ideoscapes" (*Modernity* 38). Both scholars point to a similar phenomenon, coming from the same uprootedness; in the one case, the fetishization of objects and customs from the place of origin; in the other, the acquisition of new material objects to feed the need for connection even as the consumers of these objects are incorporated into an increasingly strange/estranged land- and ideoscape. These material objects stand in for more abstract qualities, as is the emblematic case of the donkey Porfirio in González Viaña's fable. Increasingly, sociologists and other culture studies scholars have commented on this deep-seated human need for concrete reminders that anchor them in the place of origin.

Even in the most terrifying cases, such as those studied by David Parkin, in which people flee from their homes at a moment's notice, and in fear of genocide, they frequently bring with them material objects that can seem puzzling to the outsider:

> Even under these conditions of immediate flight or departure, people do, if they can, seek minimal reminders of who they are and where they come from. Alongside the items to sell or use in defence en route, and the food, farming tools, mattresses, blankets, medicines, protective amulets, and children carried on shoulders or running alongside, are sometimes the compressed family photos, letters, and personal effects of no utilitarian or market value. In rare instances these take precedence: thus, one man is reported as carrying nothing more than a bible [...] (313)

In extremity, in fear of their lives and with the probability of exile facing them, displaced people make radical choices to bring along not only what need, but what they can. These precious items continue to have value in the new homeland, but one might posit that they are valued in a different way, one that includes the qualities for which they were chosen, but also an additional significance as that which has survived to re-signify itself in a new territory.

Numerous questions suggest themselves. How does what is brought fit into the context/memory/mourning of what is left behind? How do these objects create bridges to those memories? What gets lost/erased in the new life? Parkin adds: "While art, artefacts, and ritual objects are conventionally located in predictable contexts of use, items taken under pressure and in crisis set up contexts less of use and more of selective remembering, forgetting, and envisioning" (304). These fiercely maintained and highly symbolic relations to specific cultural remnants define the ethnic identity as well as the individual's claim to cultural authenticity; they serve as codes for social interaction, and act as survival strategies to counteract perceived threats from outside. Likewise, these objects achieve a heightened value in the new nation, where they become metonyms of all that has been abandoned and all that must be preserved. Ironically, says Bruce-Novoa,

> The fact that [these cultural remnants] are remembered, practiced, or consumed with such intense need and pleasure as different from the surrounding society makes them no longer [authentic] national traits but US traits, their particular value and significance determined by this country and not the country of the group's origin. (228)

As Bruce-Novoa intuits, it is precisely their nature as isolated remnants, and their highly valorised status, their fetishized nature, that make them peculiarly an immigrant construction, and no longer unremarkable traits embedded in the immediacy of a rich home culture.

Inevitably, these culturally-linked objects give rise to stories about a culture now abstracted from the day-to-day present, a past nostalgically recalled, ineluctably distant despite the compression of time and space operative in

contemporary diasporic landscapes. These stories about home are also stories about displacement, stories that can only be told from a place other than that originary home. Says Barbara Bender: "the experience of place and landscape for those on the move work at many different levels, they shift with the particularities of time and place, and alter shape in accordance with individual biography" (79). In this way, ethnicity, identity, authenticity are closely tied together and tightly linked to specific understandings of space. And into the space are brought material objects from other times, other places: objects that create contiguities but also by their nature define the distance itself. Metaphorically tying the immigrant to the motherland, they are lifelines, umbilical cords: umbilical objects.

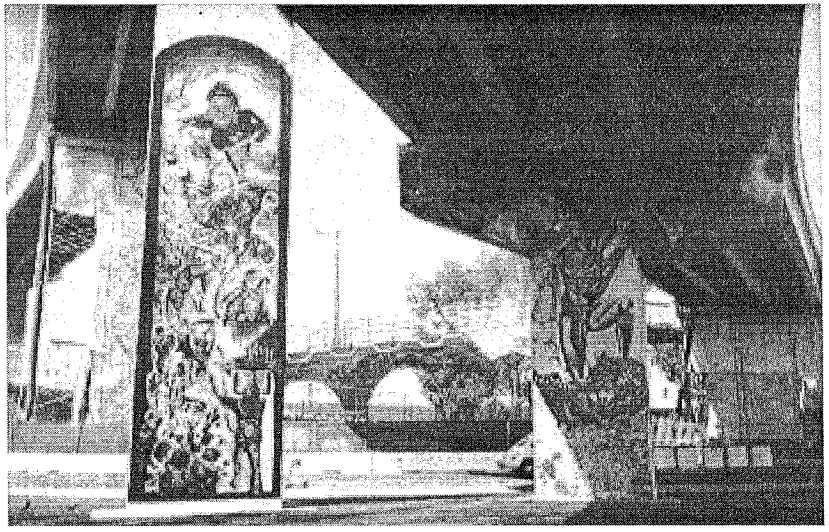
There is both pride and anxiety attached to them. Such objects are significant, as an ethnographer might say, "not because they were found [...] but by virtue of the manner in which they have been detached" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 387). They are scandalously removed from their "natural" setting, and yet in talking about them it is only by means of the relation to that originary location that they have value. While the stories around such objects seem to hark back to a reading of the past, they also remind us of anxieties about a Latino future, even now, when Latinos have become the largest minority in the United States and policy makers and businesses agree on the need to respond to this growing demographic.

Objects in general remind us of experiences, and they provoke stories, stories that in turn require an audience: orality is the essential glue for a community. Umbilical objects exist most fully in the narrations about them, and they are in some degree most significant as the occasion for story. They remind their owner of and move among other events and other spaces; they are reportable opportunities. They describe continuities and create beginnings. As Michel de Certeau says, "the story's first function is to authorize, or more exactly to *found*" (123). Story, he adds, is a spatial practice "whose essential narrative figures seem to be the *frontier* and the *bridge*" (125); furthermore, narratives "make the journey, before or during [and, we need to add, after] the time the feet perform it" (116). In the case of stories about umbilical objects, the narrative serves as a parable of difference, embedded in both a temporal and a spatial frame, and like the stories defined by the French scholar in his discussion of everyday life, they both stay at home and travel. They are narrations that insist upon the impossibility (and undesirability) of abandoning

the culture of origin and assuming another; they found, as de Certeau says, a story of origins in a particularly profound and poignant way, and serve as a counterforce to the fears of homogenization or of Americanization. Ambiguously, the narrative of the umbilical object involves seeking and finding, but also founding, regrounding the already found, embedding it in the context of a story about a journey and an arrival. It is also a bridge to the temporally receding past, crossing and recrossing an increasingly dangerous and distant borderline.

Later, significantly, de Certeau talks about storytelling as if it were a garden, a place where precious seedling relics grow just outside our door; he evokes the "'fragments' of narration planted around the obscure thresholds of our existence" (125). Transplanted, the story-objects mark out spaces, define and delimit. They can take many forms and meanings, from tiny private "pocadillas" (Taylor 48) to monumental public structures, from ephemeral to permanent. Thus, for example, one answer called into being by the questions, "Who are you?" and "Where are you from?" takes the concrete form of the "tagging" practices of young men in urban centres like Los Angeles and New York (see "Subway Outlaws" website for a rich visual and historical record pertaining to New York City). The tag is a micro-story of an individual and a social group, tied to a particular urban space, a challenge and a proclamation of identity. For Raúl Homero Villa, tagging has had a particular importance in circumstances where the social and spatial resources of the minoritized subject are limited and subject to extreme pressure. The tag creates its own novel regulation of space through local territorial economies of order, visually signalling mechanisms of control (64), the policing, as it were, of fragile cultural boundaries under attack.

In some sense, we can see that the same impulse that gives rise to the placas or graffiti tags at a microlevel, has been repeated in monumental form in the many murals in Latino barrios throughout the country; here illustrated by representative images from the internationally known Chicano Park in the Logan Heights (Barrio Logan) area of San Diego. Like the tags, which often responded to a fracturing of minority communities by public works and industrial projects (it is no coincidence that subway trains and warehouses have been frequent objects of tagging), Chicano Park took its impetus from a decade-long recovery project of mural painting that extended throughout the 1970s. After the Coronado bridge and its associated freeway and accesses cut



through the heart of the community in the 1960s, local artists like Salvador Torres, a longtime Logan resident, inspired the community with his artistic vision for re-establishing cultural pride in their bisected neighbourhood. As one explores the park today, we are also forced to confront, inevitably, that the bridge metaphor as a way of thinking immigration and storytelling needs further examination. In Chicano Park we can explore the bridge's underside as well as its passage, what it shades and what its towers interrupt or make possible. Then too, the Coronado bridge, like many modern bridge projects, is not a simple arch from point "A" to point "B", but a many-tentacled octopus of a structure. The deservedly famous body of 20-odd Chicano Park murals offers a model of locatedness and familiarity, creating landscapes that work on many different levels and different scales. They redefine the destruction caused by the freeway that cut through the Latino barrio, and turn an industrial wasteland into a park. Likewise, they reassert a continuity of history, culture, land, and water with Coronado Bay–"hasta la bahia" reads one of the murals decorating the columns of the bridge–and with a transnational understanding of their heritage and culture.

In this cultural recovery the artists involved in Chicano Park's murals articulate what Michel de Certeau might see as a story-telling determination,

which "organize[s] the play of changing relationships between places and spaces". In this understanding of narrative, the story moves back and forth between place (characterized by the being there of an inert body) and space (an operation which specifies spaces "by the actions of historical *subjects*"); de Certeau adds helpfully that "a movement always seems to condition the production of a space and to associate it with a history" (118). The story turns the dislocations of the border into a crossing, a bridge. It comes out of movement, and cuts across places as it defines them, but also produces that space, the space of crossing. Expanding upon this understanding of the production of story, we might add that the more external space seems to become homogenized and uniform (this is a borrowing from Appadurai), the more necessary it is, and the more valuable it becomes, to retain the links and stories about objects in one's intimate space. Homey micronarratives of personal artefacts, then, can be placed along a continuum with the monumental structures of Chicano Park.

Of course, cultural reproduction is a feature of all societies; what is new in today's transnational exchanges, says Appadurai, "is a world in which both points of departure and points of arrival are in cultural flux, and thus the search for steady points of reference [...] can be very difficult. It is in this atmosphere

that the invention of tradition (and of ethnicity, kinship, and other identity markers) can become slippery" (*Modernity* 44). Moreover, by definition these objects are discontinuous, fetishized fragments of a lost whole, as are the stories about them. Says de Certeau: "Objects and words have hollow places in which the past sleeps", and more pointedly: "'you *see*, here there used to be...,' but can no longer be seen" (108). The umbilical objects, and the stories around them, most poignantly signal gaps, hint at absences:

> When I think of home I do not think of the expensive commodities I have bought but of the objects I associate with my mother and my father, my brothers and sisters, valued experiences and activities. [...] Particular objects and events become the focus of contemplative memory, and hence a generator of a sense of love. Many homes become private museums as if to guard against the rapid changes that one cannot control. How can the singing of a particular song or the playing of a piece of music have such an emotional charge? I play a tape of 'La Paloma.' Why am I in tears? (Sarup 94)

Sarup's micronarrative here is highly suggestive: who will understand the embedded cultural context of the fragmentary story embedded in his reference to "La Paloma?" Who will share–and who will scoff–at the nostalgia suggested by tears? The gesture is performative, regulatory, sustaining. The points of departure and the points of arrival are both always and necessarily in flux, so the invention and narration of tradition may be insecure, slippery. How many times, for example, have we seen lovingly retained customs that become hypertrophied in the US when they cease to exist or have meaning in the country of origin? De Certeau warns: "Stories about places are makeshift things. They are composed of the world's debris. [...] The surface of this order is everywhere punched and torn open by ellipses, drifts, and leaks of meaning; it is a sieve order" (107).

It is this near oxymoronic juxtaposition of sieve and story that helps focus the mechanisms of this process: an impulse to restore a lost (imagined) completeness, all the more urgent because that completeness is only ever imagined, only ever made whole in nostalgic memory. And yet, of course, nostalgia is by definition defined by temporal and spatial distance, by loss, by the impossible wholeness that can only be approximated by the inadequate (sieve) story. Sieve and bridge, then, serve as the two central–and contrapuntal–metaphors for the immigration tale. Wherever spans are thrown across temporal and geographic divides, there too the sieve comes into play.

"La Paloma", like Porfirio the donkey, is a sign of difference embedded in a temporal frame and referencing a beloved, other space, the home behind the home. Tears reference what has been produced by contact, the homing desire that grounds itself in the concrete representation of a cultural practice, but cannot reach home. This desire can only express itself performatively, by drawing attention to its gaps and holes, its sieve-like quality. The story itself, then, is indexical, collage-like, built of fragments. Likewise, it is wholly unsurprising, in this context, that so many of the printed self-narratives of Latinos have this quality of short tales strung together, what Norma Cantú calls a "collage imaginario" [imaginary collage] (xvii). For his part, Sarup indexes the impossibility of abandoning the native culture, but also the insurmountable distance that makes it inaccessible despite modern facility of travel to almost any point on the globe. With "La Paloma" the immigrant is not so much looking for a lost object as for a retrospectively ideal other place and retrospectively ideal other self, neither of which objectively ever existed, but are incessantly yearned for, such that the song stands for the place and the place stands for this impossible other self. In Sarup's tears, the reader of his story is reminded with a profound poignancy about the illusory quality of origin-tales, and also the narrator's fear of homogenization, of Americanization (which in any case is always forbidden).

Enormous structural significance accrues to minutiae. A repository of both sentiment and knowledge, the umbilical object carries the burden of inscribing important aspects of self and personhood. Parkin describes such material culture elements as having the quality of "templates" that "may later re-articulate the shifting boundaries of a socio-cultural identity" (313), and says later: "let us call this reversible objectification. In practice reversible and irreversible objectification reflect the ambivalent power of memories to evoke either pre-traumatic hope and life or post-traumatic morbidity unresolved by mourning" (315). A photograph, a memento, a song serves as a reminder of the homeland, testifies to the integrity of a distant and beloved social system; but also in its isolation reminds the immigrant of his/her susceptibility to the vagaries of disconnected memories, the vulnerability of the reconstructed cultural template and the potential loss of valued knowledge. It is honoured as a locus for this affective memory, and perhaps sometimes dreaded in the anticipatory mourning of its irrecoverable loss. When the new culture oppresses the immigrant with its seeming claims for homogeneity and assimilation,

umbilical objects remake the space of home(land) and certify a continuous link to another space even more densely charged with signification.

Barbara Bender asks a series of questions about landscapes and people in motion that can equally apply to the stories of arrival and return: "who does the traveling? Who is left behind? Who is/are encountered? Who tells the stories? Who gets to hear the tale?" (84), and we might add–at what temporal and spatial remove? There are stories we tell about and for ourselves, stories about ourselves for others like or unlike us, stories others tell about us. Trinh Minh-ha says that for the immigrant, "identity is a product of articulation. It lies at the intersection of dwelling and traveling and is a claim of continuity within discontinuity" (14). Latinos, especially the undocumented immigrant Latinos, face exclusion and marginality in the US, the accusation of not belonging, the threat of deportation. To retain links with homeland allows for the support of mutually intelligible meaning systems where stories make sense. Yet, stories about self told to reinforce identity, eventually tend to slip and shift ground. Appadurai adduces a "new role for imagination in social life [...] imagination as a social practice", by which he means imagination

> as a form of work (in the sense of both labor and culturally organized practice), and a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility. [...] The imagination is central to all forms of agency, is itself a social fact, and is the key component of the new global order. (*Modernity* 31)

This discussion has evoked three examples thus far: an allegorical donkey, a taped song, a set of well-known murals. They appeal to a range of circumstances and stories that extend from exile to complicated negotiations of transnational identities. They hint at complex relations, more intertwined and slippery than existing literature credits. Told within the shadow of an at least partially permeable border, these stories are told both here and there, by both men and women. And stories, like objects, cross the border to gain heightened significance; they are joined by new objects from later trips or visits from family and friends. The stories arise in the first place out of contact and mixture, even unacknowledged mixture. Something is always produced, and there is always a remainder that needs to be accounted for, regulated, but that must be unaccountable to either (singular) culture's meaning systems. In brief: the object will always be allusive, will always encode both a surplus of meanings that can never be fully revealed, along with a lack of objective signification that requires the storyteller to place it in a context of cultural

identity. The storyteller, then, becomes an autoethnographer, who has a privileged relation to what may be an otherwise opaque object, and in turn, to memory and to knowledge: a material object and its complementary tale: sieve and story: sieve story.

For the teller, the value is not so much in the object, as in the affect, while for the audience it is the storytelling itself that creates value. In some sense it raises the same question asked by Kirshenblatt-Gimblett with reference to ethnographic displays in museums: "why ask the museum visitor to look closely at something whose value lies somewhere other than its appearance?" (386). The ethnographic object's most important function is, she suggests, a metonymic one; it "invites mimetic evocations of what was left behind" (389). Because its appearance is so often unprepossessing, it "needs to be rescued from triviality" (390) and turned into "an episode in an amazing story waiting to be retold" (392). As we have seen, the object anchors realities and identities in flux. Because of this, the object serves to hypostatize narrative identity. It can become a subtle fetish pointing to its own impossibility: a simultaneous loss and overdetermination of meaning.

Appadurai talks about "nostalgia without memory" in immigrant populations, what he calls "looking back on a world they have never lost" (*Modernity* 30). The intensity of nostalgia seems related to a desire for authenticity and a sense that there is a blockage in the current ability to form and retain a valued identity. In this sense, as Appadurai hints, nostalgia is always ideological, since it creates a longing that does not participate in present lived experience, and cannot be satisfied. Khatibi believes that this nostalgia for a lost space is not just a cry for lost past, but also a trace of trauma (9). Today's reality, he would argue, cannot sustain memory. This observation suggests that subjectivity may be defined by a *belated* recognition; that Latino group identity might have something to do with a shared perception of trauma, leading to nostalgia, leading to a frustrated/ing belatedness with respect to identity. To the degree that experience is shaped by trauma/nostalgia/belatedness, we might expect to see a retrospective poisoning of aspects of the narrative (past or present), and something that Freud might call an unresolved mourning. In other words, the immigrant uses the object as a way to reference not so much an ideal other space, but an idealized other self that may never have existed, but is always yearned for.

Authentic/Inauthentic

There are certain threads we might expect to find in these sieve stories about these culture-linked objects, such as their tendency to focus on certain spaces and experiences, and while all the senses are engaged–sight, hearing, smell, taste, tactility–overwhelmingly in these accounts their authors privilege the tactile, material item, pointing to a primacy of vision over the other senses. These umbilical objects offer a certain kind of authentification of the self in displaced circumstances, but curiously enough, also take it away; that is to say, the object per se authenticates one's past, but also mourns the inauthenticity of the present, and the object's (and the individual's) own inauthenticity in an estranged setting.

Concretely, such objects may range from the impoverished made-for-tourists souvenirs revalued in the immigrant's home for their evocative power–inauthenticity in strange conversation with the authentic–to ordinary household items co-opted for a home altar: authenticity willed into existence and assured in a potent spiritual amplification. In her study of souvenirs, Susan Stewart suggests a series of qualities she associates with these objects that seem useful to reproduce here. The souvenir, according to Stewart:

1 "will exist as a sample of the now-distanced experience, and experience which the object can only evoke and resonate to and can never entirely recoup";
2 "must remain impoverished and partial so that it can be supplemented by a narrative discourse which articulates the play of desire";
3 "displaces the point of authenticity as it itself becomes the point of origin for [a] narrative of interiority and authenticity"(136);
4 is only of interest to the interlocutor to the degree we are drawn into the story and included in the relationship with the object (137);
5 "moves history into private time. [...] The double function of the souvenir is to authenticate a past or otherwise remote experience and, at the same time, to discredit the present" (138-39);
6 "the object is estranged from its context [...] in order to serve as a trace of it, but it must also be restored through narrative and/or reverie" (149-50).

Stewart's list of qualities is highly resonant with the discussion traced to this point, and helps us think of the relation of temporal and spatial distance to memory and knowledge construction as ways of bridging these gaps through narrative.

But is such distance, and the need to bridge it, always traumatic? The language of de Certeau, Khatibi, and the other scholars and examples cited thus far suggest that it is. Stewart's work too, relies heavily on a rhetoric of loss that can never entirely be compensated. Her text is loaded with phrases like: "never entirely recoup"; "must remain impoverished and partial"; "displaces the point of authenticity"; "The double function of the souvenir is to authenticate a past [...] and, at the same time, to discredit the present"; "the object is estranged from its context [...] but it must also be restored." Very striking in these accounts is the assumption that the other (space, time) has a greater authenticity than the narrative point of departure, and that the homeland is associated with a certain fixed quality, while the new space projects itself as a disturbing and estranged site of flux. Only Appadurai, with his repeated warning about the "slipperiness" of modern diasporic existence, hints at the fluidity on both sides of the bridge, a fluidity evident to transnationals but that, nevertheless, the typical immigrant narrator refuses, or needs to defer. Therefore, it is not just that the individual lives in a state of inauthenticity, but to some degree requires it, brings it into being. It is a fundamental quality of the difference adduced in the negotiations between the perceived and real demands of the dominant culture and the immigrant's desire to maintain another cultural self.

In what follows, I want to focus on another category of responses, where authenticity is for one reason or another unstable. Such is the case with heirloom objects (unique objects, handed down systematically in families). As the name suggests, these are objects that may or may not have an intrinsic value in themselves, but their value to the heir is far greater than the market value. They are important because of the stories told about them that confirm a comforting genealogical continuity, and they gain value from temporal distance. Yet, these stories, because they are orally transmitted, often become garbled over time. It is fascinating, thus, that the very object that assures continuity over time may also serve as a point of contention for competing narratives, destabilizing itself. Its stubborn quiddity defies us, even as it issues a call for insertion into a meaningful narrative structure.

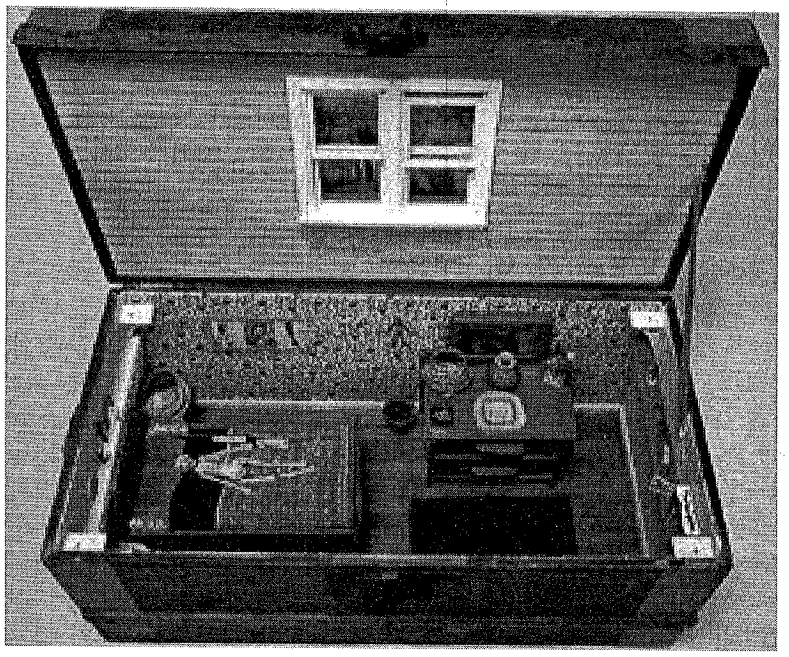
In her autoethnography, *Canícula*, Norma Cantú uses as her framing device a set of pictures of her family members, which she has pulled from their obscure storage in shoe boxes tied with shoestrings;

> la mujer Nena y su madre sacan las cajas, desatan las cintas amarillas que fueron blancas y reviven los recuerdos. [...] Las más jóvenes no recuerdan las historias, solo recuerdan imagines. [...] La madre rellena lagunas, historias de más antes, historias olvidadas, historias cambiadas por el tiempo y la memoria. (xxi)
>
> [The woman Nena and her mother take out the boxes, untie the yellow strings that once were white, and relive the memories [...]. The youngest women don't remember the stories, only the images. [...] Their mother fills in holes, stories from long ago, forgotten stories, stories changed by time and memory.]

In Cantú's account, the photographs are important, and they provoke a certain nostalgia, but it is a nostalgia without trauma. The mother and her daughters gather around the pictures; they serve as an occasion for intergenerational family solidarity. Less important in this account are the stories themselves, for what really matters in this context is the act of storytelling. Historically accurate or frankly fictive, there is no way of knowing, only a continuity of telling that gives pleasure as it recreates the family around the set of images.

A similar aesthetic prevails in Sheila and Sandra Ortiz Taylor's book, *Imaginary Parents: A Family Autobiography*, where the title already clearly warns the reader that the contents will defy genre expectations. This collaboration between a novelist (Sheila) and artist (Sandra), each highly recognized in her own right, inevitably highlights the creative appropriation of family history and the rearranging of found objects, such that text and visual art, book and object, intersect and reflect each other. In one section, entitled "Housekeeping", the narrator describes how her grandfather, "Mypapa", seven months after Mymama's death, goes to their shared chest, digging through its contents until he finds the object he wants, something hard bundled in one of several different cloths. He sets down the bundle on one of several different pieces of furniture, "and slowly unwraps it until the gun (the Colt given him by Pancho Villa; the German Luger his son David brought back from the war; the 38 he bought last week in a pawn shop on Riverside Drive) lies in a single bar of light from the window" (130). While it is not clear from the context of the writing if the narrator is describing a series of events or one, variously remembered event, or even why the grandfather has succumbed to an urge to look at this gun (or guns) at this moment (these moments) in time, Sandra's box, "Recuerdos para los abuelitos" (reproduced here) has an inscription that

describes the grandfather's suicide by shotgun seven months after his wife's death, seemingly reducing Sheila's multiplicity of narratives (all about pistols), into one true image (of a shotgun).



Each version supplements the other, and adds confusion to a story in which the basic outline is identical, but all of the details change. In the narrative account, the grandfather's suicide is forgotten in the three micronarratives, each with their respective combinatory variables, that surround it. In Sandra's box, the skeleton on the bed, absent the narrative inscription, opens up the viewer to an unresolvable host of potential interpretations. There is no particular reason, however, to privilege Sandra's box of miniatures featuring a tiny shotgun alongside a skeleton and contextualized by her inscription over Sheila's story with its unstable imagery. More importantly, the juxtaposition of both the artistic object and the textual evocation of a similar object reminds the reader/viewer of the primacy of the imagination/creativity over the supposedly authentic historical event. It is artistic integrity, whether in the arrangement

of the found objects or in the arrangement of words on a page, that has the greatest validity.

There are other contexts for parsing this micronarrative as well. The two girls are obsessed with western stereotypical cowgirl imagery, including toy guns. *Imaginary Parents* also includes Sheila's fragmentary story of a depressed and overwhelmed aunt who committed suicide with her husband Ted's gun (100-101), along with a reflection on that episode in family history in the box, "Winifred, Her Story". Sandra's box features a pistol and the unattributed Emily Dickinson quote "My Life had stood–a Loaded Gun", thus putting Dickinson's words in the aunt's mouth and creating a multiply layered, multicultured interpretation of the traumatic event.

While the interplay between the two kinds of artistic production is one of the more original features of this book, not every story has a parallel visual image. Throughout the text, one of the leitmotivs for Sheila's narrative that never appears in Sandra's boxes as reproduced in the text is that of the colourful and controversial early Twentieth Century Mexican Revolutionary leader, Pancho Villa, whose image has served, along with that of other historical figures like Emiliano Zapata and Che Guevara, as one of the staple iconic images for Chicano art. References abound in *Imaginary Parents*, ranging from the mysterious parenthetical allusion to Pancho Villa's Colt pistol in the "Housekeeping" episode cited above, to a romantic tale of the mother's encounter with the historic individual, to the comic travels of a six-foot tall straw Pancho Villa at the end of this narrative, whose purchase–by the elder sister in a market in Mexico–the narrator describes as somehow "necessary" (the matching horse was deemed optional) (252-53). Thus, one of the common threads of this narrative is that Pancho Villa keeps on showing up: in the apparently throw-away reference to his Colt revolver, as well as in a treasured heirloom of dubious provenance, and a kitschy made-for tourist item.

The heirloom story is one of the more fully developed, and involves Pancho Villa's whip. It is a romantic tale, worthy of the finest silent film, and reaches us shot through with holes and easily discernible historical inaccuracies. Family lore tells of the famous Revolutionary general sweeping down on the family's California ranch (but wait! Didn't the narrator already tell us the ranch had been lost an indefinitely long time ago?) for unspecified reasons, waiting around only long enough to receive enthusiastic greetings (while Pancho Villa did conduct a raid into Columbus, New Mexico on March 9, 1916,

neither he nor his army went as far west as California), to lift the narrator's future mother up onto his horse (since the war ended in 1920, the mother is probably at least 10 years too young to have taken part in this episode) and to leave behind the treasured artefacts (or artefact–this story only accounts for the whip. The gun that shows up a bit later in the tale trails only the most minimal of narratives). Here's the narrator's story, from "Dinner 1947":

> On the wall just to the side of my father's left ear hangs Pancho Villa's whip.
>
> My mother has told me the story. Pancho Villa and his men riding up to the family's ranch house. Pancho Villa leaning down from his saddle. My mother scooped up in his right arm and held inside the sweet odor of sweat and trail. [...] And when Pancho Villa sets down my mother, he lifts a long coiled whip of braided leather from his saddle horn and hands it to my grandfather, who accepts it in all honor. There it hangs on the wall, just to the side of my father's left ear. (91-2).

Both Cantú and the Taylors begin their stories with a specific material object (photograph, gun, whip) that serve as particularly evocative cultural referents. Instead of fetishizing them, however, they explore what it would mean to trace back their tale from an assumption of inauthenticity rather than a presumption of authenticity. That assumption, then, becomes the occasion for narrative and the invitation to creative supplementation. At the same time, a certain nostalgia passes through the acknowledged inauthenticity on its way to an authentic identity formation, one indexed through cultural hybridity. In contrast with Stewart's findings about the use of memorabilia, where nostalgia becomes the predominant feature of an ideological narrative linked to loss and utopian projections, here Cantú and the Taylors can wax playful. If nostalgia remains as a significant quality in these texts, it appears to function without trauma. Once again, Michel de Certeau's observations on everyday life are pertinent and useful: "the story privileges a 'logic of ambiguity' through accounts of interaction. It 'turns' the frontier into a crossing and the river into a bridge" (128); "what the map cuts up, stories cut across" (129).

In the Taylors' book, Pancho Villa is one of those story-figures who cuts across maps. It is, then, wholly appropriate that the book concludes with the description of the life-size statue the young women buy in Mexico. Like the made-for-tourists serapes, clay trees of life, velvet paintings of Revolutionary heroes, individualized bullfight posters, and the rest of such items, the six-foot straw Pancho Villa evokes a highly standardized system of exchange, and hints at the way stories can cross borders in both directions, following the trail of the artefact. In this economy, local artisans create folk art objects for the souvenir

market, taking into account their perceptions of the presumed tastes of their consumers. Examples might include artisans who laugh at the strange tastes of gringo tourists, who buy up heavy, breakable clay pots, when the artisans themselves prefer the more useful lightweight plastics for their personal use, or the Zapotec weavers who create elaborate rugs featuring Picasso designs in earth colours for international markets, while their own aesthetic taste leans toward the brightness and durability of modern synthetic dyes. Like the Pancho Villa statue, these objects in general can range from cheap souvenirs to costly artworks, may have display value, and they tend to have no use value even when they mimic the "authentic" objects they replace. And it doesn't really matter in any significant way.

What is striking is that these objects are in some sense always-already impoverished and inauthentic, and as such require an ironic distance between the owner and the item. In fact, the frivolity of the item, its lack of "aura" even when it is very expensive–perhaps especially so–may well be one of its conditions of possibility. Pancho Villa is in some sense necessary; he is purchased with real affection, yet the story around him has nothing to do with his historical exploits. More important is the comic element: the unwieldiness of trying to force a six-foot object into even such a vulgarly oversized car as their Buick Century, and the provocation he creates among the startled residents of the small towns they drive though, who are left with the fleeting image of a dead man's boots sticking out of the window of a car. Unlike Sarup's song, or González Viaña's metaphorical donkey, the straw Pancho Villa, like the tree of life and other objects the women pick up in the Mexican market, does not hold the promise of a cultural restoration. Instead, it marks a certain distance from the supposed home culture and operates more to discredit claims about authenticity and interiority than to substantiate them. The truly authentic/impossible object is beyond us, the narrator seems to be suggesting, however jokingly. It may never be accessible except as a trace in memory. Authentic experience is elusive, beyond the horizon, following the sight lines down a road as Pancho Villa's feet recede in the distance.

Yet, at the same time, the straw statue says something about taste and about the narrator's relation to the originating culture, and it is embedded in a narrative that includes a family heritage closely braided with Mexican history, a tale in which the statue occupies a continuum that includes the mother being lifted up onto Villa's horse, the grandfather receiving the honourable

gift of a whip, and that same grandfather killing himself with Villa's own Colt pistol. This braided and deeply layered story is quite distinct from the stories that would be told if the same or a similar item were to be the conversation point for a person from outside the culture who purchased it as a tourist. In a parallel manner, the story about the object takes into account the interlocutor, both in mutuality and in a desire to build bridges–or establish and police distances.

On an entirely different order of psychic investment are the sacred objects that build bridges between human and divine. While these, too, may be mass produced, and may include tourist items–images and statues of saints, depictions of the Virgin of Guadalupe or Our Lady of Carmen in all her forms, votive candles–they are not just material objects, but signifiers of a certain relation to the sacred, objects with a spiritual amplification. Thus, one process can be associated with the heirloom object, which begins with an authentic (if opaque) provenance, and which exerts a certain kind of field effect, bringing other objects into its orbit, and creating an authentic-inauthentic textured narrative. Another process follows the object used for sacred purposes, which gains authenticity in its associations with specific other objects, places, and practices. The heirloom begins as a singular marker of authenticity and ends up marking a sieve; an altar may well begin with a set of inauthentic items, that reaches authenticity by the temporality of its ordering process.

If, as noted earlier, male accounts of displacement are more likely than women's to find their way into travellers tales, and into active and ongoing participation in hometown associations, women's stories more often focus on the relation of things to their place in the private sphere. Altars in particular are associated with a female gendered form of domestic folk art, one that emphasizes the tenacity of dwelling, the sense of roots, over the anxieties of uprootedness, and it is the domestication of the sacred that will make my last point in this study.

It is within a sense of a female-gendered relation to space and self that we can appreciate Sheila Taylor's foreword to *Imaginary Parents:* "I say [this book] is an altar, an *ofrenda*. Small objects with big meaning set out in order. Food, photographs, flowers, toys, *recuerdos*, candles. *Pocadillas*, my grandmother would say. Scissors and paste, my father would say. *Bricolage*, my sister says" (xiii). This description's trilingual and multicultural reference point is crucial to the narrative that follows, which involves a loving reconstruction of a family

altar, but with the tools of a sophisticated and cosmopolitan artistic vision. "Small objects with big meaning", "pocadillas", "scissors and paste", "bricolage": Sheila begins with the flattest, most neutral description, in English, then riffles through a dazzling three-generational set of reinterpretations, making room for her father's dismissive definition, sandwiched between the sister's description which, because it is in French, inevitably attaches itself to the arena of high art, and recalling as well her grandmother's self-effacing modesty. Implicitly, that altar that is this book will include all these objects, all these interpretations, in a meaningful order, one that has a spiritual resonance.

The altar brings together past and present, through a grouping of objects, that is non-random, sophisticated, eclectic. In her book on altar making as a sustaining spiritual practice, Kay Turner emphasizes the importance of appearance and form as well as function in giving the woman's altar its evolving form. She writes: "collecting often begins in the childhood accumulation of potent objects, kept in special, sometimes secret, places. These altars take shape as resources for the imagination, as places set apart for the magical" (61). Altar-maker Aurora Treviño comments: "My husband is always after me to clean it up and throw things away. But I don't. This is *my place*. Oh, it's a mess, but I just keep adding things. And it makes me feel good to be here" (Turner 40-1). The range of altar-building practices runs the gamut from traditional Catholic religious structure to a spiritual practice that is much less saturated by such beliefs. Kay Turner's book includes numerous examples of women with highly adaptive appropriations of Christian and indigenous traditions; for instance, she tells us about Doña Cristina, whose home altar holds large bottles of water from the Rio Grande, which she "reads" for people to help identify safe crossing points into the US (Turner 138). In a far more traditionally religious vein, Chicana poet and essayist Pat Mora lovingly recreates her Abuela Elena's explanation of her problem with modern kitchens: "Where is the crucifix, I keep asking. Every good kitchen needs a small *altar*, candles we can light dedicating our work to the honor and glory of Our Lord" (71).

While her impulse is secular, rather than deriving from a strong religious basis, a similar sense of spiritual ease seems to underlie anthropologist Ruth Behar's discussion of altar construction in the Latino/Latina studies program office in her university:

> The only departure from everyday drabness comes on the Day of the Dead, when a Chicano artist we have invited sets up an altar complete with candles, candy skulls, and pink and yellow paper cut-outs of dancing skeletons.

> In the director's office I set up another altar in the corner in memory of my comadre Pancha, from Mexico. Her eyes, foggy from cooking tortillas on an outdoor fire, didn't see the car that killed her one morning as she ran across the highway to catch a bus [...]. I leave the altar up all year. As I sit talking to students or signing letters, I feel my comadre's smoke-filled eyes on me in that office with the gray metal desks and chairs, where the bookshelves have stayed empty. (233)

Behar's commentary juxtaposes the impermanence suggested by her empty shelves with the grounded life hinted at in her comadre's altar, the grey drabness of institutional life in the US with the colourful remembrance of the Day of the Dead. In her description of the two altars, the unnamed Chicano artist's altar in the institutional frame looks like a kitschy installation, invented less for spiritual reflection than as an exotic aesthetic object to help remind students and staff of Latino/a Studies otherness and ostentatiously police that boundary. This first impression is dispelled almost immediately by the description of the second altar, dedicated to a deceased friend, and imbued with her presence. For Behar, implicitly, the two altars–the Chicano artist's installation, her own private shrine–help mediate an otherwise impossible friction between US academic culture and US Latino/a practices. And if the altar-building practice is most associated with the syncretic Catholicism of mestizo Chicanos/as from the US southwest, Behar, the Cuban descendant of east European Jews, nevertheless finds it a meaningful and relevant as well. As with Amalia Mesa-Bains, a Chicana artist who creates site-specific altars in museums and community centres, these altars serve as "sites of redemptive memory", the "ultimate act of resistance against cultural domination" (Turner 76). Like Mesa-Bains, like Sheila and Sandra Ortiz Taylor, Behar too discovers in her two university altars instances of a sustaining and subversive tradition.

Latino/a altars take a vast number of different shapes and forms, but tend to colourful, even baroque excess–layering foods, flowers, small objects, candles, images in profuse and eclectic combinations.

For Sheila and Sandra Ortiz Taylor, their book is itself a kind of altar; unsurprisingly, within the book, both the artistic boxes and the literary text frequently call to mind these folk spiritual practices, linking home altar building to the custom of offering ex-votos for miraculous interventions, and to their grandmother's collection of small, inexpensive consumer objects: "My-mama's *pocadillas* are arranged along three long glass shelves. They are tiny and require frequent dusting. Mostly they are things people have brought her: pin

cushions and tiny tea pots that are really salt and pepper shakers. A ceramic seal balancing a ball on his nose. My mother says they all have a story". The story is entirely the point of these otherwise undistinguished items; e.g.: "I touch the glass dog, the one my Uncle David gave her when he was seven years old and had not yet blown off the two fingers on his left hand with a dynamite cap. I touch the glass dog and hear the marimba band that was playing on Olivera Street when the old glassblower put his lips to the pipe" (Taylor 48).

The *pocadillas*, like the lives they bring back to consciousness, actualize the everyday lives of ordinary people, the everyday magic bound up when any constellation or network of activities, objects, and events are layered together. There are in these gendered, spiritually evocative projects an echo of what Bracha Lichtenberg-Ettinger calls "the matrixial perspective":

> In the *matrix*, we can speak of the co-appearance of *partial subjects* which can also be simultaneously seen from a phallic angle as 'entire' subjects or an one another's object [...] . In a matrixial perspective, the focus shifts from separate elements or subjects towards the *borderlines*, the *borderspace*, and the *borderlinks* between part-objects and partial subjects, and towards the processes of transformation which take place jointly by means of these borderlines/spaces/links. (41)

In contrast with the umbilical objects evoked here, Lichtenberg-Ettinger's study focuses not on a specific physical object or site, but on her reading of the Biblical book of Exodus, and specifically on her analysis of the name of God, and secondarily on her own practice as an artist whose ink/pencil/pastel artworks on paper and plexiglass are used to illustrate the work. Like the Taylor sisters, though coming from a very different tradition, Lichtenberg-Ettinger also references the spiritual element through these word-images. However, the matrixial border is not geographical. It is a term drawn from her own artistic practice of multiply matted and framed drawings, a metaphorical representation of an abstract concept rather than (as would be the case with the altar builders mentioned above) a metonymic evocation of a concrete person or space. She uses the concept of border to describe the site of "subjectivizing contacts" (43) among the fragments of partial subjects–part objects where the encountering elements are characterized neither by rejection nor assimilation, neither repulsion or fusion. Explicitly referencing a feminine sub-symbolic network of becoming, Lichtenberg-Ettinger rethinks the Lacanian network defined by the phallus, emphasizing the importance of the Other (behind), the feminine side of God, the becoming-I. In the temporal-spatial event that marks and celebrates the ongoing process of altar construction, Latina spirituality intuits this "becoming-I" as well. Always and never complete, the altar is a constellation of individually partial objects that in their conjunction becomes a point of meditation on the other, subject to change, part subjects of the changing self.

Lichtenberg-Ettinger's description of a delicate encounter in the desert ("the space of the thing/object and/or the space of the speech/word" 54) with a feminine spiritual force helps provide a point of entry into Pat Mora's memoir. The desert, like the garden in Mora's narrative, generates a zone of encounter and exchange that reaches from behind to define an opportunity wherein shifting relations of distance and immediacy create spaces of signification. Where Lichtenberg-Ettinger uses as her guiding metaphor the meeting of God and Moses in the desert, Mora describes a parallel space in her convocation of women in an object/word/space imbued with the sacred. In *House of Houses* she explicitly frames her narrative as a personal journey through time

(the book uses the months of the year as its chapter titles) and in space (the home and its garden). Mora's epigraph sets the tone: "as the rose is the flower of flowers, so is this, the house of houses". As she travels through the year, each chapter parcels out that month's memories: flowers, fragments of song and nursery rhymes, holidays, food.

In keeping with the epigraph, flower references have pride of place and, like the part-object *pocadillas*, like the part objects in Lichtenberg-Ettinger, Mora's flowers, too, provoke micronarratives. In February, along with admiring the spring flowers with her aunt–crocuses, daffodils, iris, pansies, fruit trees (a slightly fictionalized moment, since these flowers bloom in succession, not simultaneously)–she muses: "I look at the trees with my aunt, think of the origin of the word 'pansy,' *pensée,* French for thought, the flowers once believed to make your love think of you, petal power, gardens of multicolored, velvet musings" (67). In the chapter associated with March, she offers a similar meditation: "As the earth warms, tulips, originally called *dulband* by the Persians and *tülibend* by the Turks because the blooms resemble turbans upside down" (80). In May her focus is on the interaction between the house and the garden, both associated with the lives of the humans within these spaces: "in the adobe skin of this house in which the living and dead dwell, as our dead dwell, move, and speak inside the layers of our human skin. [...] I lug out house plants: the ficus tree, miniature orange, crown of thorns, red hibiscus, bougainvillea" (122). For Mora, the very richness of her list supplements the brevity of the narratives; the names of the flowers are sonorous pleasures in themselves, and evoke other ephemeral delights of sight and fragrance, so that the house and garden complete each other in the shifting choreography of sequential blooms.

Flowers also feature heavily in the songs that Mora quotes in this memoir, drawn from her triple heritage of Spanish, English, and Nahuatl based cultures. Thus, for example, she recalls a fragment of the morning prayer that her atheist father teaches his children: "en este nuevo día, gracias .../ Por Ti nacen las flores, reverdecen los campos" [for this new day, thank you.../Through you are born the flowers, greening the fields] (54). Here, the words of the prayer echo one of the stanzas of the Mexican morning song traditionally sung to celebrate a child's saint's day, "Las mañanitas", a beautiful lyric entirely unlike the unimaginative US "happy birthday" song:

El dia en que tu naciste
Nacieron todas los flores
Y en la pila del bautismo
Cantaron los ruiseñores

The day you were born
Were born all the flowers
And in the baptismal font
Sang the nightingales.

The lovely Spanish lyrics of the morning prayer give way in June to a US popular song of the mid-Twentieth Century, the lover's appeal to the woman with the flower name: "I hear Mother's voice when I was little, 'Dais–y, dais–y, give me an an–swer, do'" (147). As she comes to the end of the book, in November, as Mexicans and Mexican Americans across the continent build altars and scatter them with pungent marigolds–cempazuchitl–she recalls the words of the great Aztec poet-king Nezahualcoyotl:

> We become as spring weeds, we grow green
> And open the petals of our hearts.
> Our body is a plant in flower, it gives flowers
> And it dies away. (267)

From Mora's perspective, the paradigmatic experience of geographical displacement in Latino culture mirrors and maps onto other more quotidian displacements: the cyclical movement from house to garden to house, the fragrant and colourful music in the floral dance of seasons and emotions, the temporal dislocation as the body moves toward death. Here, as Trinh T. Minh-ha says, "Language is the site of return. [...] But here also, there, and everywhere, language is a site of change" (10). Even in so sited an author as Mora, the house, the garden, the roots are permeated with their own fungibility, with the irrevocably deep memory of the immigrant condition, the mode of existence defined by unassimilability, uprootedness, provisionality. If she sets down roots, then she will be foreign–French pensée, Turkish tülibend, English daisy, Mexican cempazuchitl–never from here, defined by displacement and boundaries drawn around what is native. Where nostalgia is an existential requirement and trauma is always a threat, the twin strategies of irony and spirituality hold trauma at bay, imbuing a succession of part objects with the power of story.

Appadurai has commented that "in the peculiar chronologies of late capitalism, pastiche and nostalgia are central modes of image production and reception" (30). I would add that nostalgia is not just a mode of production, but is itself produced, and is produced by and through communication with a desired/imagined interlocutor. Furthermore, the mode in which nostalgia frequently finds its most comfortable form is pastiche, particularly the autoethnographic narrative fragment. Though memoir sometimes seems the genre of choice for all ethnicities in the new century, Trinh Minh-ha marks a certain distinction that it behoves us to recall:

> It is often said that writers of color [...] are condemned to write only autobiographical works. [...] When they open the doors of the abode and step out of it, they have, in a sense, freed themselves again from 'home.' They become a passage, start the travel anew, and pull themselves at once closer and further away from it by telling stories. (10)

Thus, while pastiche and nostalgia may draw in the dominant culture interlocutor at a tangent, Trinh's comment suggests that the writer (and implicitly, reader) of colour has a certain privileged locus in this project. S/he is "condemned" to autobiography as a storytelling mode, and has a particularly rich and problematic relation to home, a word that Trinh frames within quotation marks so as to signal its resistance to a clichéd or univocal meaning.

If we can agree that orality-autoethnography serves as the essential glue then, extending the metaphor, what it mends and sticks together are two part objects, one material, one aural. In a culture (ours) where knowledge is typically defined by abstraction, "mere" objects seem to have little place. Yet materiality stubbornly reasserts itself, its dignity and its frivolity, all its extraordinary ordinariness, in these sieve stories, these umbilical objects.

Works Cited

Ainslie, Ricardo C. "Cultural Mourning: Immigration, and Engagement: Vignettes from the Mexican Experience". *The New Immigration.* Eds. Marcelo M. Suárez Orozco, et al. New York: Routledge, 2005. 207-216.

Appadurai, Arjun. "Global Ethnoscapes". *Recapturing Anthropology.* Ed. Richard Fox. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, 1991. 191-210.

—. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization.* Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1996.

Arteaga, Alfred. "An Other Tongue". *An Other Tongue: Nation and Ethnicity in the Linguistic Borderlands.* Ed. Alfred Arteaga. Durham: Duke UP, 1994. 9-33.

Behar, Ruth. "Temporary Latina". Latina Feminist Group, *Telling to Live: Latina Feminist Testimonios.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2001. 231-7.

Bender, Barbara. "Landscapes-on-the-move". *Journal of Social Archaeology* 1.1 (2001): 75-89.

Bruce-Novoa, [Juan]. "Dialogical Strategies, Monological Goals: Chicano Literature". *An Other Tongue: Nation and Ethnicity in the Linguistic Borderlands.* Ed. Alfred Arteaga. Durham: Duke University Press, 1994. 225-45.

Cantú, Norma. *Canícula.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001.

Certeau, Michel de. *The Practice of Everyday Life.* Trans. Steven F. Rendall. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.

"Chicano Park". <http://www.chicanoparksandiego.com/>

Davis, Mike. *Magical Urbanism: Latinos Reinvent the City.* New York: Verso, 2000.

Dickinson, Emily. "My Life had stood–a Loaded Gun" <http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/english/melani/cs6/gun.html>

Durand, Jorge and Douglas S. Massey. "What we Learned from the Mexican Migration Project". *Crossing the Border: Research from the Mexican Migration Project.* Eds. Jorge Durand and Douglas S. Massey. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2004. 1-14.

Girard, Luce. "Doing Cooking". Michel de Certeau et al, *Practice of Everyday Life: Volume 2: Living and Cooking.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998: 149-248.

Goldring, Luin. "The Mexican State & Transmigrant Organizations: Negotiating the Boundaries of Membership & Participation in the Mexican Nation". *Latin American Research Review* 37 (2002): 55-99.

—. "The Power of Status in Transnational Social Fields". *Transnationalism from Below.* Eds. Michael Peter Smith and Luis Eduardo Guarnizo. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1998. 165-195.

Gonzalez, Ray. *Memory Fever.* Seattle: Broken Moon P, 1993.

González Viaña, Eduardo. "El libro de Porfirio". *Los sueños de América.* Lima, Peru: Alfaguara, 2000. 11-27.

Jones-Correa, Michael. *Between Two Nations: The Political Predicament of Latinos in New York City.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998.

Khatibi, Abdelkebir. "The Colonial Labyrinth". Trans. Catherine Dana. *Yale French Studies* 83 (1993): 5-11.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara. "Objects of Ethnography". *Exhibiting Cultures:*

The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display. Eds. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991. 386-443.

Lichtenberg-Ettinger, Bracha. "The Becoming Threshold of Matrixial Borderlines. *Travellers' Tales: Narratives of Home and Displacement.* Eds. George Robertson, et al. New York: Routledge, 1994. 38-62.

Mora, Pat. *House of Houses.* Boston: Beacon Press, 1997.

Navarrete, Ruben Jr. "Straddling Separate Worlds". *The Latino Condition: A Critical Reader.* Eds. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic. New York: NYU Press, 1998. 442-3.

Parkin, David. "Mementoes as Transitional Objects in Human Displacement". *Journal of Material Culture* 4.3 (1999): 303-320.

Perea, Juan F. ""Death by English". *The Latino Condition: A Critical Reader.* Eds. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic. New York: NYU Press, 1998. 583-95.

Sánchez, Luis Rafael. *La guagua aérea.* San Juan: Editorial cultural, 1994.

"Sandra Ortiz Taylor". <http://www.sandraortiztaylorart.com/>

Sarup, Madan. "Home and Identity". *Travellers' Tales: Narratives of Home and Displacement.* Eds. George Robertson, et al. New York: Routledge, 1994. 93-104.

Smith, Robert C. "Transnational Localities: Community, Technology, and the Politics of Membership within the context of Mexico and US Migration". *Transnationalism from Below.* Eds. Michael Peter Smith and Luis Eduardo Guarnizo. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1998: 196-237.

Stewart, Susan. *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection.* Durham: Duke University Press, 1993.

"Subway Outlaws". <http://www.subwayoutlaws.com/>

Taylor, Sheila Ortiz and Sandra Ortiz Taylor. *Imaginary Parents: A Family Autobiography.* Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 1996.

Telemundo/Mun2. <http://www.mun2television.com/>

Trinh T. Minh-ha. "Other than myself/my other self". *Travellers' Tales: Narratives of Home and Displacement.* Eds. George Robertson, et al. New York: Routledge, 1994. 11-26.

Todorov, Tzvetan. "Dialogism and Schizophrenia". Trans. Michael B. Smith. *An Other Tongue: Nation and Ethnicity in the Linguistic Borderlands.* Ed. Alfred Arteaga. Durham: Duke UP, 1994. 203-14.

Turner, Kay. *Beautiful Necessity: Art and Meaning of Women's Altars.* New York: Thames and Hudson, 1999.

Villa, Raúl Homero. *Barrio Logos: Space and Place in Urban Chicano Literature and Culture.* Austin: U of Texas P, 2000.