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This dissertation is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication:

Approved by the Dissertation Committee:

, Chairperson

GHOSTLY I(S)/EYES:
THE FORMATION OF SUBJECTIVITY
IN MEXICAN AMERICAN LIFE NARRATIVES

BY

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B.A., English and History, West Texas A&M Unviersity, 1997
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DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
American Studies

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

December, 2010

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DEDICATION

por mi familia

The smell of cedar can break the feed yard.
Some days I smell nothing until she opens her chest.
Her polished nails click against tarnished metal
Cleek!
Then the creek of the hinge and the memories open,
naked and total.
There. A satin ribbon curled around a ringlet of baby fine hair.
And there.
A red and white tassel, its threads thick and tangled.
Look here. She picks up a newspaper clipping,
irons out the wrinkles between her hands.
I kept this.
We remember this.
It is ours.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Until quite recently, I did not know how many years ago this dissertation began. It did not begin with my first day in the Ph.D. program at the University of New Mexico in 2000. Nor did it begin with my first day as a graduate student at the University of Texas at Austin in 1997. It began in my earliest memories – the smell of cinnamon in arroz con leche, the lonely sound of trains in the middle of the llano night, the rusty color of harvested cottonfields. My dissertation is a story of ghosts and memory. It is a story of familia. Sin familia, nothing is possible, and I am grateful to every single member of my family, living or dead.

First and foremost, I thank my mom. Her stories of Del Rio and our family's move north to the Texas Panhandle continue to inspire me. I hope someday I'll write stories worthy of her experience. There were many days when a phone call to my mom saved me from absolute panic and self-doubt.

My brother Adrian is also a crucial presence in this work. Adrian heard my first stories. His patience and his enthusiasm during our many long road trips through Texas' rural highways helped me understand the significance of geography and landscape.

Then there is las palabras. If the llano of West Texas and Eastern New Mexico has held my heart, then words have helped me write my heart. For these words and for my love of words, I thank my dad. My dad did not read books to me as much as he told me stories and sang me songs. Our many drives between Canyon and Friona, Friona and Lubbock, Albuquerque and Mesilla were thick with stories of cowboys, unruly horses and loyal dogs. Because of my dad, I learned to appreciate the rhythms of Johnny Cash, Hank Williams and Waylon Jennings.

My grandparents, Jacobo and Dominga Perea are the absent presences in the soul of everything I have ever done or will ever do. My earliest memories are my grandparents. Their stories of Dilia, Anton Chico and Las Vegas always show me the way home.

I would also like to thank my Uncle James and his family. Austin was a huge change for me and their presence and support during those years are priceless. Uncle James helped me change flat tires, took me out to dinner and perhaps, most importantly, engaged in long discussions about classic rock.

I am so fortunate to have a large and supportive network of family and friends. I am grateful to every single member of this network. In particular, I would like to thank my Aunt Irma for encouraging me with her listening for all the years I have been alive. I would also like to thank my Uncle Joe and my Uncle David for their limitless support and their willingness to move me across Texas time and time again. My grandparents Viola Lomas and Juan Alonzo are also a significant presence in this work. Their stories have inspired my future projects and I hope my next projects will do justice to their stories and experiences.

I would also like to thank Blanca Elia, Polly Donez and Camille Rodríguez. They adopted me into their family and provided me with all the comforts of home and family when I needed them most.

My friends and colleagues have also supported and sustained me during many nights when I was ready to walk away from this dissertation and graduate school in general. Lavinia Nicolae and Verónica Calvillo listened patiently to every moment of

self-doubt and always provided me with balance. Eric Castillo, Lena McQuade and Andrea Mays were with me throughout this Ph.D. endeavor and I know our conversations informed my work, sustained my work and helped bring it to fruition. Charlene Johnson taught me to write about family is to write about truth always. Erika T. Wurth provided me with so much perspective and insight regarding my writing and my work. Becky Castillo offered strength in some of my weakest and hardest moments. I know someday she will be an amazing profesora. I would also like to thank my oldest friend, Jennifer Byrd-Craven. We made it from kindergarten to graduate school together, and she offered so much support during all levels of my education.

At every step of this process are wonderful advisors, professors and committee members. Professor A. Gabriel Meléndez has patiently supported me throughout this very long process and helped me to make my arguments stronger and clearer. His work at the University of New Mexico as a writer, a critic and a professor brought me to the study of autobiography.

Professor José E. Limón gave me my first opportunities in graduate school at the University of Texas. Until my first semester in Professor Limón's graduate seminar, I had no idea Mexican American literature existed. In his courses, I realized the strength and beauty of Mexican America in the United States. I am forever grateful to Professor Limón.

Professor Michael L. Trujillo and Professor Rebecca Schreiber have consistently supported me in the writing of this project and I appreciate their willingness to continue to read and comment on my work as the years passed. I also thank Professor Jesse Alemán who is an incredible editor and a wonderful instructor. His comments on early versions of my dissertation proposal and abstract shaped the trajectory of this work.

I am also grateful to Dr. Tobias Durán at the Center for Regional Studies. Without the generous funding of the Center for Regional Studies, this project would not have been possible.

Finally, there are layers. Words write the memories. Memories saturate the heart. Annette, you helped me find my heart.

GHOSTLY I(S)/EYES: THE FORMATION OF SUBJECTIVITY IN MEXICAN AMERICAN LIFE NARRATIVES

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

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B.A. ENGLISH AND HISTORY
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ABSTRACT

Autoethnography is the genre through which many marginalized groups write back to hegemony (Pratt 1992, 7). It is no wonder then that one of the modes in which Mexican Americans choose to express themselves and represent their communities is autoethnography. However, the study of Mexican American autoethnography reveals a more complicated dynamic occurring in its formation. This dynamic goes beyond binary constructions such as periphery (Mexican Americans) versus center (Euroamerican) to illuminate the shifting structure of Mexican American history as well as the shifting structure of Mexican American subjectivity. I argue Mexican American life narratives use autoethnographic methods to inform their life narratives. Additionally, I argue Mexican American autoethnographic life narratives use ghosts as a medium through which to address the formation of Mexican America.

One reason Mexican American life narratives employ ghosts is because in many instances, but not all, ghostly bodies signify the dead. "The dead . . . and their relations are perhaps the most lawless, unruly, and potentially revolutionary inhabitants of any imagined territory, national or otherwise" (Holland 2000, 23). While I believe that to exact a mode of revolutionary resistance is one of the reasons the dead, their ghosts and

hauntings make their presences felt in the narratives of marginalized peoples in the United States, I also argue that these ghostly presences menace not only dominant society, but "other" societies as well. The ghosts of the U.S.-México border disturb the dominant narrative of the United States. They disrupt binaries between México and the United States by bringing to light contradictory desires that many present-day Mexican Americans would like to ignore. These desires make their presence known here and in each case the Mexican American autobiographer uses the ghost or absent presence of the ghost to illuminate the gap between the formation of Mexican American subjectivity as a unifying force and the formation of Mexican-American subjectivity as the fragmented force it often is. My dissertation addresses not only the fragmentation of Mexican American subjectivity, but also locates its productive potential and reveals what our haunted life narratives add to the study of our América.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES XII

PREFACE XIII

INTRODUCTION: 1

RE-MEMBER THE ALAMO: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL MOMENT 1

I. The Ghost and Me 1
II. Re-membered Ghosts and Absent Histories 6
III. Ghostly I(s)/Eyes 13

CHAPTER ONE: 20

RE-MEMBERING MEXICAN AMERICA: THE AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC IMPULSE AND THE WORK OF GHOSTS IN MEXICAN AMERICA 20

I. The Autoethnographic Impulse 25
II. ¡Viva Los Muertos!: The Visible Work of Ghosts in Mexican American Autobiography 35
III. Conclusion: Resurrection 47

CHAPTER TWO: 49

THE EYES/I(S) OF *TEJAS* ARE UPON YOU: AUTOETHNOGRAPHY AND THE GHOST IN GREATER MÉXICO 49

I. Frontejas: An Initial Encounter with Tejano Selves 49
II. The "Partial Truths" of Ethnography 53
III. Connecting the Eyes/Is: The Project of Auto/Ethnography 57
IV. "Con Su Pluma en su Mano": the Eye/I of Américo Paredes 59
V. The Ghost in the Devil's Clothes: José E. Limón's Autoethnographic I/Eye 65

CHAPTER THREE: 74

GHOSTS IN THE FIELD: THE ABSENT PRESENCE IN THE HISTORIAS OF ERNESTO GALARZA 74

I. Memories that Matter: Constructing Selves in *Barrio Boy* 74
II. The Blind Field: the Absence Inside and Outside the Frame 89
III. At Work in the Field: the Ghostly Reconciliation of Galarza's I/Eye ... 108
IV. The Narrating Photograph 116

CHAPTER FOUR: 120

GHOSTS OF MEMORY: CROSSING THE U.S.-MEXICO BORDER WITH NORMA CANTÚ, PAT MORA AND JOHN PHILLIP SANTOS 120

I. Violent Print: Narrating the U.S.-México Border in Mainstream Media. 120

II. Photographs of Presence: Norma Cantú's Re-membered Family Portrait 130
III. Border W(R)ites: Rituals of Re-memberment in Pat Mora's House of Houses 143
IV. Se Perdío en la Niebla: the Recovery of Absence 158
CHAPTER FIVE: 167
BEDEVILED GHOSTS: THE MEXICAN AMERICAN DIASPORA IN THE FILMS OF LOURDES PORTILLO 167
I. Greater Mexican Road Trip: Mexican American Diasporic Identity and Haunted Borders 167
II. El Mal Ojo: the Autobiographical "I" on Film 172
III. Gente de Razón: Intellectuals and "Others" 180
IV: Requiem: Waiting for Resurrection in Ciudad Juárez 185
CONCLUSION: 194
GHOSTLY REFLECTIONS: CAPTURING THE TRANSLUCENT SCENE OF MEXICAN AMERICAN LIFE NARRATIVE 194
I. Alamo Reflections 194
END NOTES 201

List of Figures

Figure 1: My Second-Grade Alamo 2

Figure 2: Juan Nepomuceno Seguín 28

Figure 3: Rosalía Salazar Whelan

Figure 4: Fleet of Trucks serving a centralized camp in California. 96

Figure 5: Payroll Check for Jesús Rodríguez 98

Figure 6: Mexican men being deloused with DDT at a processing station near the U.S.-México border 102

Figure 7: Photographs of a barracks in a Mexican labor camp in California 103

Figure 8: Azucena Cantú's Immigration documents 135

Figure 9: An example of a candid photo from Pat Mora's *House of Houses* 149

Figure 10: Photograph of San Antonio newspaper 165

Figure 11: Photograph from Kathy Vargas' *My Alamo* series 198

Figure 12: Photograph from Kathy Vargas' *I Was Little, They Were Big Series* 200

PREFACE

Throughout this study, I consider the components that form Mexican American subjectivity in life narrative. I would be remiss if I did not include my own experience as a Mexican American subject. For that reason, many of these chapters include personal experience. I would like to begin my study with a foundational moment in the formation of my Mexican American self. I believe this story provides an appropriate beginning to this study.

It was late fall and the sun had already begun to set. I stood in front of the English department elevator overwhelmed and scared. It was my first semester of graduate school at the University of Texas and my bag was heavy with library books. I was writing my first essay as a graduate student and I knew nothing about processes of elimination – I needed every library book the Perry Castañeda library book had to offer. I paid the price, of course, as I stood in front of the elevator, shifting my backpack from one shoulder to the other. It was after five and the department office was closed. This was the perfect time to check my mailbox. No danger of running into another person. The hallways were empty. Y entonces, I heard very light footsteps and turned around. I expected to see another graduate student or maybe one of the women who worked cleaning the halls after the day's classes finished. Instead, there was a thin viejito turning the corner into Parlin Hall. He wore a tweed coat and glasses. He smiled, gave a small wave and continued on his way. His smile, the slight movement of his greeting was, for me, a moment of great kindness. For a few seconds, I was not so terrified. Months later I learned I had encountered a legend. I had no idea then how profoundly the work of Professor Américo Paredes would influence me. What I did know was this – his presence in the hallway that

late November afternoon made me feel less alone. For that afternoon and for so much more, I am eternally grateful to Dr. Paredes.

Introduction:
Re-Member the Alamo: An Autobiographical Moment

Destiny in the Texas Revolution hardly bears inspection.
T.R. Fehrenbach[1]

As a historian, I cannot forget the Alamo; as a tejana, I am not allowed to forget the Alamo. It is imprinted upon my body, my memories, my childhood.
Emma Pérez[2]

If we won the Alamo, how come it feels like we lost the Alamo?
Irma García[3]

I. The Ghost and Me

Every February, an electric anticipation buzzed through the students at Rex Reeves Elementary School in Canyon, Texas. I was no exception. I loved the story of the Texas Revolution – Goliad, the Alamo, San Jacinto.[4] Teachers stood in front of us, recounted the astonishing feats of the Fathers of the Texas Republic. I memorized the names – Sam Houston. James Bowie. Davy Crockett.[5] While the West Texas wind turned the sky red with the dust of the cotton fields that surrounded us, we watched the Battle of the Alamo unfold reel-by-reel in the peaceful dark of the school gym.[6]

Armed with history, we were given our patriotic assignment: write an illustrated history of Texas. I was seven years old. This was my dream project. Throughout the weeks leading up to Texas Independence Day, our class had focused so much on the Battle of the Alamo. We knew thousands of Mexicans had defeated the Texans at the Alamo, but we also knew that the Texans had bravely held off those thousands of Mexicans for many days. Seven weeks later, the Texans won their independence at San Jacinto; however, I chose to end my illustrated history of Texas not with an account of Mexican defeat, but one of Mexican victory – the Alamo.[7]

I carefully printed out the official story of Texas onto the gray, lined pages of my Big Chief tablet. It was short and precise. “All of the Alamo/defenders fell to Santa/Anna and his army of/2000 men March 6, 1836./The Alamo stands today/as a reminder of their courage and sacerfice.[*sic*]/It is in San Antonio” (1984). I read it over and over again. Something did not sit well.

Figure 1: My second-grade Alamo, 1984.

An illustration might help. I took my markers and crayons, carefully traced an image of the Alamo from an old coloring book. I filled in the old mission’s walls, colored in the bright green palm trees. Still something was missing. I proofread my three sentences – scrutinized my drawing. I knew what was missing. I took my crayons and drew a Mexican flag. It looked right, but it did not bring enough attention. What more could I do? With my markers, I inked in a Mexican soldier. He stood on top of the Alamo and he was almost as big as the mission itself. I looked at my Alamo. It was no longer a pretty picture. The Mexican soldier was too much. I had ruined my picture. I tried to erase him, but he was permanent.

General Antonio López de Santa Anna and the Mexican army may have defeated the 189 Euro-Americans and tejanos in the Alamo; still, they fell far short of victory. Regarding the Alamo, Richard Flores asserts the following: “For Anglos, the Alamo serves as a sign of rebirth, the coming-of-age for a state and, eventually, a nation in the

modern period. It is not quite the same for Mexicans. For them the Alamo reverberates with ambivalence. It serves as a reminder, a memorial to a stigmatized identity" (2002, 11). My illustrated history of Texas typifies the ambivalence Flores describes. The narrative captured the patriotic enthusiasm for Texas nationalism I genuinely desired to feel. I yearned to be part of the Texas national narrative; yet, because I was Mexican the official history of Texas did not allow room for me. Embedded within these official histories of Texas was the following plotline: Mexicans had not only lost Texas, but because of our *inferior* nature Mexicans had *deserved* to lose Texas and the entire Southwest.

Flores argues the cultural memory of the Alamo represented Mexican subjects, regardless of citizenship or country of origin, as 'subjugated Others.' Because these stories of the Alamo enter into the cultural memory of Texas and the United States, the Alamo develops into a symbol of domination for Mexicans and Mexican Americans throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (2002, 11).

One hundred and fifty years later, on the eve of the massive sesquicentennial celebrations of the Texas Revolution, sitting in my elementary school classroom I still felt the shame boiling beneath the surface every time teachers or students repeated the stories of Texas Independence. I began to despise the account of Texas Independence, not only for what it said about Mexicans, but for what they made me feel about my own Mexican American identity. I no longer wanted to be a Mexican American in Texas.

My illustrated history of Texas complements these memories. The images I added to my narrative of Texas history reveal the complex workings of my Mexican American subjectivity formation. I wanted to be proud of the Mexican contribution to Texas history

so I included a Mexican flag and a Mexican soldier; at the same time, I was ashamed of my Mexican American heritage, so I made an attempt to erase the Mexican soldier. I knew permanent marker would not erase, nevertheless I wanted everyone to see I had made an effort.

Since the Texas Sesquicentennial I have been haunted by that Mexican soldier. Why did I draw him? Why did I try to erase him? Why did it take me so long to admit that I did not always want to be Mexican American? First, I had to return to mi familia and the stories I had always heard. I had to learn to listen when my relatives spoke. There was more to U.S. history than the official narrative recorded in the textbooks distributed by the public schools every fall semester. Within these familial narratives were other stories, narratives that challenged the very foundation of Euro-American authority. As Mexican Americans we had our own history of community organizing, military service, land dispossession, etc. This, I learned was the power of storytelling. Our stories were and are our power.

In this dissertation, I argue, there are three critical features of Mexican American life narratives: First, there is the re-membering act. Second, there is the absent presence which is signified by the emergence of the ghost. Finally, there is the incorporation of autoethnography. Mexican American autobiographers work these three features into their historias in order to tell a small, but integral piece of a much larger story – the story of Mexican American identity in the United States.

As I began to study Mexican American narrative, I also began to discover that within all narrative an autobiographical trace is present (de Man 1979, 922). My focus narrowed to Mexican American autobiography. What motivated Mexican Americans to

write life narrative? As I read more life narratives, I discovered many autobiographers were motivated by the same forces that motivated my illustrated history of Texas – a desire to produce a Mexican American counter-narrative to the official narrative of the United States. I also discovered that the autobiographical narrative is not always a written narrative. According to Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson,

> the kinds of media that can be used to tell an autobiographical story include short feature and documentary film; theater pieces, installations; performance art in music, dance, and monologue; the painted or sculpted self-portrait; quilts, collages, and mosaics; body art; murals; comics; and cyber art (1999, 74).

This is vital to my analysis of life narrative. Autobiographical stories, I argue, exist in multiple genres and media forms. In this dissertation, I discuss autobiographical moments in film, poetry, traditional autobiography, and photography. Still, as more and more Mexican Americans told their life stories, I found we were not only talking back to a nation that marginalized us, we were also resurrecting the spirits of our Mexican pasts. These ghosts appeared in unexpected and familiar places – at the dinner table in Pat Mora's *House of Houses* (1997); in the conversations of Chicana intellectuals in Lourdes Portillo's *Corpus: A Home Movie for Selena* (2000); in the transparent figures rising up out of a fractured Alamo in Kathy Vargas's *My Alamo* series (1995). The cultural landscape of Mexican American life narrative pulsates with Mexican ghosts. Through the translucent bodies of ghosts, Mexican American autobiographical narrative works out the complexity of Mexican American subject formation. We are not simply talking back. We are talking amongst ourselves. We take them apart. We put them back together. We exchange stories and new stories are born. Autobiographical stories

Twenty-four years ago, I created a Mexican soldier in an attempt to oppose all I had been taught about Texas history. I tried to erase the Mexican soldier. Since that time, that Mexican soldier has haunted me. His presence has reminded me of a moment when I despised everything about being a Mexican American. This is my ghost. This is my story.

II. Re-membered Ghosts and Absent Histories

Each text in this dissertation hinges on memory. Ghostly traces of haunting exist within these memories. Their appearance is a central element in the ever-multiplying configurations of memory. In the autobiographical texts I study, the remembering subject/narrator elicits the ghosts and the ghosts elicit memory. When the autobiographical subject writes the ghost, s/he creates a space from where s/he can reimagine or re-member a connection to an ancestral and communal past.

In *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1991), Benedict Anderson argues ghosts signify an absent presence (9). These absent presences are intimately connected to the formation of national and communal identities (10). According to Anderson, the formation of national identity in the culture of the West was precipitated by changes in three "fundamental cultural conceptions (36)."

> The first of these was the idea that a particular script-language offered privileged access to ontological truth [i.e. Latin, Greek]. Second, was the belief that society was naturally organized around high centres [i.e. monarchy]. Third was a conception of temporality in which cosmology and history were indistinguishable, the origins of the world and of men were essentially identical (36).

In addition to the decline of these "cultural conceptions," Anderson details other changes such as the development of "increasingly rapid" communications, the impact of economic change and 'discoveries' [social and scientific]" (36). These changes helped to destabilize those attitudes that gave "meaning to [and redemption from] the everyday

fatalities of existence (above all death, loss and servitude)" (36). Where these attitudes had been, there was now absence. Consequently, as Anderson explains, "the search was on . . . for a new way of linking fraternity, power and time meaningfully together;" thus, the rise of national and communal identities in the West (36). Anderson's hypothesis on the formulation of national identity rests on the death of "script language" as well as the significance of print capitalism and its contribution to the rise of vernacular language. According to cultural studies critic Sharon Patricia Holland, Anderson's focus on shifting practices of language and written communication does not go far enough in identifying the process of imagined communities.

In *Raising the Dead: Readings of Death and (Black) Subjectivity* (2000), Holland concurs with Anderson's postulation that the birth of national/community identities is deeply connected to issues of death and immortality. However, she critiques Anderson for relying on the "fatality in language rather than on actual fatality as represented by a literal body" (23). For Holland, the dead body and its resurrection are integral to the process of the formulation of imagined communities. At the same time, the dead body is not always dead. Holland writes:

> I might want to suggest that the dead and their relations are perhaps the most lawless, unruly, and potentially revolutionary inhabitants of any imagined territory . . . Moreover, I would add that the disenfranchised and oppressed often join the dead in this quixotic space, becoming in common parlance, menace(s) to society (23).

The space of death, then, is not only where the dead reside. These bodies (our bodies) that are silenced, violated, exploited and ignored also inhabit the marginal space of death and from the margin, they can trouble, if not completely overthrow hegemonic rule. The presence of the bodied dead troubles, or haunts, the national landscape as does the

absence of the disembodied. To better explain this, Holland turns to the African American body and the space s/he inhabits in the United States:

> In the imagined life of a United States citizen, black subjects constantly haunt and therefore threaten the stability of the working nation. This black subject retains a certain amount of anonymity by being 'spirit' or 'ghost' – by being disembodied but simultaneously recognized as black and residing in poor urban space (23-24).

Ghosts that disturb the imagined community are absented presences in that they are recognized, but absented from the innermost space of that community. From this space of absence, they counter oppressive communities, but they also provide the very core around which those oppressive communities center. Without the absence, without the ghost, without the dead (both present and not present), there is no imagined community. Hegemonic communities absolutely *know* this. If they did not, they would not dramatize the threat. In other words, absence is fundamental to the formation of any "territory" or community. Without absence, there is no presence.

The Mexican American autobiographers in this dissertation recognize the import of absence. They have felt the effects of being absented from the community of mainstream U.S. America. Within the official and often celebrated historical discourse of the United States, the Mexican American presence is more than disruptive. If the Mexican American perspective becomes part of the historical and cultural landscape, it then undermines the positive history, culture and identity the U.S. has made for itself. Significant events such as the Alamo, the U.S.-Mexican War and Western expansion are no longer causes for celebration. The Mexican American presence during these critical moments simultaneously enables and disables the mythic constructions of U.S. American identity. Whether it is my Alamo story, or Richard Flores's Alamo story, or Kathy

Vargas's Alamo story, the effect is the same. The official, sanctioned narrative of the Alamo is called into question. The victory was not absolute. Questions and critiques continue.

The autobiographers included in this study deploy the work of memory in order to re-member absence. Absence, our Mexican American absence, in the cultural and historical landscape of the United States must be re-membered in order to affect changes in discourse and action. Juan Seguín, Celofas Jaramillo, Américo Paredes, Norma Cantú and John Phillip Santos are just a few examples of Mexican American writers who point to absence in order to contest silence. Each life narrative uses memory to re-member our dismembered or absented histories. In all of this work, the re-membering narrator and her/his memory are crucial.

To best capture the imaginative power of the narrator who remembers, I return to a narrative site that recognized, illustrated and theorized the transformative component of "rememory" – Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1988).

Sethe, the protagonist in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1988), is haunted by the ghost of the two-year-old daughter she physically (but not spiritually) killed to protect from the violence of African slavery in the United States. Caroline Rody gives an in-depth description of rememory:

> For Sethe a 'rememory' (an individual experience) hangs around as a 'picture' that can enter another's 'rememory' (the part of the brain that 'rememories') and complicate consciousness and identity. 'Rememory' as trope postulates the interconnectedness of minds, past and present, and thus neatly conjoins the novel's supernatural vision with its aspiration to communal epic, realizing the 'collective memory' of which Morrison speaks (1995, 101).

Rememory is the fluid space where the remembering subject experiences simultaneously the present and past; the individual and the collective. Rody writes:

> 'Rememory' thus functions . . . as a trope for the problem reimagining one's heritage . . . [Morrison] must work to 'rememory' those ancestors who wish they could forget. . . The elevation of memory to a supernatural power that connects all minds, making it possible to 'bump into a rememory that belongs to somebody else,' is generated by authorial desire to write like a 'we' about unknown ancestors (1995, 101-102).

I cite these passages from Caroline Rody at length because these passages lucidly demonstrate rememory's power in the face of myriad forceful wills to forget. Significantly, the force of rememory is not only working against one monolithic force; nor, is rememory working against several forces which may be unified in their ideological principles. The work of rememory is more difficult than this. In *Beloved*, rememory works not only against the desire of hegemonic U.S. America to forget slavery; it also works against the desire of African Americans to forget slavery.

Rememories, according to Jan Furman, "often displace existing life, making the past more authentic than the present . . . [The act of remembering] . . . is necessary [because] remembering constitutes . . . storytelling, the record of a life and what that life signifies" (1998, 262). As Furman argues, and as I argue, re-membering and rememories are necessary. They bear witness to experiences otherwise forgotten and resurrect a past that can inform the present. More than this, I believe the power of rememory and the power to re-member can create a space where neither past nor present dominate, but where both survive to create multi-dimensional, intergenerational and collective experience of identity formation.

The absent presence inhabits a crucial part of the re-membering process. Richard Flores draws on the work of Marita Sturken (1997) and Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1995) to further explore the construction of memory and its place in history. Flores writes: “The process of ‘remembering’ requires . . . a certain level of ‘forgetting.’ But forgetting is not a passive experience; like remembering, it is an active process that involves erasure. Memory, in being selective, actively forgets or ‘silences the past’ (2002, xv). To silence, to forget, and then to re-member are active, purposeful, and crucial elements in the formation of histories. Michel-Rolph Trouillot writes:

> Silences enter the process of historical production at four critical moments: the moment of fact creation (the making of *sources*); the moment of fact assembly (the making of *archives*); the moment of fact retrieval (the making of *narratives*; and the moment of retrospective significance (the making of *history* in the final instance) . . . To put it differently, any historical narrative is a particular bundle of silences, the result of a unique process, and the operation required to deconstruct these silences will vary accordingly (1995, 26).

Of course, the term historical narrative includes numerous historical narratives that do or do not contradict one another. As Trouillot point out, at each of the four moments something is said and something else remains unsaid, or silent. Let’s return to the Alamo and my experience of it for a moment, there’s the moment of fact creation: Davy Crockett and a few hundred other Texans were at the Alamo. The Mexican Army defeated them and they were killed. That is our source material. These facts “are collected, thematized, and processed as documents and monuments” (Trouillot 48). There are newspapers, government records, and letters documenting the events of the Alamo. They are the archive. Historians and critics return to these documents, study them and write them into narratives. The simple narrative I wrote, or rather I traced, as a child was put together from sources and retrieved from archives. Nothing that I wrote was incorrect. It is all

documented. In 1836, the Texans were defeated by the Mexicans at the Alamo. History occurs the moment we look back and saturate the event with meaning. As Texas moved away from 1836, the Alamo (in the official and mainstream histories taught in public schools such as mine) became not a moment when Texans were defeated, but instead became a moment that illustrated the ineptitude of the Mexican army, i.e. it took thousands of inept Mexicans thirteen days to defeat fewer than 200 Texans. Ineptitude of this sort demonstrates the ineptitude of México in general. Thus, the Alamo signals not a Mexican victory, but the inevitability of a Mexican defeat. This is the mainstream narrative of the Texas struggle for independence; however, history is the synthesis of "mentions and silences" (48). If the above is the mainstream "mentioning" of the Alamo, then what makes up its counterpart, i.e. the silence?

What if at every moment in the production of Texas history, we "mention" Juan N. Seguín and the other Tejanos who were in the war for Texas Independence? What if we mention the dissatisfaction of Tejanos with Mexican government in the mid-nineteenth century? The narrative and the history change. Additionally, we cannot forget that within this Tejano-centric version of the Alamo, there are still silences. Are there Tejanas in the Alamo? Was the Mexican army comprised of indigenous men forced into service? What are these stories? History is full of both silence and absence. Trouillot writes:

> That some peoples and things are absent of history, lost, as it were, to the possible world of knowledge, is much less relevant to the historical practice than the fact that some peoples and things are absent in history, and that this absence itself is constitutive of the process of historical production (49).

In other words, not only is history full of absence, the very process of making history requires absence. Within this process, power is central. The group who possess the power to write, speak and be heard, influence what is commonly known and what is not. They choose which events serve their narrative and their history, and they choose which events do not. Again, I return to Trouillot: “For the power to decide what is trivial – and annoying – is also part of the power to decide how ‘what happened’ becomes ‘that which is said to have happened’” (115). The gap between what has been created as fact and what has been created as rumor pulsates with silence and absence. I argue it is in this space/gap where the ghostly presence exists and it is in this space from which the ghost is invoked by the Mexican American narrators in my study.

Through the ghost, Mexicans American life narratives create more narratives and more histories. Of course, these narratives and histories possess their own silences and their own absences; however, in resurrecting the past through the ghostly figure they are able to re-member and thus recognize the past in the present. To recognize the simultaneous existence of these two ostensibly separate experiences enables the subjects to narrate the past and serve as conscious actors in the present.

III. Ghostly I(s)/Eyes

Michel-Rolph Trouillot posits a distinction between the chronicler and the narrator: “The chronicler describes only events that he witnessed; the narrator can tell stories both about what he saw and what he learned to be true from others. The chronicler does not know the end of the story – indeed, there is no point to the story; the narrator knows the full story” (50). Mexican American narrators tell the story of their own Mexican American lives in this study. Without question, chronicled sources inform their

narratives, but they give different amounts of weight to different storytellers, different facts, and different moments. They compose a historia of Mexican American subjects. In this historical creation, there are imbalances, as there are in any history. In many cases, these imbalances are ignored. One history speaks and another is silent. Rather than ignore the imbalances inherent in any historical narrative, I argue Mexican American narratives turn to the autobiographical "I" in order to address imbalance directly. They ground themselves in their own lived experiences and in the experiences of their families. Imbalance is expected in life narrative. There is no need for objectivity. In fact, it is exactly the opposite. Readers come to the life narrative in order to learn about the subject. Subjectivity is not only an inherent component of autobiography – it is expected. This expectation is an essential part of the relationship between the autobiographical "I" and her/his reader.

Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson address the relationship and agreement between the autobiographical "I" and her/his audience:

> Any utterance in an autobiographical text, even if inaccurate or distorted, characterizes its writer. Thus, when one is both the narrator and the protagonist of the narrative, as in life stories, the truth of the narrative becomes undecidable. We need, then, to adjust our expectations of the truth told in self-referential narrative. Of course, autobiographical claims such as date of birth can be verified or falsified by recourse to documentation or fact outside the text. But autobiographical truth is a different matter; it is an intersubjective exchange between narrator and reader aimed at producing a shared understanding of the meaning of a life . . . If we approach self-referential writing as an intersubjective process that occurs within the writer/reader pact, rather than as a true-or-false story, the emphases of reading shifts from assessing and verifying knowledge to observing processes of communicative exchange and understanding. We could redefine the terms: autobiographical narration is so written that it cannot be read solely as either factual truth or simple facts (2001, 12-13).

I cite this lengthy passage from Smith and Watson's *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (2001) at length because it provides a detailed explanation of the subjectivity inherent in the practices of writing and reading autobiography. If it is assumed that life narrative is subjective, then there is room for the narrator to not only illustrate her/his life experience, but to also offer other(ed) perspectives and critiques regarding mainstream history and culture. No one is expected to maintain the pretense of objective truth; consequently, life narrative reveals something other than truth – subjective candor. For example, my Alamo experience is absolutely subjective. I do not posture it as anything else; however, I do include my experience here with the intent of critique. I want to elicit curiosity, inquiry. I cannot control the answer, but I can situate my position clearly and engage my autobiographical "I" in a conversation with the reader. This conversation is vital to the Mexican American life narrators in this study because it allows them to confront audiences with some of the issues of Mexican America such as racial inequity, absent history and cultural identity.

The Mexican American life narratives that I discuss here and in later chapters reveal relational selves and relational lives (Eakin 1999, 69). In *How Our Lives Become Stories: Making Selves*, John Paul Eakin acknowledges that all "selfhood" is relational (69). In other words, all selves are defined by their relationship to others; however, Eakin saves the "usefulness of the [relational] label" by applying it to select autobiographies. He writes:

> [Relational autobiographies] are those autobiographies that feature the decisive impact on the autobiographer of either (1) an entire social environment (a particular kind of family, or a community and its social institutions – schools, churches, and so forth) or (2) key other individuals, usually family members, especially parents (69).

The autobiographers included in this dissertation are relational autobiographers. Each writer tells his/her story in relation to the social environment in which s/he was raised; the community s/he calls home; and, the individuals s/he calls family. In relational autobiographies, Eakin argues, "the autobiographical act . . . affords the opportunity to speak the previously unspoken, to reveal what has been hidden or repressed" (87). In addition to the autobiographical "I" and the autobiographical act, I assert the ethnographic "eye" and the ethnographic "act" are also critical components in the formation of the relational self in Mexican American life narrative.

In "'Ejemplos Metafóricos': Self-Presentation and History in Chicana Autobiography and Life Narrative," A. Gabriel Meléndez invites "scholars of ethnic life-writing to refocus their attention on their respective traditions and reconsider the particular that constitute the life-narrative trajectories of these communities" (2). I agree with Meléndez that specific cultural practices need to be considered in the analysis of ethnic life-writing. The trend in each Mexican American life narrative included in my analysis is to write not only Mexican American selves, but also Mexican American families, communities and cultural practices. This is significant because at the end of each autobiographical text discussed here the reader leaves with new awareness regarding particular aspects of Mexican American culture. For example, Norma Cantú's *Canícula: Snapshots of a Girlhood en la Frontera* identifies those last days of summer in South Texas as canícula – the dog days of summer. This term is something specific to language and geography. As a reader from the Texas Panhandle who speaks mostly English, this was not a term I knew; yet, there were aspects of the text which were achingly familiar

such as her descriptions of her grandmother's remedies for susto or mal ojo. I walk away from Cantú's story informed about both her particular experience in Mexican American South Texas as well as the more general cultural practices of Mexican Americans in South Texas. The "Is/Eyes" combine and the result is autoethnography.

According to Philippe Lejeune autoethnography falls into the category of collaborative autobiography (190). Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson provide greater detail:

> While typically the lives of workers have been 'studied from above,' with the effect that the workers did not speak, the publication of everyday lives . . . begins to redress a situation in which those living everyday lives could not write but only be written. Lejeune's extensive studies of the life narratives collected as ethnographies by social scientists . . . of those who do not write their own stories are some ways of negotiating an 'ethnological gap' (2000, 144).

The desire to write autoethnography gained and continues to gain strength in light of the processes of "de/colonization, immigration, displacement, and exile" (Smith and Watson 145). Alongside decolonial movements, questions regarding authority and the asymmetrical dynamics of power between informant and ethnographer have also strengthened, multiplied and to some degree collapsed (Eakin 1999, 173-174). The practice of autoethnography plays a vital role in this collapse. Additionally, the multiplicity of voices that occurs with these diasporic movements illuminates all the more strongly the relationality of the self; hence, the need to write not only the narrative of self, but also the narratives of selves and communities. Here I return to Meléndez and his call to investigate the impact of cultural traditions and experience on life writing. Perhaps it is to some degree obvious why many Mexican American autobiographers would choose an autoethnographic method. Our lived identities as border(ed) subjects have always been

constructed around asymmetry – México and the United States. We negotiate inequity on a regular basis. Perhaps the autoethnographic self is the path these Mexican American narrators have chosen in order to inform and affirm the culture of the U.S.-México borderlands while simultaneously challenging the imbalances of political and historical authority that exist in the relationship between the center and the periphery. It is these gaps between the center and the periphery in which the ghosts reveal themselves. Ghosts, whether bodied or disembodied, are not silent. The life narratives in the following chapters illustrate this.

Autoethnography, the absent presence and acts of re-memberment are the threads that run through this dissertation and bring all of the Mexican American writers I discuss together. Chapter One traces these elements of life writing in Mexican America from the Texas Revolution of 1836. In this chapter, I illustrate the formation of various aspects of Mexican American identity in the works of Juan N. Seguín, Cleofas Jaramillo and Patricia Preciado Martín.

Chapter Two discusses to autoethnographies I consider to be integral to the formation of Mexican American identity: Américo Paredes' *With His Pistol in His Hand: A Border Ballad and its Hero* (1958) and José E. Limón's *Dancing with the Devil: Society and Cultural Poetics in Mexican American South Texas* (1994). Both writers, I argue, position in their work in order to redress the field of Texas ethnography for its deliberate dismissal of the Mexican American role in not only the imagined community of Texas but in the subject formation of the Texan.

Chapter Three looks at the multiple writings and sociological studies of Ernesto Galarza. In this chapter, I argue Galarza utilizes autoethnographic methodology in *Barrio*

Boy (1971) as well as in his academic work. I use written and visual text to demonstrate Galarza's commitment to document migrant fieldworkers in California, while simultaneously using the camera to portray the absent presence of their ghostly bodies.

Chapter Four analyzes the significance of memory in the work of Norma Cantú, Pat Mora, and John Phillip Santos. Each of these writers uses memory in order to resurrect family ghosts and re-member family histories. I argue the resurrection of these family historias challenges absence and re-members Mexican Americans en la frontera.

Chapter Five turns to the filmwork of Lourdes Portillo. In this chapter, I argue Portillo uses the absences of her uncle Oscar, Tejana music star Selena Quintanilla and the disappeared women of Ciudad Juárez to formulate a critique of Mexican American identity.

I hope each of these chapters will combine to provide a cohesive portrait of some critical aspects of Mexican American identity and their critical role in U.S. culture and history.

Chapter One:
Re-Membering Mexican America: The Autoethnographic Impulse and the Work of Ghosts in Mexican America

Our ancestors are the unseen visitors that sit at our kitchen tables when we speak of the past; they are the ancestral countenance that we believe we've recognized on the faces of strangers that we pass on the street. Now they are the elongated shadows that move in the old abandoned patios and the unearthed bones that walk the earth and do not know eternal rest or peace.[8]
A. Gabriel Meléndez

You will hear the voice of my memories stronger than the voice of my death.[9]
Juan Rulfo

The dead are not silent. Their voices return to us through our individual and collective memories. The dead whisper the stories of their lives into our dreams as we sleep, reminding us that their histories are our histories. If we do not listen, we become haunted by these ghostly absences, which of course, are not absent at all.

The expressive culture of Mexican America is haunted by ghostly presences. These Mexican American ghosts, I submit, make visible the moments where there are absences in U.S. history, in Mexican American history, and in the stories of our own Mexican American identity formations. Because ghosts make these erasures visible, they appear most clearly in stories of autobiographical self-fashioning. The Mexican American "I" tells her/his story while simultaneously telling a collective story and making visible an invisible history. Making Mexican American history visible is done through storytelling, or using the "I" experience to inform the "eye" experience. The two work simultaneously. The "I" tells his/her story and the "eye" clarifies the landscape and the cultural context within which the "I" exists. Through the resurrection of ghosts and the incorporation of what I call the autoethnographic impulse, Mexican American

expressive culture simultaneously draws attention to the gap between center and periphery and the absences that exist in that gap. From this gap, these narratives resurrect the ghostly figure in order to re-member Mexican American history.

Each narrative in this study speaks back to the spectral presence of Mexican American absences which haunt all of Mexican America. A specter arises from the legacy of colonization and imperialism in México and the México-U.S. borderlands. This ghost of a troubled history haunts each of the Mexican American autoethnographic autobiographies in this project. These alternative life forms appear in Mexican American cultural production and remind the readers that our family history is a critical part of the political history of the Americas. This is the work of ghosts and hauntings. This study proposes Mexican American autobiographers include ghosts into their narratives to re-member a dismembered past. By populating their autoethnographic autobiographical accounts with descriptions of a Mexican past, these writers not only reinscribe Mexican culture back onto the landscape of United States history, they also attempt to reconcile themselves with the *Mexican* American selves they have created in their life narratives. These ghostly presences affirm that mexicana/os and Mexican Americans have always been an active force affecting the body politic of the U.S and that we have always been *mexicanas/os*. Ghosts do not only remind us; they remember us.

Both A. Gabriel Meléndez and Juan Rulfo acknowledge the power of these absent presences in their narratives of Greater México.[10] Although Meléndez and Rulfo have written works of fiction rather than life narratives, their writing exemplifies the meaning of memory and place in the haunted narratives of mexicanas/os and Mexican Americans in the Greater Mexican borderlands.

Pedro Páramo and "Sombras de la Jicarita" are peopled with spirits who have crossed into the afterlife. In these accounts, the narratives are haunted by beings that are caught between the past and the present world. *Pedro Páramo*'s México overflows with the disembodied survivors of the Mexican Revolution. Juan Preciado, the narrator of *Pedro Páramo*, is driven by the dying request of his mother to return to her birthplace Comala and to find his father Pedro Páramo. When he arrives in Comala, he discovers a *pueblo* devastated by the Revolution. Páramo has already died. As Preciado's stay in Comala lengthens, he discovers most of the pueblo's population – the people he sees and talks to everyday are also dead. When Preciado mentions his conversation with the burro driver Abundio, his hostess Eduviges Dyada laughs: "Abundio died" (1955, 16). Eventually, Preciado will discover that Doña Eduviges is also dead.

Hundreds of miles north from Comala, Jalisco in Mora County, Nuevo México, the dead walk among the living in "Sombras de la Jicarita." In this Mexican American narrative, Manuel Trujillo receives a visit in the late summer afternoon from his *comadre* and former lover Petra. However, it is not Petra as she is in the current moment, but Petra as she was in her youth. The vision is not silent: "I heard her call out in a very low and serene voice as if she were very far away, 'Ay, dear one, the joy of my youth.'" (2001, 122). For Trujillo, Petra's sudden and youthful appearance signals her death; therefore he is not surprised when his cousin arrives the next day to tell him that Petra has been sick for a long time and is now gone.

A. Gabriel Meléndez and Juan Rulfo narrate the presences of ghosts caught between worlds. They also reveal traces of why the Greater Mexican borderlands are seething with haunted presences, unable to rest calmly with the narratives and practices

of U.S. history and policy. U.S. imperialism and Mexican resistance are two significant elements these accounts have in common. It is also why they are haunted. *Pedro Páramo* occurs in post-revolutionary, rural Jalisco. While a casual examination of the Mexican Revolution might lead one to believe the world's first social revolution was a civil war fought between los federales and recognized, revolutionary leaders such as Venustiano Carranza, Francisco Madero, Francisco "Pancho" Villa, Emiliano Zapata, it is important to remember the aim of México's Revolution was to remove U.S. and European foreign investors and settlers from Mexican lands.[11] As Michael J. Gonzales argues in *The Mexican Revolution: 1910-1940*,

> [Mexican president Porfirio Díaz] violated every imaginable principle of liberal democracy [when he] offer[ed] government support to foreign-owned enterprises . . . As U.S. capital, technology and personnel poured into Mexico, key sectors of the national economy came under American control. The most aggressive American investors recognized that Díaz's polices granted them unprecedented opportunities in Mexico. As William Randolph Hearst wrote to his mother, 'I really don't see what is to prevent us from owning all of Mexico and running it to suit ourselves' (2002, 8).

Hearst whose family owned thousands of acres of land to support cattle ranches in northern México in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century is just one example of hundreds of wealthy U.S. businessmen who exemplify an attitude of entitlement toward Mexican land and resources. U.S. desire to own México is an imperialist one. The Mexican Revolution was in part a rebellion against U.S. capital and imperialism.

"Sombras de la Jicarita" alludes to another popular uprising against U.S. imperialism in Greater México. This uprising occurs in New Mexico, formerly the northern frontier of México. Before Petra's spirit travelled across the valleys of northern New Mexico to visit the narrator Manuel Trujillo, he "picked up a book . . . about

Vicente Silva's gang of bandits" (2001, 122).[12] This small phrase alludes to one of the most significant outbreaks of mexicano resistance in the U.S. Southwest – las Gorras Blancas.[13] Like the Mexican Revolution, the People's Movement or las Gorras Blancas fought to expel wealthy outsiders. As Anselmo Arellano explains: "Since about 1880, Anglo parties interested in ranching interests had been purchasing land from some of the heirs of the original colonists . . . These outside settlers had their own concepts of land tenure, and they began to claim complete ownership. Furthermore, they fenced the land they claimed within the grant" (2000, 61). Throughout the 1880s and into the early 1890s, las Gorras Blancas destroyed "fences that restricted access to communal grazing and water" on the Las Vegas Land Grant. In support of mexicano railroad workers, they also burned and destroyed railroad ties and bridges and encouraged railroad workers to strike (66-7).[14]

Although separated by decades and the México-U.S. geopolitical border, "Sombras de la Jicarita" and *Pedro Páramo* are linked by the unrelenting presence of ghosts whose marginalized mexicana/o bodies are figures of resistance – they haunt the landscape of U.S. history. They act as reminders to us that the United States is a nation built on imperialism and colonialism. While colonialism and imperialism have not been critically engaged in the historical narrative of the United States, Manifest Destiny is a key component of dominant U.S. history.[15] In this history, there are two essential components of Manifest Destiny – "territorial expansion and the mission of democracy" (1997, 10). Taking these components into consideration, Manifest Destiny appears harmless, even beneficial for those who come under its force. However as Juan Rulfo, A. Gabriel Mélendez and other writers studied in this dissertation demonstrate, the legacy of

Manifest Destiny was not harmless and certainly not beneficial for the hundreds of thousands of mexicana/os and their descendents who remained in the greater Mexican borderlands. Therefore, it is crucial the legacy of Manifest Destiny be understood as one of U.S. imperialism.

Legal scholar Laura E. Gómez clearly states the connection between empire and Manifest Destiny: "Colonialism was central to the origin of Mexican Americans. Manifest Destiny fueled American imperialism and the expansion west and south in México" (2007, 4). These narratives shed light on the intersection between Mexican Americans, colonialism and imperialism in the México-U.S. borderlands by re-membering our *mexicana/o* ancestors in and resurrecting their ghostly presences in order to dismember and resist a hegemonic U.S. narrative that forgets the U.S. invasion, occupation and colonization of México, mexicana/os.[16]

I choose to begin my study of Mexican American expressive culture by illustrating the connection between autoethnography and the legacy of U.S. colonialism in the Southwest borderlands. The appearance of ghosts, however, is not only one of resistance. I argue ghosts also exist in Mexican American expressive culture because their presence provide us with a secure sense of place and identity in a national landscape where we otherwise do not feel secure – where we feel under constant surveillance either because of the lightness or darkness of our skin, the degree to which we do or do not speak English or Spanish. Mexican American identity forms in the gaps at each of these points. It is at these crossroads where ghosts become visible.

I. The Autoethnographic Impulse

This study claims Mexican American autobiographical narratives are suffused with an autoethnographic impulse because they write back not only to articulate a counternarrative to Euro-American hegemony in the Southwest, but also to reveal the inner workings of the formation of Mexican American subjectivity. This concern with the Mexican American construction of the subject in Mexican American life narrative is a concern with the self/auto.[17] In addition to writing the Mexican American self, the life narratives in this dissertation also record the details of *mexicano* culture in the Greater Mexican borderlands; thus they are also ethnographic.

According to Mary Louise Pratt in *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, autoethnographic expression is a widespread phenomenon in the "colonial frontier" (1992, 6). Therefore, it is inevitable that autoethnographic life narratives would appear in the México-U.S. borderlands. The México-U.S. border is also a "colonial frontier" which Pratt argues is synonymous with "contact zone, [a] space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict" (Pratt 1992, 6-9).[18] *Mexicana/o* and Mexican American autoethnographic autobiographies rise out of these adverse and often violent interactions.[19]

Autoethnography "refer[s] to instances in which colonized subjects undertake to represent themselves in ways that *engage with* the colonizer's own terms . . . Often such texts constitute a group's point of entry into metropolitan literature culture" (Pratt 1992, 7-8).[20] Pratt also argues that even though autoethnographic texts engage with the colonizer's terms, the practice of autoethnography is a site of resistance against

colonialism (1992, 9). In addition, anthropologist Deborah Reed-Danahay maintains that "one of the main characteristics of an autoethnographic perspective is that the autoethnographer is a boundary-crosser [or border-crosser]" (1997, 3). Several mexicana/o and Mexican American life narratives in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are consistent with these descriptions of autoethnographic expression. So why does Mexican American expressive culture allow ghosts to speak? Why are ghosts both embodied and bodied determined to make their absence known? I begin in the recent and past of 1835 and the particular story of Juan Nepomuceno Seguín. As my Introduction illustrates, the moment of the Texas Revolution is critical to the formation of my Mexican American identity and the ways in which I understand autobiographical text. It is also crucial to the formulation of the absent presence and its role in the formation of Mexican American subjectivities. Juan Nepomuceno Seguín is a critical, but often missing piece of this historical moment in both Texas and U.S. history.

Figure 2: Juan Nepomuceno Seguín by Jefferson Wright, 1838

Juan N. Seguín resisted the Mexican government and believed Texas could be an ideal site of political democracy. In *A Revolution Remembered* (2002), Seguín writes: "A native of the city of San Antonio de Béxar, I embraced the cause of Texas at the sound of the first cannon which foretold her liberty, filled an honorable role within the ranks of the conquerors of San Jacinto, and was a member of the legislative body of the Republic" (2002, 73). Seguín attempts to defend himself against a U.S. audience who he fears might

not understand why he, a fourth-generation tejano, fought against México during the Texas Revolution, and then fought against the United States during the U.S.-México War.[21] In a further effort to prevent his audience from perceiving his actions as treason, he directly appeals to the reader: "I address myself to the American people, to that people impetuous as the whirlwind when aroused by the hypocritical clamors of designing men but just, impartial, and composed whenever men and facts are submitted to their judgment" (2002, 73). *A Revolution Remembered* exemplifies Seguin's autoethnographic desire to write back to the United States and engage with the colonizer on the colonizer's own terms (Pratt 1992, 7-8). Like a man on trial, Seguín submits the facts of his case to the Euro-American people and asks that he be given reprieve for his crimes. Yet, what exactly are his crimes?

As the opening lines of his memoir point out, he began his political career on the side of the Euro-Americans in Texas; however, as time passes and the fortunes of *mexicanas/os* in Texas and the U.S. Southwest change, Seguín changes sides and fights on the side of México during the U.S.-México War (1846-1848). Eventually, Seguín lives in both Texas and México but is consistently considered a traitor by two groups of people: the *mexicanos* who fought under Santa Anna in the war for Texas Independence and the Euro-Americans who fought against México during the U.S.-Mexico War. I ask the question again. What are his crimes? For the answer, let us turn to Seguín's narrative:

> A victim to the wickedness of a few men whose false pretenses were favored because of their origin and recent domination over the country, a foreigner in my native land, could I stoically be expected to endure their outrages and insults? Crushed by sorrow, convinced that only my death would satisfy my enemies, I sought shelter among those against whom I had fought. I separated from my country, parents, family, relatives and friends and, what was more, from the

> institutions on behalf of which I had drawn my sword with an earnest wish to see Texas free and happy (2002, 73-4).

Seguín feels compelled to justify his actions in order to be allowed to live unmolested in Texas, which after 1845 is now part of the United States.[22] Yet, Seguín's desire to be what he once was – "a proud Mexicano and a loyal Tejano" – is now impossible (Montejano 1987, 26). As David Montejano argues:

> The political alliance between Mexicans and Anglos in Texas, the alliance that made Lorenzo de Zavala the first vice-president of the republic for a few days, began unraveling soon after the rout of Santa Anna's army at San Jacinto. A spirit of revenge and abandon prevailed in the young republic, and many ex-soldiers carried out raids that claimed the land, stock and lives of Mexicans, ally and foe alike. Many of the victims had fought alongside the Anglo colonists . . . 'Many lost their grants, and all lost their ideal – The Republic of Texas.' (26).

During the course of the Texas Revolution, Juan N. Seguín and Sam Houston established a strong political alliance. After the Battle of San Jacinto in March 1836, Sam Houston, ordered Seguín to take command of San Antonio and to accept the surrender of the defeated *mexicano* army. Houston also gave Seguín orders to oversee the withdrawal of all Mexican troops from Texas and to raise a battalion to defend Texas's frontier. Yet, as Seguín reminds us, the intrusion of Commander Felix Huston, an "American straggling adventurer" reveals how easily these political alliances can be shattered (de la Teja 2002, 31). Huston arrived in San Antonio in October 1836. By November, he argued to Sam Houston that "because [Seguín] cannot speak our language" he no longer deserved to lead Texas forces (de la Teja 2002, 31). Huston then tried to usurp Seguín's command and evacuate and destroy San Antonio. Seguín understood Huston's intention was to clear San Antonio of its tejana/o population and redistribute the land to new Euro-American immigrants. Consequently, he appealed to Sam Houston and his command of

San Antonio was retained; however, Huston and his associates became lifelong enemies of Seguín. Six years later, on the eve of the U.S.-México War Seguín is mayor of San Antonio and must reprimand several Euro-American immigrants who are squatting on Texas land. Ousting the men off of these properties is his last action as mayor. The squatters are now enemies determined to get revenge. Seguin leaves San Antonio and advises other *tejano* families to do the same. Tejana/o families are no longer safe in San Antonio. Angry Euro-Americans write letters to Sam Houston explaining that Seguín has joined the Mexican Army. They accuse him of murdering three Euro-American soldiers at Sulphur Springs.[23] As Montejano points out, Seguín and his family were no exception. They were just one of several hundred mexicano families Euro-Americans forced out of San Antonio during the nineteenth century.

> By 1856, San Antonio had been half-deserted by its Mexican population . . . The American settlers, in speaking of Mexicans, constantly distinguished themselves as 'white folks . . . White folks and Mexicans were never made to live together . . . [Mexicans] were getting so impertinent, and were so well protected by the laws, that the Americans would just have to get together and drive them all out of the country' (1987, 29).

One of Seguín's impulses to write his memoir is to justify his existence as a *mexicano* and a U.S. citizen-subject who was loyal to both Texas and the United States. However, Seguín's experience in the Texas Revolution illustrates it is impossible to be *mexicana/o* in the United States after the annexation of Texas.[24] As Genaro M. Padilla points out in *My History, Not Yours: The Formation of Mexican American Autobiography* Seguín's memoir "trace[s] the personal and collective trauma produced by the American annexation . . . material loss measured against cultural continuity, memory of prior stability rooted in an idea of home buttressed against dispossession and

alienation" (1993, 71). *A Revolution Remembered* tracks the making of the *mexicana/o* subject into the making of the Mexican American subject. This is the crime Juan N. Seguín commits against the United States – becoming Mexican American.

In *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism*, Reginald Horsman narrates the historical moment of 1848 and captures the anti-Mexican sentiment that circulated throughout U.S. centers of power. Just a few weeks before the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo and the subsequent incorporation of 100,000 Mexicans into the Union, Senator John C. Calhoun of South Carolina delivered the following speech to Congress: "'We have never dreamt of incorporating into our Union any but the Caucasian race – the free white race'" (qtd. in Horsman 1981, 241). According to Senator Calhoun, "Mexicans . . . [are] a race largely Indian," and to incorporate a group so different from the Euro-American into the United States would cause "certain destruction to [U.S.] political institutions" (Horsman 1981, 241). Without doubt, Seguín's *A Revolution Remembered* is prompted by Seguín's tense position in the contact zone of the newly-constructed Mexican America. We witness the *mexicano* Juan Nepomuceno Seguín attempt to become the more palatable Mexican American John N. Seguín. Yet, Mexican American is not an identity he easily accepts. As we have seen, Seguín is comfortable with tejano, mexicano, or American; none of which are possible for him in nineteenth-century Texas. As a result, he must manipulate his autobiographical narrative in order to become acceptable to his Euro-American audience in Texas. How does he do this? Seguín rejects his Spanish name Juan and signs his memoirs with the more *American*-sounding John N. Seguín. He rejects racial markers such as his name –

those signs that might link him to a non-English speaking, indigenous heritage. Seguín longs to be a Mexican American in Texas again.

Seguín's life narrative exposes disturbing complexities in the formation of Mexican American subjectivity. His narrative reveals the several, ambiguous negotiations Seguín was willing to make in an effort to return to his home. Juan N. Seguín is willing to give up his Mexican name, if giving up his name will allow him to be a *tejano* again. A large portion of *A Revolution Remembered* consists of Seguín's correspondence. These letters serve to confirm his status as a significant figure in Texas history – one that should no longer be ignored in the conventional accounts. His final communication, written in June 1890, two months before his death, describes the scene inside the Alamo: "The day following the arrival of Santa Ana, the bombardment was vigorously commenced and lasted three days. Finding ourselves in such a desperate situation, Col. Travis resolved to name a messenger to proceed to the town of Gonzalez and ask for help, thinking that Sam Houston was then at that place" (2002, 194). Seguín describes meetings with James Bowie and James Bonham in the rest of this letter. This last example of Seguín's autobiographical writing comes to us from his final home as an exile in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, México. It is addressed to Texas educator and historian William Winston Fontaine. Clearly, in this correspondence with Fontaine, Seguín is still trying to prove his significance to Texas history. By 1890, the figures of Bonham, Bowie, Houston and Travis were iconic. For Seguín to associate himself directly with these Euro-American defenders of the Texas Republic in his memoir is not accidental. He is more interested in being associated with a Euro-American past of 1830s Texas, than the *mexicano* present of 1890. Seguín hopes these final letters will help him in his appeal to be allowed to return

to the country of his birth safely. Yet, none of Seguín's appeals are successful and he dies in Nuevo Laredo so close to his native Texas where his father, grandfather and great-grandfather were born.

Seguín, according to Genaro Padilla,

> came to represent the strain and tear of intercultural division; he became the prototypical Mexican American subject on which racial hostilities commenced and were to be executed on succeeding generations; he became the figure in the flesh of people made foreigners in their native land . . . He had discovered that his idea(l) of an independent Texas Republic, jointly ruled by Anglo-American and native Tejanos, was only a delusion (1993, 67).

For this "delusion," Seguín bore the label of traitor after death and even then was allowed no rest. After his burial in Nuevo Laredo, his body was exhumed and reburied in Seguín, Texas on 4 July 1976 (2002, 54). Becoming the "prototypical Mexican American subject" meant Seguín's experience of "dispossession and alienation" became the conventional experience of Mexican Americans in the nineteenth and early twentieth century (Padilla 1993, 71). Seguín's encounter with "dispossession and alienation" within the United States is not the sole factor motivating *A Revolution Remembered*. Although Seguín is in México, he is uneasy there. He is not *mexicano*. This is what motivates his autoethnography.

Because of this experience of "dispossession and alienation," I argue Mexican America turned to the genre of autoethnographic autobiography as a means of affirming cultural agency and resisting the normative discourses of Euro-American autobiography and history that discount the significance of storytelling and other non-Western cultural traditions (Kaplan 1992, 125-127). Following Seguín's *A Revolution Remembered*, hundreds of Mexican American writers make their life narratives known in various sites

across the newly incorporated U.S. Southwest. These sites include numerous publications in Spanish-language newspapers in California, southern Arizona, southern Colorado, New Mexico and Texas. In his extensive analysis of Nuevomexicano newspapers, A. Gabriel Meléndez argues: "*Neo-Mexicano* biographical profiles emerge in the print discourse of *Neo-Mexicano* newspapers as an extremely important field of representation that register *nativo* civic participation in the affairs of their society" (1997, 113).[25] Biographical sketches, Meléndez reminds us, are examples of "positive self-representation in the face of hegemonic effacement" (1997, 113). These numerous narrators of the Spanish-speaking communities of the U.S. Southwest are telling the *historias* of their people as acts of resistance in the contact zone. These multiple autobiographical sites also become autoethnographic sites. The fusion of the (I) of autobiographical narrative and the (we) of community history was not a new concept to the Mexican American historian as the nineteenth century became the twentieth century. In the preface to his biography of southern Colorado politician Casimiro Barela, José E. Fernández wrote: "'*Biografiar es historiar* [to write biography is to write history]'" (qtd. in Meléndez 1997, 112). Fernández's 1911 declaration echoes a trend that occurs throughout this dissertation. An autoethnographic impulse exists within Mexican American life narrative. Resistance to the hegemonic and imperialist narratives of Euro-America motivates the autoethnographic impulse in Mexican American autobiography; however, the politics of resistance are not the only force inspiring Mexican American autoethnographic life narrative. The politics of community also inspire Mexican American life writing.

II. ¡Viva Los Muertos!: The Visible Work of Ghosts in Mexican American Autobiography

In *Raising the Dead: Readings of Death and (Black) Subjectivity*, Sharon Patricia Holland argues that "[e]mbracing the subjectivity of death allows marginalized peoples to speak about the unspoken – to name the places *within* and *without* their cultural milieu where . . . they have slipped between the cracks of language" (2000, 4-5). The Mexican American life narratives included in this dissertation resurrect and invite the dead and the ghosts that signify their absence into narrative space. Through these resurrections, these narratives re-member a marginalized, Mexican American history; yet, los muertos do not exist only to fill in the gaps of normative Euro-American history. Mexican American autobiographers such as Patricia Preciado Martin and Cleofas Jaramillo populate their accounts with memories of relatives, friends and ancestors. For both autobiographers, *los muertos* are the ideological force prompting each narrative into action. I believe Martín and Jaramillo are examples of a process that exists in Mexican American autobiography overall. I also incorporate a discussion of Rosa Linda Fregoso in this section because I argue *MeXicana Encounters: the Making of Social Identities on the Borderlands* (2003) exemplifies a less traditional autobiographical narrative – an autoethnographic cultural study. For each of these three writers, Martín, Jaramillo and Fregoso visual imagery is critical. Each writer includes personal photographs in her story.

Before we begin a discussion of haunting and how it relates specifically to the Mexican American autoethnographies included here, it is necessary to look at the relationship between haunting/ghostly presences and visual imagery in general.

In *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Roland Barthes argues there are two elements to a photograph – *studium* and *punctum*. *Studium* "doesn't mean, at least not immediately, 'study,' but application to a thing, taste for someone, a kind of general, enthusiastic commitment of course, but without special acuity" (1980, 26). In other words, the *studium* is a general interest in content. As Barthes emphasizes that interest in content is not without a genuine enthusiasm, but it does not possess a gripping acuteness either. For Barthes, the acuteness comes in the *punctum*, which he describes as the "element that will break (or punctuate) the *studium* (1980, 26). Regarding the *punctum*, Barthes further explains:

> This time it is not I who seeks it out (as I invest the field of the *studium* with my sovereign consciousness), it is this element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me. A Latin word exists to designate this wound, this prick, this mark made by a pointed instrument: the word suits me all the better in that it also refers to the notion of punctuation, and because the photographs I am speaking of are in effect punctuated, sometimes even speckled with these sensitive points; precisely, these marks, these wounds are so many *points*. This second element which will disturb the *studium* I shall therefore call *punctum*; for *punctum* is also: sting, speck, cut, little hole – and also a cast of the dice. A photograph's *punctum* is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me) (1980, 26-7).

Unlike the *studium*, whose content the spectator can knowingly search for, the *punctum* is the element of the photograph that can reach out and determine a space for itself in the spectator – a space that the spectator was unconscious of until the s/he was confronted by the *punctum*. But what of the relationship between the photograph, its elements, death and the haunting that may arise from the perusal of photographs?

According to Avery Gordon,

> the ghost is not simply a dead or a missing person, but a social figure, and investigating it can lead to that dense site where history and subjectivity make social life. The ghost or the apparition is one form by which something lost, or

> barely visible, or seemingly not there to our supposedly well-trained eyes, makes itself known or apparent to us (1997, 8).

Ghosts, or *los muertos,* exist at the crossroads of history and subjectivity formation. They make the invisible visible. In the case of Mexican American autoethnographic autobiography, I argue the presence of mexicana/o ghosts makes visible our mexicana/o history. Gordon states: "To write ghost stories implies that ghosts are real, that they produce material effects. To impute a kind of objectivity to ghosts implies that, from certain standpoints, the dialectics of visibility and invisibility involve a constant negotiation between what can be seen and what is in the shadows" (1997, 17). Gordon's dialectics of visibility and invisibility capture the politics of Mexican American autoethnographic autobiography. Gordon writes: "[Haunting] is a case of . . . inarticulate experiences, of symptoms and screen memories, of spiraling affects, of more than one story at a time, of the traffic in domains of experience that are anything but transparent and referential" (1997, 25). This layering of experiences and stories is one of the themes that permeate each autobiographical narrative in this study. None of the autobiographies included here concern themselves with following a chronological timeline. Instead, they treat memory like concentric circles. There is the point at which the memory pricks and from that point emanates all related memories. The ghostly presence can also have spiraling effects, which move downward, or archaeologically, as well. This archaeological spiral takes the analysis into an interpretation of Mexican American culture and history.

The presence of ghosts in Mexican America make an invisible mexicano past visible. This is the purpose of the ghostly in Mexican American expressive culture. It is

absolutely crucial to remember that we are not talking about ghosts as supernatural entities; rather, in this dissertation, I am looking at ghosts as presences that serve a sociological function. They exist to illuminate the places in Mexican American identity formation where subjectivity and racial identity form. It is in these crossroads where photograph, memory, narrative and Mexican American identity begin to intertwine. Each narrative looks to a combination of visual and remembered imagery to illuminate missing presences. Sometimes these missing presences are quite local and quite personal – a dead father, a missing wife. But what might be their more global meanings? If we, as Mexican Americans have historically been excluded from the narrative of the United States, then does not all of our writing concern our exclusion? If mainstream U.S. history as not attempted to make us invisible (and they have), then does not all of our writing write against our invisibility? And if these conditions are true, then are we not all writing ghost stories of some sort? And what exactly does it mean to write ghosts? Once again, the sociological functions of ghosts and hauntings return.

In *MeXicana Encounters: the Making of Social Identities on the Borderlands*, cultural critic Rosa Linda Fregoso resurrects the Mexican American ghosts of her South Texas past in order to repopulate that past with a Mexican American presence. Corpus Christi has forgotten its *Tejana/o* past. Fregoso is recovering the Mexican American presence from the margins of official Texas history. Fregoso documents her Mexican American family's role in the movie industry in South Texas. In the early twentieth century, two generations of Fregoso's tíos were film projectionists and small business owners. She locates these great-uncles in the oral histories of her grandmother Angelita. Fregoso must rely on her grandmother's historia because Mexican Americans business

owners do not exist in the official records of South Texas history. She describes the following encounter:

> The Chicana librarian is startled by my request. ‘There are no books in the library about Mexican American business,’ she whispers to me. In April of 1996 I am searching Corpus’s public library for book, newspaper, or magazine accounts of the old Mexican merchant class, my ancestors, and for any archival evidence of Mexican theaters, nickelodeons, or movie houses in the early twentieth century, or at the very least for written acknowledgement of their existence . . . I would not find any evidence of the Teatro Juárez, which Angelita remember (2003, 160).

The absence of Mexican American businesses in official historical narrative haunts Angelita as much as it haunts Fregoso. Both women want to recover the “lost memories of the Mexicans *de este lado*” (150). Not the stories of Mexican Americans as victims or exploited, indiscernible cheap labor, but as those individuals who built Texas industry and created Texas culture. Fregoso is driven by her grandmother’s stories of barrio movie houses. She wants to know who the projectionists were; who the owners of the theaters were, and even more who made up their audiences (151). Her desire to research Mexican American cinema and the Mexican American film audience reaches far back into her cultural and familial history in Texas. Fregoso is haunted by the Mexican American presence made invisible by official history. It is her charge to make these *Tejana* histories visible. She writes: “Thirty years later as I document Mexican visibility I too am haunted by ghosts of Corpus Christi’s old Mexican barrios, the human actors in a history I never lived” (2003, 150). Fregoso’s “MeXicana” ghosts re-member the forgotten stories of her south Texas past – the invisible becomes visible.

Reversing the long history of colonialist history in the U.S. Southwest is not a straightforward task. As Emma Pérez maintains in *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing*

Chicanas Into History (1999), Mexican American historians have often been complicit in our own marginalization. Pérez writes:

> Chicana/o historiography has been circumscribed by the traditional historical imagination. This means that even the most radical Chicano/a historiographies are influenced by the very colonial imaginary against which they rebel . . . Historians who are more traditional in their approach often claim that history is an objective science. When writing the history of the Southwest, the historian who accepts the notion of objectivity can often ignore the colonial relations that are already in place (1999, 5-6).

According to Pérez, the antidote to objective, colonialist historiography is "[t]he subjectivity introduced by Chicanas/os and Native Americans of the Southwest" (1999, 6). This introduction has forced the "detached observer, writer, historian to examine the ways in which the colonial imaginary is structuring the very form of their/our objectivity by compelling authors to situate themselves in the making of the 'frontier' (1999, 6). Each narrator included in my analysis, situates himself/herself at the beginning of her/his account. From the beginning of each account, each author positions himself/herself in relation to the story's action and how s/he fits into the picture of the México-U.S. frontera. These tactical maneuvers of narrative positioning allow each author some room to resist colonialist methodologies.

Resisting the methodology of objectivity through self-positioning is only one of the tactics Mexican American narrators utilize in their efforts to undo the colonialist projects of historical narrative. The other is the introduction of ghosts. These absent presences appear in memories, photographs and sometimes as ghostly presences. Regardless how they appear in the narrative, their function is the same – to disrupt the normative narrative of the U.S. Southwest and to reveal key moments in the subject formation of Mexican Americans in the Greater Mexican borderlands. This is the

sociological function of the Mexican American specter in the autoethnographic narratives of mexicanas/os in the United States.

Like Rosa Linda Fregoso, Patricia Preciado Martin described ancestral memory and historical recovery as the motivating impetus when she set out to interview Mexican American women in Southern Arizona for her oral history collection *Songs My Mother Sang to Me* (1992):

> I was guided by the certain knowledge that the history of the West and El Norte was chronicled by the male explorer, soldier, missionary priest, prospector, and warrior. If the history of this area has fallen short in documenting the women in general, how much greater the void relating to the history of the Mexican-American pioneer women of El Norte . . . This book was also motivated by very personal feelings – a love and respect for the richness and power of my Mexican heritage, and an abiding love for the memory of my maternal grandmother, Mercedes Rascón Romero . . . a *mestiza* of Tarahumara lineage, came to Clifton, Arizona, from Guerrero, Chihuahua (xxii-xxiv).

Although the Preface is the only section where Preciado Martin mentions her own family, her *Sonorense* and indigenous roots are an autoethnographic subtext to the Mexican American women she interviews.[26] Preciado Martin interviews ten women. Like her, all her interviewees trace their roots to Sonora, México. Several of the women are also descended from the tribes of northern México and the southwestern United States. In telling their stories, Preciado Martin is also telling her story.

Preciado Martin pieces these ten accounts into a mosaic that offers a revised portrait of Mexican American subject formation. She uses the memories and photos of each interviewee to re-member a counter narrative to the dominant narratives of history in the U.S. Southwest. An excellent example of this occurs in her interview with Rosalía Salazar Whelan. Salazar Whelan is the daughter of an Opata man and a *mexicana*.[27] She grew up in Aravaipa Canyon in the early 1900s.[28] While Salazar Whelan does briefly

mention the tense race relations between Euro-Americans, Mexican Americans and the indigenous in southern Arizona, the central thread of her storyline is ranch and farming culture: "All of us girls also learned to saddle and ride a horse at a very early age. We had quite a few horses as well as the cattle. From the time we were about fourteen years we helped with the plowing . . . My sister . . . was in charge of irrigating [the orchard]" (1992, 152-153). She goes on to describe every task each girl performed both outside the home and inside the home. This focus on the daily practices of ranch-life may appear apolitical but that is far from accurate. Salazar Whelan portrays a world where her indigenous father and *mexicana* mother are the norm, not the exception. By resurrecting the ancestral memories of her parents and grandparents, Salazar Whelan re-members a southern Arizona where indigenous people and mexicanas/os are not a disenfranchised, segregated population, but engaged members of an active, integrated community. Massacres such as the massacre against the Western Apache in Aravaipa Canyon in 1871 occurred; however, there are indigenous narratives of survival and prosperity despite such racial violence. Salazar Whelan's is one of these. Her family is an example of the many that survived in southern Arizona at the turn of the century. They were able to manipulate the racial policies of the time. Anthropologist Martha Menchaca writes:

> It is likely that a large percentage of the Christian Indians faded into the Mexican population and obtained the political privileges of Mexican *mestizos*. For several generations after the Gadsden Purchase was ratified the military left the Christian Indians alone, so that they had the opportunity to assume public identity. Many Indians probably did assume a Mexican identity . . . I propose that many former mission and Christian *ranchería* Indians were pressured to change their public ethnic identity to in order to avoid being killed, placed in bondage, reduced to paupers, or relocated to reservations. There was also a property incentive – Mexicans had the opportunity to submit land grant petitions, whereas Indians did not (2001, 257-58).

Salazar Whelan's father, a Mexican Indian and a Catholic, marries a mexicana and is able to acculturate into Mexican society. Although he fears he will be mistaken for Apache

Figure 3: Rosalia Salazar Whelan at her family's ranch in southern Arizona

and consequently fears for his life, he is able to negotiate the racial policies of Southern Arizona and the United States. He succeeds in being a more than able provider for his family. Epimenio Salazar also becomes a successful rancher and farmer, supplying livestock and food to the townspeople nearby. In providing her readers with other/Mexican American narratives of the frontier experience in the United States, Preciado Martin has interrupted the hegemonic frontier narrative of the U.S. West. In her revisionist narrative, Mexican American women, mexicanas/os, indigenous men and women are self-sufficient and productive. They are the agents of their own lives, their own histories.

Not only have Mexican American women been the agents of their own history, they have been and continue to be historians themselves. Determined to record and preserve the cultural traditions of her native New Mexico, Cleofas Jaramillo collected and published the folktales, fairytales and recipes of her nuevomexicano culture and family.[29] To publish these collections; however, was no small task. As Tey Diana Rebolledo points out, Jaramillo her work locally in order to oppose writers whose own writing on New Mexican culture often silenced the writing of nuevomexicanos/as (Rebolledo 1995, 38).[30] Jaramillo writes:

> I tried sending my manuscript to some of our Western universities. After holding it for several months, they would return it . . . One professor said he was writing a book. Would I permit him to use two or three of my stories in his book? . . . All they wanted was to read my manuscript and get ideas from it, so I decided to have it published by a small private press here in my city (2000, 168).

In 1955 Cleofas Jaramillo *Romance of a Little Village Girl* (2000) published her autobiography. With this publication, Jaramillo felt she accomplished “at least one thing – the [preservation] in writing [of] our rapidly vanishing New Mexico Spanish folk customs” (Jaramillo 2000, 168). Throughout *Romance of a Little Village Girl* which narrates Jaramillo’s experience from girlhood in Arroyo Hondo, New Mexico in the late nineteenth century through her later years in Santa Fe in the 1950s, Jaramillo documents these *nuevomexicano* folk customs. She details the feast day of San Geronimo at Taos Pueblo and the ceremonies of Holy Week. All of these descriptions exemplify the autoethnographic impulse in Jaramillo’s Mexican American life narrative. These autoethnographic descriptions are also compromising acts of resistance against Euro-American forces who would appropriate her cultural work and misrepresent it as their own. Genaro Padilla states:

> On the one hand, her work resisted the ‘rapid adoption of the modern Anglo customs by the new generation’ which eroded cultural practice; on the other, since one of these ‘Anglo customs’ was the fetishizing of Mexican American and Native American people, she unwittingly participated with them in constructing a version of culture that dehistoricized social relations, substituting a romanticized culture (1993, 199).

I agree with Padilla that Jaramillo’s autoethnographic work walked a fine line between resistance and accommodation; however, I submit that Jaramillo was fully aware of the romanticized Spanish past she constructed. I also maintain that her construction of the Spanish past contextualized and highlighted the unequal social relations of Jaramillo’s

autobiographical present. Describing the Santa Fe Fiestas of 1946, Jaramillo remembers the "eloquent" and "impressive" sermon delivered by Bishop Fitzsimmons of Amarillo:

> Recounting the historical incident of the reconquest of New Mexico by Gen. de Vargas, he mentioned the coincidence that this year we were also commemorating the centennial of the conquest by Gen. Kearney, and he mentioned the freedom and great progress which had come to our state through these two conquests. He said that New Mexico was on the verge of a new era with the discovery of the atomic bomb here on our soil" (2000, 181-182).

This recitation of Bishop Fitzsimmon's sermon seems unremarkable until this final comment on the subject which takes place during the next year's fiesta.

> The . . . Archbishop of Peoria . . . stressed the great need of spiritual solidarity among nations . . . Right here in this land which for centuries has cradled and bears so deeply, the imprints of the great religion of the world, its peace is now disturbed by the proximity of the atomic hatchery holding us for better or for destruction" (200, 190).

Jaramillo's final comment reveals the politics of resistance at work within these lengthy descriptions of the Santa Fe Fiestas. She has devoted six chapters to minute descriptions of fiestas and celebrations of Spanish conquest. As Padilla points out, these descriptions are meant to appeal to a Euro-American audience; yet, embedded within all of these descriptions of a romanticized Spanish past are phrases that expose her opposition to Euro-American hegemony in New Mexico. It is clear Jaramillo views Los Alamos and Trinity Site as disruptions of the peace and examples of Euro-American dominance in New Mexico.[31] It is also evident that she equates the entrance of the nuclear age in New Mexico with the invasion of New Mexico by the United States in 1846. She does not agree with Archbishop Fitzsimmons that the arrival of the U.S. into the Mexican North signaled freedom and progress. Instead, I argue she deliberately romanticizes the Spanish past in order to contradict normative Euro-American representations of a *mexicano* past.

These normative representations often depict colonial México as backward and vulgar. Jaramillo writes against these stereotypes.

Simultaneously, she is also aware that new arrivals to New Mexico are avid consumers of the Spanish heritage fantasy. Jaramillo knows she has to wrap her autoethnographic autobiography in the hispano packaging that will sell to tourists and scholars of the U.S. Southwest. Padilla writes:

> Forced by circumstances as well as encouraged by Anglos who yearned to see living representations of the romantic Spanish past, it is little wonder that like other women from once elite families, she would costume herself in 'old-fashioned' finery, silk shawls in an annual fashion show that glimmered of an imagined colonial golden age" (1993, 221-222).

From this constructed, romanticized position, she writes against Euro-American hegemony in New Mexico.

The desire to write against Euro-American hegemony and the desire to preserve nuevomexicano culture are two factors motivating Jaramillo to write her life narrative; yet, there is also a ghostly presence guiding her work. In 1925, Cleofas Jaramillo loses her husband Venceslau to illness. Jaramillo describes his death:

> As the cord of his life broke, I felt something rush into my hand. Was this undescribable thing something of my husband's spirit that passed into me, through my hand? Was this what gave me the courage and strength needed? Something appeared to be holding me up and leading me. It seemed to say: 'Your baby needs you, and there is work for you. Brace up' (2000, 128).

At this moment, Jaramillo's life narrative shifts from one recounting her experiences as a daughter and wife to one where she is alone, manipulating the discourses of culture that surround her in Santa Fe. Venceslau's spirit vivifies and strengthens her; he is the sociological ghost that enables her to manipulate and push back against the dominant and appropriating discourses of Euro-America in New Mexico during the twentieth century.

Although Venceslau's death is an autobiographical truth, it is also a narrative device. His spirit gives her the freedom to pursue her writing. As a *nuevomexicana* at the turn of the century, the endorsement of her husband is something society requires. Once again, the ghost performs a sociological task.

Tey Diana Rebolledo adds to this argument in *The Chronicles of Panchita Villa and Other Guerrilleras* (2005). Writing about the moment of Venceslau's death, Rebolledo states: "Aligning herself with her family, history, and community, she is, at last, able to transcend the sorrows and difficulties of her life and to become whole" (152). The ghostly presence provides Jaramillo the means to voice acts of resistance. At the same time, it also provides Jaramillo a connection to the community and thus a collective self. The ghost becomes the medium through which Jaramillo is able to re-member a dismembered Nuevomexicano past.

III. Conclusion: Resurrection

Avery Gordon writes:

> Haunting is an encounter in which you touch the ghost or the ghostly matter of things: the ambiguities, the complexities of power and personhood, the violence and the hope, the looming and receding actualities, the shadows of our selves and our society. When you touch the ghost or the ghostly matter (or when it touches you), a force that combines the injurious and the utopian, you get something different than you might have expected (1997, 134-135).

Each autoethnographic autobiography in this chapter resurrects los muertos. These resurrections have resisted the hegemony of Euro-America; they have also made visible the invisible presence of our mexicano pasts. In making the mexicano past visible, these ghosts reveal the formation of Mexican American subjectivity in autoethnographic autobiography as a palimpsest of social relations and histories. The "I" is no longer the

"I." Instead it is an intersection of communities, and selves, of "I(s)" and "eyes," each evoking a different memory in order to remember a new story, construct an identity that incorporates our mexicano past into our Mexican American future.

Chapter Two:
The Eyes/I(s) of *Tejas* are Upon You: Autoethnography and the Ghost in Greater México

They still sing of him – in the cantinas and the country stores, in the ranches when men gather at night to talk in the cool dark, sitting in a circle, smoking and listening to the old songs and the tales of other days. Then the guitarreros sing of the border raids and the skirmishes, of the men who lived by the phrase, 'I will break before I bend.'
Américo Paredes[32]

Los recuerdos de un poeta,
que la prisión fue su casa,
son de aquel profe muy neta
que trabajó por la Raza.

Ya con ésta me despido
como una espiga de trigo.
Siempre te recordaremos,
querido hermano y amigo.

Aquí termino estos versos
con el permiso de ustedes,
compuestos a un maestro,
Don Américo Paredes.
raúlrsalinas[33]

I. Frontejas: An Initial Encounter with Tejano Selves

Before I began my first year as a graduate student at the University of Texas, I knew nothing of Mexican American cultural studies in the United States.[34] During my undergraduate career at West Texas A&M University, I had taken countless courses in American, British and World literatures, but none of these courses included writings by Mexican American writers. I had lived in Texas my entire life. I grew up surrounded by my Mexican American family and I had never read any literature by a Mexican American. Américo Paredes' *With His Pistol in His Hand* (1958) was my first encounter with Mexican American writing. I read the book in one night and when I finished, I put it down, looked at its cover and started crying. I had never seen any aspect of my

experience as a Mexican American in print. Here it was. Forty years after its publication, *With His Pistol in His Hand* finally found me.

Beginning that semester, I started my journey into Mexican American Studies and at every step I have met Paredes and his multiple works. I also began to recognize the long legacy of writing the experience of Mexican America in Texas. In this chapter, I study the methodology and work of two well-known Mexican Texans, or as I will call them for the remainder of this chapter, Tejanos: Américo Paredes' *With His Pistol in His Hand: A Border Ballad and Its Hero* and José E. Limón's *Dancing with the Devil: Society and Cultural Poetics in Mexican-American South Texas* (1994). I argue Paredes and Limón utilize autoethnographic methodologies in order to present a depiction of Mexican Texas that is authenticated by their experiences as Tejanos. Additionally, I argue that both Paredes and Limón write ghostly autoethnographies. In both cases, an absent presence lurks in the margins of their works. These absent presences, or ghosts, reveal the complex formation of Tejanos, in particular, and Mexican Americans in general. For both Paredes and Limón, the U.S.-México border plays a central figure in their work.

Américo Paredes begins his collection of poems *Between Two Worlds* (1991) with the following poem:

> Muddy river,/muddy river,/Moving slowly down your track/With your swirls and counter-currents,/As though wanting to turn back, As though wanting to turn back,/As though wanting to turn back/Towards the place where you were born,/While your currents swirl and eddy,/While you whisper, whimper, mourn;/So you wander down your channel/Always on, since it must be,/Till you die so very gently/By the margin of the sea./All my pain and all my trouble/In your bosom let me hide,/Drain my soul of all its sorrow/As you drain the countryside,/For I was born beside your waters,/And since very young I knew/That my soul had hidden currents,/That my soul resembled you,/Troubled,

> dark, its bottom hidden/While its surface mocks the sun,/With its sighs and its rebellions,/Yet compelled to travel on./When the soul must leave the body,/When the wasted flesh must die,/I shall trickle forth to join you,/In your bosom I shall lie;/We shall wander through the country/Where your banks in green are clad,/Past the shanties of rancheros,/By the ruins of old Bagdad,/Till at last your dying waters,/Will release their hold on me,/And my soul will sleep forever/By the margin of the sea (15-16).[35]

Américo Paredes was nineteen when he wrote "The Rio Grande." Although much time would pass between the poem's publication in the *Valley Morning Star* and the publication of the groundbreaking *With His Pistol in His Hand*, it is clear that the same "hidden currents" which compelled him to write "The Rio Grande" were still compelling him to write more than twenty years later. B.V. Olguín and Omar Vásquez Barbosa discuss this poem in the Introduction to *Cantos de Adolescencia* (2007): "This poem about a river with two names that functions as a border also serves as a metonym of Paredes' conflicted, life-long preoccupation with place, language, and the complexities of Mexican-American literature" (xxv). "The Rio Grande/El Río Bravo" utilizes the first person "I" and in doing so reveals insight into Paredes' creation of an autobiographical self. John Paul Eakin describes the process of the formation of self: "In forming our sustaining sense of self, we draw on models of identity provided by the cultures we inhabit" (1999, 46). Paredes inhabits U.S.-México border culture. This conflicted space informs his formation of self. "The Rio Grande/El Río Bravo" makes this quite clear. The border was (and remains) a marginal and often violent space.

Hector Calderón and José Rosbel López-Morin remind us that Texas, "was a place where white supremacy reigned . . . In Texas, Anglos and Mexicans lived in separate worlds, Mexican Town and Anglo Town, with specific rules defining the proper place for Mexicans" (201). In an interview conducted by Calderón and López-Morin,

Paredes' talks of his early years, which were marked by his movement between these separate worlds:

> During the summers, my younger brothers and I, we all went across the river to a ranch that would have been my father's if my father had decided to stay in the country . . . We stayed over there for almost three months and they were living in an almost completely Mexican rural environment. Of course, when we would come back the other nine months would be in between. School was an Anglo environment and home was a combination of both (2000, 203).

Paredes would spend the rest of his life straddling the Mexican Texan/ Anglo Texan border with pen in hand, of course. But exactly what kind of narratives did Paredes write? And how can we read them? In this chapter, I argue that Paredes' *With His Pistol in his Hand* demonstrates an autoethnographic impulse; therefore, I argue, it is an autoethnography. I also posit that Paredes is the ghost, or absent presence lurking in the margin of his own autoethnographic text.

José E. Limón's *Dancing with the Devil: Society and Cultural Poetics in Mexican-American South Texas* (1994) is more obvious than *With His Pistol in His Hand*. Limón intends to write an autoethnography of "Is/Eyes." The first half of *Dancing with the Devil* traces the legacy of ethnography in Texas. Limón devotes these first four chapters to an analysis of four of Texas' most prolific and influential ethnographers: John Gregory Bourke, J. Frank Dobie, Jovita González and Américo Paredes. His analysis of these four key figures in the study of Texas culture, specifically the relationship between Tejanos and Euro-Americans is thorough. From Limón's study, the reader extracts the cultural maneuvers in the making of Texas. Within Limón's analysis of these cultural maneuvers, there is also an absent presence lingering in the margins. Like Paredes, I argue Limón has also positioned himself as the absent presence in the margins of his own

work. He is the ghostly figure inhabiting two important gaps: the gap between the United States and México and the gap between insider and outsider.

II. The "Partial Truths" of Ethnography

Within the last thirty years, theories of ethnography have turned the focus in cultural anthropology toward the act of writing culture and away from "an ideology [that] claim[s] transparency of representation and immediacy of experience." (Clifford 1986, 2) In other words, the ethnographic project has shifted from one, which assumes that the immediate experience of the field will produce an objectively written account of culture, to an understanding that the act of writing culture is always an act of ambivalence. This act is ambivalent because culture itself is contested terrain. Culture, according to James Clifford, George E. Marcus, and Renato Rosaldo is not "an object to be described, [nor] is it a unified corpus of symbols that can be definitively interpreted" (19). Instead it is "composed of seriously contested codes and representations" (2). If we recognize dialogism and polyphony as one of the essential characteristics of these contested representations of culture, then we cannot fail but to question the "monophonic authority, [which has] been revealed as historically characteristic of a science that claimed to *represent* culture" (15). This question takes us away from the objective ethnographic eye in the field and toward the subjective "I" present at the scene of writing, which, in turn, illuminates the fictive, or self-fashioning, nature of the ethnographic writing process (6). To focus on the subject of ethnography is to focus on the question of subjectivity itself. And we cannot forget that "the fashioned, fictional self is always located with reference to its culture and coded modes of expression, its language" (142). Consequently, ethnographic subjectivity is composed of "participant-observation in a world of 'cultural

artifacts,' linked to a new conception of language or, better, languages, seen as discrete systems of signs" (142). This new conception of language is one that is heteroglossic and symptomatic of a world "where syncretism and parodic invention are becoming the rule, not the exception, an urban, multinational world of institutionalized transience . . . in such a world it becomes increasingly difficult to attach human identity and meaning to a coherent 'culture' or 'language'" (143). For Clifford, this is the predicament of culture (1988, 1-17). And within this new cultural paradigm, ethnography has become a hybrid activity—one, which appears as "writing, as collecting, as modernist collage, as imperial power, [and] as subversive critique" (Clifford 1988, 13).

In his essay "Post-Modern Ethnography: From Document of the Occult, to Occult Document," Stephen A. Tyler outlines the possibility of subversive ethnographic critique within the post-modern situation.

> [Because] the text can eliminate neither ambiguity nor the subjectivity of its authors and readers, it is bound to be misread... [Nevertheless the meaning of] the text's inherent failure to control ambiguity and subjectivity is that it provides good reason for rejecting the model of scientific rhetoric, that Cartesian pretense that ideas are effable in clear, unambiguous, objective, and logical expression, for the inner form of a text is not logical, except in parody, but paradoxical and enigmatic ... For post modern ethnography the implication is ... that its text will be projected neither in the form of this inner paradox nor in the form of a deceptive outer logic, but as the tension between them, neither denying ambiguity nor endorsing it, neither subverting subjectivity nor denying objectivity, expressing instead their interaction in the subjective creation of ambiguous objectivities that enable unambiguous subjectivity. The ethnographic text will thus achieve its purposes not by revealing them, but by making purposes possible (135-6).

Tyler views the contradictory situation of the post-modern ethnographic project optimistically. If the ethnographic text can learn to live comfortably within the paradoxes of its own situation, then it possesses the potential to be a multivalent text: "It will be a text of the physical the spoken, and the performed, an evocation of quotidian experience,

a palpable reality that uses everyday speech to suggest what is ineffable, not through abstraction, but by means of the concrete. It will be a text to read not with the eyes alone, but with the ears in order to hear 'the voices of the pages'" (137).

Like Tyler, Clifford situates ethnography "between powerful systems of meaning. It poses its questions at the boundaries of civilizations, cultures, classes, races, and genders. Ethnography decodes and recedes, telling the grounds of collective order and diversity, inclusion and exclusion. It describes processes of innovation and structuration, and is *itself* part of these processes" (2). If this is the state of ethnography in the contemporary moment, then it is within this state that ethnography must critique its own history if it is to remain a viable field. And because ethnography is both an object and subject of these double movements outlined by Clifford and Tyler, it does have potential to critique the ethnocentrism of its own past (Torres 2000, 153-5). However, in critiquing that ethnocentrism, ethnography finds itself in a double bind. Hector A. Torres writes:

> If ethnography exists to critique ethnocentrism, then by rigorous implication ethnography *cannot* fail to critique its own assumptions, among these, the desire to be a science of the Western humanities . . . Following one requirement, ethnography stands to give a better 'scientific' account of its object of study, human culture, the more it de-centers itself. However, the more it de-centers itself the more it would at the same time erase its authority as a science of the Western humanities. As a consequence, the necessity, logical and ideological, to perform—write—a scientific discourse *under* erasure makes it impossible for ethnography to produce scientific discourses except in the most ironic ways. For this reason it is possible to perceive in contemporary ethnography a resemblance to the postmodern narrative arts. Under erasure, ethnography appears radically de-centered, occupying a precarious position as a scientific discourse (Torres 2000, 155).

The key in this passage is irony. If ethnography can maintain an ironic discourse, then the redemption of the ethnographic project is possible. Irony, according to Michael M. J. Fischer, is perhaps one of the most definitive elements of the present condition of

knowledge (1986, 224). “Irony is a self-conscious mode of understanding and of writing, which reflects and models the recognition that all conceptualizations are limited, that what is socially maintained as truth is often politically motivated” (Fischer 1986, 224). Ethnic writers/ethnographers have often been the target of such politically motivated truths. Consequently, when Mexican American writers write, they write to escape from the oblivion of American history and restore a certain memory” (Torres 2000, 152). It is here where the contested terrain of cultural representation reveals itself, and it is also here where irony functions as a powerful cultural critique. Américo Paredes and José E. Limón understand both of these moments very well.

In his 1977 essay, "On Ethnographic Work Among Minority Groups: A Folklorist's Perspective," Paredes exposes the weakness of an "objective" ethnography that fails to problematize its relationship to the object of its study. This failure results in a misunderstanding and misreading of culture. Paredes writes:

> Anthropologists may need to reexamine the argument that they can give us substantially true pictures of a culture by following time-honored methods. And when the group under study is part of one of our own minorities, the situation takes on a good deal of urgency. It was one thing to publish ethnographies about Trobrianders or Kwakiutls half a century ago; it is another to study people who read what you write and are more than willing to talk back (1977, 75)

This is part of the predicament of ethnography. As outlined above, the contemporary ethnographic situation is one that makes the unbiased representation of a pure culture impossible. It also illustrates the collapse of the subject(I)/object(eye) duality upon which anthropology once rested. As Clifford Geertz reminds us, one of the major assumptions of anthropological writing was "that its subjects and its audience were not only separable but morally disconnected, that the first were to be described but not addressed, the second

informed but not implicated" (1984, 132). Paredes' and Limón's presence in the field, in the academy, and in their community confirms the fallacy of such assumptions. The "eye" and "I" are no longer radically disconnected.

III. Connecting the Eyes/Is: The Project of Auto/Ethnography

Nowhere is the collapse of the boundaries between the observing ethnographic eye and the participant subjective "I" more apparent than in auto/ethnography. It is the moment where the eyes/I(s) unite, however, paradoxically; it is also a moment that demands an acknowledgement of the power of language and representation. Many auto/ethnographies find themselves in this dilemma, and are forced to ask the following questions: What gives me the authority to write about my own community? How is my role as the ethnographic eye a perpetuation of the historical, oppressive power of anthropological representation? How can self-reflexivity help to critique the power structure, which enables me to study and write my own community? The practice of auto/ethnography and the auto/ethnographic perspective help to answer some of these questions.

Deborah Reed-Danahay defines one of the main characteristics of an auto/ethnographic perspective as one in which "the auto/ethnographer is a boundary-crasser, and can be [said to possess]... multiple, shifting identities" (1997, 2). But exactly what kind of boundaries does the auto/ethnographer cross—the boundaries between home and academy, center and periphery? These issues result from what Ohnuki-Tiemey calls the emergence of the "'indigenous ethnographer'" (9). Clifford writes:

> Insiders studying their own cultures offer new angles of vision and depths of understanding. Their accounts are empowered and restricted in unique ways. The diverse post- and neo-colonial rules for ethnographic practice do not necessarily

> encourage 'better' cultural accounts. The criteria for judging a good account have never been settled and are changing. But what has emerged from all these ideological shifts, rale changes, and new compromises is the fact that a series of historical pressures have begun to reposition anthropology with respect to its 'objects' of study. Anthropology no longer speaks with automatic authority for others defined as unable to speak for themselves . .. Other groups can less easily be distanced in special, almost always past or passing, times—represented as if they were not involved in the present world systems that implicate ethnographers along with the peoples they study. 'Cultures' do not hold still for their portraits. Attempts to make them do so always involve simplification and exclusion, selection of a temporal focus, the construction of a particular self-other relationship, and the imposition or negotiation of a power relationship (9-10).

While it is true that "nothing about being an insider of Mexican American [or any] culture guarantees that a writer can portray [that] experience with understanding or transform it into an aesthetically pleasing literary discourse," it is also true that the possibility and "necessity [for] performing] a continual critique of the language and intentions [of ethnography] remain open" (Torres 159). The absolute authority of anthropology to objectively represent has been undermined by the shift in focus to the act of writing, the rise of the native ethnographer, and the project of auto/ethnography.

Paredes understood the necessity of this critique which calls for an anthropology more capable of understanding the subtleties and nuances of Mexican American culture:

> Too much of the ethnographic work conducted among Mexican Americans has been aimed at compiling data by the most direct means possible—that of asking people for facts. Every utterance seems to have been received as communicating the information asked for and is duly noted as such, without taking too much into account either the rhetorical and figurative uses of language or the structure of any given speech event, which may demand one response rather than another (1977, 83).

Part of what has not been taken into consideration in the compiling of facts is the uneven power structure inherent in the relationship between ethnographer and informant. Because both parties are aware of the unequal distribution of power, "a large margin [is

left] for the operation [and perpetuation] of stereotypes" (Paredes 1977, 107). The rigorous practice of autoethnography can help to articulate, critique, and eventually lessen the margin of misrepresentation. As Mary Louise Pratt has suggested: "Texts or works of art that are auto/ethnographic assert alternative forms of meaning and power from those associated with the dominant, metropolitan culture" (Reed-Danahay 1997, 8). It is at this point where we can begin to consider the auto/ethnographic possibilities of Américo Paredes' foundational text *With His Pistol in his Hand*.

IV. "Con Su Pluma en su Mano": the Eye/I of Américo Paredes

In their interview, Calderón and López-Morin ask Paredes to once again outline the circumstances surrounding the publication of *With His Pistol in his Hand*:

> It began as my doctoral dissertation. . . Stith Thompson, who was then the most highly regarded folklore scholar. . . came here as a visiting professor ... He liked the manuscript and told me that he was recommending that it be published by the University of Texas Press . .. That was 1956 ... I went to Texas Western, which is now UT-E1 Paso. The director of the Press called me over there and told me they had the manuscript. They liked it very much, but they would insist on certain changes. That I would have to remove all my derogatory remarks about Dr. Webb ... Also, I had to remove all the criticism about the Texas Rangers because the Press felt that they might be sued. So I told the director: 'Well, Frank, why don't you just send the manuscript back.' I'm sure they thought I would publish it somewhere else. As a manuscript the University of Texas Press would not publish it (Calderon and Lopez-Morin, Interview with Américo Paredes (2000, 220-1).

If we put to use Pratt's idea that auto/ethnography can offer a critical counter narrative to the dominant discourse of society, then we can situate *With His Pistol in His Hand* within a discussion of the project of auto/ethnography. As Paredes outlines above, UT Press met his text with hesitancy because of its critique of the ethnographic practice in Mexican American communities. His demand that anthropology become a self-critical discipline, aware of both its biases as well as its inability to objectively, and accurately represent

culture predicted the change that would radically alter anthropology over the next half-century. As both a member of a community that had been subjected to the ethnographic gaze, and a member of the gazing, academic community, Paredes understood the need for critique. He also understood the way irony could function within such a critique.

In his essay, "Ethnicity and the Arts of Memory," Michael Fischer argues that irony, and ironic humor can serve as a "survival skill, a tool for acknowledging complexity, a means of exposing or subverting oppressive, hegemonic ideologies, and an art for affirming life in the face of objective troubles" (224). This is exactly how Paredes deploys irony in *With His Pistol in His Hand.* The first element of Paredes' ironic strategy is to go right to the source. He quotes at length from Walter Prescott Webb, the well-known [where?] and much-embraced [by whom?] historian/author of *The Texas Rangers in the Mexican War:*

> Without disparagement, it may be said that there is a cruel streak in the Mexican nature, or so the history of Texas would lead one to believe. This cruelty may be a heritage from the Spanish of the Inquisition; it may, and doubtless should, be attributed partly to the Indian blood . . . The Mexican warrior. . . on the whole, inferior to the Comanche and wholly unequal to the Texan" (Paredes 1958,17).

The second element of Paredes' strategy is to completely disarm the validity of Webb's misreading of Mexican Americans by using irony not only to mock Webb, but also to reveal the racism, and consequently undermine the values of Webb's "scholarship." Paredes writes: "Professor Webb does not mean to be disparaging. One wonders what his opinion might have been when he was in a less scholarly mood and not looking at the Mexican from the objective point of view of the historian" (17). Reading this passage through the ironic lens reveals Paredes' fundamental problem with anthropology and ethnography – its refusal to acknowledge its own subjectivity. By writing this kind of

subversive irony into the text within the relatively hostile environment of 1950s Texas, Paredes not only problematized the "objective" nature of ethnographic discourse, he also risked his career and his life. In the Calderón and López-Morin interview, Paredes remembered the immediate and violent reactions his book received upon publication:

> I used to meet [Webb] at that time after the book came out. The English Department was already in Parlin Hall and I had a class at noon. I would climb up to the mall and go along where the tower is and very often I would meet Webb coming from the other direction... He would look at me and if looks could kill I would have dropped dead right then and there When he saw me in a group he was very, very cordial. But when he met me, just him and me, it was a different story (226).

Paredes also recalls when a Texas Ranger physically threatened him: "[The Ranger] came to [UT] Press. [He] wanted my address to pistol-whip me. He wasn't going to waste a bullet on me ... I never met him, never saw him, but I knew that he was after my scalp. And there were a lot of others who would not have minded if something had happened to me" (226-7). So what was motivating Paredes to level these attacks despite the dangers they posed to his academic career, and most importantly, to his life as well?

Paredes reveals a specific moment, which motivated his desire to write back despite the danger. It concerns J. Frank Dobie's explanation of the word "mojado:"

> I remember when I was in grade school... I saw a kid running around the playground with a bunch of others chasing him. They finally caught him, held him down, so everyone could wet their fingers and touch the back of his ears. *¡Esta mojado!* Where the *mojado* was supposed to be *mojado* was the back of his ears because, obviously, he had been in the water and that is the last thing that dries out . . .[Dobie] said when the Mexican decided to come to Texas he swam the river and he was too stupid to take his clothes off. He swam across with his clothes on... So when he gets to the other side what does he do? Since he was a Mexican, he had to take a nap. He lies down on his back and the sun dried all his clothes, except his back. So when he gets up his back is still wet. That infuriated me... But I didn't have any outlet for that. Nobody in the paper would have taken an article from me on that (Calderón and López-Morin 225).

It is not so much the correct meaning of the word “mojado” that is the focus here, although it is certainly an important issue. What is an issue is the sense of personal injury and insult felt by Paredes *because* of Dobie's misreading. This narrative serves to illuminate one of the motivating factors of Paredes' writing. This desire to write back to a history that has historically ignored or misunderstood the Mexican American presence is one of the key moments in the formation of Mexican American autobiography (Padilla 1993, 29). In this moment, Américo Paredes articulates his position within the absented presence of Mexican America in the United States. From this space of absence, or as Sharon Patricia Holland says, this space of death (both literal and metaphorical), Paredes is able to disrupt the narrative of the mainstream. Even though *With His Pistol in His Hand* does not adhere to the conventional norms of autobiography as defined by James Olney in the first chapter of this study, it is still an autobiographical text.

It is undeniable that Paredes’ text is ethnography. He is present in the text as an informant, as an “eye” that gives us a glimpse into his community. He is also present as an “I” that appears sub-textually and engages in a direct dialogue with his audience. This is part of an auto/ethnographic project. According to Reed-Danahay:

> auto/ethnography stands at the intersection of three genres of writing which are becoming increasingly visible: (1) ‘native anthropology,’ in which people who were formerly the subjects of ethnography become the authors of studies of their own group; (2) ‘ethnic autobiography,’ personal narratives written by members of ethnic minority groups; and (3) ‘autobiographical ethnography,’ in which anthropologists interject personal experience into ethnographic writing (Reed-Danahay 1997, 2).

Clearly, Paredes’ *With His Pistol in His Hand* inhabits the first genre Reed-Danahay outlines. He is a ‘native anthropologist’ who entered the academy and re-wrote the study of his own community.

As the second genre of writing, ethnic autobiography is less apparent in the text, but it is undoubtedly present. José E. Limón writes: "*With His Pistol in His Hand* is, in effect, a new kind of corrido, one whose complex relationship to the past enabled it to speak to the present" (Limón 1992, 65). One of the key components of the Texas Mexican border corrido is, according to Paredes, a Tejano hero who, in conflict with the Euro-American is outnumbered and pistol in hand, defending his 'right' against the *rinches*" (1958,147). If this is a basic element to the corrido, and if *With His Pistol in his Hand* can be read as a corrido, then who is the hero of the corrido/text? Considering the conversations between Paredes, Calderón and López-Morin, described above, it is not difficult to read Paredes as the hero of the corrido/text. In the words of Tish Hinojosa, raúlrsalinas, and Victor Guerra, "with his pen in hand," Paredes defended his rights against the Euro-American academic establishment of the twentieth century. There is also a specific moment in Paredes' text that opens *With His Pistol in His Hand* to this possibility. Paredes raises the question of Gregorio Cortez's appearance: "I'd say he was not too dark and not too fair, not too thin and not too fat, not too short and not too tall; and he looked just a little bit like me" (34). While it is obvious that Paredes is trying to create the figure and predicament of Gregorio Cortez as one with which any Mexican American living on the border might identify, it is also true that this is one of the few moments in the text where Paredes uses the first person. If Paredes is the hero of *With His Pistol in his Hand*, and identifies with Gregorio Cortez, then is it not possible to consider the story of Gregorio Cortez as an allegory for the story of Américo Paredes himself? Reading the text this way sheds light on yet another angle of Paredes' auto/ethnographic project.

The third and final autoethnographic genre is autobiographic autoethnography, which is when anthropologists include personal narrative in their ethnographies. This is also a difficult moment to uncover in Paredes' corrido/text, however, it is present. In the book's poetic dedication, Paredes writes. "To the memory of my father/who rode a raid or two with/Catarino Garza/and to all those old men/who sat around on summer nights,/in the days when there was/a chaparral, smoking their/cornhusk cigarettes and talking/in low, gentle voices about/violent things while I listened" (Paredes 1958, 1). Once again, this is one of those rare moments in *With His Pistol in His Hand* where the first person is used. Paredes calls forth the communal memory of his past and from the margins of history resurrects the spirit of resistance in order to challenge the oppressive silence of the present. Within the dedication, the ghosts are at hand, ready to do their work of resistance. It also serves to locate Paredes at the scene of his study, as an insider. The insertion of the self-reflexive "I" functions as a way for Paredes to problematize the objective "eye." For ethnography, the inclusion of autobiography helps to articulate the contradictions of ethnography. Paredes understands this, and it is for this reason that he includes himself in the dedication. Consequently, his text inhabits another autoethnographic genre. Paredes makes it clear that he understands the political possibilities of autoethnography to problematize the eye/I relationship.

These three genres of writing are characteristic of the predicament of contemporary ethnography as I outlined above. All of them point to a blurring of the boundaries between subject/object, eye/I. Once again this is not to imply that the power of representation has neutralized, it is merely to point out anthropology and ethnography's historical failure to engage in a self-critique. As I pointed out earlier, this failure is part of

what recent ethnographic and auto/ethnographic writing has been trying to resolve. *With His Pistol in His Hand* begins this dialogue, and demands that anthropology and ethnography account for the contradiction presented by the discipline, which is, at the same time anthropology claimed objectivity, its failure to recognize its objects as subjects with agency resulted in texts that perpetuated stereotypical generalizations about culture—the exact thing anthropology, with all its scientificity, claimed to oppose.

V. The Ghost in the Devil's Clothes: José E. Limón's Autoethnographic I/Eye

In *Dancing With the Devil: Society and Cultural Poetics in Mexican American South Texas*, José E. Limón, the returning native anthropologist posits a hypothesis for the appearance of the devil in South Texas. Limón – an academic outsider in his native land – spends months in the ethnographic field of South Texas. He interviews old friends in Laredo and Corpus Christi. At the heart of Limón's study stands one question: Why does the devil dance among Mexican Americans in South Texas? Since childhood Limón, like many of us, has heard stories of the devil appearing at a dance hall; sometimes he appears on the side of the road as the dancer embarks on the lonely walk home. Sulfur signals his appearance and after he is gone it remains as his trace. These stories of the devil are not unusual. Limón accepts these devil stories; and, he wants to know more. Why does the devil show up in South Texas and what does he signify? What does the devil mean to South Texas? Limón dedicates the entire second half of his ethnography to this question. In doing so, he not only turns his ethnographic eye outward toward his community; he also turns his "I" inward toward himself. Between these eyes/I(s) there is a gap. Within that gap, lives a ghostly presence. This presence illuminates Limón's partial absence in two communities – the ethnographic/academic

community and the objectified/native community. *Dancing with the Devil* is an attempt to give voice to the gap.

According to Limón, the devil's emergence among Mexican Americans in South Texas acts as a record "of the society's initial and shocking encounter with the cultural logic of late capitalism" (1994, 179). Each interview strengthens Limón's argument. The devil appears during instances of intense encuentro. He writes: "As more drugs, alcohol, opportunistic sexuality, and violence begin to mark the dance scene as a site of cultural contradiction, the devil also enters the dance to mark this contradiction" (180). The devil is the vessel through which Mexican Americans in South Texas, particularly Mexican American women in South Texas can critique the forces of late capitalism (186). Clearly, this is the intent of the interviews and Limón's lengthy observations. Like Paredes, he engages in the practice of autoethnography in order to re-member a Mexican American narrative of resistance. This is a significant contribution to the field of Mexican American studies and cultural anthropology; however, it is also an example of self-fashioning.

These interviews are productive in numerous ways. They provide the material with which Limón can make a successful argument regarding the impact of late capitalism in Mexican America. They also provide evidence of resistance to the imposition of the capitalist model in South Texas. Finally, they also reveal the complexity of the relationship between autoethnographer subject and her/his objects of study. Limón's relationship with his interviewees also reveals a great deal of anxiety about the rupture that has taken place between himself and his native community. The binaries of outdated, colonial ethnographic models no longer hold and as a result the subject is left the responsibility of determining a new ethnographic path.

For Mary Louise Pratt, autoethnography is a product of the contact zone. She describes the contact zone as a "social space where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination – like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today" (4). As many Mexican American scholars have argued, the U.S.-Mexico border is such a space. For example, Gloria Anzaldúa describes the border as "*una herida abierta* where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds" (25). Mario Barrera also documents the inequity of social conditions between Mexican Americans and Euro-Americans. Barrera goes to great lengths to prove that Mexican Americans were part of a subordinate class segment "in which the segmentation is based on race and/or ethnicity" (101). For Barrera this is a colonized class segment (101). The power dynamics are highly asymmetrical and therefore characteristic of the contact zone experience.

As I mentioned above, out of the contact zone comes the autoethnographic project. Pratt argues that autoethnography "refers to instances in which colonized subjects undertake to represent themselves in ways that *engage with* the colonizer's own terms . . . Autoethnographic texts are not, then, what are usually thought of as 'authentic' forms of self-representation . . . Rather autoethnography involves partial collaboration with an appropriation of the idioms of the conqueror" (7). Conceptualizing autoethnography in this manner complicates readings that would privilege it simply because it is told from an insider's perspective. It is exactly for this reason that I have chosen Pratt's definition of autoethnography as the one that informs this project. For we would all like to think that the native ethnographer can tell us something authentic about their culture – that they can venture into spaces where no one else can – that they can elicit stories and inspire trust in

unique ways. But, to put it simply, this is not so. As Limón's work proves, in many cases, the native informant is met with distrust and suspicion if not outright hostility. S/he must grapple with what it means to leave a subordinate community and then come back to as an outsider in order to represent it to an outside, often academic and elite audience. These are the politics with which he is wrestling. They are the politics with which every autoethnographer wrestles.

In *Dancing With the Devil*, Limón's voice is never far below the surface. The text is divided into three sections, and while his "I" is fairly subdued in "Part One: Politics, Poetics, Precursors," it explodes out onto the page in the interchapter and in "Part Two: Politics, Poetics, Present." In this sense, his work falls into line with the definition of autoethnography set out by Deborah Reed-Danahay. Limón's work fits most securely in Danahay's first and third definitions of autoethnography – native anthropology and autobiographical ethnography. He is a member of the Mexican American community that was often the object of study by outside scholars such as John Gregory Bourke and J. Frank Dobie, and as a Mexican American trained in both anthropology and literature he has taken up the pen to document the representation of his community from his own native perspective. This most closely describes Part One. However, Limón's "I" is still present in this section, even if it is an absent presence. The Interchapter and Part Two represent autobiographical ethnography. Throughout these sections, Limón interjects his own voice and his own personal reflections as he interviews and socializes with the men and women he grew up with in the Valley of South Texas. His eyes/I(s) merge quite fiercely in these sections. Although Limón's eyes/I(s) merge, I also posit that at many points within *Dancing with the Devil*, Limón's "I" is the larger presence. Consequently, I

maintain Limón's autoethnographic text also fulfills Reed-Danahay's second definition – ethnic autobiography.

The autobiographical self, according to John Paul Eakin is relational. We fashion ourselves in relationship to others (1999, 85). Eakin describes the components of relational autobiography. He writes:

> Situated selves [are] products of a particular time and place; the identity-shaping environments in these autobiographies are nested one within the other – self, family, community set in a physical and cultural geography, in an unfolding history . . . They share with all the rest the conviction that the key environment in the individual's formation is the family, which serves as the community's primary conduit for the transmission of its cultural values (85).

Dancing with the Devil is without question an ethnography; however, it is an ethnography centered around Limón and his relational identity to the Mexican American community of South Texas. The drama of *Dancing with the Devil* is the formation of Limón's identity in relation to the identities of his community. From the outset, he is aware he tells the story of not only Mexican America, but of his family. *Dancing with the Devil* begins with the guiding words of his mother: "Mi hijito, si vas a decir algo de nosotros, dilo bien. (My son, if you're going to say something about us, say it well) (3). Limón recognizes he tells the story of familia.

"Part One: Politics, Poetics, Precursors" consists of four chapters. They are respectively: John Gregory Bourke, J. Frank Dobie, Jovita González and Américo Paredes. Each of these chapters provides a detailed discussion of each of these four scholars. This section traces the history of the representation of Mexican Americans in South Texas or Tejanas/os from the nineteenth century through the 1970s. And it moves in a very logical pattern. From Bourke who was a member of the U.S. military that came

into the Southwest 20 years after 1848 to J. Frank Dobie who grew up in the early twentieth century of Euro-American ranch culture to Jovita González who studied under Dobie at the University of Texas in the 1920s and 1930s. The fourth and final chapter in this section is dedicated to Américo Paredes. In order to effectively situate Limón within Part One, it is necessary to discuss González and Paredes as well as Limón's analysis of both of them.

Jovita González was J. Frank Dobie's protégé and the relationship between González and Dobie actually will set the tone for another relationship I plan to discuss in a moment. For Limón, González represents a "bedeviled consciousness" because she is caught between her own distinctions of gender, class and race, her relationship with Dobie and the population she represents. Limón argues that she expresses this bedeviled consciousness through devil stories. In *Dancing with the Devil*, González is the first autoethnographer who wrestles with the politics of representing her own community to a mainstream, hegemonic Euro-American audience.

Américo Paredes was the first Mexican American to graduate from the University of Texas with a Ph.D. in 1957. As Ramón Saldívar argues Paredes' *With His Pistol in His Hand* is the heart of Mexican American, particularly Chicana/o, cultural production (1990, 72). Limón takes on Paredes and argues that Paredes represents a "bedeviled community because Paredes details the tensions that exist between the middle-class Tejana/o society and the working-class fuereño mexicanas/os who came into the valley as the Mexican Revolution and then the twentieth century progressed. For Limon, the "bedevilment" occurs in that Paredes reinforces the tension (92-93). Paredes' lack of

critique in this instance allows Limón to move out of the ghostly margin of Part One and to disrupt the mainstream Tejano narrative Paredes has constructed. Limón writes:

> As a *mexicano* working-class native of south Texas born of *fuereño* parents, growing up in the late forties and fifties, I never knew a time of small ranches and country stories; I knew only the asphalt-concrete *pachuco* mean streets of cities . . . Sirens might cut through the night and an elderly woman might say, "*Por hay anda el Diablo*" (the devil is about), and as the police cruisers came up the narrow alleys hunting *pachucos*, hunting *pochos*, we *fuereños* would imagine the devil and wage the continuing war (94).

I have incorporated this quote to illustrate the ghostly presence working its way through Part One. Limón chooses to end this section in the first person. In doing so, he is not only illustrating the ways in which he and his family are not the Tejanas/os Paredes wrote of, but he is also putting himself into a dialogue with those other Texan scholars – particularly González and Paredes. Because he has written this book, he is now one of them. This is further exemplified in that, like González who worked under Dobie, Limón worked under Paredes. *Dancing with the Devil* is, in fact dedicated to Paredes. And if we can imagine for a moment that there might be a fifth chapter in Part One, I think it is not hyperbolic to suggest that fifth chapter would be called José E. Limón. With *Dancing with the Devil*, Limón returns to Texas as the native son and the native anthropologist. However, as Part Two illustrates, this attempt is also haunted.

Limón begins his study of dances and working-class Mexican American culture in South Texas quite simply. He is only in San Antonio's west side to take notes, to figure why his people, our people dance. Immediately, however, it becomes much more complicated. Early in the second section, Limón recalls: "Spread-eagled on the hood of a police car at age fifteen, I once declared war, I now do anthropology, and I've almost forgotten how to dance" (145). What kind of war did Limón declare? Where does

anthropology fit in? And what does dancing mean? Throughout this section, Limón obsesses over his inability to dance smoothly to the conjuntos of his youth. He is pulled between the world of Ruperto's Bar on the West Side and his job at UTSA where he must still finish his dissertation. His inability to dance is his inability to glide smoothly between the world of academia and the world of his native community. The project of his book becomes how to articulate the resistance of the youth and somehow merge it with the politics of his current academic and yet politically aware Mexican America subjectivity. For Limón the devil exists at the crossroads of Mexican American subjectivity – class, gender, race/ethnicity. The devil appears, according to Limón, when the components of late capitalism enter into these spaces and intensify the experience of these intersections. As I mention above, the signifiers of the devil/late capitalism's entrance into the scene of Mexican American dance halls in South Texas include "drugs, alcohol, violence" (1994, 180). Yet, the devil is not necessarily an unwelcome figure. For Mexican American women, the devil presents an opportunity to critique the patriarchal system late capitalism reinforces in South Texas.

> Ester: "I don't know . . . I kind of like him!" Why? (I feign surprise.) He's a devil, isn't he? Si, pero, he's so different! (Different from what?" I think to myself. Do I need to really ask? . . . Esta bien chulo (He's so cute, attractive), Ester continues. Lola adds, "I once met a guy like that in Houston." What do you think he would be like, I mean, as a person? I ask. "Te apuesto que es bien suave" (I bet he's real kind, soft, sweet, suave). But he's a devil! I insist in mock argument. What about the goat's feet? "Ay, who cares?" says Sulema (174).

Limón later argues Mexican American women view the devil multi-dimensionally because it allows them some freedom from the daily violence conducted against their bodies both off and on the dance floor. While *Dancing with the Devil* writes Mexican American women as active in their resistance to patriarchy in Mexican America, this

quote also illustrates Limón's distance from the women he interviews. Words such as "feign" and "mock" suggest that Limón already knows what the women are thinking; thus, the autoethnographic conversation does not appear to be a truly dialogic one. Consequently, even an autoethnographic "eye" that consciously sees itself as a "bedeviled" member of Mexican America speaking from the margins of both the mainstream and Mexican America recreates asymmetrical power relations. This asymmetry signals the absent presence in *Dancing with the Devil*. Both eyes/Is are always present; however, one is consistently absented – the self-fashioning autobiographical "I." The narrative of *Dancing with the Devil* lies in the construction of the "I." Limón's "I" depends on the community he studies. Without characters, and I do use character carefully, Limón does not have an "I." We know the narrator of *Dancing with the Devil* because we know him in relation to Jovita González, Américo Paredes in the academy and Sulema and Ester on the dance floor. Limón exists in the gap between these two identifying spaces. He is conscious of this. Therefore he places himself in the gap and consequently becomes the ghostly trace in his own narrative.

Chapter Three:
Ghosts in the Field: The Absent Presence in the Historias of Ernesto Galarza

In this camp . . . we have no names.
Ernesto Galarza

I. Memories that Matter: Constructing Selves in *Barrio Boy*

Unlike the other Mexican American life narratives I discuss in this dissertation, Ernesto Galarza's *Barrio Boy: The Story of a Boy's Acculturation* (1971) is a recognized member of the Mexican American literary canon (Saldívar 1990, 155).[36] However, despite its long-established position in Mexican American literature, *Barrio Boy* is quite new to me. I read *Barrio Boy* many months and in some cases years after I read and/or viewed the works of the other artists included in this study. I arrived at Galarza's story prepared to ask familiar questions – the same questions I had asked of Norma Cantú, Lourdes Portillo and John Phillip Santos. Is *Barrio Boy* an autoethnography? Does it narrate both an individual self and a collective self? How does this narrative exemplify haunting? Are there ghosts? If there are ghosts, what space do these absent presences occupy in Galarza's work? Initially, I looked for answers to these questions only in *Barrio Boy* and I did find answers. I also found answers in Galarza's other writings which include many sociological studies he published decades before *Barrio Boy*. These studies lend support to Galarza's autobiographical text. Together they provide the individual experiences that inform the collective experience of Mexican migrant laborers in California during the first half of the twentieth century.

While ghostly presences linger in all of Galarza's works, their translucent figures exist most profoundly in *Strangers in Our Fields* (1956). Sponsored by the Fund for the

Republic, *Strangers in Our Fields* is a published report documenting the experience of Mexican migrant laborers.[37] Its focus is the contractual, legal and civil rights of Mexican contract laborers in the United States. The absent presence of ghosts is palpable throughout the text of Galarza's study; however nowhere are these absences more present than in the photographs Galarza chooses to include in this publication. He incorporates visual images of Mexican migrant labor in a sociological study. In doing so, he makes visible the haunting presence of migrant bodies. Once visible, it becomes much more difficult to ignore Mexican migrant bodies and their exploitation in the violent fields of U.S. agriculture.

The strength of both the visual and textual matter of *Strangers in Our Fields* is enhanced by Galarza's personal experience as a migrant laborer in California. As a result, I contend that *Strangers in Our Fields* and *Barrio Boy* work in tandem to present a more complete portrait of Mexican migrant labor. Galarza's narratives work against the invisibility of these laborers by re-membering Mexican migrants as both individual and collective subjects. In order to trace the formation of a Mexican American collective subject, I argue Galarza turns to his personal experience to illustrate the relationship between Mexican migrant identity and Mexican American identity. Galarza begins his life narrative as a Mexican migrant; however, as *Barrio Boy* moves to its conclusion, it becomes the story of a Mexican migrant boy's acculturation into the United States. Galarza's saga as the son of Mexican migrants ends with the implication that he has become a Mexican American. Of course these two identities do not exist independently of one another. On the contrary, they exist within each other. Without his experience as a migrant laborer, Galarza's life story would not speak so clearly to both U.S. labor history

and the history of Mexican America. As it is, *Barrio Boy* speaks to Mexican America because migration from Mexico into the United States during the Mexican Revolution is a key component in the history of Mexican Americans. Galarza chronicles his life as both a Mexican migrant and a Mexican American in autoethnography and in documentary photographs.

Years before the 1971 publication of *Barrio Boy*, Ernesto Galarza had already dedicated much of his energy and work to the study of migrant labor. Determined to bring the experience of migrant workers to the forefront of U.S. consciousness, Galarza participated in numerous U.S. Senate and House Committee Meetings between 1940 and 1969. While all of these committee meetings concerned the issue of migrant labor in the United States, not all were specifically about Mexican labor.[38] In the early 1940s, Galarza's testimony before the Senate and House of Representatives involved the state of migrant labor in general. Beginning in 1950; however, Galarza's testimonies began to focus exclusively on Mexican migrant labor in the United States.[39] In addition to working on numerous government committees, Galarza also published four sociological studies regarding Mexican migrant labor. These include: *Strangers in Our Fields* (1956), *Merchants of Labor: The Mexican Bracero Story* (1964), *Mexican Americans in the Southwest* (1969), *Spiders in the House and Workers in the Field* (1970) and *Farm Workers and Agri-business in California, 1947-1960* (1977).

Although not autobiographical narratives, Ernesto Galarza's sociological studies are informed by his personal experience as a migrant laborer during the first decades of the twentieth century. These studies provide a more complete portrait of Galarza's story.

They also fulfill his objective – re-membering Mexican America through the lens of a particular Mexican experience.

On the other hand, *Barrio Boy* captures the collective experience of migrant laborers, specifically the experience of Mexican migrant labor. Galarza's autobiographical narrative counters the negative portrayals of Mexican laborers by showing how Mexican migrant culture adheres to its traditional values and courteous attitudes. For example, Galarza describes his family's reaction to Euro-Americans, or gringos, as he calls them in the narrative: "*Se han fijado?* Had we noticed – that the Americans do not ask permission to leave the room; that they had no respectful way of addressing an elderly person . . . that they never brought *saludos* to everyone in your family from everyone in their family when they visited?" (236). Recounting his experience in the *barrios* and fields in this manner allows Galarza to contrast the fine manners of Mexican America with the vulgarities of mainstream U.S. society.

Throughout *Barrio Boy*, Galarza frequently illustrates this cultural gap and in the process creates as Ramón Saldívar notes, "a personal document where historical self-explanation, philosophical self-analysis, and poetic self-expression merge to tell with irony and humor a social story: an individual's participation in one of the grandest migrations of modern times – the influx of Mexicans into the American Southwest" (Saldívar 1990, 168).

Galarza combines autobiographical narrative and autoethnographic methodology in order to simultaneously participate in and bear witness to the experience of immigrant Mexicans in northern California during the first two decades of the 1900s. *Barrio Boy* recounts only the first fifteen years of Galarza's life. These first fifteen years encompass

Galarza's 1905 birth in Jalcocotán, Nayarit, México; the upheavals of the Mexican Revolution and his family's subsequent migrations into the Mexican cities of Tepic, Nayarit and Mazatlán, Sinaloa before their final departure from México and entrance into Nogales, Arizona. The summer before Galarza enters high school he works with his uncle in the agricultural fields surrounding the northern California towns of Folsom, Lodi, Woodland and Florin.[40] Because he is bilingual and literate in English, fifteen-year-old Galarza tries to help the other migrant workers to organize against the unfair wages and living conditions in the fields.

Galarza attended Stanford University after receiving his B.A. in 1927 from Occidental College in Los Angeles, California. He left Stanford with an M.A. in Political Science and Latin American History in 1929.[41] After Stanford, Galarza entered the Ph.D. program in Latin American History at Columbia University. He continued to do sociological fieldwork in México throughout the 1930s and 1940s. He also continued to work closely with both students and the laboring classes, particularly Mexican contract labor. Galarza received his Ph.D. in 1944 (Galarza Papers, 1978).[42]

Ernesto Galarza's biography provides a context for his various modes of cultural production.[43] It also provides evidence of the influence his life experience has in his written work. This is the autobiographical element I argue we can find in all of his texts. Beyond an autobiographical element, there is also an element of autoethnography. In each text, specifically *Barrio Boy*, Galarza is motivated to illustrate not only his individual experience, but the experience of an entire Mexican/Mexican American community. Through his autobiographical storytelling Galarza resolves to portray and affirm a full picture of Mexican American cultural practices, hence autoethnography.

For Mary Louise Pratt, autoethnography is only one of three terms she uses to propose a “dialectic and historical approach to travel writing” (6). While *Barrio Boy* is most often read as a bildungsroman and a story of the Mexican labor experience, it is also a travel narrative. As I stated earlier, a large portion of Galarza’s life narrative occurs in transit between Nayarit and the barrios of California. Pratt’s *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* “considers how travel writing and enlightenment natural history catalyzed each other to produce a Eurocentered form of global . . . consciousness” (5). The legacy of a Eurocenterd global consciousness is a crucial part of the make-up of Galarza’s audience. While *Barrio Boy* is a travel narrative, it is not a traditional travel narrative in that its perspective is not the perspective of the powerful elite. Rather it undermines that perspective by offering the viewpoint of a marginalized subject. Through his life narrative and sociological studies, Galarza challenges a Eurocentered consciousness that reads white Euroamerican identity as central. He troubles the notion of a Euroamerican identity that assumes itself and its perspectives to be the norm. By presenting the public with his own story and his own study Galarza offers a perspective that exists outside of the Eurocentric norm.

Pratt also shifts outside of the realm of travel writing and moves into the study of non-European expression. Investigating nineteenth century Spanish American writers, she argues these writers “selected and adapted European discourses on America to their own task of creating autonomous decolonized cultures while retaining European values and white supremacy. It is a study of creole self-fashioning” (5). Without doubt, Ernesto Galarza is consciously participating in the traditions of conventional autobiography. The epigraph he chooses to begin *Barrio Boy* is taken from *The Education of Henry Adams*

(1918). This is no accident. As Smith and Watson point out in their study of autobiography, *The Education of Henry Adams*, “emerges as a ‘landmark’ in the critical study of self-exploration, confession and self-discovery” (2001, 121). Additionally, Adams’ life narrative “helps shift the canon . . . beyond a Eurocentric focus and acknowledge[s] [the presence of] significant life narrative in the Americas” (121). Galarza’s use of Adams signals his intent to dialogically engage the “canon” of U.S. American autobiographical literature; however, he does not uncritically invest in “European values and white supremacy” (Pratt 5). Instead, he methodologically challenges not only U.S. literary traditions, but also traditional understandings of U.S. history. He is able to simultaneously challenge both U.S. literary and historical traditions because these two traditions are inextricably linked. The literary tradition sustains the historical narrative and vice versa. Confronting these traditions allows him to make room for himself in particular and Mexican American culture and history in general. Richard Rodriguez, another well-known Chicano autobiographer, also uses Henry Adams’ *The Education of Henry Adams* as a model for his own autobiography. *Hunger of Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez* (1982). While many scholars argue, Rodriguez is supporting the ideology of a U.S. literary canon, I suggest, like Galarza, he is engaging in a dialogue with the Eurocentric tradition of autobiography and undermining it.

Galarza’s autobiographical narrative is also an autoethnography. For a definition of autoethnography, I return to Pratt. She writes: Autoethnography, “refers to instances in which colonized subjects undertake to represent themselves in ways that *engage with* the colonizer’s own terms” (1992, 7). As I illustrate above, this is precisely what Galarza does when he engages the life narrative of Henry Adams.

Contact zone is another term Pratt includes in her definition of autoethnography (6-7). Contact zone is "the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, racial inequality, and intractable conflict" (6). Galarza's uninterrupted focus on the appalling conditions, both legal and social, under which Mexican migrant laborers live, exemplifies life in a contact zone. The condition of U.S. American migration west and Mexican migration north puts these two populations into constant contact. In California and in other regions of the United States, Mexicans find themselves living in a political climate that is hostile and often characterizes them as racially, linguistically, and psychologically inferior. This is the contact zone Galarza inhabits and portrays.

Barrio Boy illustrates the formation of Galarza's Mexican American, autobiographical self in the contact zone of the Greater Mexican borderlands.[44] The reader serves as witness to Galarza's *acculturation* into U.S. society.[45] Galarza writes:

> [W]e had to get used to the Americans. They did not listen if you did not speak loudly, as they always did. In the Mexican style, people would know that you were enjoying their jokes tremendously if you merely smiled and shook a little, as if you were trying to swallow your mirth. In the American style there was little difference between a laugh and a roar, and until you got used to them you could hardly tell whether the boisterous Americans were roaring mad or roaring happy . . . With remarkable fairness and never-ending wonder we kept adding to our list the pleasant and the repulsive in the ways of Americans. It was my second acculturation (1971, 204-205).

Galarza accomplishes both features of autoethnographic autobiography in this passage. He illustrates the cultural landscape of the contact zone and establishes the complex network of relationships that will continue between the Mexicans and Euro-Americans

living in Sacramento's lower *barrio*. Resistance is also a feature of Galarza's autoethnographic autobiography. Although Galarza and his family are becoming accustomed to the ways of the Euro-Americans in their neighborhood, they still find them "repulsive." Throughout his autobiographical account, Galarza hints that there is a "proper" ways to do things, and some of his Euro-American neighbors offend Galarza's sense of *mexicano* propriety: "Americans do not ask permission to leave the room; they had no respectful way of addressing an elderly person, they never brought *saludos* to your family when they visited; Americans didn't keep their feet on the floor when they were sitting" (1971, 236). This constant accusation of vulgarity against some of the Euro-Americans in *Barrio Boy* points to the narrative's site of autoethnographic resistance against U.S. normativity.

Accusations of vulgarity against some Euro-Americans are only one example of the multiple sites of resistance that are the foundation of *Barrio Boy*. Some of the other sites of resistance are his accounts of worker exploitation in the fields and his condemnation of the poor housing conditions in the Sacramento barrio. We can locate these foundations of resistance in Galarza's motivation to write his autoethnographic life narrative. *Barrio Boy,* he reveals, "began as anecdotes [he] told his family" (1971, 1). From these intimate, personal disclosures, the autobiographical accounts began to receive attention among academic audiences. Shifting away from the familial and the academic, Galarza admits a desire to record an historical narrative. He remembers:

> What brought me and my family to the United States from Mexico also brought hundreds of thousands of others like us. In many ways the experiences of a multitude of boys like myself, migrating from countless villages like Jalcocotán and starting life anew in *barrios* like the one in Sacramento, must have been similar (1).

The event that brought Galarza and his family as well as 10 percent of México's population into the United States was the Mexican Revolution of 1910. The Mexican Revolution, the subsequent massive arrival of *mexicana/os* into the United States and their entry into the migrant labor force is one of the motivating factors behind the creation of *Barrio Boy*.

In *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson argue that autobiographical narratives consist of several components. One of the key components in the autobiographical narrative is the "coaxer/coercer, the person or persons, or the institution, that elicits the story from the speaker" (2001, 50). According to Smith and Watson, an example of such a coaxing situation might be the following: "[A] political speech [where] a candidate often tell[s] compelling personal narratives that may project 'character' and 'values' or situate them in the major wars and movements of the times or attach them to specific religious, ethnic, or vocational communities" (51). While Galarza's autoethnographic autobiography is not a political speech, as a political autobiography infused with his own autoethnographic impulse, it functions very similarly. Another possible coaxer for Ernesto Galarza's life narrative was his relationship with fellow Chicano academic, Julián Samora. Samora who founded and directed the Mexican American Graduate Studies Program at Notre Dame University was also a member of the editorial board for University of Notre Dame Press. According to Alberto López Pulido, Samora was "an integral and active member of the press and is credited for supporting numerous groundbreaking publications in the fields of Chicano and Ethnic Studies . . . One of the most important works that Samora helped

to bring to publication was the research and scholarship of Ernesto Galarza" (202, 720). *Barrio Boy* was one of the projects Julián Samora supported and coaxed.

In *Barrio Boy*, narrative memory surpasses conventional conceptions of autobiographical truths. Galarza chooses to begin his autobiography with the following epigraph from Henry Adams: "This was the journey he remembered. The actual journey may have been quite different . . . The memory was all that mattered" (1971, xii). Smith and Watson contend the act of remembering possesses a collective function:

> The collective nature of acts of remembering . . . extends to motives for remembering and the question of those on whose behalf one remembers . . . 'Memory is an intersubjective phenomenon, a practice not only of recollection of a past *by* a subject, but of recollection *for* another subject'[46] . . . Memory is a means of 'passing on,' of sharing a social past that may have been obscured, in order to activate its potential for reshaping a future of and for other social subjects. Thus, acts of personal remembering are fundamentally social and collective (2001, 20-21).

Galarza was eight years old when his family left México; yet, he remembered the journey fifty-eight years later with vivid detail. Their long trek began in a railroad car in Mazatlán, Sinaloa and ended in the train station in Nogales, Arizona. During their passage, Galarza recalled an outbreak of measles among all the children on the train. This epidemic forced the train to stop for days until all the children recovered. He remembered several moments when the tracks collapsed and they camped until the engineers could repair the railroad. While it would seem that the measles epidemic and the collapsing tracks would be the memorable moments in Galarza's narrative of the journey north, he spends most of his narrative time recalling the camps people set up and the community it created. He writes:

> Many of the soldiers lived [by the tracks] with their wives and children. They cooked outside their tents, sitting round the fires in the dark. We exchanged food

> with them and they welcomed us to their family circles . . . Around the family campfires I heard the songs the men of the revolution were singing. I learned snatches of 'La Valentina'. . . 'Adelita' . . . 'La Cucaracha'. . . 'El Quelite' (177).[47]

Galarza's narrative memory begins to serve a collective function. It crafts a collective, Mexican migrant experience of the Mexican Revolution through song and the sharing of food. In this passage, Galarza's memory establishes a communal bond between the migrants moving north and the soldiers and soldaderas of the Mexican Revolution. Over song, over food, the reader witnesses the migrants' regrouping and survival in the midst of the Revolution. The reader also witnesses the struggle against common enemies – U.S. imperialism and U.S. capitalism.

In *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century*, Michael Denning claims *Barrio Boy* encompasses three diverse, but I would argue clearly interrelated historical and social movements – the 1910 Mexican Revolution; the Popular Front decades of migrant farm worker organizing; and the Chicano Movement of the 1960s (1997, 281).

Aligning himself with the revolutionaries of the Mexican Revolution is one function of Galarza's construction of a collective self in *Barrio Boy*. The other function of the construction of a collective self is to align himself with The Popular Front.

According to Michael Denning, the Popular Front was:

> born out of the social upheavals of 1934 and coincide[ed] with the Communist Party's period of greatest influence in U.S. society . . . The Popular Front became a radical historical bloc uniting industrial unionists, Communists, independent socialists, community activists, and émigré anti-fascists around laborist social democracy, anti-fascism and anti-lynching (1997, 4).

Denning goes on to argue that within the Popular Front were individuals in the Cultural Front. These individuals included cultural workers such as Carey McWilliams, F.O. Matthiessen and Orson Welles. They produc[ed] culture, "working with Communists and with liberals . . . marking out a culture that was neither a Party nor a liberal New Deal culture" (5). While cultural workers in the Cultural Front and social organizers in the Popular Front were vital to the success of labor movements in the twentieth century, few individuals occupied the ideological space where the two came together. Ernesto Galarza was one of these individuals.[48]

Galarza identifies as a member of the multi-ethnic, "émigré" Popular Front by re-creating it in the cultural work of his autobiographical narrative memory. He recreates the émigré population out of the *barrio* schoolchildren he remembers. At Lincoln Elementary, Miss Ryan happily announced when Galarza's Japanese classmate learned to read in English. She was equally happy when the Korean, Portuguese, Italian and Polish first graders "had similar moments of glory" (1971, 210). Galarza's utopian narrative continues:

> At Lincoln, making us into Americans did not mean scrubbing away what made us originally foreign. The teachers called us as our parents did, or as close as they could pronounce our names in Spanish or Japanese. No one was ever scolded or punished for speaking in his native language. Matti told the class about his mother's quilt, which she had made in Italy . . . Encarnación acted out how boys learned to fish in the Philippines . . . someone showed a silk scroll with a Chinese painting (211).

Galarza remembers and thus constructs this multi-ethnic elementary classroom as a microcosm of the multi-ethnic character of the Popular Front. The classroom is no exception. The first sentence in the above excerpt speaks to the delicate balance of Galarza's acculturation. In this passage, it is possible to become a U.S. American and

maintain a Mexican identity. Throughout *Barrio Boy*, Galarza's autobiographical subject develops close relationships with a cross-section of the barrio's residents. These include South Asians, Italians, Irishmen, African Americans, Jews and a migrant worker from Oklahoma who lectures Galarza: "[D]on't be no farmhand for a livin', be a lawyer, or a doctor . . . If nobody won't listen to you, go on and talk to yourself and hear what a smart man has to say" (258). This example further illustrates that the relationships poverty and labor cultivate can cross racial borders and unify around matters of class. Michael Denning extends this argument with his discussion of *Barrio Boy*. He writes: "Like the slave narratives of the mid nineteenth century, the migrant narrative of . . . Galarza [is a] portrait of a collective condition, in this case, the world of migrant men" (1997, 274).[49] While Galarza's migrant narrative does remember a multi-ethnic community of migrant workers, I also suggest *Barrio Boy* remains committed to the re-membering of a collective, specifically Mexican-American migrant identity.

Fifteen-year-old Ernesto Galarza makes his first organizing speech at a migrant camp near Folsom, California. Several children at this camp have died from exposure to contaminated water. After Galarza delivers his speech, the camp mobilizes into action and a water inspector investigates the conditions at the camp. Galarza has become an activist. Significantly, the source of Galarza's inspiration and the motivation for his social activism is the memory of Duran, his neighbor in the barrio. Galarza writes: "Remembering Duran in that camp meeting, I made my first organizing speech" (1971, 265). It is vital Galarza remembers Duran as he becomes an organizer in the migrant camps of northern California in the 1920s because it is the memory of Duran that connects the migrant experience of northern California with the revolutionary politics of

México. Duran, a Sonorense, "had been a miner in Cananea, had taken part in the great strike there that was put down by gringo soldiers, and knew the Flores Magón brothers, who had stirred the miners to revolt . . . It was Duran who brought us up to date on the revolution at our doors . . . [who] explained the Industrial Workers of the World" (239-240).[50] In order to structure a collective Mexican American, activist future that is based on a revolutionary, mexicano past, Galarza deliberately remembers Duran as a miner in the cultural geography of Cananea. Even Duran's home in the Sacramento barrio does not escape attention. It is the location of dies y seis de septiembre celebrations.[51] Like Duran, these parties celebrate and embody the anti-colonialist spirit of México. The collective memory of the Mexican Revolution personified in the figure of Duran motivates Galarza to organize, re-member and write.

Ernesto Galarza uses memory throughout *Barrio Boy* to construct a collective, Mexican American subject. This use of memory is not specific to *Barrio Boy*. I argue this is the work of memory in all Mexican American autobiography – to create a collective Mexican American subject. This is not to say that the Mexican American subject is without ego; however, as Genaro M. Padilla asserts in his study in Mexican American autobiography, the autobiographical "I" in Mexican American autobiography is subsumed by the collective "I." Padilla writes:

> Central to the reclaiming of the Mexican past was the narrative habit of remembering oneself within a community of the past. It is no surprise, therefore to see that many of the nineteenth-and early twentieth-century narratives that comprise the beginnings of Chicano autobiography construct a culturally matrixed subjectivity in which the "I" is subsumed within a narrative of regional or cultural history (1993, 29).

Mexican American autobiographers continue to reclaim their past through collective, autobiographical acts into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

As I have mentioned throughout this chapter, *Barrio Boy* is the most overt example of Galarza's autobiographic/autoethnographic example. This text is infused with memory and re-memory, but where are the ghosts? Where are these absent presences that exist in the center of Mexican American subject formation? I answer these questions in the next section. The ghosts are the absent bodies of migrant workers. The bodies whose physical presences have been absented from mainstream U.S. history, but continue to disrupt that mainstream narrative with their presence. These absent presences are the ghosts Galarza brings forth from the margins of U.S. history.

II. The Blind Field: the Absence Inside and Outside the Frame

In 1956, Ernesto Galarza published *Strangers in Our Fields*. The text, which was published with the help of a grant from the Fund for the Republic, "was [intended] to call public attention to alleged injustices under the Mexican Labor Contract Program" (Miller 1998). Galarza conducted interviews with migrant workers and he took photographs of the conditions under which migrant workers lived and worked. The interviews and the photographs were meant to accurately document the exploitation of Mexican migrants in the labor camps. I argue Galarza's textual and visual documentation points to the absent presence of Mexican/Mexican American laborers in the United States. His work is to illustrate the silence surrounding migrant labor in the United States.

In the first section of this chapter, I point out Galarza's life-long dedication to the predicament of the Mexican/Mexican American migrant. *Merchants of Labor: The Mexican Bracero Story* (1964) is an example of his dedication. In this study, Galarza

situates the Bracero Program within the early twentieth century economies of both the United States and México.[52] According to Manuel Gamio, the Mexican discourse around Mexican immigration focused on the economic contribution the migrants could provide to both México and the United States. For the United States, particularly in border states,

> Mexican migrants provided necessary labor. For México, seasonal migrant labor served as an escape valve during economic crises such as are occasioned by revolutionary movements, when large groups of unemployed are saved from pillaging and starvation by crossing the border to work for a time in the United States. There they not only live but can earn enough to send money to their families in México; in fact, the amounts remitted have averaged 5,000,000 a year during the last nine years. They also pay transportation back and forth from México and often save enough to live through a period of unemployment at home until the next season in the United States. Moreover, if the immigrant involuntarily but effectively advertises American products in México, he likewise imports certain Mexican articles as for example the straw sombreros which were originally introduced by Mexicans and are now generally used by American ranchers. This item is of some importance in the list of Mexican exports (Gamio 1929, 466).

While Gamio advocates for the potential benefit for México of Mexican immigration to the United States, he agrees this migration should be only temporary. To allow Mexican immigrants to remain permanently in the United States would be a detriment to México (Gamio 465). In this respect, his position regarding the Bracero Program is in line with that of the United States.

Throughout *Merchants of Labor*, Galarza merges the legal discourse of the United States government during the Bracero Program with statistical data illustrating the numbers of Mexican migrants who entered the United States during this period, their low wages and ill-treatment. He outlines the legislative points of the Bracero Program such as Public Law 78, which allowed the U.S. Secretary of Labor to recruit Mexican laborers for employment including those who had been in the United States illegally for at least five

years (Galarza 1964, 80). Directing immigration officially enabled the United States to satisfy the agricultural corporations who wanted the Bracero Program to continue and the law enforcement agencies such as the Border Patrol that wanted Mexican migration more adequately controlled. In bringing the legal discourse to the forefront, Galarza challenges uninformed opinions which presume that Mexican labor enters the United States uninvited and without U.S. sanction.

The terms Galarza utilizes to describe and identify the change from "unofficial" laborer and "official laborer" reflect and satirize the vernacular of the times. Once farm growers realized Public Law 78 made it more difficult to take advantage of workers who were to a very minimal extent protected by U.S. law, they began to back away from the enforcement of immigration laws. The stakes were now much lower. If the growers could not exploit Mexican workers for maximum profit, then they had little investment in keeping these laborers within the borders of the United States. Given this change in the resistance to immigration law, a new surge of anti-immigration laws were passed in 1954. Operation Wetback, as these set of laws came to be known, mobilized the Border Patrol, and began rounding up unsponsored laborers and deporting them back to Mexico. Between 1954 and 1960, 1,386,000 migrant workers were deported back to Mexico.[53] Galarza ironically plays on this official and racist vernacular in order to make a point:

> [T]he Wetback left his mark . . . The fees and commissions formerly paid to the underground brokers became a form of graft in the bracero program. Since many thousands of braceros were only "dried-out" Wetbacks, their employers continued to deal with them confident of their docility and striking unlikeness to the local domestic laborers. The willingness to work at any assigned task regardless of the wages, the complacency toward the hazards of the job, the isolation of barracks life . . . were carried over from one system to the other because the order had not changed and the men were the same ones (1964, 71).

In this passage, Galarza is quite aware that these terms "Wetback" and "bracero" are interchangeable. While officially there is a difference between these two terms, in reality these terms collapse into one another and signify the overall complicity of the United States government to keep agricultural corporations satisfied and migrant laborers bound to work that is economically and socially unjust.

Undoubtedly, Galarza's sociological studies document both the condition of migrant labor and his commitment to illuminating circumstances he has experienced firsthand; these sociological studies are also supplemented by Galarza's photographic eye. Both his sociological studies and the photographs he incorporates in them document absence; thus, they document ghostly presence.

As I explained above, *Strangers in Our Fields* (1956) is based on a government-sponsored report illustrating the conditions of migrant laborers in California. In this work, the absent presence is palpable. Galarza begins his study with the haunted words of a Mexican laborer. "'In this camp . . . we have no names. We are called only by numbers'" (1). Galarza begins his study with this testimony because he is determined to bring these ghosts out of the field and make their bodies visible and their voices audible. Additionally, I argue Galarza is committed to making these absent presences felt because as a migrant laborer he is himself an absent presence, and in resurrecting the ghosts of the fields, he resurrects himself as well.

Ernesto Galarza joined the National Farm Labor Union (NFLU) as Director of Research and Education in 1948.[54] His first NFLU assignment was to aid strike director

Hank Hasiwar in the strike against the DiGiorgio Fruit Corporation in Arvin, California (Chabran 1985, 142). According to Chabran, Galarza's strategy was to

> destroy the alliance between towers and government bureaucrats, and to shake organized labor out of its complacency . . . He had neither large numbers of supporters. nor finances, nor friends in high places. His weapons were highly personal: the shield of research and analytical thought. the sword of the written and spoken word His basic tactic was to document the flouting of laws the abuses, the corruption, the debasement, the scandals inherent in the Bracero system and to publicize his findings as widely as possible (qtd. in Chabran, 145).

Strangers in Our Fields is an example of Galarza's determination to make public these social and political findings within migrant labor programs. Although the U.S. government made attempts to discredit the report and find faults with Galarza's findings, which included accusing Galarza of unfair bias and exaggeration the substandard conditions of the labor camps, *Strangers in Our Fields* received extensive publicity, even in such mainstream papers as the *Los Angeles Times* (Zamora 1956, 1-18). The report went through two editions and sold over 10,000 copies. According to Richard Chabran, condensed pieces of the report appeared in at least three national magazines (Chabran 148).

Armed with $25,000 from the NAWU and a camera, Galarza participated in and photographed "organizing rounds into bars, movie houses, community events, barrios, and colonias. [He] documented appalling housing conditions and degrading treatments, especially in border recruitment and processing centers" (Steven Street 2008, 372). Galarza was not the only photographer of migrant labor during the Bracero Program, but he was, according to Richard Steven Street, the first.[55] While Richard Steven Street contends that Galarza's photographs do not compare to the work of other labor

photographers such as Leonard Nadel, I propose Galarza's photographs are comparable to the work of Nadel if we consider what a photograph may potentially provoke and what Galarza has both intentionally and unintentionally left out. Although Galarza's photographs appear bare and without composition, I argue they are quite complex in their scope and composed in their detail (2008, 368). Leonard Nadel a more professionalalized photographer than Ernesto Galarza recognized this (2008, 372).

Leonard Nadel is an important figure to consider in any analysis of Ernesto Galarza's visual work because his photographs are some of the most recognized photos that document the Bracero Program; however, Galarza's *Strangers In Our Fields* was the inspiration and catalyst for Nadel's photographs. Leonard Nadel was a professional photographer active in Los Angeles. In the summer of 1956 Nadel was given an assignment by the Fund for the Republic to document photographically a study on the Mexican Contract Labor Program (Bracero Program.) Nadel used Ernesto Galarza's earlier report *Strangers in Our Fields* as a point of departure. Nadel took photographs of labor camps in the California San Joaquin Valley around Salinas, Watsonville and Stockton. He also photographed recruitment and assembly of braceros in Mexico City and the migration station in Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, Mexico. Nadel's images comprise the majority of the collection held by the Smithsonian's Bracero Project. There are over 2,000 images in the collection. After finishing his project photographing and following braceros, Nadel wanted to make his work available to as many people as possible. He organized the photos and lobbied editors. He eventually put together two photo essays. These essays were published in *Jubilee* and *Pageant* magazines. Because of the close relationship between Galarza's *Strangers in Our Fields* and Nadel's photography, I

believe a comparison between the two would be productive. Before I begin this comparative analysis; however, I will turn Roland Barthes and his readings of the visual image.

Throughout *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Roland Barthes focuses exclusively on a study of the photograph – a study of one image suspended in time, its subject forever caught with the click of the shutter. Yet, there is an exception to both Barthes' study and the staticity of the photograph – the cinema. "The screen," according to Barthes, "is not a frame, but a hideout; the man or woman who emerges from it continues living: a 'blind field' constantly doubles our partial vision" (1981, 55-57). For the most part, Barthes does not see the blind field in still photography. He writes: "Everything which happens within the frame dies absolutely once this frame is passed beyond. When we define the Photograph as a motionless image, this does not mean only that the figures it represents do not move; it means that they do not *emerge*, do not *leave*: they are anesthetized and fastened down, like butterflies" (57). Although these photographs may have a very strong studium, Barthes believes they remain static. However, they remain static only until they are punctured by a punctum. While a punctum may not always appear, it is, according to Barthes, the only photographic component that can break the monotony of the stadium. Once again, the studium of a photograph offers two points of entry for the viewer. The first is the obvious intent of the photograph. The second point is the viewer's desire to read the photograph and his/her general knowledge about the photo's subject. The punctum is the "detail that attracts

. . . This detail's mere presence [can] change [a] reading, [make it seem as if the viewer] is looking at a new photograph" (Barthes 1981, 42). To exemplify Barthes description of both studium and punctum I return to both Galarza and Nadel.

A viewer may come to this photograph of a line of work trucks in Watsonville, California and read the photograph as a documentation of the facts of migrant labor in central California. Reading the photo thusly derives entirely from the education and opinion the viewer possesses regarding this issue. Perhaps s/he knows the circumstances of Mexican migrant labor in California. Perhaps s/he is familiar with the politics of the Bracero Program and has formed an opinion regarding the program. There is nothing in particular about this photograph that reaches this viewer outside of its composition. Within the frame, it is total and it is comprehensible. This is the studium.

Figure 4: Fleet of Trucks serving a centralized camp in California. Photograph by Ernesto Galarza.

The punctum is the unintentional detail. Barthes writes:

> [The punctum] occurs in the field of the photographed thing like a supplement that is at once inevitable and delightful; it does not necessarily attest to the photographer's art; it says only that the photographer was there, or else, still more simply, that he could not *not* photograph the partial object at the same time as the total object" (47).

The punctum is that partial, particular component that moves and breaks through the total, general, and informed studium. It is the punctum that encourages motion and "endows the photograph with a blind field" – that outside field where what has died in the frame is resurrected (Barthes 57). As resurrection is a dynamic act so is the punctum. It is an active element "which rises from the [photographed] scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces [the viewer] (Barthes 26).

As Barthes argues, the punctum is unintentional and "absolutely subjective" (55). One of the questions I ask as I view this photograph is the following: How do I know this photo depicts some aspect of Mexican American life in the United States? As a scholar of Mexican American Studies, I am aware that Watsonville, California is a location where Mexican American and Mexican migrant labor is a significant portion of the labor force. Watsonville is known for its agricultural and manufacturing industry. Significantly for this project, Watsonville is also where 1,600 cannery workers, mostly Mexican American women, went on strike in 1985 (Ruiz 2006, 805).[56] All this is the studium. The punctum is what is not at the intended center of the photograph. As mentioned above, the punctum is absolutely subjective and it speaks to the viewer's experiences and subjectivity. This punctum is the element that has unintentionally overwhelmed me. (Barthes 57). The punctum endows the photo with a blind field and "brings to life the life external to the photo" (Gordon 1997, 107).

In *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (1997), Avery Gordon elaborates on Roland Barthes' blind field:

> The blind field and its fundamental imbrication in the visible field is what we are aiming to comprehend. The blind field is what the ghost's arrival signals. The blind field is never named as such in the photograph. How

> could it be? It is precisely what is pressing in from the other side of the fullness of the image displayed within the frame; the *punctum* only ever evokes it and the necessity of finding it. Yet the blind field is present, and when we catch a glimpse of its endowments in the paradoxical experience of seeing what appears to be not there we know that a haunting is occurring (107).

In Ernesto Galarza's photograph, the blind field is present in the unintentional personal significance the trucks possess. The invisible unintentional presence of Mexican Americans shadow and haunt the intentional method of Galarza's work.

Throughout *Strangers in Our Fields*, Galarza barely photographs Mexican bodies. In fact out of twenty-two photographs, only three show Mexican bodies. I argue this absent presence works as the punctum that evokes the blind field which signals the appearance of a haunting. Seven of Ernesto Galarza's photographs in *Strangers in Our Fields* are photographs of migrant laborers' documents. These photos document the abuses in wages, food distribution and shelter accommodation. These photos absolutely accomplish this purpose. However, they also do more than simply document; they come complete with their own form of punctum. The studium of this kind of photograph is clear. The viewer comes to the photograph and quickly becomes aware this is a photograph of a paycheck. If the viewer possesses prior knowledge of the inequities that pervade migrant labor, s/he may come to the photograph prepared to see inequity and informed of the conditions of Mexican migrant labor. These are aspects of studium. The punctum is both what the viewer adds to the photograph and "*what is nonetheless already there* (Barthes 1981, 55). The punctum exists in the absence.

The photograph witnesses and proves Jesús Rodríguez's words. The image of the payroll check combined with the Rodríguez's words gives body and voice to a man who

otherwise would be nameless, voiceless, and invisible. A blind field appears. What has happened within the frame has not died; it is not static (Barthes 1981, 57). On the contrary, the most remarkable aspect of this photo is the entity, or should I say body that has been enlivened outside the frame. Jesús Rodriguez is a name and a person who has earned $27.l7. Of that $27.17, $24.50 was spent on miscellaneous items (including food) at the commissary, $1.82 on living quarters. After these deductions, the amount of Rodríguez's payroll check is $0.85. These details are important for their record of corruption and exploitation. They are also important because they bring the life of Rodríguez from out of the frame of the photo. The absent presence of Jesús Rodríguez triggers a punctum. I add to the photograph by adding elements from my own memory and experience as the daughter of seasonal laborers whose stories of fieldwork in Texas and Idaho haunt me and thus provide me with a recollection that is easily touched and punctured by the reality of Jesús Rodríguez's payroll check. Simultaneously, I as a viewer am adding something to the photograph that is already there (Barthes 1981, 55). This is the personal history of the migrant laborer. It is there because I bring it through my own experience; it is there because Galarza brings it through his own experience; and, it is

Figure 5: Payroll Check for Jesús Rodríguez. Photograph by Ernesto Galarza

there because it is fundamentally the experience of the photo's subject – Jesús Rodríguez. Thus the three separate experiences of three separate individual's position themselves as transparent layers through which the heretofore disembodied body of the migrant laborer can finally be seen. This is a powerful effect of the punctum.

Unlike many photographers of migrant labor, including Leonard Nadel, Galarza photographs and documents the names of laborers. This is significant because it combats the anonymity that follows these workers from nation to nation and camp to camp. They have an identity, a particular name and Galarza's camera is there to name them and bring them as individuals from out of the shadows and into the light of the U.S. American political conscious. To supplement the photograph, Galarza chooses to caption the image with the spoken words of the man whose name appears on the payroll check, Jesús Rodriguez: "'The food is a serious problem. They charge us $1.75 a day. We ask permission to cook our own meals like it says in the contract. The camp boss said it's part of the contract we eat in the commissary restaurant or our contract will be cancelled'" (Galarza 1956, 40).

Galarza makes the existence of these invisible laborers visible through his photographs. Throughout *Strangers in Our Fields*, he punctuates his statements with visual imagery that attests to the social and environmental conditions of migrant laborers and the camps in which they live.

In *Everyone Had Cameras: Photography and Farmworkers in California, 1850-2000* (2008), Richard Steven-Street writes: "Nadel was so taken by Galarza's book that he launched a project that would become the most ambitious, systematic, and explicitly political farmworker photographic exposé of the decade" (373). Nadel, inspired by

Galarza's *Strangers in Our Fields* set out to make a visual record of braceros in the process of migrating from recruitment centers in México to the labor camps in the United States. Nadel became one of only two photographers to travel into México, photograph Mexican workers and their families in their homes, and then follow them to the recruitment centers in the Mexican interior and at the Mexican border. He photographed the entire process of bracero migration. After his experience photographing and following braceros, Nadel discarded any pretense of objectivity (Steven Street 373). He believed braceros were "essentially modern slaves" (373). Writing for *Pageant* magazine, Nadel stated:

> Arriving here, the bracero soon finds that a contract is a piece of paper which may be torn, or burned, or spat upon. His papers assure him a minimum of work hours, paid sick leave, sanitary lodgings, meals at cost, free heat and bedding. But a periphery of profiteers bleeds his paycheck dry. Too often, he is given just enough work to cover his board. He lives in unheated barns and warehouses. He pays dearly for food too rancid to eat, blankets he is too cold to forego, and, sometimes, even for the tools of his trade (qtd. by Richard Steven Street 2008, 375).

Nadel's observation is clearly empathetic to the plight of Mexican braceros; however, he and Galarza are vastly different in their tools of narration. Rather than speaking, as Nadel does, of a symbolic and consequently nameless bracero, Galarza chooses to name a particular bracero and from that particularity discuss the harsh and unfair conditions of migrant labor. While both Galarza and Nadel move with migrant labor as observers, only Galarza has experience as a migrant laborer, thus his motivation to name a laborer, a laborer like himself who has been primarily nameless. Differences also occur in the photographs of Galarza and Nadel. Nadel photographs particular Mexican bodies that bear witness to the abuses and humiliation Mexican migrant laborers suffer. Galarza, on

the other hand, photographs only names and absent bodies that bear witness to these same abuses and humiliations.

One of Nadel's most disturbing and condemning photographs depicts a line of Mexican men being 'deloused' at a recruitment center. The medical assistant sprays DDT directly into the face of the man at the front of the line. All the men are exposed from above the waist. In other Nadel photographs, the men's entirely naked bodies are exposed and the medical assistants are spraying their entire bodies with DDT.[57] A depiction such as this is undeniably powerful and effective depicting the humiliation of Mexican men.

Strangers in Our Fields includes six photos of labor camps. In these photos no laborers are present. Galarza uses these photographs to document the bleak conditions of camp life. One photograph exhibits barracks made of wood and corrugated tin. In between the cracks of the building, there are crumpled pieces of cloth and paper. Once more, the Galarza captions the picture with a passage taken from one of his many interviews with the migrant laborers who live in this camp. "'Windows do not have screens. Mosquitoes from the river possess themselves of our dormitory. You get a little sleep when the mosquito gets tired of singing.'" (1956, 24). Both the grammatical structure of this sentence and its wording suggest Galarza conducted his interviews in Spanish. This is an important

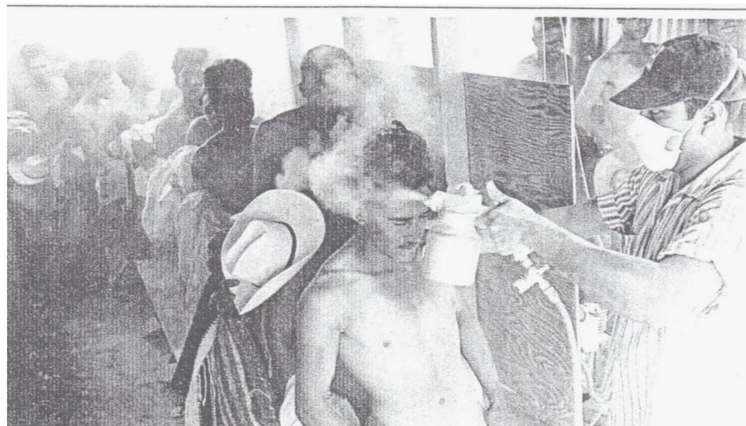

Figure 6: Mexican men being deloused with DDT at a processing center on the U.S.-Mexico border. Photograph by Leonard Nadel.

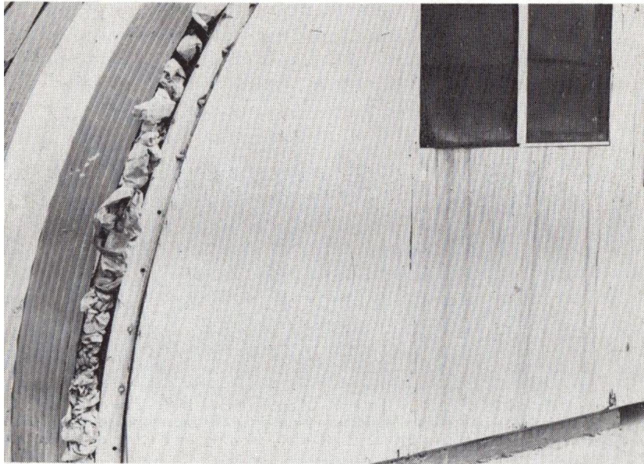

Figure 7: Photograph of barracks in a Mexican labor camp in California. Photo by Ernesto Galarza.

observation because once again it points to the significance of Galarza's experience as a Mexican migrant laborer. He is able to communicate with the primarily monolingual Spanish-speaking migrant population. This is something Leonard Nadel was unable to do. Furthermore, Galarza also adds his own description to the photo's caption: "Metal huts sometimes part at the seams and become weather-loose. The braceros in this unit, not provided with stoves, attempted their own repairs by using paper bags and newspapers as caulking material" (24). Galarza's commentary suggests his empathetic perspective regarding the living conditions of the migrants. It also confirms his presence in the camp. As a photographer, as an activist, as a sociologist, he is there to bear witness to these conditions and act as cultural and linguistic translator for the laborers. He is there to serve their needs and relate their stories.

This photograph of barracks in a California migrant labor camp is also notable absent of bodies. Diverging from Nadel, Galarza does not photograph Mexican bodies. If we consider the above Nadel photo, we as an audience witness the humiliation and degradation of Mexican masculinity. As a Mexican man who is familiar with the hardship and degradation of migrant labor, Galarza chooses not to objectify his subjects nor subject them to more humiliation within the lens of his camera or within the edges of a

frame that will then be viewed by countless individuals. His refusal to closely photograph Mexican bodies signifies his recognition of the camera shot as an act of violence.

In “Photography and Fetish,” Christian Mertz reveals the violent component of photography:

> Photography is linked with death in many *different* ways. The most immediate and explicit is the social practice of keeping photographs in memory of loved beings who are no longer alive. But there is another real death which each of us undergoes every day, as each day we draw nearer to our own death. Even when the photographed is still living, that moment when she or he *was* has forever vanished. Strictly speaking, the person who *has been photographed* – not the total person, who is an effect of time – is dead . . . Photography has a third character in common with death: the snapshot, like death is an instantaneous abduction of the object out of the world into another world . . . The photographic *take* is immediate and definitive, like death and like the constitution of the fetish in the unconscious . . . With each photograph, a tiny piece of time brutally and forever escapes it’s ordinary fate . . . photography preserves fragments of the past ‘like flies in amber.’ Not by chance, the photographic act . . . has been frequently compared with shooting, and the camera with a gun (2003, 140-141).

I propose Galarza is quite aware of the static and deathly nature of photography and it is precisely for this reason that he does not photograph Mexican bodies. He does not want to subject Mexican laborers to a process wherein they symbolically are shot, captured and immobilized.

Critic Allan Sekula also describes the abusive potential of the camera. In “The Body and the Archive,” Sekula illuminates the multiple uses for photography during the nineteenth century. The photograph, according to Sekula, begins to “claim the legal status of a *visual* document” (1986, 6). There is no question regarding the authenticity of a photograph. What is photographed is true. Sekula acknowledges the “honorific” possibilities of photography, such as maintaining emotional ties to one’s family (8).

However, he also argues photography can function "repressively" (6). The photograph quickly became a means of archiving human subjects. Archiving human subject, thusly allowed for definitive constructions to emerge: "the law-abiding body and the criminal body" (15). Within the criminal body, there were two additionally constructed categories: the criminal who appeared as part of law-abiding citizenry, i.e. the criminal genius; and, the criminal "who was organically distinct from the bourgeois: a *bio-type*. The science of criminology emerged from this latter operation" (16).

Richard Steven Street calls our attention to the "*bio-type*" aspect of some photographs of Mexican migrant workers in California. Steven Street includes and describes post-mortem photographs of Mexican men who died violently. He writes: "Many are caught in last gasp. Some are in pieces. Or hanging. They are shriveled and caked in dirt. Often their pants are stained with urine and blood" (120).[58] Portraits of Mexican American men wherein they are criminalized, de-humanized and violated are exactly what Galarza attempted to avoid. The absence of Mexican bodies in his photography suggests a vigorous life outside the confines of the camera's shutter and outside of the confines of the labor camp. Even more basically, it suggests life and agency. They are not solely victims, but active laborers who have the capacity and power to organize and unionize.

I argue Galarza photographs absence because of his Mexican American experience as both a laborer and an organizer in the camps. For a moment, I return to *Barrio Boy* to trace how he constructs the process of his awakening consciousness. This consciousness, of course, is what he perceives leads to his labor activism.

The majority of *Barrio Boy* describes Galarza's growth from a young child in Nayarit to a teenage boy in the barrio of Sacramento. However, in the last few pages, circumstances radically shift. In the ten years since Galarza and his family left México for the United States, they have lived and worked in an exclusively urban setting. This changes in 1918 when twelve-year-old Galarza loses his mother and his Uncle Gustavo to the 1918 influenza outbreak.[59] After the death of his mother and uncle, Galarza, in order to make a living, is compelled to enter the workforce of seasonal labor. The following lengthy quote details the social and physical geography of labor camps. He writes:

> It was a world different in so many ways from the lower part of Sacramento and the residences surrounded by trim lawns and cool canopies of elms to which I had delivered packages . . . In the better camps there was a faucet or a hydrant, from which water was carried in buckets, pails and washtubs . . . [housing was] weatherworn and sagging . . . made of secondhand lumber, patched and painted . . . Those who arrived late for the work season camped under trees or raised lean-to's along a creek, roofing their trucks with canvas to make bedrooms. Such camps were always well away from the house of the ranchero, screened from the main road by an orchard or a grove of eucalyptus. I helped to pitch and take down such camps, on some spot that seemed lonely when we arrived, desolate when we left (1971, 262).

Galarza's point of view as a migrant laborer allows him access to a way of life that is kept hidden from the mainstream population in California as well as the mainstream population in the rest of the United States. Simultaneously, Galarza's point of view as a bilingual activist, educator and researcher informs and forms his need to document and re-member this community in order to not only evoke empathy, but also political, social and legal activism. From out of the opaque shadows of orchards, Galarza brings migrant workers into the spotlight. Their presence stands as evidence of their existence. Their

existence dismantles the screen of their employers – a screen that blurs and softens the harsh edges of migrant labor.

The autoethnographic element of Galarza's work testifies to his need to make known the hidden/ghostly bodies of migrant laborers. He makes these bodies known by telling his story and thus serving as witness to their lives and experiences. This autoethnographic element remains in all of his work. Throughout *Strangers in Our Fields*, Galarza presents case studies of migrant workers. He interviews these workers and incorporates their accounts into the overall narrative of Mexican migration and U.S. legislation. In doing so, he personalizes the detached and often harmful language of government legislation. He begins by narrating the events of Mexican immigrant Pito Pérez's life. He describes Pérez's economically weak status in Michoacán and his desire to leave his home for better wages in the United States. Galarza then minutely details Pérez's experience at a bracero recruitment center, the physical examinations that follow, and then the lengthy time Perez must wait before he finds out if he has been accepted and picked up by an agricultural corporation in the United States. In using the name of a particular Mexican immigrant, Galarza brings a name to the "nameless."

Galarza is active in visually documenting the social and economic conditions of Mexicans and Mexican Americans during the first half of the twentieth century. His photographs are endowed with a blind field informed by Galarza's personal experience as an absent presence in the California fields. And as I have also illustrated, *Barrio Boy* serves as evidence of Galarza's desire to both personalize and collectivize the Mexican/Mexican American labor experience.

III. At Work in the Field: the Ghostly Reconciliation of Galarza's I/Eye

As Director of Research and Education in the NFLU, Galarza also concerned himself with local farmworkers who were not official or unofficial migrant laborers. They were Mexican immigrants or Mexican Americans who had moved into the valley and into farm work labor earlier than the braceros or other Mexican migrant laborers. Galarza calls these local farm laborers "locales" (1977, 148).

> The *locales* were men and women inured to the most punishing living conditions in all of California agriculture. In the dark of the early morning they walked under the stars to climb into trucks and buses so they could be at work an hour or two ahead of the sun . . . For them the Valley was a universe of heat and dust, of short-handled hoes, overloaded crates, sixty pound lug boxes stacked six and seven high . . . Their talk was that of people who knew the fields by their first names (148-149).

In this passage, Galarza explains the circumstances of farm laborers that are not recent immigrants to the United States. These are laborers whose wages are being pushed down by both the braceros and the unofficial Mexican migrant workers. He continues: "As a community of settled families paying taxes and meeting their modest expenses, such as those of sending their children to school, their economic position was under constant pressure" (149). These "settled" farm workers, Galarza argues, were familiar enough with the conditions of field work and secure enough in their status as U.S. citizens or established and legal immigrants to resist the implementation of certain practices and policies. For example, locales rejected the use of the short-handled hoe, and they rejected the growers' demand to substitute hourly rates for piece rates.[60] The locales were vital to Galarza's work in the NFLU. Locales had a relatively secure and stable position in the U.S. labor force. From this position, they could join the NFLU and

demand fair treatment from their agri-business employees. This is exactly what the locales did in 1951 (2008, 365). Steven Street writes:

> On May 24, 1951, the NFLU announced it represented farmworkers in the valley and demanded a raise in melon picking wages from twenty to twenty-five cents an hour. The union also called on growers to stop hiring braceros over domestic workers in violation of international agreements (365).

The growers refused to honor these demands. Consequently the union organized picket lines outside some melon packing sheds. Eventually the NFLU extended the picket lines to "labor camps, the Holly Sugar refinery . . . and several large ranches. [The NFLU] use[ed] the strike to highlight the way braceros and undocumented workers were being used as strikebreakers" (365). While the NFLU highlighted the violations of the bracero agreement, government officials from both the United States and México ignored these violations. Because it could not force the bureaucrats of either nation into action, the NFLU ended the strike on June 25, 1951 (2008, 365-366). The locales' demands illustrate the complexity of agricultural labor. In order to succeed and potentially overcome the monopoly of agricultural corporations in the United States, Galarza understood he must appeal to and work for the group of laborers most likely to strike against unfair treatment – locales. Unlike braceros (official migrants) or undocumented workers (unofficial migrants) locales were more willing to call attention to themselves and resist. This was a privilege neither official nor unofficial migrant workers possessed. Galarza recognized these differences and used this in an attempt to call attention to *all* facets of agricultural labor. He understood the process of agricultural labor the constant arrival of new official and unofficial migrant workers as a vicious cycle.

In *Farm Workers and Agri-business in California, 1947-1960*, Galarza details this cycle:

> In the years that it took a domestic harvester [local] to equate the level of his wages with that of his family's living, he . . . noticed the ways in which he was cheated by the contrived shrinkage of his work product between the time he delivered it and the computation of his weekly paycheck . . . Knowledgeable in these matters, he became a marked man, progressively less desirable than illegals and braceros (150).

Galarza's description of the increasing distance between the locales and the unofficial and official migrant workers suggests a bias. Perhaps he does not believe the gulf between the three can be bridged. I do not believe this is so. In fact, I argue that Galarza considers locales and the official/unofficial migrants to be absolutely connected. As I state above, they are all part of the same cycle. Again, I return to Galarza:

> The competitive disadvantages of the domestics that were forcing them out of their communities did not result from the free play of market forces. They were the effects of a deliberate design to dislocate them in order to make room for the braceros. In twenty years, these, too would develop work experience awareness and social stabilities of their own. Psychologically, they too would become *locales*, but another decade or two would have passed; and since the Mexican reservoir south of the border remained inexhaustible and open, the recycling of poverty in the Imperial could go on indefinitely (150).

Galarza understands the cycle of immigration. The migrants are brought to the United States through the Bracero Program or they cross the border undocumented. Either way numerous members of both groups make their way into the world of California agri-business. After decades in the United States, these immigrants also become locales. Eventually, these immigrants-turned-locales become the undesirables in an agricultural labor force that builds itself on the exploitation of inexperienced, new migrant workers. Galarza does not blame the poverty of California farmworkers on either the official or the

unofficial migrant workers. Instead he faults the governments of both the United States and México.

In yet another autoethnographic moment, Galarza places himself within the narrative of Mexican migrant workers in California. In an effort to force the U.S. Department of State and the Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores in Mexico to include the National Farm Labor Union in the negotiations regarding the renewal of the bracero program, Galarza travels to Mexico City in January 1951.[61] Travelling with Galarza is Frank Noakes, an official in the Railway Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees. It is Noakes' task to make certain the renewed bracero agreement does not include the contracting of braceros within the jurisdiction of the Railway Brotherhood (Galarza 1977, 154-157). Galarza is in Mexico City for two weeks. During those two weeks, he twice attempts to meet with the Assistant U.S. Secretary of Labor Robert S. Creasy. Both attempts are unsuccessful. Creasy refuses to meet with Galarza; however, he does agree to meet with Noakes. Creasy and Noakes meet regularly and Creasy makes an unofficial agreement with Noakes – bracero contracts for railway employment will not be discussed during the negotiations. Noakes, unlike Galarza is successful. Why?

Galarza answers my question with his "I." Throughout his several sociological works, Galarza has kept his autobiographical "I" quiet. The style of *Strangers in Our Fields* is an excellent example of Galarza's effort to maintain narrative distance, and thus maintain an aura of objectivity which will perhaps give his report more authority. After interviewing several official and unofficial farm workers, he writes:

> The results of this study may seem startling. But to anyone who is familiar with the workings of the international recruitment program, there is really nothing novel about them. The author of this study has had considerable

> experience with the program's operation during the years it has been in existence. Year after year he has visited the camps . . . he has made personal inspections of the recruiting centers in Mexico and has participated in Congressional hearings on the operation of the program; he has had thousands of interviews with Mexican Nationals in various parts of the United States and has investigated hundreds of individual grievances on their behalf (1956, 20).

In this lengthy passage from *Strangers in Our Fields*, Galarza maintains authoritative distance. Although he mentions his familiarity with farm workers and farmwork in general, he narrates this experience quite briefly and in the third-person. He does not want to make the story of farm workers his story – yet.

Nevertheless, he cannot help but make the story of farm workers in California his story. It always already has been his story. Of course *Barrio Boy* is the ultimate expression of Galarza's personal experience as a farm worker. It also tells the story of his move towards farm worker activism. As I mentioned earlier, *Barrio Boy* ends with a very young Galarza's decision to be the voice for the farm workers he has worked with as a child and young adult.

Farm Workers and Agri-Business in California, 1947-1960 begins where *Barrio Boy* ends. This sociological study analyses the inequities laborers (both locales and migrants official and unofficial) face in the world of agri-business. Galarza writes of these events from afar; he is involved in the narration of the conditions of migrant labor, but he involved as a spectator or perhaps even a spectre. He watches. He views. He is the ethnographic eye that witnesses the experience of farm labor in California. And yet as a member of this community, his personal experience – his autobiographical "I" remains distant. It hovers in the margins. However, Galarza cannot remain the spectre in the margins. His "I" erupts into the narrative and merges with his ethnographic eye.

Consequently there is an autoethnographic (eye/I) moment. Why does Galarza's autobiographical "I" appear in this moment in *Farm Workers and Agri-business in California*? Why does it appear in his re-telling of the two weeks he spent in México trying to force México and the United States to listen to the demands of the NFLU? I argue it appears because it is in this moment that a haunting occurs. Galarza's personal experience as a Mexican migrant in California's central valley returns. Galarza remembers and this memory is the ghost that erupts into his sociological narrative.

Avery Gordon writes:

> Haunting . . . is precisely what prevents rational detachment, prevents your willful control, prevents the disaggregation of class struggle and your feelings, motivations, blind spots, craziness, and desires . . . The ghost always carries the message . . . that the gap between personal and social, public and private, objective and subjective is misleading in the first place (1997, 98).

Galarza's ghost arrives while he in Mexico City because in Mexico City Galarza remembers what he is and what he always has been – a racialized mexicano. As I mentioned earlier, Ernesto Galarza travels into México with Frank Noakes. Noakes manages to meet with Assistant Secretary of Labor Robert S. Creasy and secure an unofficial promise that braceros will not be contracted for railway employment. Galarza fails in his several attempts to meet with Creasy. Galarza's inability to retain a rational detachment signals a ghostly haunting. Writing of this moment, Galarza remembers:

> [A successful meeting with Creasy] would have been the end of Noakes's assignment, but he did not stop there. Noakes was a dapper dresser . . . also, his low-key style clashed subtly with Creasy's pomposity. Noakes readily agreed to stay on a few days and help me deflate it. While he remained in Mexico City he paid for my dinners and allowed me the use of his hotel suite . . . I decided to make contact with Mexican labor organizations in Mexico City, to address public meetings of hundreds of applicant braceros who had gathered from all parts of the country . . .

> Arrangements were made for me to address [the bracero applicants] in a mass meeting in one of the working-class districts of the capital (1977, 156).

Galarza recognizes Noakes possesses a cultural capital that U.S. officials easily recognize – his dress, his style. Galarza recognizes that he also possesses cultural capital – a cultural capital completely apart from that of Noakes. He, unlike Noakes, can appeal and speak to the working-class, Spanish-speaking braceros. He can speak directly to the Mexican migrant laborer. And he does. However, his ability to attract a bracero audience and to speak to a bracero audience is not without public and personal difficulty. Once again, I return to Galarza:

> I . . . called a press conference on the Paseo de la Reforma . . . At the press conference a roomfull (sic) of correspondents received copies of documents I had brought with me concerning wages and working conditions of braceros who had returned from California and asked the NFLU to assist them in pressing grievances they had left pending and which neither government had resolved . . . The publicity resulting from the press conference and the leaflets announcing the mass meetings . . . aroused the Mexican government. The Secretaria de Gobernacion . . . picked up two of the organizers of the mass meeting, advised them to cancel it or face jail and to pass the word to me that unless I desisted I would be deported under Article 33 of the constitution, which provides for the summary expulsion of undesirable aliens. I had become an American citizen in 1939 (1977, 156).[62]

Because the Mexican government considers Galarza a disruptive foreigner, he is at risk for deportation. And as a Mexican-born American citizen, Galarza "present[s] the Mexican government with peculiar problems with respect to Article 33, and that [his] deportation would be the best way to call international attention to what was happening in Mexico City" (1977, 156). In order to prevent international attention, the U.S. Ambassador William O' Dwyer grants Galarza an interview. In this meeting O'Dwyer informs Galarza that México has stood in the way of the negotiations between the NFLU

and the U.S. and Mexican governments. México insisted on keeping Galarza out of the negotiations for the renewal of the bracero program. O'Dwyer advises Galarza to return to the United States and take the NFLU off the international stage. Galarza describes this meeting:

> The ambassador sat across from me at his wide desk, high on a leather chair, as if on a throne. He was framed in drapes, plaques, photographs of the famous, great seals, and the perpendicular folds of an American flag at rest on a polished mast. I imagined behind these props a distant montage of the powers that bought him to such eminence . . . [He was] the brother of Frank O'Dwyer, partner of Keith Mets, President of the Imperial Valley Farmers Association, associate of B.A. Harrigan, employer of more than five thousand braceros (1977, 157).

Galarza exists in the misleading gap between "personal and social, public and private, objective and subjective" (Gordon 1997, 98). His social role as an activist and organizer is always affected by his personal role as a Mexican-born U.S. citizen. His public experience as a farm worker advocate is always affected by his personal experience as a farm worker. His objective perspective as a sociologist who studies farm workers is always affected by his subjective experience as a *mexicano* who was a farm worker. The gap is misleading, nevertheless it is real. Avery Gordon reminds us that the ghost does not "transcend the actually existing social relations in which we live, think, and think up new concepts and visions of life" (98). Quite the opposite is true. The ghost arises from lived experience in the gap. At the same time, it illuminates the countless ways the gap (mis)leads. Gordon clarifies: "[The gap] is leading you elsewhere, it is making you see things you did not see before, it is making an impact on you; your relation to things that seemed separate or invisible is changing" (98).

Ernesto Galarza's ghost identifies the gap in which he finds himself. As his two weeks in Mexico City exemplify, he is somewhere between México and the United States; he is somewhere between activist and laborer. His ghost leads him to the experience of the gap, which in turn (mis)leads him toward the ghostly matter of his subject (observed with his eye) and his subjectivity (practiced with his "I"). The gap is not irreconcilable. The ghost tells us this. Throughout his autoethnographic work, Galarza has maintained a delicate balance between eyes/I(s); yet, the ghost returns over and over to disrupt the balance.

IV. The Narrating Photograph

According to Avery Gordon, the blind field outside of the photograph suggests the shadow of a ghostly presence (1998, 107). She writes:

> The photograph is involved in the ghostly matter of things and not surprisingly, since the wavering quality of haunting often hinges on what sign or image raises the ghost and what it means to our conscious visible attention . . . When photographs appear in contexts of haunting, they become part of the contest between familiarity and strangeness between hurting and healing, that the ghost is registering (102-103).

As I argue in section two of this chapter, the blind field frames Galarza's photographs. Each photograph is significant not for what image is present, but for what image is absent – the body of the Mexican migrant laborer. *Strangers in Our Fields* is Galarza's earliest publication. *Kodachromes in Rhyme* (1982) is his last. This collection of poems illuminates Galarza's reverence for the image. He has chosen to feature a particular kind of picture-making – kodachrome – in the collection's title.[63] Importantly, *Kodachromes in Rhyme* has also reconciled the gap between the visual image and the textual image. Galarza uses the ghost to address this (mis)leading gap.

Galarza dedicates his poems to his wife and children. In this dedication, he poses two questions: “How does a human specie take a cosmic shaking, an explosion of the corruptions of generations as at an altar before the eyes, and yet remain unremoved? How can frail flesh continue to pursue an earthly order and continue in that race where the eyes are fixed on the extant heavenly order?” (1982, ii). These questions marvel at our strength to not only survive the violence of our existence, but also our ability to maintain hope. Galarza believes this strength emerges in the images we create and the thoughts we produce (1982, ii). Galarza’s dedication ends with the following line: “Because of the author of these works and the sterling companion at his side, his little chip off the block proved to love a man through death awakened to life” (iii). He has passed through the “cosmic shaking” of the gap and he has emerged alive and perhaps more settled than the young boy arriving in Nogales in 1913 or the labor activist meeting with braceros at the Paseo de la Reforma in 1951. Undoubtedly, the gap between farm worker and activist is real. Undoubtedly, the gap between Mexican (familiar) and U.S. American (strange) is real. However, the ghost in Galarza’s image-poems registers this gap and moves forward into that blind field – the absent presence we cannot see *and* the absent presence we absolutely feel. Galarza’s poems, and I would argue his entire body of work, are a combination of imagery and thought. They radiate strength and hope. And perhaps most significantly they testify to the productive possibility of ghosts and haunting.

Much earlier in this chapter, I noted that the epigraph to *Barrio Boy* was an excerpt from *The Education of Henry Adams*. I argued Galarza invoked Adams in order to dialogically engage the “canon” of U.S. literature. He does this again in *Kodachromes in Rhyme*. In “A Short Response to Robert Frost,” Galarza writes: “One could do worse

than climb white birches/brittle with ice on some New England hill./City things are apt to be contentions/and snap occasionally against the will" (1982, 18). Robert Frost is one of the best known and most "canonized" U.S. American poets (Ferguson 2005, 2095). His writing is deeply connected with New England; and thus, contributes deeply to the way in which the United States imagines itself (Mulder 1979, 553). Galarza's "A Short Response to Robert Frost" affirms the impact of the poetry of Robert Frost and then challenges the impact. Galarza recognizes and chides the sadness and loneliness that imbue Frost's "American" poetry; however, he also recognizes his own "American" experience. A critical component of "American" identity is the identity of Mexican and Mexican American laborers. Through the use of Frost, Galarza reminds his audience of the harsh conditions in which migrant laborers work. Simultaneously he points out the privilege of the U.S. mainstream.

In *Mexican Ballads, Chicano Poems: History and Influence in Mexican-American Poetry* (1992), José E. Limón, traces the evolution of a Chicano poetry of resistance. It's origin, according to Limón, is in the defiant lyrics and sounds of the Mexican corridor tradition. I agree that corridos have shaped Chicano poetry; however, I have to wonder where Galarza fits into this scheme? Galarza's poetry does not follow the model Limón discusses. It is not lengthy, it does not describe a specifically Chicano experience; nor, does it allude to any Chicano event. Instead, it uses the much maligned canon of U.S. American culture and undermines it. Galarza's poem reminds us we as Mexican Americans live in the United States. We must engage with it, but through our words, through our critical thinking, we can revolutinize mainstream U.S. culture and hold it accountable. "A Short Response to Robert Frost" is also a ghostly poem. It is a poem of

absences. Its power lies in what is not said. What is the experience that is in such tension with the New England experience of Frost? We can only know the answer to this if we pay attention to what is outside the poem's margins.

Kodachromes in Rhyme ends with the following poem:

> Could Be
> I only sang
> because the lonely road was long;
> and now the road and I are gone
> but not the song.
> I only spoke
> the verse to pay for borrowed time;
> and now the clock and I are broken
> but not the rhyme.
> Possibly,
> the self not being fundamental,
> eternity
> breathes only on the incidental (53).

I close this chapter with these words because they are Ernesto Galarza's words. These words remind us, as Mexican American scholars, that we can embrace the reality of the gaps we inhabit and follow the ghosts into the thick history of our experience as Mexican Americans in the United States.

Chapter Four:
Ghosts of Memory: Crossing the U.S.-Mexico Border with Norma Cantú, Pat Mora and John Phillip Santos

The memory of that [pre-1848] time has now been stolen or just forgotten, but some still carry inside of us ghost maps of long-abandoned pueblos, populated with legions of nameless spirits.[64]
John Phillip Santos

I. Violent Print: Narrating the U.S.-México Border in Mainstream Media

The 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall prompted John Phillip Santos to write his own experience with border guards and boundary enforcement on the U.S.-México border. For Santos, who was born and raised in San Antonio, Texas, his border is this one. In a short piece for *The New York Times*, Santos compares the collapse of the Berlin Wall to the "recent years [that] have seen proposals to create a chain-link 'taco curtain' and to dredge the river into a deep and menacing moat" (Dec. 18, 1989; A19). According to Santos, the fall of the Berlin wall promises the future unification of Europe, but he says in the Americas our "wall" is being reinforced with "debt, the obsolescent military and the strategic sensibilities of the Monroe Doctrine" (A19).[65] One real consequence of such reinforcement is that it once more fractures the history and culture in common with those of us in the borderlands of Mexico. Santos asks why reinforce boundaries where none need be in the first place? Of course, the troubling twist of Santos' question is its romantic nature. Throughout his autobiographical narrative he imagines a very mythic, romantic narrative between Mexico and Mexican America. In Santos' narrative, the two are permanently and often unproblematically connected. As Norma Cantú among others illustrates, this is not always true. The natural connection between México and the

Mexican America is often tenuous. Consequently, this tenuous relationship often produces much anxiety in Mexican American subjects regarding their perceived alienation from México Undoubtedly there are similarities between the experiences of Mexicans and Mexican Americans; however, no amount of desire can undo the legacy of 1848, the Monroe Doctrine, and 1898. It is this history that haunts Mexican American autobiography because it is the history that separates Mexican America from the very entity it longs to be a part of – Mexico. Santos, in addition to Norma Cantú and Pat Mora tries to re-member México in Mexican America.

The final paragraph of Santos's article continues to lament the increasing division between the United States and Mexico while it predicts a more hopeful future for an increasingly less divided Europe. His comparison of both European and U.S.-Mexican borders ends with the following observation: "For now, the Rio Grande, flowing sluggishly toward the Gulf of Mexico, remains a moving yet inscrutable reminder of the deep commonalities that history has washed away. The Germans are luckier in this respect – they remember" (A19). This final sentence betrays the flaw of the argument that structures the essay. It begs three questions. First, Mexican America has forgotten which histories? Secondly, why have they forgotten these histories? And finally, how do they re-member their history? Here Santos addresses the carnivorous policies of the U.S. government, particularly in relation toward Mexico. The United States and Mexico have forgotten the deep historical and cultural ties that bind them together. They have forgotten these ties as Mexico has become increasingly impoverished and reliant on U.S. demand for labor and as the U.S. has grown increasingly wealthy and desirous of cheap Mexican labor. And while this is a sound critique of the United States, there is a problem

with Santos' description of colonial Mexican society. He imagines a pre-1848 society of miners, missionaries and traders . . . [inhabitants who] kept farms or raised livestock on land granted by Spanish royal title. There were statesmen and intellectuals, artisans and musicians. By the end of the seventeenth century, Hispanic North America was part of a loose network of military presidios and missions stretching from Santa Fe to Mexico City and farther south to Buenos Aires" (A19). This picture of colonial Spanish society ignores its strict class and racial structures. It ignores the rebellions, both indigenous and *criollo* that constantly loomed on the horizon.[66] Perhaps Mexican America chooses to forget because it chooses to survive. After all, once the Berlin Wall fell, once the Iron Curtain fell, once the Soviet Union fell, did Europe unite, or did it only divide into smaller and smaller nationalist, essentialist and ethnic enclaves? This is not to say that circumstances in Europe might have been better if the Soviet Union had never fallen. I only bring up the realities of present day Europe to illuminate the problem with Santos's romantic re-imagining of a unified, peaceful and colonial New Spain. It simply did not exist, and this project hopes to determine how and why the works of Santos, along with Chicana writers Norma Cantú and Pat Mora re-member México in their Mexican American pasts. I also illustrate that in several instances these three autobiographies reveal the ruptures inherent in the process of re-membering.

I have used Santos' brief newspaper article to illustrate the larger issues that will be at work throughout this chapter. The four questions I outlined earlier will be used to address each of the three works I consider. These works are: Norma Cantú's *Canícula: Snapshots of a Girlhood on la Frontera* (1995); Pat Mora's *House of Houses* (1997); and John Phillip Santos's *Places Left Unfinished at the Time of Creation*(1999). Finally, I

place these works into a larger discussion regarding the place and politics of memory in the formation Mexican American of Mexican American identity.

Theories and practices of Mexican American autobiography have by necessity moved away from the hegemonic definitions of autobiography prescribed by Europe and Anglo America. Nevertheless before we look closely at the Mexican American theory and practice of autobiography, it is useful to look at a conventional definition of autobiography.

In his 1989 study on autobiography, Philippe Lejeune offers a clear definition of autobiography: "[Autobiography is a] retrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular the story of his personality" (1989, 4). According to Lejeune, this definition is realized as long as four criteria are met: 1:) that the autobiography is told as a prose narrative. 2:) that its subject is an individual life/personality 3:) that the author and narrator of the autobiography are the same *true life* person 4:) that the narrator and the protagonist are identical and that the autobiography is told in retrospection (4). If a work does not meet all four of these criteria, then they are not true autobiographies. Lejeune argues that examples of autobiographical works that do not meet the *true* standards of autobiography as he outlines them are the following: memoirs, biography, the personal novel, autobiographical poems, journals/diaries, self-portraits or essays (4). Because memoirs are not limited to the story of only one individual or personality they do not meet Lejeune's second requirement. The personal novel does not fulfill his third requirement. The autobiographical poem is not in prose and the self-portrait or essay is not necessarily in narrative form; nor, are they generally told in retrospection. The biography does not

conform to the language of the first part of the fourth requirement and finally, Lejeune points out that the journal/diary is not retrospective (4).

Lejeune's definitions are undoubtedly clear, and they are undoubtedly narrow. If we were to follow them to the letter, none of the three texts considered in this chapter, or for that matter in this entire dissertation, would be called autobiographies and yet that is exactly what I and I'm sure others would *choose* to call them. How is it possible to come to such a conclusion? Obviously, by widening the definitions of autobiography, but how is such a task both justified and accomplished? Françoise Lionnet argues:

> For those of us who are natives of the so-called Third World, it has become imperative to understand and to participate fully in the process of re-vision begun by our contemporary writers and theorists. The latter are engaged in an enterprise which converges toward other efforts at economic and political survival but which is unique in its focus on memory – the oral trace of the past – as the instrument for giving us access to our histories. These recovered histories have now become the source of creative explosions for many authors . . . Within the conceptual apparatuses that have governed our labeling of ourselves and others, a space is thus opened where multiplicity and diversity are affirmed. This space is not a territory staked out by exclusionary practices. Rather it functions as a sheltering site, one that can nurture our differences without encouraging us to withdraw into new dead ends, without enclosing us within facile oppositional practices or sterile denunciations and disavowals. For it is only by imagining nonhierarchical modes of relation among cultures that we can address the crucial issues of indeterminacy and solidarity (1989, 5).

For Lionnet, memory is crucial for survival as well as for giving us access to our histories. These recovered histories break new ground and give us the tools to become familiar with ourselves in a space that exists outside of hegemonic domination. She writes:

> We have to articulate new visions of ourselves, new concepts that allow us to think *otherwise*, to bypass the ancient symmetries and dichotomies that have governed the ground and the very condition of possibility of thought, of 'clarity,' in all Western philosophy. *Métissage* is such a concept and a practice: it is the site

> of undecidability and indeterminacy, where solidarity becomes the fundamental principle of political action against hegemonic language (1989, 6).

Lionnet's métissage is in direct correlation to both Gloria Anzaldúa's mestizaje. Throughout her multiple autobiographical works, Anzaldúa argues that to live en la frontera requires mestiza consciousness. For Anzaldúa, mestiza consciousness is a way of being that compels its subject to tolerate ambiguity (1987, 27). However, as Anzaldúa continues to explain the concept of mestiza consciousness, she makes clear that tolerance is not enough. Mestizas thrive in ambiguity. Ambiguity is a productive and tense environment which fosters courageous creativity. Lionnet and Anzaldúa use cultural hybridity as a theoretical concept to break down conventional understandings of traditional Western autobiography and to make room for "other[ed] autobiographical methods.

These articulations of métissage, mestizaje insist that the formation of autobiographical selves is based on relationality. In other words, our self is known by its relation to a larger body of selves/community. Lejeune's individual, Western European or hegemonic Euro-American subject/personality is an inadequate model for the relational self. The individual is not the rule; nor the ideal. Instead it is the voice that arises from a collection of inter-related and intra-related individuals.

In his discussion of the *californio* narratives of the nineteenth century, Genaro M. Padilla discusses the importance of collective identity in this early moment in the formation of Mexican American autobiography:

> Central to the reclaiming of the Mexican past was the narrative habit of remembering oneself within a community of the past. It is no surprise, therefore, to see that many of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century narratives that comprise the beginnings of Chicano autobiography construct a culturally matrixed

> subjectivity in which the 'I' is subsumed within a narrative of regional or cultural history. This displacement of a self-absorbed 'I'-centered narrative by narrative in which the cultural subject is refigured within a collective matrix may be regarded as a filial act (1993, 29).

None of the autobiographies considered in this chapter fit the conventional definitions of autobiography outlined by Lejeune; yet I argue that autobiography is precisely what these narratives are and it is their refusal to conform to the conventional model of autobiography that makes the autobiographical practices of Cantú, Mora and Santos political acts of resistance.

As Lejeune points out, the conventional reason to tell an autobiography is to tell the story of an individual life/ personality; yet, as "natives of the so-called Third World" this is not how we theorize or write autobiography (1989, 5). We theorize autobiography differently in order to question the authority of European and Euro-American dominance in history and culture. By questioning this authority, we question the veracity of the claims Europe and mainstream U.S. America have made about our histories, our cultures.

Genaro Padilla argues this point: "Autobiographical authority . . . issue[s] . . . from . . . a deep human desire to shape and control narrative, to modulate its articulation by that small stubbornness of voice that insists on its own story and that reconstructs the past in a register that claims ownership of the past, especially, when ownership of the present is endangered" (1993, 29). Although in this passage, Padilla refers specifically to the "endangered present" of the post-1848 moment in California, for Mexican Americans and *mexicana/os* in the United States the present is always a dangerous moment.[67] All of the narratives included here were published in the last five years of the 1990s, or to be more direct, they were published post-NAFTA (the North American Free Trade

Agreement).[68] The late 1990s was a crucial period in U.S.-Mexico border history as many border residents tried to negotiate the shifting political, economic and cultural effects of NAFTA. For example, in the 1990s three Texas cities and two Mexican cities Laredo/Nuevo Laredo, San Antonio and El Paso/Ciudad Juárez experienced a boom in population. For Laredo/Nuevo Laredo the population rose 43 percent to 500,000 while in San Antonio, the population rose to one million. But it is the growth of El Paso/Ciudad Juárez that most effectively illustrates the growth in the border population. From 1990-2000, El Paso/ Ciudad Juárez grew 38 percent to become a combined city of 2 million and the largest border community in the world (Lertola and Dykman 2001, 46-7). It is because of these massive shifts in population that more and more mainstream attention has recently been paid to the border. Its visibility has made Mexican Americans and *mexicana/os* visible. It has also forced the U.S. to reckon with the political and economic power that the Mexican American/*mexicana/o* demographic holds; however, it has also elicited a racial and nationalistic fear in the United States that Mexicans and their descendants will overrun the United States and threaten the political, religious and moral institutions to which the United States has always clung. Of course these fears are not new.

During the U.S.-Mexico War, at the height of U.S. imperialism and expansionism, it was possible the United States might take all of Mexico. And while this might seem like the ultimate goal of a nation determined to accomplish its manifest destiny, neither political party endorsed the colonization of all of Mexico. The significant racial *mestizaje* of the large population was seen as a threat to the "democratic institutions" of the United States. Discussing the possibility of citizenship rights for Mexican Americans, Senator

John Clayton illustrates the racist logic of the fear that gripped the government of the U.S. during this period. If Mexico were taken, and if its people were to become citizens then Clayton's reasoning was as follows: "'Aztecs, Creoles, Half-Breeds, Quadroons, Samboes, and I know not what else – 'ring-streaked and speckled' – all will come in, and, instead of our governing them, they, by their votes will govern us'"(Horsman 1981, 246).

These fears never subside. Instead, I argue racial fears only intensify with the passage of time. Throughout the mid-1800s there are various border wars/race wars along the U.S.-Mexico border, particularly in Texas where uprisings led by figures such as Juan Cortina and Catarino Garza become some of the most clearly articulated and violent rebellions (Young 2004, 98-130).

Racial fears continued into the twentieth century and not coincidentally the border grew increasingly more policed and militarized. As usual the fear remained that an idyllic Protestant, Anglo United States would be overrun by Mexicans. A 1911 *El Paso Times* headline reads: "The Latin Will Overcome the Anglo-Saxon in this Country in a Few Years" (qtd. in Romo 2005, 231). Tom Lea, the newly elected mayor in El Paso, did nothing to allay this fear. Instead he sent an urgent telegram to the U.S. Surgeon General pleading for a quarantine system to be put in place and for Mexicans to submit to it: "Hundreds dirty lousy destitute Mexicans arriving at El Paso daily/ will undoubtedly bring and spread typhus unless a quarantine is placed at once" (qtd. in Romo 2005, 233). The Mexican Revolution and the growth in immigration, both formal and informal only exacerbated these tensions and fears. It is estimated that ten percent of Mexico's entire population came into the United States during this period. This increase of immigrants led to the creation of the U.S. Border Patrol in 1924, and more sinisterly to the ultimate

creation of Lea's quarantine stations, particularly in El Paso, but also in other parts of Texas (Romo 2005, 223-44).[69] The disinfection plants lasted until the 1950s. Mexican migrant laborers coming to work in the United States as part of the Bracero Program (1947-1964) were no longer deloused with kerosene as they had been in the early 1900s.[70] By the middle of the twentieth century, kerosene had been abandoned as a disinfection technique; instead, the United States government began to use DDT as a disinfectant. (Romo 2005, 237). A more in-depth analysis of the exploitation of Mexican migrant labor during the 1950s can be found in the autobiographical, sociological and visual work of Mexican American activist Ernesto Galarza.

Although the U.S. no longer officially sanctions this kind of treatment of Mexican immigrants, the border is increasingly militarized and policed by forces both official and unofficial. Despite the attempt by mainstream media such as *Time* and *Newsweek* to put a positive spin on the growing Mexican American population and the Mexican immigrant population that feeds into it, the rhetoric remains the same. As illustrated earlier *Time* may not say that Mexicans are dirty and full of lice, but it does remind its readers that 31 percent of all cases of tuberculosis in the U.S. are concentrated in the border states (Gibbs 2001, 42). Without explicitly blaming anyone, the article has suggested it is Mexican border residents who are the carriers. We are still infected and infecting.

And we are growing. This is the rhetoric of every mainstream publication. We are the largest minority. The mainstream press reports that in states such as Alabama or Pennsylvania there is a Mexican American population. This Mexican American presence, according to the press is new and not always welcome. Before 11 September 2001, the border threat seemed to be weakening. News magazines, both televised and printed, such

as *Time* and CNN.com dedicated entire issues to the economic possibilities of looser borders. The potential of free trade and collaboration between the presidencies of George W. Bush and Vicente Fox seemed positive. Nevermind, the devastation NAFTA brought to the Mexican economy. Nevermind the exploitation of Mexican workers, the vast majority of them women, working for substandard wages in U.S.-owned maquiladoras. This was progress. This rhetoric seemed positive, but it bordered on sensationalism. *Time* named the population of Mexican Americans and Mexicans in the U.S. Amexica, a whole new world, and a country of 24 million.[71] This language of a whole new world takes us back to the language of the 1950s and UFOs, and just as the 1950s alien was the Soviet, the twenty-first century alien is the unidentifiable brown body. Citizen or not, immigrant or not, the brown body threatens. After September 11, the perception of threats only intensified and the U.S.-México border narrative went back to what it had always been – dangerous and contaminated. Once again, the country of 24 million could potentially swallow the country of the United States. Fear is still and has always been present. It does not matter whether it is 1848, 1911, 1950, or 2010; Mexican American subjectivity inhabits the constructed and potentially weak gap between us (the United States) and them (México). From this neither here; nor there space of mestizaje, life narrative emerge to resurrect our absence and re-member our presence.

II. Photographs of Presence: Norma Cantú's Re-membered Family Portrait

For these very political and personal reasons, Cantú, Mora and Santos must re-member. They write autobiography in order to re-member *and* to solidify a place for both Mexican Americans and *mexicanas/os* in the United States. I argue there is a collective and political function to memory in their writing. As individuals, they use memory to

situate themselves within that collectivity. It is in the gaps between writing about a collective identity (Mexican Americans and *mexicana/os* in the United States) and writing about belonging to that collective identity as an individual where I believe political, cultural, and collective ghosts and hauntings exist. I will return to more fully explain my metaphor, but for now I want to point out that it is also in this gap where Mexican American subjectivity is formed. Each of the three autobiographies presented in this chapter inhabits these spaces of collectivity, writing and identity.

Aside from their generic, geographical and historical relationships, these three works are also held together by how they re-member. Cantú, Mora and Santos use the language and imagery of ghosts and hauntings to bring their memories to textual life. Before we can get into a more detailed analysis of each text, it is necessary to define what I do and do not mean by ghosts and hauntings. As Avery Gordon points out in *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (1997), "The ghost is not simply a dead or a missing person, but a social figure, and investigating it can lead to that dense site where history and subjectivity make social life (1997, 8). In other words, the ghost, because of its very absence, is a felt, living presence. That presence thus turns it into a social being and in the case of the autobiographies included here the ghosts and/or hauntings are the sites where histories such as the conquest of Mexico, 1848, or the Mexican Revolution collide with the making of Mexican American subjectivities to form at the very least troubled memories. In this sense, ghosts not only "produce material effects" (Gordon 1997, 17); they are also the embodiment of memory (Brogan 1998, 16). Consequently, there is nothing unreal about them, on the contrary, they are quite real and they possess historical memory. Norma Cantú is aware of this and it is precisely for this

reason that she incorporates photographs into her memoir. They possess the historical memory she needs to supplement her personal memory. Their unavoidable presence interrupts the three autobiographies included here. It complicates narratives that would sometimes like to construct the historical movements between the United States and Mexico in ways that emphasize fluidity. Certainly as Santos mentions in his 1989 *New York Times* essay, there are numerous similarities between those of us on this side of the border and those of us on the other side of the border. But what always remains – what can never be ignored – is perhaps the most obvious and violent fact – the border does create a difference, a gap. Each text's ghosts of memory belie this fact.

Norma Cantú's 1995 memoir *Canícula: Snapshots of a Girlhood en la Frontera* is a collage of photographs and vignettes. These photos and short recollections capture Cantú's memories of Mexican American life on the Laredo/Nuevo Laredo border during the 1950s and 1960s. However, while the photos that Cantú includes in the narrative are of her as a child and teenager, the autobiographical subject is not Norma Cantú. She gives the narrated "I" another name – Azucena Cantú. The narrated "I" Azucena Cantú does not exist extratextually. The narrating "I" Norma Cantú does exist; however, she is not the person whose life narrative is being told. Thus, the narrating "I" and the narrated "I" do not share the same proper name (Smith and Watson 2001, 59). Norma Cantú and Azucena Cantú are not unlike the border town that is their home – Nuevo Laredo/ Laredo – the same, but different. Why does the narrating Cantú choose to rename her narrated "fictional autobioethnographical" subject (1995, xi)?

Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson argue in *Reading Autobiography: A Guide to Life Narrative*, "the writer of autobiography depends on access to memory to tell a

retrospective narrative of the past and to situate the present within that experiential history. Memory is thus both source and authenticator of autobiographical acts . . . remembering involves a reinterpretation of the past in the present" (2001, 16). For Cantú; however, *Canícula* is not an absolute source of her *individual* truths. She writes:

> In *Canícula*, the autobiographical is not always so. On the other hand, many of the events are completely fictional, although they may be true in a historical context. For some of these events, there are photographs; for others, the image is a collage; and in all cases, the result is entirely of my doing. So although it may appear that these stories are my family's, they are not precisely, and yet they are. But then again, as Pat Mora claims, life en la frontera is raw truth, and stories of such life, fictitious as they may be are even truer than true. I was calling the work fictional autobiography, until a friend suggested that they really are ethnographic and so if it must fit a genre, I guess it is fictional autobioethnography (1995, xi).

Cantú's stories are informed by a collectivity of stories from the Mexican American border community, and they are also informed by autobiography and memory as well as fiction; yet, what is vital to keep in mind is that the breaking of these genres does not reduce the impact of *Canícula's* border politics. In fact, I will argue, that it strengthens these politics.

Unlike any other autobiography in this study, there is no "real," or "historical" 'I' in *Canícula*. As Smith and Watson explain, "[A]n authorial 'I' is assumed from the signature on the title page – the person producing the autobiographical "I" – whose life is far more diverse and dispersed than the story that is being told of it. This is the 'I' as historical person, a person located in a particular time and place" (59). While we know that Norma Cantú exists as a historical person who did live in the South Texas borderlands during the 1950s and 1960s, she is not the narrated autobiographical "I" Azucena Cantú. Cantú asserts:

> I wanted to tell my story of growing up on the *Tejas*-Mexico geographical border, but I wanted to do this in a way that, with my literary critic's eye, I could layer the narrative so that the text would speak to many – my family, my friends, Chicanas/os, readers at large – about many things: relationships . . . I also wanted to write about the way childhood and coming-of-age constitutes sites where multiple identities develop (2003, 103).

While no individual, historical "I" exists in *Canícula*, Cantú's declaration exemplifies that the narratives of Azucena Cantú are Norma Cantú's individual stories as well as the communal stories of the Mexican American border community. Because *Canícula* intends to speak communally, it has much in common with the testimonio tradition of Latin America.[72] In this sense, autobiographical truth becomes even more malleable. In doing so, Cantú's narrative becomes the vehicle through which the Mexican American border community can identify and express itself. Azucena Cantú becomes a representative for all women and men en la frontera.

Smith and Watson describe testimonio as "an act of "bearing witness" (2001, 206). Latin American literary critic John Beverley defines testimonio in the following way: "[It is] a novel or novella-length narrative in book or pamphlet . . . form, told in the first person by a narrator who is also the real protagonist or witness of the events he or she recounts, and whose unit of narration is usually a 'life' or a significant life experience" (1995, 92-93). Beverly goes on to contend that in testimonio there is an "erasure of authorial presence. [This] makes possible a different kind of complicity . . . between narrator and reader" (97). Although Azucena Cantú is not a historical, real "I," she is Norma Cantú's double who bears witness to the oppressions of Mexican Americans on the south Texas border at mid-century. She is the "I"/eye through which the stories are told. It is not insignificant that Beverley argues that for testimonio to be

successfully on the communal level between reader and narrator, an erasure of the authorial presence must occur. There must be a sense of communication between the narrator and the reader. Cantú accomplished this by creating an everywoman character and naming her Azucena – a flower. In fact, all of her sisters in the memoir are named for flowers: Dahlia, Esperanza, Azalia, Margarita, Xóchitl. I claim she made this narrative move to capture a representation of Mexican womanhood.[73] They are all perennials that renew themselves yearly and are connected to the earth. By erasing her self (Norma) and replacing that self with Azucena, Cantú has allowed for a communal discourse and identification process to occur; however she has not totally removed her "I"/eye witness from her fictional autobioethnographical account. I maintain that the photographs in *Canícula* stand in as Cantú's witness to the experiences of the Mexican American border community.

FILIACION

Edad: 16 años
Estado Civil: soltera
Profesion: estudiante
Estatura: 1.62 mts.
Color: moreno
Ojos: cafés
Pelo: negro
Señas particulares: ningunas

Lugar de nacimiento: Nuevo Laredo, Tamps. 3 enero 1947.
Domicilio: 104 San Carlos St. Laredo, Texas.

FIRMA DEL PORTADOR

Observaciones: Reg. Ext. 6-890-531.

Azucena Cantú

NOTA: Esta Matrícula deberá ser refrendada cada dos años

Figure 8: Azucena Cantú's immigration documents.

The vignette "Mexican Citizen" exemplifies this. Here the two images are official U.S. and Mexican immigration papers. Both have a picture of Azucena Cantú stapled to the documents. In the U.S. document she is a one-year-old baby; in the Mexican document she is sixteen. These photos clearly represent the same baby/girl/woman we have seen represented throughout the narrative. This lets the reader/viewer know that we have seen Azucena throughout *Canícula*, and initially there seems to be nothing

significant about that fact; however, if one looks closely at the images, particularly the one where she is sixteen, it is possible to see that the original signature has been taped over. The new signature boldly reads Azucena Cantú, but underneath that signature is a faint capitalized "N" (1995, 21-23). This act bears a semblance to what Latin American historian Patricia Seed calls "pentimento," which in painting is "a trace of an earlier composition or of alterations that has become visible with the passage of time" (2001, 1). As Seed contends, these pentimenti often signal the artists changed intentions. Here it is no different. Cantú's intentions were deliberate; she wants the reader to know she is Azucena and she is not. It is vital to the survival of her testimonio that the reader of this narrative understand that *Canícula* is a communal discursive entity surviving because it is neither entirely true or entirely fiction, but a balance of both that allows her to bear witness and tell the historia of her community.

One of these historias is the narrative of Azucena's friend Sanjuana. In this series of vignettes, Azucena tells of Sanjuana, who quits school in sixth grade to stay at home and take care of her younger siblings. Eventually; however, Sanjuana's father gets sick, loses his job at the smelter and she must go to work at the general store in order to work off the debt the family owes. The store is owned by a Tom, a tobacco-chewing, cowboy boot-wearing Anglo man and his Mexican American wife. Cantu remembers: "She [Sanjuana] swept the floor, cleaned the shelves, sliced and weighed cold cuts, made the signs: fire-engine red paint on white butcher paper that advertised 'manteca 3#/$1'while we were painting posters for our football games" (1995, 119). While working at the store, Tom rapes Sanjuana. Once she is pregnant, Sanjuana is fired from the store and sent away to have the baby.

After Sanjuana has gone, Azucena's mother sends her to the store for groceries: "Tom was perched on his usual stool at the cash register. I was so upset I couldn't look at him. Instead, I just looked down as I signed Mami's name for the pound of baloney and the loaf of bread; all I saw were his cowboy boots" (1995, 120). For Cantú, Tom's cowboy boots become metonymic for the racial and sexual power exercised by Anglo men in South Texas. Because of this horrific memory, the image of cowboy boots haunts Cantú for the rest of her life: "I don't like cowboy boots. I don't wear cowboy boots, and in fact when I see a man, especially an Anglo, wearing cowboy boots, I cringe, react like I do when someone scratches the chalkboard with their nails. (1995, 118). For Cantú, the story is an individual one, but it is also a collective one. Euro-American cowboys in Texas have been the icons of masculinity and virility. Since the establishment of the Texas Rangers in the mid-nineteenth century, Euro-American Texan men have attempted to establish superiority over Mexican American men by challenging their masculinity. They have accomplished this in three ways: 1:) claiming that Mexican American men are racially and thus mentally inferior 2:) claiming that Mexican American men, because of their racial inferiority, are naturally cowardly 3:) taking advantage of what is deemed to be the sole property of Mexican American men – Mexican American women.

Citing Texan historian Walter Prescott Webb, Chicano cultural critic Américo Paredes reveals the violent and yet absurd basis for the claim of Euro-American Texans' racial superiority: "'Without disparagement, it may be said that there is a cruel streak in the Mexican nature. . . This cruelty may be a heritage from the Spanish of the Inquisition; it may . . . be attributed partly to the Indian blood'" (Webb qtd. in Paredes 1958, 17). Paredes goes on to argue that it is because of the racist and violent treatment Mexicans

suffered at the hands of the Texas Rangers that a “deep hostility” was created for Euroamerican authority (1958, 32).

To return to Cantú, the haunting image of cowboy boots exists at the intersection of race, gender and sexual politics. Tom’s cowboy boots have become “ghostly matter” – they are a place “where meaning – comprehension – and force intersect” and they signal the absent presence of Tejano history (Gordon 1997, 194). The force of the constructed Euro-American cowboy has absented its origin – the Mexican vaquero. As a result, the image of boots haunts not only Cantú, but the Mexican American community as a whole. Because of his position as a Euro-American man, Tom was able to exercise physical and sexual power over the body of Sanjuana, a young, brown woman – a power from which not even her father can protect her. Through Azucena’s and Sanjuana’s mutual friend Helen, we learn that Sanjuana’s “father was gone, he’d signed on to work up north or else he would’ve killed the gringo” (1995, 119). Tom’s actions demonstrate that Mexican American men can do little to nothing, not even protect their own children. Knowing there is no just law to protect them or their families, Sanjuana’s father chooses to leave. If he were to kill Tom, undoubtedly he would be killed by the vigilante justice represented by the Texas Rangers. After all, we cannot forget that in the first half of the twentieth century at least 300 Mexicans were lynched in South Texas.[74] Something similar would be Sanjuana’s father’s fate; thus, he *must* leave.

By committing these violent acts of physical and mental aggression against Sanjuana, her family and the Mexican American community, Tom participates willingly in the brutal racial and sexual codes that exist between Mexicans and Euro-Americans in the Southwest.

Cantú's narrated "I," Azucena acts as the testimonial witness to the violent, sexual oppression Mexican American women experienced in Texas throughout the twentieth century. The narrative voice tells us the story of Sanjuana and she gives us the reaction of Azucena as a young girl who had to witness the experience of her young girlfriend and who also had to experience the terror and humiliation of going into the store to buy food from a man who she knew raped Sanjuana and who could just as easily do the same thing to her. Finally, the metonymic power of cowboy boots and the overt masculinity and Euro-American hegemony they represent still haunt Azucena Cantú as a grown woman. This is where the narrative stands in for all Mexican American women on the border. We are all haunted by these sexual and racial codes. The 1990 Texas gubernatorial election proves my point.

In his discussion of this election, José E. Limón illustrates that these dynamics are still in place. As Limón reminds us, the two candidates were Ann Richards, a "tough-talking" Democrat and Clayton Williams, a "swaggering," hypermasculine Republican (1998, 139-41). During the campaign, Williams made a number of faux pas such as admitting to getting into not a few drunken barroom brawls and crossing the border into Mexico to visit Mexican brothels. However, none of these revelations compromised his position as a candidate until he compared rape to the weather: "If a woman can't do much about it, she might as well enjoy it" (qtd. in Limón 1998, 140). These remarks made in the last decade of the twentieth century illustrate that the racial and sexual politics between Euroamerican Texas men and Mexican American women were unequal at best, brutal at worst.

Just as Azucena Cantú and all the other characters in *Canícula* serve as witnesses to the oppression and experience of the México-U.S. *frontera*, they are also border subjects in formation. Azucena recalls crossing between Laredo, Texas and Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas.

> We've been shopping at the Mercado Maclovio Herrera . . . we carry bags [Mami] calls *redes* full of meat, sugar, sugar, tomatoes, groceries . . . Sometimes [Mami] sends Tino and me to run these errands. We make the rounds at the mercado, go to the butcher's and buy red juicy meat and have it ground by Raúl who winks as he puts in a pilón; we go to Rangel's for cookies – galletas marías and Morenas – and sugar, piloncillo, and dark aguacates which he cuts carefully in half, satisfying U.S. Department of Agriculture requirements he extracts the pit so we can legally cross them to the United States and closes them again, like fine carved wood boxes. We carefully count out the money, figuring out the exchange pesos to dollars. Tino gets a shoeshine at the plaza . . . I eat fruit – perhaps a slice of watermelon, pineapple, or jícama – sprinkled with red chili powder . . . We walk, cross the bridge, resting every half block or so, resting our arms, sore from carrying the heavy redes. We take the bus home (1995, 8).

This description of crossing into Nuevo Laredo to shop, eat is striking in its detail and clearly it is part of the Cantús' routine. They run their daily or weekly errands across the border. This is where they buy their groceries. México is as familiar as the United States. There is nothing remarkable, unusual or exotic there. However, because there is a national border, it is different – officials must remove the avocado pit; pesos are changed back to dollars. Yet, it is the same; Azucena and her younger brother Tino are on a first name basis with the *mexicano* butcher Raúl. I return to the point I made earlier in this chapter – the México-U.S. border and the narrating "I"/narrated "I" are similar – the same, but different. The gap is small, but strongly felt.

As Azucena grows older; however, her subject position vis-à-vis México shifts. No longer is México the comfortable familiar. When the narrated "I"/eye must travel further into México to visit her familia mexicana and stay for longer periods of time,

Azucena experiences strong bouts of homesickness. In these moments, she realizes that she is not a mexicana, but a U.S. American.

> But now I'm off to Monterrey . . . where my cousins will tease me and call me *pocha* and make me homesick for my U.S. world full of TV – Ed Sullivan and Lucy and Dinah Shore and Lawrence Welk . . . and Glass Kitchen hamburgers . . . Cousins. Kind and cruel ask me to say something in English, I recite, 'I pledge allegiance to the flag . . . ;' to sing something, and I sing to them silly nursery rhymes and tell them these are great songs: Humpty Dumpty, Jack and Jill, Little Miss Muffet, Old MacDonald. They listen fascinated, awed, but then they laugh when I don't know their games, 'A la víbora, víbora de la mar, de la mar,' or their hand-clapping games, 'Yo no soy bonita ni lo quiero ser, porque las bonitas se echan a perder.' And, 'Padre e hija fueron a misa, se encontraron un francés . . .' I'm homesick and I don't have a word for it" (1995, 22-3).

Azucena longs for U.S. popular culture. She feels at home in the culture of the United States. She is a Mexican *American* subject. U.S. culture has saturated her. Throughout the narrative, she describes watching television shows such as Roy Rogers and the Lone Ranger. Because, she is aspires to become a writer, she copies the plots of these programs. She goes as far as writing the Euro-American cowboys into the parts of the heroes mistrusting her own experiences such as Tom, the grocer who sexually assaulted her friend or her *mexicano* relatives who are *vaqueros* in Anáhuac "herding cattle and being real cowboys, [her] aunts living out stories no fifties screenwriter for Mexican movies or U.S. TV ever divined" (1995, 34). Narratives of Euro-American superiority have so permeated her childhood she cannot see past the accepted narrative to resist it and write the alternative – yet.

One of several alternative narratives of resistance arrives when Azucena reaches young adulthood. The narrated "I"/eye recalls her boyfriend René who had serious intentions of marrying her. While they are together, Azucena excels at the local Instituto de Belleza Nuevo León. She becomes an unofficial beautician and when René begins to

discuss marriage, Azucena's response is the following: "I freak out. I am frightened to imagine myself living the life my married cousins live; I imagine myself married, with babies like Mami, and with a jolt realize I don't want that" (1995, 127). Upon this brutal awakening, she and René go their separate ways and Azucena continues as an unofficial hairdresser:

> When I retire seventeen years later, I put away my special scissors . . . The callous on my scissor finger hard and rough reminds me of . . . those summer afternoons . . . dreaming of a different life, a life married to René, a beauty shop all my own, a two-story house in front of a neighborhood plaza, a life as a Mexican (1995, 129).

Azucena reveals that she is haunted by the possibility that she could have been Mexican. What does this mean? Despite *Canícula* attempt to construct a subjectivity that is familiar in both México and the United States – an identity that crossed national borders with ease, in the end this is not who the narrated "I"/eye is. Azucena is not a Mexican. What is perhaps even more disturbing to the narrated subject of *Canícula* is she does not *want* to be a mexicana. The narrated "I"/eye does not want what she perceives to be the life of a mexicana – marriage, children. She desires her life to be something else. Because mexicanidad is no longer something she wants, Azucena is haunted by México – the familiar México of her past and now the unfamiliar México of her present. Both haunt her because they are the same and they are so different. How did the same place become so different? How did the same subject, the same person change so much?

The narrated "I"/eye is haunted by the memory of feeling at home en el otro lado. Azucena no longer feels this sense of familiarity – she is left only with a memory of having once felt at home in a space that no longer feels familiar as she gets older. This destabilizes her sense of self and her Mexican American border subjectivity. To come to

terms with this destabilization, the narrating "I" uses photographs to stabilize *Canicula* for the narrated "I" Azucena.[75] These photographs help stabilize the narrative and they act as the narrating "I's" witness to the events of the autobioethnography. The photographs are the stand-in for Norma Cantú's "I"/eye. They are where the "I's" shift. México has become the symbolic absent presence that haunts Azucena. This felt absence, I argue is what prompts Cantú to write and re-member those moments when her mexicana "Is"/eyes were intact. The absent presence is her mexicana self. *Canícula* portrays her passage into adulthood as well as her passage into a distinctly aware Mexican American identity.

III. Border W(R)ites: Rituals of Re-memberment in Pat Mora's House of Houses

Like *Canícula*, Pat Mora's *House of Houses* (1997) is a memoir of life on the U.S.-Mexico border. For Mora; however, this life has not been a rural one, but one set in the urban centers of Ciudad Juárez/El Paso. Consistently these cities have been the largest continuous U.S.-Mexico border community, and not surprisingly it is a community brimming with ghosts. Before we read with the ghosts, before we speak with them and listen to what they are saying, I believe it is important to look at the way Mora's audience received *House of Houses*.

Significantly, five national publications reviewed *House of Houses*.[76] This is important because *Canícula* did not receive this kind of national recognition. As Ruth Behar pointed out in her response to Norma Cantú's "The Writing of *Canícula*: Breaking Boundaries, Finding Forms," perhaps Cantú's writing was too outside the law of genre, perhaps it did "get lost in the cracks" and was therefore ignored by the mainstream press (Behar 2003, 111). Yet, if this is the case what makes *House of Houses* more palatable to

mainstream tastes and if it is more palatable, then how is it so? Furthermore, even within its ability to seemingly satisfy the demands of the dominant press, does it in any way, subtle or otherwise, enact modes of resistance?

Perhaps the most obvious way that *House of Houses* resists the conventions of autobiographical narrative is through language. Mora sprinkles the text with conversational Spanish and dichos. She provides a translation in the back of the book. For example, a popular Mexican saying that can be seen adorning many Mexican restaurants is the following: "Panza llena, corazón contento;" the English translation for this is "full stomach, happy heart" (1997, 293). Mora's father Raúl utters this dicho as he sits in the kitchen listening to the women talk about various Mexican dishes such as: "galletitas y gorditas y sopaipillas y menudo y tamales y champurrado" (1997, 97). For dichos such as this Mora provides English translation, but this is not the only Spanish included in *House of Houses*.

Although much of the Spanish in *House of Houses* is translated there are moments when it is not. A significant moment where Spanish remains without translation is the following passage. Here Mora remembers how her home, her world, was one divided between Spanish and English, the United States and México. She remembers:

> Amelia's children live much of their life in a language she will not learn. '*Son buenos hijos*,' she says to herself, the woman who, like Lobo, never wears pants or make-up. As soon as the Delgado children are old enough to play outside, new sounds dart through the house since most of their neighbors speak only English. 'Hurry, Lalo!' 'Wait for us, Stella!' The children run through the house with their English trailing like a banner behind them – unless their father is at home. When they see him, they stop, knowing he considers it bad manners for them to speak the foreign language in front of their parents. '*Es una grosería hablar ingles en frente de sus padres*,' . . . And all speak Spanish in those rooms that he considers Mexican territory. '*Cuando pisan en esta casa, hijos*, *pisan México*' (Mora 1997, 57).

There is no English translation for the Spanish in this excerpt.[77] Nevertheless Mora does provide significant context for the non-Spanish speaking reader to comprehend what is being said. Although she does not give exact English translations of the Spanish phrases, she does paraphrase the Spanish with English; thus allowing a careful reader to get the meaning. Yet despite Mora's efforts to paraphrase the Spanish, she does make a conscious choice to not offer a complete translation. This is a significant political move in a nation that often espouses the rhetoric of English-only. In a 2001 interview with Elisabeth Mermann-Jozwiak and Nancy Sullivan, Pat Mora articulates the politics behind such a decision:

> I'm writing to a great extent for an English-speaking audience. I am bilingual, though English-dominant. I'm interested in including Spanish because it's part of my world, it's part of my mind. On the other hand, I am not writing for a primarily Spanish-speaking audience, or I would be writing in Spanish. To use *House of Houses* [for an example], I built in humor for the person who is bilingual. There is subversion in the use of Spanish, very consciously (2003, 143).

By using Spanish, Mora risks marginalizing readers who speak only English and who are not used to being marginalized. Consequently Mora's subversive politics regarding Spanish result in an interesting *New York Times* review of *House of Houses*: "Mora's device of including untranslated bits of Spanish gets irritating when it becomes evident that context only occasionally reveals meaning" (Jarolim 29 June 1997, A20). The discomfort Jarolim experiences here has less to do with whether or not the Spanish phrases conform to the context of the paragraph and more to do with Jarolim's personal discomfort about being in a Spanish-speaking world where dichos, and phrases are literally and metaphorically tied to the meaning of what is being said. This review illustrates how the use of Spanish can be an act of resistance. It turns power relations on

their head by forcing the dominant, English-speaking public into a space where they are unfamiliar, uncomfortable and insecure – the kind of space Spanish-speakers often occupy in a world of English. Jarolim's book review is an example of how the mainstream, monolingual classes do not usually appreciate this turn of events.[78] Obviously not everyone is meant to get the bilingual humor of *House of Houses*.

Although the obvious subjects of *House of Houses* are Mora's ancestors, the subtext of this autobiographical narrative is writing and how Mora came to writing. Throughout the text, she is in constant communication with her relatives. Each chapter is told as one of twelve installments. The chapters are named after the months of the year and have adjectives describing the characteristic of each month in the Chihuahüense desert. There is Marzo airoso/ Windy March to evoke the crazy windstorms of the desert in the spring and then there are more elaborate sayings such as the two that accompany June and November: Huerta sin agua, cuerpo sin alma/An orchard without water is like a body without a soul. This dicho serves as a reminder to take care of the gardens of summer. And then for November – La primavera se hace ligera, el invierno se hace eterno/ Spring breezes by, while winter seems eternal. This is also crucial because just as June's dicho was to remind the reader about the importance of taking care of the earth/soul, November's dicho is to remind us not just about the changing of the seasons from summer to fall, but also about the spiritual element of the calendar for November is the month when the dead return and are celebrated. Each of these chapter titles allows her to weave together the three major themes that will twist through her memoir: writing, gardening, and the ceremonies of religion and spirituality.

In order to bring memory to life, Mora must theorize the fluidity between the boundaries of past and present. It is only when these boundaries are fluid that the inhabitants of the present, the past and the future will be able to occupy the house of Mora's creation and memory. She writes:

> In this landscape, Indians and Spaniards shaped space from what their hands touched – mud, straw, water – and the house grew out of the desert; a house of paradox, rooted, built on bedrock, yet the adobe hovers near the Río Grande between El Paso and Santa Fe. Jung, who understood the psychological implications of space shaping, referred to the house he built as 'a confession of faith in stone.' Is this our adobe confession? Through generations, sun, wind, rain, hands, voices, and dreams create and alter this place pregnant with possibilities in a landscape as familiar to me as my body. What does the house, the body, know? . . . Though much in this house is imagined, how could I not use the family names, the stories I've heard, read, followed, stories from the interior, the private space a family creates and inhabits, in which ti me loses its power and past∞present braid as they do within each of us, in *our* interior. The clock ticks, the present becoming past, a current that like the wind resists control, drifts or gusts through our doors at will, bringing with it whatever it gathered, a dead bird, a butterfly (1997, 4).

In this excerpt, Mora equates the landscape with the house and the house with the body. As she demonstrates, the house is made from a landscape that is as familiar to her as her own body. In this equation the language of landscape and house and body echo the language of nationhood and nation building. The landscape in which this entire narrative takes place is that of the U.S. Southwest or, depending on one's perspective, the Mexican north. The nationalistic term for this space is Aztlán, and although Mora never explicitly mentions this term, she does attempt to link her family's history and culture to those cultures and histories that are indigenous to this particular space.

National identity is also forged through the language of the household. The home and the ideal upkeep of the home becomes a metaphor for the upkeep of the nation. In this case, the upkeep of the Mora household is a microcosm for the upkeep of the

Mexican American border community. Through her descriptions of Mexican American religious customs, folk cures, and food preparation, Mora creates an imagined community of bordered mexicanidad.[79]

Within this community, the syncretic customs of Mexican folk Catholicism are crucial. For Catholics, the confessional is the sacred space where we confess our sins and are absolved of them. It is where many Catholics seek solace and relief from an outside world where they feel insecure or endangered. As Mora describes in the beginning of *House of Houses*, the adobe house in Santa Fe where she wrote this memoir is her "adobe confession" (1997, 4). Its walls hold not only the secrets and histories of the Mora and Delgado families – the families that created Mora, but also the historia of the peoples who built houses such as this. *House of Houses* describes the experiences of Pat Mora's family; it also describes the experience of Mexican American life on the Río Grande. The insularity of the home keeps them/us safe from outside danger and it absolves them/us from their/our sins. These two functions of the home lead us to the following questions: From what is the house protecting us? What sins do we need absolved? One of the ways in which the narrative creates the fluid design of family within the domestic space is by emphasizing the porous nature of the boundaries between the past and the present. Mora does not simply blur these lines, but in many cases she completely erases them. The lines between the living and the dead, heaven and earth simply disappear. Why does *House of Houses* have this desire to erase these absolute boundaries? Because to do so is to rewrite the violent history of the absolute U.S.-Mexico border and remove the household from the absolute space of death. The narrative desire of *House of Houses* is to dismember the violent border and re-member a border where fluidity is the rule; where absence and

Figure 9: An example of a candid photo from *House of Houses*. Depicted in the photo are Mora's grandmother, Pat Mora (the older girl), her Aunt Nina, Pat Mora's mother and her baby sister Cecilia.

presence exist simultaneously. Most of *House of Houses* takes place within the realm of the domestic space; therefore, the inhabitants are free to cross dismembered and re-membered borders.

The first page of Mora's memoir contains a genealogy of Mora's family. This familial archaeology stretches across time to the mid-nineteenth century; across space from El Paso to Ciudad Juárez to Chihuahua; and across history from the Porfiriato to the Mexican Revolution to the late twentieth century. From this family tree, Mora then moves into the realm of the visual image and we find fourteen photographs in the next seven pages. The majority of these images are official portraits of Mora's family members. A handful of the pictures are amateur snapshots. A small caption underlines each photograph; unlike *Canícula* the words describe precisely what the images illustrate. Up to this point Mora has not broken any of the traditional rules of genre. It appears that *House of Houses* will be a straightforward memoir of Mexican American life on the U.S.-Mexico border. And as I mentioned previously, it is even told in what appear to be chronologically arranged installments – the initial chapter is entitled "*Enero friolero*/Chilly January and the last "*Diciembre, mes Viejo que arruga el pellejo*./December, old month that wrinkles our skin" (1997, 14; 272). Yet the moment we read the first page of the prologue, we know this is not going to be a conventional autobiographical narrative:

> 'How can you still be hungry if you're dead?' Aunt Chole sing-songs her question in the high pitch she reserves for birds, children, spirits, "*Ay, mi Raúl, querido*, what do you want?' . . . Lobo, another of the transparent souls who moves comfortably through this, their house, enters the kitchen. Lobo: maternal aunt, Ignacia Delgado, who called us her *lobitos* . . . This aunt who died in 1983 is like us all, a creature of contradictions . . . My father winks at me, reveling in the presence of two women he can tease. The door opens again, and Mamande enters, patient maternal grandmother who died in 1962 enters also in a house coat, white hair in one long braid down her back (1997, 1-5).

Everyone in this excerpt, with the exception of Patsy, the narrator and Aunt Chole, is dead. This will be the case throughout the rest of *House of Houses*. Mora has erased the gap between the living and the dead and they now inhabit the same domestic space. For a moment, let me return to Sharon Patricia Holland. As I mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, Holland argues death can be the space where the ghosts of dead bodies reside and it can also be the space where marginalized bodies reside – the space where absented bodies can retain presence. She also posits that the dead can be unruly, revolutionary and disturb the constructed communities of the center. The absent presences Mora writes in these chapters are Mexican and Mexican American bodies that lived in the cultural and historical margins of the U.S. imagination. They also lived in the physical margins of the U.S. – the Chihuahua-Texas borderlands. To resurrect these disembodied spirits, to embody them is a revolutionary act. And although the stories they tell seem harmless, sometimes almost saccharine, Mora's choice to give presence to absence enables the disruption of hegemonic history. Walking through the adobe space she writes:

> This is a 'world that we can call our own,' this family space through which generations move, each bringing its gifts, handing down languages and stories, recipes for living, gathering around the kitchen table to serve one another; in the walled garden, engaging in the slow conversation of families sitting to pass the

> time. Voices mingle with the voice of the fountain, parrot, broom, wind, *voces del jardín* (1997, 7).

She goes on to trace the genealogy of the walled garden – indigenous to Mexico, to Iran, Islam and then brought to the Americas by the Spanish (1997, 7). It is hybrid tradition and it meshes well with the hybridity of existence on the border. The garden, the house that encircles it are spaces where conversations occur, where stories get told, where, I argue, history gets ruptured and the formation of Mexican American subjectivity gets complicated. It is for this reason that ghosts become necessary; their absent presence enables them to express rupture and complexity in a way Mora the family recordkeeper cannot. If she were to express what she allows the ghosts to express she would be forced to come to terms with the contradictions of her own Mexican American existence.

For example, Mora chooses to allow the ghost of her Tía Lobo to tell the story of the family's position of privilege in Chihuahua and their ultimate move to Ciudad Juárez. Lobo remembers her father's position as a judge and his successful climb up the ranks of the Mexican judicial system until the breakout of the Mexican Revolution:

> 'Don Porfirio Díaz arrives in Juárez in his presidential train,' Lobo continues . . . busy with her story, her eyes again seeing the customs house, well decorated with flags, seeing Don Porfirio, greeted by ranchers, schoolchildren, politicians . . . Taft is greeted with a twenty-one gun salute and many ovations . . . My father is part of the welcoming committee at the meeting of the two presidents. 'Everyone wants to see him and talk to him' (1997, 29).

Listening to Lobo's description of the 1909 Taft-Diaz meeting in El Paso, Mora's daughter Libby questions why everyone wants to see President Porfirio Diaz: "'Isn't he on the wrong side? Mr. Represso? Don't, don't tell me my great-grandfather is a conservative!'" (1997, 29). This quick, but significant interruption does not deter Tía Lobo from recounting the rest of her story, which includes the outbreak of the Mexican

Revolution and the Delgado's family immigration into the United States: "In 1910, the Mexican Revolution begins. That Pancho Villa changes our lives, such a bloody time . . . We stay for a time on the El Paso side. When we return, my father is named *Agente del Ministerio Público*. *La revolución* continues" (30). Eventually, Pancho Villa and his troops invade Ciudad Juárez in November 1913 and the Delgados are forced across the river once again:

> Papande and his daughters slip out of their home, all dressed in black . . . The judge looks at the water of the Río Bravo, the river called the Río Grande to the north, its waters very high . . . The Delgado sisters clutch one another's hands, can't cry out their fear as the carriage bobs. Since they can't swim, they'd normally be terrified hearing the small waves slap against the doors, fearing the carriage will sink or tip . . . but the gunfire propels them through their terror . . . 'The U.S. officials find humor in our condition,' Lobo says . . . 'In those days, no passports or documents are needed. We cross the river in 1913, but I don't apply for a passport until 1929' (1997, 32-33).

From this passage and the one immediately preceding it, we can see that for this older generation of Mora's family, Pancho Villa is the working-class villain that forced the decent Delgado family from the security of their home and the security of their positions as middle-class Mexicans. This portrait is unlike the one painted by the generation of the Chicano Civil Rights Movement, in which Villa becomes a hero of the working-class *mexicana/o* and Mexican American. Lobo does not mention the heroic Villa that raided Columbus, New Mexico to avenge the wrongful deaths of 19 Mexicans (Romo 2005, 226).[80] Clearly she does not align herself, nor her middle-class family with the Mexican Americans and *mexicanas/os* who crossed the border and were subjected to, not only, humiliating stares, but physical assaults such as the disinfection stations. Because Lobo does not align herself with these groups of working-class Mexicans, she is isolated from the icon that Pancho Villa has become. She does not understand how her grand-nieces

and nephews understand him. Continuing her description of Villa's invasion of Juárez, Lobo says:

> 'We return to El Paso in November 1913, when Villa attacks Juárez. Sunday, November twelfth, General Castro, who commands the military zone in Juárez and is married to our relative, is eating at our house when he receives a telegram from Chihuahua directing him to repel Villa's forces.' 'She's anti-Villa!' Libby gasps. '*¿Qué, mi Libita? ¿Qué dices?*' 'Lobo,' my daughter says, unable to restrain herself. 'Pancho Villa is a hero. He took from the rich.' *'¿Qué!'* Lobo says, her gray eyes widening. 'That assassin a hero! He steals. He robs. He murders.' 'Okay, okay, Lobo,' I say. 'Lib, weren't you off to do something?' (1997, 30).

In these passages, Mora and her children Libby and Bill listen to the ghost of Tía Lobo recount the family's situation on the border during the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution. It is only through the ghostly voice that the reader can hear the traumatic memory of the revolution. The ghost provides the story that the narrative cannot. This is part of Mora's adobe confession. Unlike the majority of mexicanas/os who came during the revolution, her family was not of the lower classes, consequently, their memories of figures such as Villa and events such as the invasion of Ciudad Juárez differ. Through the ghostly narrative of Lobo, *House of Houses* attempts to absolve the Delgado family of its position of relative privilege.

Throughout her narration, Lobo describes how her father is forced to sell his mine at a much lower cost than it is worth. She recounts how she and her sisters must go out into the workforce. And although she and her family are not of "*la pobre gente humilde* that are made to bathe in gasoline," she does empathize with them (1995, 34). Lobo's empathy is one way that *House of Houses* seeks absolution for its inhabitants. While in Mexico, as owners of mines in Chihuahua, they may have benefited from the labor of these poor, humble people, here in the United States they empathize with them. They are

all mexicanas/os. Of course, here is where the rupture exists. The Delgado family, because of its position, does not have to submit to the same kind of humiliating treatment to which the poorer mexicanas/os must submit. They merely empathize from afar. They do not have the same loyalties to the revolutionary army represented by Villa as the poor have, and as the generations have passed this rupture within Mexican American identity formation has only grown stronger, even if it is less obvious.

For example, the conversation between Patsy, Lobo, Libby and Bill is an example of Mexican American culture and history coming together across generations. It could be an opportunity for productive dialogue. Mora could use this moment of disagreement between Libby and her Tía Lobo as a space to talk about the difference in generation – how the Chicano Movement turned Villa into a figure that many Mexican Americans and mexicanas/os would not recognizes and definitely not appreciate. This dialogue between family members could also have been a moment in which the narrator addressed the multi-layered, intracultural conflict that exists within the contemporary Mexican American community. There is conflict between classes that gets expressed around figures such as Villa, Zapata, etc. This conflict reminds the non-Mexican American community that we are not all the immigrant, working class community the media has constructed us to be; nor, do we all fall on the same political page. These issues could have been addressed in this section of Mora's text; however, such a conversation would have interrupted a narrative that she wants to keep personal. As the story begins, she reminds us of what she really wants to know about: "Her [Lobo's] repeated stories are about the exterior world. I wonder about what she loved, what she feared. How she spent her days? Who were the men she noticed, hoped would ask her to dance, or hold her

hand, or whisper in her ear?" (1995, 29). Just as the house is an insulated space that shields its inhabitants from the outside world, so Mora would prefer to tell stories that are equally insulated and shielding; however, the exterior world will not be kept out. In *House of Houses*, ghosts remind us about this exterior world and its impact on us in the past, present and future.

Mora's mother Estela, is another absent presence, whose storytelling does not allow the narrative to forget the outside world. As a young girl in school, she is rewarded with award after award for her ability to excel in speech and debate classes. With the exception of her last name – Delgado – she is generally able to pass as white, although she never does so. This changes when her teachers select her to compete in a speech contest in another part of Texas:

> 'One time Miss Duncan, our speech teacher, wants me to prepare a speech for a contest on Texas heroes. I tell her that I've heard about a man of Mexican descent, Lorenzo de Zavala, who was governor in Mexico, and came to Texas, signed the Texas Declaration of Independence, and became the Vice President of the Republic of Texas. 'This is it!' Miss Duncan says. 'I hope you can find enough material.' 'I think the guy is a traitor to Mexico, but I don't want only Anglos always talked about like Houston and Austin. I even remember how I start the speech. Much has been written and more has been said about the Anglo American in the struggle of Texas for Independence, but little or nothing has been written about the Mexicans who fought for this state . . . As long as the judges don't know my name, I have a chance, can probably win, but if they hear a name like *Delgado*, I know I'm out . . . Once, we stop for a meal at Lubbock. The sign on the restaurant says NO DOGS OR MEXICANS. I know no one there can tell I'm Mexican, but I feel bad' (1995, 176-177).

Despite her ability to pass, Estela exhibits a Mexican consciousness. This is exemplified by her choice and determination to narrate a part of Texas history that does not often get told – the involvement of Mexicans in the Texas War for Independence. For the narrative, this story is easier to recount than the one of the Mexican Revolution. There is no

interruption from a grandchild or niece with a different perspective. This incident is one around which Mexican Americans are able to rally. It is exemplary of intercultural conflict, which is always easier to combat than intracultural conflict. With this story, the enemy is clearly not of the Mexican American or mexicana/o community. This is the moment where Mora can allow the narrative to realize its overt, political potential. Writing of her mother, Mora writes: "How early does this little bilingual girl in the 1920s and '30s – how early do children in the '90s – want to push away their names or skin or accent or family or weight or home or language with one hand while they long to clutch tight to the familiar with the other" (1995, 181).[81] In the excerpt that contains these questions, Mora admits that there are "structural tensions" in the household, but the presence of a loving family overrides these. In other words, the intracultural tensions represented by the exchange Lobo and Libby have regarding Villa are always going to be overridden by the family's insulated love and respect for one another. Rather it looks more to the outside conflict between Anglo and Mexican American.

Although *House of Houses* does not generally seek to disturb the structure of the house it has set up. It does, on occasion, attempt to move outside of some of these established boundaries. At one point, Mora muses:

> If rain were scarce during the growing season, a family might invite friends to join in taking the statues of their saints out through the fields to ask for their help . . . Saints and rain, songs and rain, usually pale saints, Europeans, a white pantheon of goodness and sacrifice and virtue. Where are the other holy songs in the family, the non-Christian songs – chants for rain, corn-growing songs, sun-rising songs . . . What are the names of Indian women and men, part of this family, who sang the songs? Why have only the Spanish names been passed from mouth to mouth? When does the legacy end of cherishing only white skin and *ojos azules*? In this desert garden, when does the *agua santa* heal us, when do we heal our spirits, the soul of this house? (1995, 156).

This is one of the few moments where she seriously challenges the ideologies espoused by her ancestors. If the house is symbolic of the domestic space, which is symbolic of the nation, then this is an opportunity where we could potentially discuss the effect of race on the nation, but this opportunity is lost. It is posed as a momentary question, a thought before being brushed quickly aside. Soon we are returned to the idyllic, enclosed space of the house – a space without borders.

These borders are further erased when not only deceased relatives cross into the realm of the living but also saints and la Virgen de Guadalupe herself. First, San Rafael appears:

> There he stands, his clear eyes smiling down at her, his wings, immense . . . The angel lifts the bottom of his mother-of-pearl wings to arrange himself in a curved rawhide chair . . . [He] rises to greet Saint Martin and Saint Cecilia. In the midst of their *abrazos*, they hear the courtyard fill with birds and smell the red perfume of roses, turn to see Our Lady of Guadalupe . . . Our Lady point[s] toward the garden entrance, toward them trudges a disheveled Santo Niño de Atocha. The Holy Child hands Mamá Cleta his staff and basket, climbs into His mother's lap . . . The weary Boy rests his tired head on His mother's breast, lulled to sleep by *las voces del jardín* (1995, 230-231).

These holy figures appear to bless what has been said within the adobe walls of this home. Their presence absolves the inhabitants of whatever worries or guilt they might have. In this sense, the spirits are present to smooth the ruptures created by the ghosts of the family. However, they are also ghostly presences themselves and to allow these sacred lives into the everyday life of a household is an incredibly unruly act.

So why all the ghosts and holy spirits in this *House of Houses*? One of the effects of these ghostly presences and their imagined bodies is they prevent this memoir from ignoring any politics other than those obvious ones between Mexican and Anglo, oppressor and oppressed. The stories of her ancestors remind Mora and her audience of

intracultural conflict as well as intercultural conflict. Mora attempts to create a Mexican American autobiography that weaves a coherent Mexican American past. Her storytelling, ghostly ancestors refuse to allow such coherence.

IV. Se Perdío en la Niebla: the Recovery of Absence

Similarly, the life narrative of John Philip Santos also refuses Santos's attempt to obtain a coherent Mexican American identity. The suicide of Santos's grandfather Juan José Santos serves as the philosophical and historical center, or *punctum* if you will, for John Philip Santos's memoir *Places Left Unfinished at the Time of Creation* (1999).[82] Santos has made it his mission to discover how and perhaps why his grandfather chose to kill himself one early January morning in 1939. This mission turns into a travel journal and family memoir that takes him from Texas back to New York into Coahuila and London and then into central Mexico retracing the journey of Cortez from Veracruz through Puebla and Cholula and finally into Tenochtitlán.

Santos derives the title of his memoir from a story told to him by his great-aunt:

> Madrina told the story of a valley in Coahuila, somewhere near their town of Palaú, in the Serranía del Burro. She said that in this valley, in a clearing by a large mesquite tree, there were places where no sound could penetrate . . . the place was called *el Valle de Silencio* . . . This was one of many such places around the world that God had, for some unknown reason, left unfinished at the time of creation. For some reason, there were many such places in Coahuila. These were places, often completely unnoticed, with no sound, without color, dark places where no sunlight could penetrate, places where the world had no shape or substance (1999, 54-5).

Santos allows this legend to exemplify his story because he is haunted by the unfinished elements of his individual, familial and communal history. He longs to "bind Texas and Mexico together like a raft strong enough to float out onto the ocean of time, with our past trailing behind us like a comet tail of memories" (1999, 5). In order to accomplish

this cultural and historical marriage of Texas and Mexico, Santos sets out as an archaeologist of sorts determined to find the cultural fossils that will prove Texas and Mexico have always already been linked.

Like *House of Houses*, *Places Left Unfinished at the Time of Creation* begins with a genealogy of Santos's ancestors: the García, the Santos and the López. It appears to fall into the conventional category of memoir and initially it does not seem as if it will stray too far from that genre. Perhaps it is because of this initial impression that *Places Left Unfinished at the Time of Creation* received even more mainstream press than either *Canícula* or *House of Houses*. The attention Santos received might lead one to believe that perhaps his memoir received the attention precisely because it was not too threatening to Euro-America; yet, I argue, that if the mainstream press does not see Santos's politics of resistance it is not only because it willfully ignores them, but also because it cannot comprehend that ancestral ghosts might have something political to say.

In her review of *Places Left Unfinished at the Time of Creation*, Suzanne Ruta focuses on one of the narrative's first recollections. Remembering his maternal grandmother Leandra López who he nicknames the "Tejana sphinx," Santos writes: "Through the year, she filed away embossed death notices and patron saint prayer cards of departed family and friends in the black leather address book I consulted to write out her Christmas cards every year" (1999, 6). When it is time to send out the Christmas cards, Santos's grandmother has him match up names in the address book with names on the death notices. If names match they are crossed out of the address book. Each name tells a story. For example: "*Efraín Vela from Mier, Tamaulipas*. Son of a cousin on her father's side whom she never spoke to. Supposedly, he was the keeper of the family coat

of arms, awarded to the family by the Viceroy of Nueva España himself. What would happen to it now?" (1999, 6). This bit of familial gossip is preceded by another in which we are told about an in-law from Hebbronville, Texas. These stories are shared between Santos and his grandmother and they serve to illustrate the strength of ancestral ties across borders: the borders between one generation and the next, between the living and the dead, between the U.S. and Mexico. After all, family from both sides of all of these lines occupy the pages of Leandra López's address book.

Initially, Suzanne Ruta is charmed by what she perceives to be these "borderless" stories. She writes: "such wonderfully suggestive vignettes erase barriers . . . Santos writes splendidly of the ranching life in Coahuila . . . Out on the range, under a swarm of migrating monarch butterflies, the border disappears and we are in some more enlightened future when this desert region lies open to all creatures" (5 December 1999, BR53). However, her celebration of the beauty of Santos's writing is overshadowed by what she perceives to be his refusal to fully engage the political situation of life on the Texas-Mexico border. Ruta finds it problematic that Santos does not address the class inequity of Mexico. She points out that Santos does not take his family's own middle class position into consideration when he discusses the family's place in México and in the United States. To do so, she seems to implicate, would keep Santos from maintaining the narrative's nostalgic foundation. She argues: "One barrier this book fails to address is the class barrier. The good life based on cheap domestic labor was maybe not so good after all. But Santos doesn't study the social inequity that forced his grandparents to emigrate. His subject is not Mexico, after all, but the search for lost time" (5 December 1999, BR53). While I would definitely agree that the search for lost time is one of the key

aspects of *Places Left Unfinished at the Time of Creation*, I would also argue that this book is very much about México, specifically the diasporic experience of Mexican Americans and mexicanas/os in the United States. Santos's memoir is undoubtedly about his search for his own ancestors and familial past, but his search is also a microcosm for the ways that we as a Mexican American community search for our own ancestors and our own pasts. To say that this narrative is not about México, is to miss the heart of the story.

Ruta is specifically critiquing Santos's failure to problematize the position of privilege his family occupies in México. And, although, he does not specifically ever condemn his family for profiting from indigenous Mexican labor, he does subtly critique their politics. As a young boy, he visits his relatives in Sabinas, Coahuila. He joins the indigenous maid Zulema and his Tía Josefina in the kitchen as they prepare breakfast. While Zulema quietly and quickly works, his aunt never stops talking. Eventually, the family moves to the dining room:

> Around the great dining table, under an equestrian portrait of the family patriarch, Don Alejandro Guerra, Doña Josefina would gently steward the discussion during the meal, beginning by catching up on the family in San Antonio. If her eldest son, Tío Alejandro, was there, the talk would quickly move to news and politics of Mexico's borderlands, the politics of *El Norte*, a joke about the new Mexican president – an assassination of a governor in the Yucatán – or about poor Mexico herself. *Pobre Mexico*. In these mealtime colloquies, over *huevos* and *frijoles*, Mexico was referred to in tones of pity and exasperation: all the poverty, all the corruption, all the dust. The idea of annexing Coahuila to Texas would receive a jubilant toast of watermelon juice. And I worried to myself secretly: *What would be the destiny of Mexico?* (1999, 15-16).

With this passage, Santos subtly creates a contrast between the quiet strength of Zulema and the somewhat pointless chatter of his middle-class family. Their words are useless monologues that equate the corruption of México, the poverty of México, with the dust of

México. They have no real commitment to challenging Mexican politics beyond a joke here and a criticism there. Even Santos's decision to include their desire to be annexed to the United States quietly reveals his critique of their politics. Throughout the rest of *Places Left Unfinished at the Time of Creation*, he goes to great lengths to illustrate the inequity between Mexicans and Euro-Americans. That his Mexican relatives are not familiar with this inequity shows that he is somewhat critical of their middle class politics and privileges.

In "Two Worlds, One Dream," Alan Figueroa Deck also reads Santos's memoir as somewhat apolitical. He argues: "Unlike some contemporary Latino writers, Santos does not have an ideological or political ax to grind. While his subject matter is most definitely the lived experience of Latinos in this country, his take on that reality is filled with awe and gratitude and not with anger" (25 March 2000, 37-38). While the tone of *Places Left Unfinished at the Time of Creation* might not be an overtly angry one, it certainly has a political consciousness that cannot be ignored. Santos writes:

> There was revolution in the old country when the family set out for the north in this century. In 1914 they were Mestizo settlers, part Spanish, part Indian, on the edge of the ruins of ancient Mexico and New Spain. Even though these lands had been Mexican for nearly three centuries – Texas had been taken over by los Americanos in 1836 – it was a new world they settled in, less than three hundred miles from home. Mexicanos could easily keep to themselves, but back then, there were some places you just didn't go. Mexicans knew to avoid completely the predominantly German Texas hill country towns of New Braunfels and Fredericksburg, where there had been trouble with '*esa gente con las cabezas quadradas*,' – 'those people with the square heads' – as Great-uncle Manuel Martinez, Madrina's husband used to say (1999, 13).

In this passage, Santos is aware of both the indigenous and European background of his family. He does not hold to myths of cultural purity; he also mentions 1836 – a crucial year in not only *Tejana/o* culture, but also in Mexican American and Euro-American

cultures. The story of the struggle for Texas independence and the battles of Goliad, the Alamo and San Jacinto have become mythic spaces where Euro-American heroism always triumphs over Mexican cowardice. This cultural memory, specifically the Alamo, has been used to justify the subordinate position of Mexican Americans in Texas and in the United States. Rather than weaken; however, this cultural memory has only grown stronger with each generation of U.S. Americans. The continual production of Alamo films dating from 1915 to 2003 combines with the upkeep of the Alamo as a museum to reinforce the positive and negative stereotypes of both Mexican soldiers and Anglo "freedom fighters."

For Santos to mention the Alamo in this passage, along with the history of segregation between Mexican and German immigrants, is to remind his readers that within the Texas hill country Mexicans were not the only immigrants. Germans were there as well. And the discrimination that did exist was clearly based on race and ethnicity. Simply, Mexicans were dark-skinned and not European. Nevertheless, despite these elements of conscious resistance, *Places Left Unfinished at the Time of Creation*, like *House of Houses,* does use the domestic life of the family as the sacred space where one can retreat from the exterior world. Despite his desire to erase the structure of borders, John Phillip Santos upholds the boundary between the private and the public space. One appears to be safe while one does not. This is where the ghosts make themselves known. They exist in the gap between the private and the public space – this specific crossroads where Mexican American subjectivity is made.

Los Voladores are one of the more potent images Santos uses to link himself as a Tejano to the ancient Aztecs. As a child, he watched Los Voladores perform at the 1968

San Antonio Hemisfair and he witnessed it years later as an adult in Mexico City's Chapultepec Park. Los Voladores "were the guardians of the old time, the time of the Maya, the time of the Aztecs. The ritual of los Voladores is made up of very precise rotations and gestures which are based on the numbers four, thirteen, fifty-two. These were the counts that corresponded to the number of days in a year, and the number of years in the great cycles, between which the world might be destroyed or reprieved. This ritual fascinates Santos because it is a ritual of memory, and it is a ritual that demonstrates memory is crucial to survival. Without memory, all is lost. This aspect of Los Voladores is central to Santos's memoir because he longs to re-member what his family, what his community has intentionally forgotten. In his family's case it is the suicide of his grandfather. The entire narrative revolves around this absent presence – the lost father.

Because of his desire to re-member and his family's desire to forget, Santos is caught between his family who does not want to remember the stories and his own longing to know the story and tell a communal story. Santos manages this tension by expanding his search for family historias into the ancient past. In his case, it may be easier to re-member events that occurred centuries ago than events that occurred only decades ago. However, this is not the case. His search for origins only leaves him more frustrated. Each step into the distant past forces him to confront the close present, and in both cases the past and the present are teeming with the absent presence of his grandfather and father.

That absence holds the central place in *Places Left Unfinished at the Time of Creation* is clear. Before the narrative begins, before the family geneaologies, there is a photograph that faces the table of contents. This photograph is a copy of the newspaper article covering his grandfather's suicide in 1939. For the entire narrative, Santos searches for this missing story and it remains unknowable. The absent presence is felt, but as an audience we are not sure of its function. Yet, as Santos's journey continues, the absent presences function becomes clear. He wanders from New York to San Antonio to Chihuahua to Mexico City to London and back to New York and in the end comes to the following conclusion. The origin is absence or places left unfinished at the time of creation. Absence is fundamental to all stories, to all narratives, to all makings of self. This moment signifies the beginning of Santos's recognition that the absence will never be filled. Nor, should it be. The bodied and disembodies presences that inhabit absence are those beings that inspire his curiosity and help him to come to peace with absence, to learn to live with ghosts.

es de Espa

SE TRATA DE JUAN SANTOS, DE 49 AÑOS

Su cuerpo fue encontrado flotando muy cerca de la calle Simpson

Es el cuarto suicidio que ocurre en los pocos días del año actual

DE VIOLAR LAS LEYES DE LA NEUTRALIDAD

Por haber hecho remesas de aeroplanos, destinados a su Gobierno

Los adquirieron en este país, enviándolos a través de México

e Lambert
os Nueceros

...con ciertos elementos para ...trabajadores mexicanos el derecho de ...la ley respectiva

...Federation of Labor, ...Nueceros no se fija

GRAN H
DE UN

Figure 10. Photograph of the newspaper article recounting the death of Juan José Santos

By the end of his autobiographical narrative, Santos returns to his home in New York City. His pilgrimage in the Southwest and Mexico over, he knows he has not solved the mystery of his grandfather's suicide; nor, has he found the cultural or historical tie that would bind Texas and Mexico equitably, historically and culturally to one another. Frustrated and exhausted, he dreams of his Tío Raúl. Tío Raúl who died while Santos was in London, visits him in his apartment. This re-membered presence takes him on a flight through Manhattan where they witness the performance of

Los Voladores on a rooftop. His uncle reminds him that "This is not a dream," and Santos once again describes the ritual of Los Voladores:

> In the night air, I can hear Uncle Raul's breath next to me. We watch then as each of the dancers in sequence leaps from the roof's edge and flies out over the city . . . As the faint, airy sound of the old man's flute song wafts over us again, I look out over the brilliantly illuminated nighttime cityscape one last time, marveling silently with my uncle at how here, too, in Babylon-on-the-Hudson, Mexico's invisible enchantment is already under way (278-279).

In this passage, absence does not signal absence. Absence is presence. In the construction of his narrative, Santos must know this. The narrative ends with the unexpected death of his own father. In these last pages, Santos realizes the absence he searched to make present during the entirety of his autobiographical work is now his absence. Like his father, he now lacks a father. The experience of recognizing presence in absence is vital to his ability to re-member his identity, his family and his community. As Avery Gordon argues in *Ghostly Matters*, the appearance of a ghost points to absence. John Philip Santos' quest to remedy absence has left him with just that. Consequently, he is free to tell his story and re-member his Mexican American identity. The present absence is quite often what we would like to forget; and yet, it is absolutely vital that we re-member for this is our path to historia.

Norma Cantú, Pat Mora and John Phillip Santos resurrect the ghosts of their families in order to depict a rich and often melancholic experience of the U.S.-México border. The ghost, or absent presence each writer brings from the margins contributes to a more complex and full representation of the formation of Mexican American subjectivity on la frontera.

Chapter Five:
Bedeviled Ghosts: the Mexican American Diaspora in the Films of Lourdes Portillo

The dead return on this night to visit and to become, once again a part of the family, sharing in the everyday life of those who remember them. The family lives not in anticipation but in memory
-- from Lourdes Portillo's *La Ofrenda: the Day of the Dead*[83]

Para el habitante de Nueva York, Paris ó Londres,
la muerte es la palabra que jamás se pronuncia,
porque quema los labios.
El mejicano, en cambio,
la frequenta,
la burla, la acaricia,
duerme con ella, la festeja,
es uno de sus juguetes favorites
y su amor más permanente
-- Octavio Paz[84]

I. Greater Mexican Road Trip: Mexican American Diasporic Identity and Haunted Borders

As the epigraphs above demonstrate, death is a common inhabitant in the formation of Mexican American subjectivity. Lourdes Portillo's films consistently focus their filmic eye/I on the relationship between death and identity in Mexican America. Like many of the narratives already discussed in this dissertation, Portillo's films summon the ghost from its marginal existence and give this absent presence a starring role in the making of Mexican American identity. To demonstrate Portillo's ghostly work, this chapter analyzes three films by Lourdes Portillo: *The Devil Never Sleeps* (1994), *Corpus: A Home Movie for Selena* (1999) and *Señorita Extraviada/Missing Young Woman* (2001). In each of these films, Portillo uses the absent presence/ghost to inform mainstream audiences about the issues facing Mexican Americans in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. In addition, and of particular import to my project, I argue Portillo

invokes the ghost in order to trace the formation of Mexican American identity *within* our communities. To better explain how I came to this understanding of Portillo's work, I turn to an example from my historia – a road trip through Texas.

There is nothing better than a road trip. I have known this my entire life. Packing a cooler full of bologna sandwiches, chips and sodas into the bed of my dad's truck never lost its luster. It did not matter if we were driving to Lubbock, El Paso, Albuquerque or Ruidoso. The road trip was the vacation. Listening to the radio on those long dark highways brought me closer to my dad, my grandpa, my aunt Irma, my Uncles David, Joel and James. After everyone had fallen asleep, I would move to the middle of the front seat and interrogate whoever was at the wheel – who was the best musician, who was the best writer. The answers ranged from Johnny Cash to Janis Joplin; Zane Grey to Charles Dickens. I loved the road at night. I could not wait until I could drive across Texas or New Mexico. I could not wait until I was in control of the radio. I wanted to decide which landmarks to point out and which places to rest.

Right after high school graduation, I finally got my opportunity – my first road trip. No family, no friends – just me. I was in my first semester at Texas Tech University; my best friend was in her first semester at Stephen F. Austin State. A visit was in order. I plotted the roads between Lubbock and Nacogdoches – 84 South, I-20 East, 259 South. It was March 31, 1995. At sunrise, I left what I knew – the U.S. Southwest/West Texas for what I did not know, the U.S. South/East Texas. They were both Texas cities, but I could not imagine anything else that might connect them. Mexican Americans had left East Texas before the formation of the Texas Republic in the 1830s, or so my seventh-grade Texas history class taught me. As far as I knew, Nacogdoches was not part of Mexican

America. There were Mexican Americans in Houston; Mexican Americans in Dallas, but it seemed unlikely there would be Mexican Americans in deep East Texas. Mexican Americans were not part of the U.S. South. I had no idea how wrong I was; nor, did I know how deeply I underestimated the strong reach of the Mexican American diaspora.[85]

I reached the outskirts of Sweetwater sometime in the early afternoon. Barbed wire cut the flat landscape; divided fields from highway. Newly planted cotton and onions were beginning to sprout in the red dirt. My mom worked these fields when she was in high school. They listened to transistor radios while they trimmed the tops of onions, pulled weeds. She earned money for school clothes this way. It was fun, she says, a way to escape from her stern parents. As I drove through Sweetwater toward Abilene, I could not imagine fieldwork as fun. It was hot and humid and as far as I could see, there was no shade. The closer I got to Abilene, I began to notice the cars that shared the road with me. For miles, I had paid no attention to the non-descript trucks, sedans, semis that passed me; but, suddenly something changed. The cars and trucks merging onto the interstate had purple ribbons tied to their antennae. Some drivers used shoe polish to draw white roses on their back windows. Others had used polish to write: "En paz descanse; siempre; always in our heart; we love you. These phrases were everywhere. Puzzled, I watched as the number of decorated cars increased. By the time I reached Fort Worth, the majority of the cars were displaying shoe polish and purple ribbons. What had happened? Tejana singer Selena Quintanilla had died. For nearly 300 miles, I had witnessed Mexican America publicly mourn one of their own. It didn't end. Even as I travelled further east, leaving the bigger cities behind, the public sorrow continued. Tyler, Kilgore, Nacogdoches – all these small, East Texas towns were full of Mexican

Americans mourning Selena. I did not know our reach was this extensive, our presence this felt. This moment of public mourning was an example of the Mexican American diaspora. I did not know the word "diaspora" that spring morning, but I witnessed its operation.

In *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History* (1999), Emma Pérez argues Mexican Americans are part of a diasporic population. Furthermore, she maintains that in order to comprehend the full complexity of Mexican American subjectivity, Mexican American subjectivity must be read as diasporic. She writes:

> Identity itself transforms as diasporas weave through historical moments. The unmarked identities of the diasporic become categorized according to the named and renamed geographic spaces on which they travel . . . an analysis of the diasporic may elicit different questions concerning the identities of these travelers/migrants. I toss into the debate 'diaspora' to interrogate 'immigrant,' a concept that has meaningful historical junctures for European immigrants who are mostly of white, assimilable, ethnicities . . . A diasporic subjectivity may differ from 'immigrant in a number of ways. For one, 'race' may not be so easily erased from diaspora. Diasporic subjectivity would not deny the culture of race, but instead would open a space where people of color – in this case Chicanos/as – could negotiate a raced culture within many kinds of identities without racial erasure through assimilation, accommodation, adaptation, acculturation, or even resistance – all of which have been robbed of their decolonial oppositional subjectivity under the rubric of immigrant (77-78).

Diasporic Mexican American subjectivity, according to Pérez, shifts away from a colonial model that reads Mexican American identity as an "immigrant" identity that is expected to assimilate into mainstream culture. Instead, diasporic Mexican American identity moves towards a decolonial model that recognizes Mexican Americans' ability to "live inside with a difference" (Pérez 78). Pérez further explains:

> Unlike adaptive immigrants, transformative diasporic subjects travel and 'live inside with a difference.' In the difference is the diasporic subject's mobility through and about, weaving interstitially, to create, always create, something else, whether music, food, clothes, style, or language. The diasporic ushers in an

> adaptability as only one of many ways to keep moving, to keep weaving through power, to grasp and re-create culture, to re-create oneself through and with diasporic communities (79).

The Mexican American response to both the life and death of Selena exemplifies the expression of diasporic identity. The figure of Selena represented the Mexican American subject's mobility. Within the United States, Mexican America "re-created" or re-membered a fluid identity that was able to adapt to the United States and simultaneously maintain and transform what it means to be Mexican American in the United States.

Lourdes Portillo taps into diasporic Mexican America in her films. In each film, she turns to the periphery – the U.S.-Mexico border and its inhabitants – in order to depict the expansive impact and effect of Mexican American movement in the United States and México. Throughout this study, I have returned to Sharon Patricia Holland's description of death and the dead. In this final chapter, I find it quite useful and turn to it again. The dead, according to Holland, are not only the physically dead, but also those oppressed and marginalized presences that live in the space of absence. In "Filming *Señorita Extraviada*" (2003), Portillo reveals her intent to document marginal identities:

> At this height of world globalization, it is critical that film become an activist tool. The art of film can be used in the service of the unprotected, and documentary can take a stance and inform, activate, and promote understanding and compassion. Our task is to communicate heart to heart, to join our forces that will put an end to the violence and brutality perpetrated on those without voice! (2003, 234).

She intends to bring attention to these bordered lives. In bringing her audience's attention to these communities, she hopes to break the silence and re-member the absent presence of Mexican American and Mexicans en la frontera. She breaks the silence, I argue, by resurrecting the dead in order to summon forth the ghosts, both bodied and disembodied so that they may disrupt the narrative of the mainstream. Portillo not only invokes the

ghosts of others; she also invokes her own ghostly self and uses her haunted experience to inform her films and aid in their ghostly disruptions. The ghostly bodies she resurrects are numerous; however, I argue there are three essential figures around which the three films discussed in this chapter revolve: Tío Oscar in *The Devil Never Sleeps*; Selena in *Corpus: A Home Movie for Selena*; and the maquila (the migrant woman who works in the maquiladoras of Ciudad Juárez). These figures are essential in Portillo's mission to disrupt the fantasy of globalization; however, they depend on Portillo's own experience as a diasporic Mexican American subject to provide evidence of their deep effect. For this reason, Portillo must insert her autoethnographic "I." If she does not, then her "eye" becomes less effective, less revolutionary and less provocative.

II. El Mal Ojo: the Autobiographical "I" on Film

The Devil Never Sleeps/El Diablo Nunca Duerme (1994) is Lourdes Portillo's most obviously autobiographical work. Like all the life narratives included in this dissertation, *The Devil Never Sleeps* articulates the desire to tell the story of self and the story of family and community. In attempting to articulate each of these stories, the film crosses the line into autoethnography. *The Devil Never Sleeps* films diasporic Mexican/Mexican American subjectivity because its maker has experienced diasporic subjectivity firsthand. Portillo is a Mexicana subject whose U.S. American transformation has recreated itself and added another dimension to the formation of Mexican America; therefore, her lived experience provides vital context.

In an interview with Héctor A. Torres, Lourdes Portillo briefly recounted her family history:

> My family comes from Chihuahua, Chihuahua City for Lourdes Portillo many, many generations, as far as I can see. I mean as far as I've investigated from the 1700s, you know. My family has been in Chihuahua, and, my father's family hasn't been. My father's family was an immigrant from Zacatecas. He came into Chihuahua, met my mother, and married her. He decided that he wanted to immigrate into the United States, otherwise we would have remained in Chihuahua, I'm sure. And from there, we moved first to Mexicali, so I've lived in the border for many years. And from Mexicali, we then moved to Los Angeles, and then I moved to San Francisco (Torres 66-67).

Portillo's experience as a diasporic Mexican/Mexican American who departs from México and later returns to México further troubles the problematics of the autoethnographic project, particularly the relationship between native ethnographer and native community. To address this problematic, Portillo invokes the ghostly presence of Tío Oscar. His absent presence is the film's catalyst; however, I argue it is also an allegory for Portillo's own absent presence in México. She herself is also a ghostly figure inhabiting both the margins of nation (México and the United States) as well as the margins of her film.

Throughout the course of *The Devil Never Sleeps*, Portillo travels to her native Chihuahua in an attempt to uncover the mystery of her Tío Oscar's death. As she interviews relatives and family friends, it becomes clear there is a tense gap between Portillo and the chihuahuenses who are her informants. The ghost lives in the gap and helps to understand the secrets the family simultaneously reveals and hides. In this chapter, I argue the ghost helps lift the screen; and, consequently reveals and conceals the fractures of Mexican American

Before we can delve any deeper into this argument, it is necessary to revisit the definition and project of autoethnography. How is autoethnography defined? What are

the circumstances under which autoethnography is created? And how does the work of Lourdes Portillo exemplify autoethnographic practice?

For Mary Louise Pratt, autoethnography is a product of the contact zone. She describes the contact zone as a "social space where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination – like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today" (4). As many Mexican American scholars have argued, the U.S.-Mexico border is such a space. For example, Gloria Anzaldúa describes the border as "*una herida abierta* where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds" (1987, 25). Mario Barrera also documents the inequity of social conditions between Mexican Americans and Euroamericans. Barrera goes to great lengths to prove that Mexican Americans were part of a subordinate class segment "in which the segmentation is based on race and/or ethnicity" (1989, 101). For Barrera this is a colonized class segment (101). The power dynamics are highly asymmetrical and therefore characteristic of the contact zone experience.

As I mentioned above, out of the contact zone comes the autoethnographic project. Pratt argues that autoethnography "refers to instances in which colonized subjects undertake to represent themselves in ways that *engage with* the colonizer's own terms . . . Autoethnographic texts are not, then, what are usually thought of as 'authentic' forms of self-representation . . . Rather autoethnography involves partial collaboration with an appropriation of the idioms of the conqueror" (7). Conceptualizing autoethnography in this manner complicates readings that would privilege it simply because it is told from an insider's perspective. And it is exactly for this reason that I have chosen Pratt's definition

of autoethnography as the one that informs this project. For we would all like to think the native ethnographer can tell us something authentic about their culture – that they can venture into spaces where no one else can – that they can elicit stories and inspire trust in unique ways. But, to put it simply, this is not so. As the work of Portillo proves, in many cases, the native informant is met with distrust and suspicion if not outright hostility. She must grapple with what it means to leave a subordinate community and then come back as an outsider who intends to represent it to an foreign, often academic and elite audience. These are the politics with which Portillo wrestles. They are the politics with which every autoethnographer wrestles, I would argue – even if s/he is not conscious of it. In fact, in many cases autoethnographers *are* unconscious of the tensions that bubble through to the surface of their texts. It is these unconscious tensions and anxieties that reveal the fractures in the identity politics of the autoethnographer and her/his relationship to the community from which s/he comes. Ghosts inhabit these fractured spaces.

So exactly how is *The Devil Never Sleeps* an example of autoethnography. In this sense, her work falls into line with the aforementioned definition of autoethnography set out by Deborah Reed-Danahay (1997, 2). According to Reed-Danahay, autoethnography stands at the intersection of three genres of writing: native anthropology, ethnic autobiography and autobiographical ethnography (2). Portillo's *The Devil Never Sleeps* aligns itself most closely with Danahay's second definition. Her film documents her return to Chihuahua in the hopes of discovering the truth behind her Tío Oscar's murder. Because she herself is a native Chihuahuense and because she is interviewing family and friends, the film is autobiographical.[86] Of course, as Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson

remind us, documentary film is often quite autobiographical (2001, 74). But exactly how is it ethnic? Many people would argue it is ethnic because it is *mexicana/o* and Mexican American. And in the United States, Mexican American is an ethnic minority. However, a discussion of ethnicity can certainly be problematized by delving into any of the branches of cultural studies, specifically whiteness studies, and discovering that ethnicity is not essential or specific to people of color. And yet, so many would like to see ethnicity as something essential, even Mexican American scholars themselves. Certainly this is how Michael M.J. Fischer conceptualizes ethnicity. He writes: "ethnicity is a deeply rooted emotional component of identity, it is often transmitted less through cognitive language or learning . . . than through processes analogous to the dreaming and transference of psychoanalytic encounters" (195-6). Perhaps the ghostly figure is a transference. They certainly are common guests in Mexican American culture. So in this sense Portillo's films link themselves to Mexican American cultural identity and in Portillo's case that ethnic link, along with her autobiographical narrative, makes her film an autoethnography. Additionally, *The Devil Never Sleeps* also follows another path in life narrative and self-representation. In *Autobiographical Acts: the Changing Situation of a Literary Genre* (1976), Elizabeth Bruss inserts performativity into the work of autobiography. She writes: "Autobiography is a personal performance, an action that exemplifies the character of the agent responsible for that action and how it is performed" (300). Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson assert Bruss's attention to performativity in life narrative "anticipate[s] a dominant trend . . . toward theorizing autobiographical performativity" (138). In this chapter, I argue Portillo's autoethnographic films also portray performativity – Portillo's performance as a Mexican American subject. Portillo's

camera (eye) fulfills Portillo's mission to bring attention to the U.S.-México border while simultaneously serving as witness to her performative fashioning of self – the Mexican American "I."

In *The Devil Never Sleeps*, Lourdes Portillo returns to her native Chihuahua in an attempt to discover the secret behind her Tío Oscar's death. Was it a murder? Was it a suicide? Looking for an answer, she interviews family and friends. As she interviews each person, it becomes clear that she is a family member and she is not. Her positionality as a filmmaker interferes with her ability to simply return unnoticed to Mexico, and emerge with the truth. It is for this reason that she problematizes even the very notion of truth and fiction in her film. In fact as a 1994 interview with Rosa Linda Fregoso illustrates, Portillo never had any intention of looking for typical "Western" notions of truth.

> Truth is really a very subjective feeling. What is true is what you feel is true. So that's your truth, which is different from everyone agreeing on what the truth is. So there are partial truths, and everyone has their own point of view . . . So I'm presenting the audience with this panorama of the Mexican truth: each person had their own genuine experience and they've experienced the truth . . . I'm sharing this in a way that might be confusing to an American audience, which might feel like, 'Well, they're all lying, and they're all negating what the other one is saying.' And the American audience will get confused if they don't understand that each experience is just as much the truth (46).

In the formation of Mexican American subjectivity, Portillo's elucidation of truth is critical. Whereas the Chicano Civil Rights Movement had no problem speaking against the truth of Euroamerican domination in the U.S., it is much more difficult to deal with the fluidity of truth if it applies to the intracultural dynamic of Mexican America. Because if we begin to question the truth of Mexican America – family truths, cultural truths, religious truths – then the façade of a monolithic Mexican American subjectivity

begins to fracture and room is made for voices of opposition such as that of Mexican American women and other subjects who have experienced aspects of Mexican American culture that are quite oppressive and reinforce patriarchy and sexism. Portillo resurrects Tío Oscar so that his absent presence may illuminate the fractures and provide space for critique and identity formation.

Portillo's portrayal of Tío Oscar and the Mexican family begin to undo and problematize the heroic portrayals of the Mexican family that had been and in some cases continue to be held up by Mexican American cultural producers.[87] For example, Portillo goes to great lengths to document the rift that exists between her family and her tío's second wife Ofelia. This rift is one mostly of class for Ofelia comes from a working class family and the Almeida Ruiz family looks at Ofelia's marriage to Tío Oscar as an attempt to climb up into landed, middle-class Mexican society. Although Portillo does not defend Ofelia, she uses her as a means of showing the strong classism that does exist in Mexican society. She also uses the figures of Ofelia and Tío Oscar as a means of eliciting family gossip. Through this chisme, we learn that Ofelia perhaps had herself artificially inseminated. We learn that Tío Oscar perhaps had himself injected with sheep placenta to prevent aging; perhaps he was gay and had AIDS; perhaps he had been murdered by someone who owed him money. All of these things are whispered on film and represented by mouths moving against ears onscreen.

The story of this one family is an allegory for the story of Mexico. As Portillo says in her interview:

> The film goes way beyond a specific incident in my family . . . What I feel the film tells is the story of Mexico. It tells the story of deception. It tells the story of pretense and of family ties – the strength of family ties, the strength of family

> love. It tells the folly of the filmmaker . . . And when I showed the film in Mexico, I think the Mexicans agreed. They looked at the film and said, 'I can't believe this film. This film is not about your uncle Oscar. This film is about Mexico right now, about the political situation, about deception, heroizing people (45).

By far, this is not a romantic representation of Mexico. In fact it pulls everything Mexicans and Mexican Americans have idealized about the family and the homeland apart. In "Devils and Ghosts, Mothers and Immigrants," Rosa Linda Fregoso writes:

> [In *The Devil Never Sleeps*], Portillo breaks the silence around family unity and the family myth-making enterprise so central to Mexican and Chicano/a nationalism and deconstructs the values associated with Chicana/o (and Mexican) families, 'including familism (beliefs and behavior associated with family solidarity), compadrazgo (extended family via godparents), confianza (a system of trust and intimacy).' Since the Chicano movement of the sixties, Chicana/o nationalists have conjured up la familia as the foundation of oppositional politics, insisting on a single, coherent, representation of la familia – namely, the heterosexual, nuclear family . . . Positioned simultaneously as insider and outsider, Portillo removes from the family its shroud of secrecy, publicly unveiling its private face and exposing, not the blessed, untouchable Holy Family . . . but la familia, a site of conflict and contestation (2001, 91-92).

The Mexican/Mexican American family is central in the self-fashioning of Mexican America. To problematize and disrupt the narrative of the family is to problematize and disrupt the narrative of Greater México. Portillo is able to disrupt the patriarchal and nationalist models of mexicanidad and Mexican American peoplehood by using her position in the gap between insider and outsider, Mexican and Mexican American. She becomes the ghost in the film's margins. From this marginal space, she haunts the nationalist narrative of Mexican America. Mexican American subjectivity is problematized and haunted by a ghost that does not rest. This ghost is constantly at work whispering, maneuvering, and performing throughout the Mexican/Mexican American diaspora.

III. Gente de Razón: Intellectuals and "Others"

Lourdes Portillo returns to the margins and to the Mexican American diaspora in *Corpus: A Home Movie for Selena* (1998). In this film, Portillo interviews family members, friends and local residents of Corpus Christi, Texas. In each of these interviews, the interviewees describe their emotional connection to the figure of popular Tejano singer Selena Quintanilla. *Corpus* is not a film about Selena as much as it is a film about the Mexican American/Mexican community. In the film, the ghostly figure of Selena serves as a channel through which the Mexican/Mexican American community becomes visible and dynamic.

Portillo divides the filmed subjects of *Corpus* into three groups: the Quintanilla family, the Mexican/Mexican American community, i.e. Selena's fan base, and Mexican American intellectuals. For the family, Selena is someone they knew and loved. The interviews with the family demonstrate this. Each time Portillo turns the camera to a family member, the conversation focuses on the chronology of Selena's life – her childhood, the familial experience of life on the road, the joys of commercial success and the events that led to Selena's sudden death. Although these interviews are straightforward, I argue that even from within their narrow confines, Portillo finds room for critique. As with any documentary, Portillo must identify her interviewees. For example, Portillo identifies Tejano D.J. Vincente Carranza as "local radio personality. Under Suzette Quintanilla's name, the title is simple: "Older Sister." These rather simple, unremarkable labels change; however, when Portillo interviews Selena's father Abraham Quintanilla. She identifies him as "The Father." This is significant, I argue, because a crucial part of all of Portillo's films is the critique of patriarchy in Mexican

American/Mexican culture (Fregoso 2001, 91-92). To list Abraham Quintanilla as "The Father" is to hint at the problematic discourse of patriarchy and "the Father" in some aspects of Mexican/Mexican American traditional culture. That Portillo views Abraham Quintanilla as an oppressive patriarch is detailed in Rosa Linda Fregoso's introduction to *Lourdes Portillo: the Devil Never Sleeps and Other Films* (2001). Fregoso, who refers to Abraham Quintanilla as the "devil himself" describes the birth of *Corpus* and the process of its filming (2001, 16). She writes:

> [Portillo's] desire to include Selena footage in the documentary grew the more Portillo watched the singer's performances on video . . . [She] then decided the documentary would be enhanced by an interview with Quintanilla, and she made plans to return to Corpus . . . Quintanilla asked to see the latest cut of the film . . . so Portillo sent it to him . . . he demanded several changes, making it clear that if Portillo really wanted his help . . . then she was going to have to eliminate certain parts he disliked . . . Portillo objected: 'But Abe, that's censorship.' To which Quintanilla responded, 'Yes, but who would know except the people in this room – and nobody's going to tell . . . Portillo capitulated to several of his demands, cutting out some of my favorite footage, like the segment of an animated Tejano expressing in colorful descriptive terms his disappointment with Selena's modest tombstone (too critical for the patriarch) (18).

This lengthy excerpt from Fregoso makes it clear that in the film Abraham Quintanilla is a figure that typifies the oppressive Mexican American patriarch. While it would be careless to deny Abraham Quintanilla his place as a father who lost his daughter, Portillo and Fregoso do not excuse his controlling behavior. In order to contest his overbearing presence in the after-life of Selena, Portillo chose to focus on the fans (2001, 18).

Undoubtedly, Portillo fulfills her desire to focus on the fans. She spends the majority of the film talking to Selena fans. The goal of each interview is not only to document what Selena meant to fans, but also to illustrate Selena's significance in the construction of Mexican American subjectivity. A critical component of Portillo's

autobiographical self-fashioning in *Corpus* is the agent that persuades her to tell her story (I) and the story of Selena in Mexican America (eye). This agent is also known as the coaxer. According to Smith and Watson, "the coaxer/coercer . . . is any person or institution or set of cultural imperatives that solicits or provokes people to tell their stories" (50). For Portillo, the coaxer is a set of cultural imperatives. These cultural imperatives have led to her sense of internalized racism. Portillo's internalized racism motivates her to tell the story of her I(s)/eyes through the ghostly figure of Selena. Portillo begins *Corpus* with the following personal statement:

> I didn't know who Selena was and I said, 'Well, who was shot?' and they said, "Selena." And I said, "Who's Selena?" And then I started seeing everyone's reaction and the coverage and television. I think it was my own kind of internalized racism that I could not believe that this brown girl had gotten to be so famous. I did not believe it so that's when I decided to make a film about Selena (1998).

Portillo attributes her desire to represent Mexican Americans, particularly Selena, in the media to her internalized racism. Internalized racism is powerful and to struggle against it Portillo uses the figure of Selena. She can resurrect Selena's embodied ghost to combat oppressive cultural forces. Selena's image allows young Mexican and Mexican American girls to have a role model with whom they can identify. However, it is also clear Selena's image is a source of ambivalence for Portillo. Selena's image is very sexual and to be very sexual in Mexican/Mexican American culture is dangerous, according to Portillo. Rosa Linda Fregoso identifies this ambivalence: "It is a film that conscientiously (and I would add reflexively) validates the bodies of brown women . . . the filmmaker doesn't shy away from [Selena's] . . . somewhat enigmatic legacy as a role model . . . Portillo forces us to grapple with the negative underside of the singer's image: its

hypersexualization" (20). Because Selena's overt sexuality is a site of ambivalence in *Corpus*, Portillo includes the perspectives of well-known Mexican American feminist writers and cultural critics.

The Mexican American community of Corpus Christi is undoubtedly *a* subject in *Corpus*; however, it is not *the* subject. Portillo gives significant amounts of time to critics and to the critics' interpretations of Selena's significance. The writers and cultural critics who inhabit Portillo's label "Intellectuals" are the following: Sandra Cisneros, Rosa Linda Fregoso, Cherríe Moraga and Yvonne Yarbo Bejarano.[88] Portillo offers the perspective of these critics in order to provide a variation on the Selena image. After spending almost half an hour interviewing local residents, *Corpus* cuts to a dining room. Cisneros, Fregoso and Yarbo Bejarano sit around a beautifully set table. Cisneros breaks the silence by declaring she is not a Selena fan. Cisneros comments:

> I'm not a Selena fan. But I have a Selena keychain. The reason I have her here on this keychain is I went to the Stop and Shop, this little gas station here and it's the first time I ever saw a Chicana on a keychain that wasn't La Virgen de Guadalupe and I had to buy it, but I don't have any Selena records. I never listened to her music . . . And I have to say there are some things she stands for that I think are very dangerous . . . Like she dropped out of school. Her father had her working – she quit school (1998).

Cisneros' observation is followed by an interview with Abraham Quintanilla. Quintanilla reminds the viewer that while Selena may have quit school, she was always under the watch of her father and mother. The family protected her in ways perhaps school could not (1998). I bring these two perspectives – Selena as ideal role model and Selena as problematic role model – into conversation because I believe they illustrate a rupture in the formation of Lourdes Portillo's coherent Mexican American subjectivity. Portillo is conscious of this rupture. As I mentioned above, she begins *Corpus* acknowledging her

ignorance of Selena and Selena's popularity among Mexicans and Mexican Americans. She attributes this ignorance to oppressive external forces that have helped her to create and maintain internal models of oppression, i.e. racism, sexism. While *Corpus* devotes the great majority of its time to interviewing locals, it is clear *Corpus* needs another perspective to supplement the regional locals; thus, the film includes the perspectives of estranged intellectuals. They provide an intellectual context for Selena's image; however, their incorporation into the film also represents a gap with which Portillo is familiar – the gap between insider and outsider. Portillo, like the feminist critics talking around the dinner table is a Mexican American; however, she is alienated from the Mexican American/Mexican populace that comprise Selena's fan base. She is of "el gente," but she is no longer "gente."[89] Selena illuminates the rupture. Gente knew Selena and her music well. The intellectuals, Portillo included, did not. Selena, the absent presence, brings this rupture onto the center stage of Mexican American identity formation. How do we negotiate these gaps between insider and outsider, native and foreign, intellectual and *other*? For even if Portillo does not intend to create these binaries she does so by ascribing categories such as "native" and "intellectual" to some interviewees and not to others. However, all is not lost. For even within the recognition of the gap, Portillo still presents the absent presence as a possible site of reconciliation. She states:

> I think the most important thing in telling the stories about Selena and Latinos and Latinas is that we need to look at ourselves in the media. We need to see ourselves portrayed . . . otherwise we don't exist. And if we don't exist we become diminished by the media and we can't allow that to happen" (1998).

Selena's death – her absent presence – made visible millions of Mexicans/Mexican Americans and Latinas/os. Her death brought attention to her listeners and the

mainstream media was surprised to see that these listeners were from South America, Central America, México and Mexican America. The loss of Selena made clear the diasporic reach of Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the United States. In absence, Selena helped realize our existence as a people living inside the United States with a difference.[90]

IV: Requiem: Waiting for Resurrection in Ciudad Juárez

Before I begin my analysis of Lourdes Portillo's film *Señorita Extraviada* (2001), it is important to talk about the conditions of Juárez/El Paso. While I speak specifically of Juárez/El Paso, these conditions and the racist rhetoric that surrounds them are generally the same in all of the urban centers that stretch across the 2,000-mile U.S.-México border.

In June 2001, *Time* magazine in conjunction with ABC News and CNN put together a weeklong special on the U.S.-México border. These mainstream media outlets renamed the U.S.-México border Amexica: La Nueva Frontera (2001). Putting aside all the racism and ethnocentrism that both of those terms assume, what all these mainstream news organizations were attempting to do was showcase enthusiasm for a changing and growing demographic about which they could do nothing – Mexicans and Mexican Americans (or what they politely called Hispanics). In "Two Countries, One City," Tim Padgett and Cathy Booth Thomas remind their readers that Ciudad Juárez and El Paso's population of 2 million make up the largest border community anywhere in the world. Moreover, it is growing at a rate of five percent every year. While this may look like enthusiasm for the growing population of the U.S.-México borderlands, it is not. What the magazine and the website, and the entire mainstream U.S. population, always betray in their rhetoric is, in fact, panic. In the same paragraph that these news reporters discuss

the growing population of Juárez/El Paso, they discuss water shortages, *narcotraficantes* and disease: “Tuberculosis and hepatitis flow freely back and forth – and beyond. ‘The truck driver with TB who sits in our restaurants today will be in Chicago or Denver tomorrow,’ says the dean of Texas Tech Health Sciences Center. ‘Our problems will be dispersed throughout the country’” (11 June 2001). This is not a new phenomenon. As Chicano David Dorado Romo pointed out in his recently published history of El Paso/Juárez, Mexicans and Mexican Americans have always been accused of harboring disease. That *Time* should do it is nothing new. They only cloaked it with enthusiasm.

What was particularly appalling in the numerous articles on the U.S.-México border that appeared in June 2001; however, was not the various offensive things they included about Mexicans and disease, or Mexicans and narcotraficantes, or how many Mexicans a border agent can single-handedly discover in the Arizona desert during his/her morning patrol. The most appalling aspect of the border articles was an absence. An absence that Avery Gordon would argue was “seething with presence” (17). Despite having three articles devoted solely to Juárez/El Paso, and mentioning several times the 400 maquiladoras that dominate the Chihuahuense landscape and the $1.25 hourly wage that most maquila workers earn, the website and magazine devoted only one sentence to the several hundred women of Juárez that have been disappeared. In that lone sentence, the estimate is low – only 200 women have disappeared. Most activists agree the estimate is closer to 400. Some even estimate it is as high as 500.

Lourdes Portillo’s *Señorita Extraviada/Missing Young Woman* (2001) focuses on the families of the disappeared in Ciudad Juárez. Portillo’s film makes known the border[ed] voices that we must and should be hearing. In *Raising the Dead: Readings of*

the Dead and (Black) Subjectivity (2000), Sharon Patricia Holland argues: "The dead acknowledge no borders" (18). She goes on to argue that one can tell the strength of a nation by the way that it treats its poor (let's also add its women here) and one "can also ascertain this relative strength by examining the way a nation treats its dead. Holland continues: "At the global level, the dead appear before the public eye as a sign of another country's *lack* – of democracy . . . of resources, of compassion" (18-19). After watching Lourdes Portillo's *Señorita Extraviada*, the viewer would undoubtedly feel that México is a nation that fails according to the standards Holland sets up in her argument; however, I am not willing to stop with México. The several hundred murders that are the subject of the film and that have occurred over the past fifteen years in Ciudad Juárez are the direct result of patriarchy, corrupt government, and unwilling cooperation from both México and the United States. As I mentioned earlier, when it is convenient for the United States we pretend to enthusiastically celebrate the U.S.-México border, the United States takes advantage of looser environmental laws, lower wages and sends industrial complexes and businesses south of the U.S.-México border, the United States employs some of these maquiladora workers that have been murdered, but it does not and will not take responsibility for finding the people who are guilty. Therefore, if we measure a nation's strength by how it treats its poor and its dead, this is one place where the United States and México stand on equal terrain – the U.S.-México border is a marginal space in the national communities of both nations.

In "Gender, Violence and Denationalization of Women's Rights in Ciudad Juárez, México," Alicia Schmidt Camacho illustrates this point:

> How Mexican women may exert rights in the border space is thus fundamentally an international, not a national problem. By this, I mean that the implementation of human rights conventions is not simply a matter of remaking the Mexican state but of addressing the global processes that make Mexican women convenient targets for discrimination, exploitation, and assault . . . While the Mexican and U.S. governments tend to depict border violence as a matter of insufficient policing, due consideration of women's rights would lead us to ask whether infact border policing incites violence against women. Over the last decade, human rights groups and immigrant advocates have reported a rise in the incidence of rape and sexual assault of migrant women at the hands of border patrol officers from both countries.

Camacho argues that increased border militarization represents a state of war. Within this context, law enforcement officers and armed criminal groups routinely subject Mexican women to deliberate acts of gender terror. The broad gender violence evident at the border reminds us that feminicidio is not simply a Mexican problem:

> U.S. immigration agencies deliberately police migrant women on the basis of their sexuality in order to reproduce exclusionary forms of nationalism while simultaneously depressing the price of migrant women's labor . . . Studies of migrant Latina domestic labor in the United States suggest that the market for housecleaners and babysitters demands a denationalized, female worker without access to full citizenship rights . . .The maquiladoras and tourist industries, which trade so visibly in Mexican women's physical capacities, are only the most obvious sites that eroticize Mexican women's superexploitation. The informal economies of human smuggling [and] drug traffic . . . expand the formal economies in Mexican women's labor in the United States. It is not enough to claim that governments are merely complicit in this violence. Gender crimes in fact sustain a binational project of governance and growth. The very notion of the border necessitates violence (276-79).

In general, people have assumed that the United States and Mexico have a relationship in which the México depends upon and is affected by the United States. This is not so – and the United States has always known it and silently feared it. Since 1848 and the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo to the present moment, the U.S. has known that it could be undone and destabilized by México. It is for this reason that I consider México's failures, our failures. As Emma Pérez has pointed out, U.S. owned corporations run 80 percent of the

maquiladoras (Livingston 278). Consequently, the U.S. is responsible not only for the lives of the women who work in them, but also for the men and women who run them.

In *Señorita Extraviada*, Portillo goes to great lengths to give voice to the women who have disappeared and to the families they left behind. She gives voice to the missing women by refusing to allow them to remain nameless and faceless, which is what both the Mexican and U.S. government have done. Throughout the film, Portillo films close-ups of the women's faces in photographs from quinceañeras, school photos, maquila photos, etc. She also reminds the audience repeatedly of their names. We must not and cannot forget their names. As many histories and testimonies of the disappearances in Central and Latin America have argued, the first thing the state tries to disappear is one's name. Portillo recovers the names for these women. As the film continues it also becomes clear, that the government has no intention of clearly identifying the bodies the families locate in the desert. The police routinely misidentify remains – in one case, they point a mother to a wrong grave. In another case, they give a mother the wrong remains. In perhaps the most outrageous move, the police burn piles of clothing – important evidence – all of it belonging to the murder victims. The families in the film are left to solve the cases themselves. In many instances, the mothers make much better detectives than the investigators themselves. For example, there is the mother of Silvia Arce. Her daughter sold cosmetics to strippers and bartenders in Juárez bar district. She disappeared. Silvia's mother is haunted by her own experience as a young woman who was also kidnapped. She got away, and now she is determined to find the people who have kidnapped and murdered her daughter. She has notebooks full of names of people who work at bars. She has given all of these to the authorities and they have interviewed

no one. Her frustration is palpable. Like all of the mothers in the film she is met with the same response from the government officials. When some of the young women have disappeared like Maria Isabel Nava, the last woman to be mentioned in *Señorita Extraviada*, the Juárez police suggest she left with her boyfriend. In the Nava case, they publish a photograph and article in the local newspaper. Both documents state Nava has been found alive. Of course the girl in the photo is not Nava and her case continues on the path away from any kind of resolution.

> State authorities have assumed that some of the victims were prostitutes and moved slowly on investigations. In 1995, the state assistant attorney general blamed the murders on the "double life" that many young women lead—working by day and going out at night, or even taking up prostitution. The Juárez mayor issued statements such as 'Do you know where your daughter is tonight?' Some Juárez residents also adopted this attitude, believing that only prostitutes and factory women were at risk of being murdered (Livingston 2004, 64).

As I mention above, these women are recognized bodies in no nation. They and their families inhabit the border[ed] space of death. However, as Sharon Patricia Holland has powerfully argued, the space of death can produce bodies capable of disrupting and re-membering dominant narratives.

As *Señorita Extraviada* demonstrates, the space of death is often one of violence. Throughout the film, Portillo's interviewees detail the horrific abuse their daughters endured; however, she does not film the bodies or even document the gruesome photos of the women's bodies that have appeared in other media forms. Rather than focus on the dead bodies of the murdered women, Portillo turns her camera or eye to the family members. Through the stories of the families, Portillo is able to resurrect the dead and help them to fulfill their ghostly mission.

Throughout the film, there are several shots of the desert landscape that surrounds Ciudad Juárez. These shots reinforce the real disjuncture between the barren, Chihuahua desert that holds the dead bodies and the urban chaos that is Ciudad Juárez. Portillo's intent to depict Juárez as a city in turmoil is clear. Juárez on film is shot in a series of high-speed images. These shots of Juárez and its inhabitants moving at an incredibly fast speed demonstrate Portillo's determination to show the city as out of control. The chaos of the city is in part to blame for both the deaths and disappearances of women, but also for the lack of attention paid to Mexican women in general. These women disappear and there is little to no ceremony. Families are not given answers; consequently, the ceremony of mourning, if it happens at all, is delayed. *Señorita Extraviada* attempts to provide the disappeared women and their family with the opportunity to publicly perform the ceremony of mourning. It is for this reason that Portillo chooses to fix the film with elements of the funeral rite. *Senorita Extraviada* is a requiem for the dead. Rosa Linda Fregoso points out:

> Lourdes employs religious symbolism and iconography subversively. She enshrouds her film in the discourse of religiosity. The strategic placement of crosses, montages of crucifixes and home altars, along with the musical score of Gregorian chants, including the solemn chant for the dead . . . all work to establish a meditative, hieratic rhythm in the film. Lourdes described *Señorita Extraviada* as a 'requiem.' She has in effect resignified the requiem into an artistic composition for the dead. To her credit, not a single dead body appears in the film; nonetheless the haunting presence of the victims is summoned both literally, through the placement of photographs, and figuratively, through her reworking of the requiem form (26).

For Portillo, the absence of the dead bodies is a conscious choice. Rita González writes:

> *Señorita Extraviada* counters regional and international journalists' tendencies to portray the story in a lurid or shocking manner . . . Feminist activists in Juárez . . . point to the "yellow" journalistic coverage that focuses on sensational facets, such as links to narcotrafficking and prostitution rings, rather than on the large-scale

> social, economic, and environmental problems of Juárez. For Portillo that kind of journalism, 'become[s] a place for . . . lurid thoughts' and only creates distance between the public and the crimes, which leads to further objectification of the victims. In response to the language of "the said" – the social and judicial narrative that blames the young women for the crimes – Portillo wanted to give the girls back their humanity, that which is 'unsaid,' noting throughout *Señorita Exrraviada* the details of their lives, their contributions, and their personalities, so that each life lost would not become yet another statistic or grotesque photograph. (2003, 238-239).

These two lengthy quotes demonstrate the strong presence of absence. Also, they illustrate the power of absence in the photograph. As I argued in Chapter Three, absent bodies in the photograph make their presence known and felt in the blind field (Barthes 1981, 57). This blind field is otherwise known as the space that exists external to the photograph – the space inhabited by absent presences/ghosts (Gordon 1997, 107). The blind field is related to the punctum – that unnameable element that brings to life the blind field. Avery Gordon reminds us: "The blind field is never named as such in the photograph . . . Yet, the blind field is present, and when we catch a glimpse of its endowment in the paradoxical experience of seeing what appears to be not there we know that a haunting is occurring" (107). In *Señorita Extraviada*, the photographs of the disappeared are at the center of the story. Portillo films the geographic and discursive space that exists externally to these photographs. Around the photograph is the rural landscape of the Chihuahuense desert, the urban landscape of Ciudad Juárez, the voices of the families. Each of these elements exists outside of the photograph and simultaneously inform the photograph. In essence, Portillo films the blind field. The absence of these hundreds of young Mexican women haunted the landscape of the U.S.-México border and coaxed Portillo into telling their story.[91] However, she is not only telling the story of the disappeared women; she, also tells her own story as the "I" in the

film. Rita González acknowledges the connection between Lourdes Portillo's "I(s)/eyes" in *Señorita Extraviada*. She writes:

> As someone who grew up between two cultures, who comes from and is deeply connected to her Northern Mexican roots yet is planted in the Bay Area, Portillo has often addressed her simultaneous intimacy with and distance from Mexican society. According to the filmmaker, *Señorita Extraviada* deals with the 'two different languages' of Mexican society, 'the said and the unsaid.' Portillo's interest was to tell the stories based on a culturally specific way of telling stories, one that stresses the eloquence of the unsaid (236).

As both *The Devil Never Sleeps/El Diablo Nunca Duerme* (1994) and *Corpus: A Home Movie for Selena* (1998) exemplify, Portillo's films are locations where she interrogates the formation of her Mexican American subjectivity. Undoubtedly, Portillo's films make visible the often invisible presence of Mexican America. Each film portrays the wide reach of the Mexican American diaspora both inside and outside the borders of the United States. Each film crosses the U.S.-México border and in doing so demonstrates the intimacy and alienation the U.S.-México border elicits for Mexican American subjects. Yet, they also expose Portillo's own border[ed] presence. She is the often absent presence in her films (of course, *The Devil Never Sleeps* is an exception); her presence signified only by her voice. She is the ghostly matter outside of the film imbuing the blind field with external meaning – her lived experience as an inhabitant of the U.S.-México border, as a border-crosser and as a diasporic Mexican American woman. In her films, Portillo brings attention to the gap between embodied and disembodied presence, between the U.S. and México, between the "I" and the "eye." To linger in these gaps is a key component of Mexican American identity.

Conclusion:
Ghostly Reflections: Capturing the Translucent Scene of Mexican American Life Narrative

I was looking for a brown history of America. I was looking for the precedent that made me possible

Richard Rodriguez[92]

I. Alamo Reflections

Again it was March and the heat was making its return to central Texas. As I drove through East Austin, I saw families making their way out of Sunday services – some of them stood in front of cathedrals like St. Mary's, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Cristo Rey. Some stood near store fronts whose walls read Iglesia Apostólica. I turned on the radio. There was a contest. The DJ offered free tickets to a car show or a concert. The winner could choose. First; however, the winner had to answer this question: Name four people who fought in the Battle of the Alamo. I listened as person after person called the station – all of them knew Davy Crockett. Some knew James Bowie or William Travis. Juan Seguín, the tejano who fought with the rebels in the Alamo and delivered their requests for help to Sam Houston, was not part of any caller's litany of names. I waited and I drove. Could any of these callers name four Alamo defenders? I do not remember if anyone won the contest. I'm sure someone did. What I do remember is one name was repeated on the air over and over again – John Wayne. John Wayne was at the Alamo.

Yes. John Wayne was at the Alamo. He fought for Texas Independence in Walt Disney's *The Alamo* (1960). Does it matter that John Wayne was not at the Battle for the Alamo in 1836? Yes, of course it matters. We cannot and should not ignore the facts of history; yet, we can critique the interpretation of those facts. And we can articulate the

effects those interpretations have on the formation of Mexican American identity in the United States.

The preservation of the Alamo in the national memory of the United States works as a vehicle through which a particular memory of the Battle of the Alamo is reinforced. That memory, Richard Flores argues, is one in which Texans are heroes and Mexicans are tyrants. To remember the Alamo in this way "serve[s] as a public reminder 'to keep Mexicans in line'" (2002, 33). In the United States, the cultural memory of the Alamo "serves to inform the present rather than to enlighten the past" (Flores 2002, 33). In this sense, to remember is not to recall the facts of past historical events. Instead, to remember is to put those facts to contemporary use and use them to justify the attitudes of the current moment. If the Mexican American population in the United States is perceived as a threat to Euro-American hegemony, then it is necessary to remember a moment such as the Battle of the Alamo as an event where Mexicans were malicious and tyrannical. Remembering the moment of the Alamo in this way justifies the dominant ideologies that have placed and continue to place Mexican Americans in subordinate positions.

For Mexican Americans, the Alamo remains a contested, dismembered and re-membered site. A few years ago, I came across the work of San Antonio artist Kathy Vargas. Vargas' work struck me with its translucent beauty and ghostly images. Several of her pieces helped me to meditate on my readings of the life narratives I include in this dissertation. While all of Vargas' work is relevant to my work on ghosts and haunting, I will first focus on only one of her many photograph in the "My Alamo" series (1995). In "My Alamo," there are six photographs. Each photograph confronts a component of mythic Texas history such as the Alamo, the Texas Rangers, and the San Antonio fiesta

queen.[93] Fiesta in San Antonio celebrates the Battles of the Alamo and San Jacinto. The festival began in 1891. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the festival had grown into a parade. Parade participants marched from San Antonio's Municipal Auditorium to the Alamo. Once participants reached the Alamo, they listened as the names of the men who died during the Battle of the Alamo in 1836 were read over a loudspeaker (Simpson 2010).[94] Given its history, it is not surprising that Fiesta San Antonio is a source of conflict between Mexican Americans and Euroamericans in Texas.

In *Dressing Up Debutantes: Pageantry and Glitz in Texas* (1998), Michaele Thurgood Haynes describes the process of the fiesta queen's coronation:

> Coronation began in 1909, when John Carrington founded the Order of the Alamo to elect a queen and to crown her, amidst her court of twenty-four duchesses, in an elaborate pageant. Almost all of the royal debutantes are daughters of, or related in some way to, Order of the Alamo members . . . Coronation is an overwhelmingly Anglo and upper-class event in a city with a more than 60 percent Hispanic population (2).

Despite the almost exclusively Euroamerican participation in the coronation of the Fiesta Queen, the fiesta employs practices that signify Mexican and Mexican American culture. Some of these practices are: the incorporation of mariachi singers and music into the fiesta; the incorporation of ballet folklórico; and the considerable use of Spanish. Although, the fiesta queen's coronation during Fiesta San Antonio implies a celebration of Mexican American culture in San Antonio, according to Audrey Elisa Kerr, the fiesta is not at all interested in commemorating or celebrating any connection between Euroamericans and Mexican Americans in Texas. Instead,

> coronation is a localized and deeply symbolic commemoration of American Southern Anglo life, as well as a proclamation of this life as 'royal': those who are included in the Coronation courts are the social monarchy of San Antonio who

inherit both the social obligations and privileges that accompany 'noble' birth (Kerr 2001, 107).[95]

Mexican and Mexican culture is present, but Mexican Americans are absent. San Antonio artist Kathy Vargas deals with the absent presence of Mexican Americans at sites of cultural significance and practice such as the Alamo, and in particular, the coronation of the fiesta queen.

As I mentioned earlier, Kathy Vargas' *My Alamo* series contains six photographs. Each of these photographs uses the cultural significance of the Alamo as a foundation around which to construct a visual re-membered narrative of her lived experience as a Mexican American in San Antonio. However, under the weight of her visual rememory, the foundation cracks. In other words, Vargas' re-membered vision dismembers the mainstream narrative and consequently, offers a re-membered critique of U.S., specifically Texan, history.

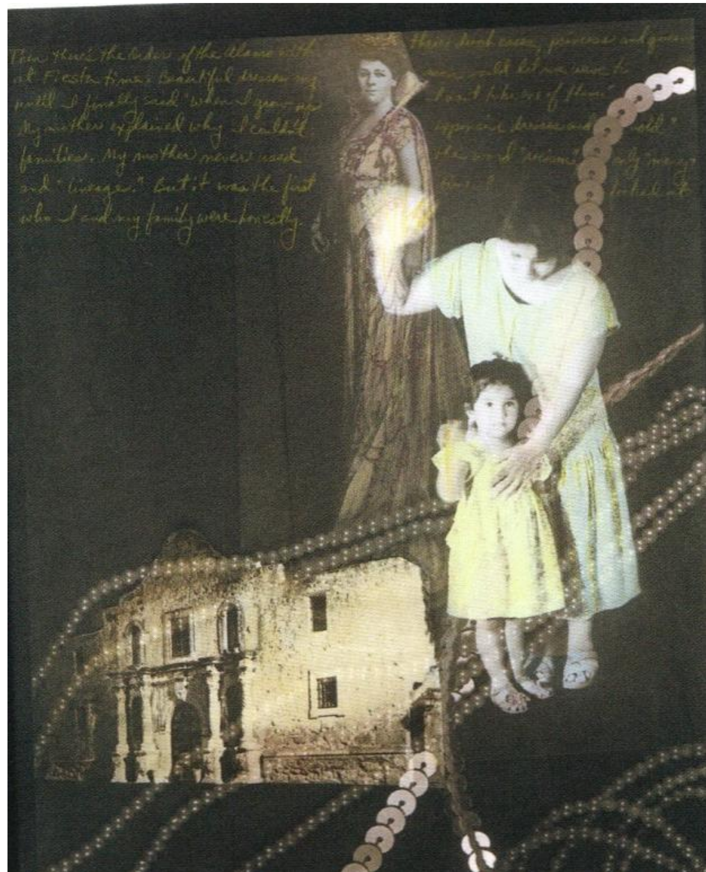

Figure 21: Photograph 3 from Kathy Vargas' *My Alamo* Series (1995)

The third photograph of *My Alamo* series is a layered photograph. This photograph consists of five layers. The

first is an image of San Antonio fiesta queen Clara Driscoll. Driscoll's transparent figure looms large. This layer is a bit more transparent than the others and blends more easily into the piece's dark background. Covering the feet of Driscoll, is the Alamo. The Alamo is lighter, more opaque and quite small when compared to the other figures in the photograph. In front of the Alamo is a family photograph. In this layer, Vargas is a little girl and stands in front of her mother. These figures are the brightest in the piece. Both their brightness and their prominent position at the photograph's forefront bring the viewer's eye directly to them. Flowing diagonally across the portrait, strings of beads and sequins constitute the fourth layer. The fifth layer, which comprises a third of the piece, is Kathy Vargas' handwritten account of the Alamo, Fiesta and the Vargas familia. She writes:

> Then there's the Order of the Alamo with their duchesses, princesses and queen at Fiesta time. Beautiful dresses my mom would let me wave to until I finally said, "when I grow up, I want to be one of them." My mother explained why I couldn't experience the dresses and said, "old families." My mother never used the word, "racism," only "money" and "lineage." But it was the first time I looked at who I and my family were. Honestly (Vargas 1995).

In this piece, Vargas has ruptured the superficial narrative of the Fiesta as a recognition of the Mexican American presence in Texas and has revealed its racist and classist construction. By also including the Alamo, she has dismembered its place as a site of romantic history and has reinscribed it with her own experience – for Vargas, the Alamo is also a site of racism and classism. She has used her photographer's "eye" to inform the viewer's "eye" with the story of her "I."

In *Chicana Art: the Politics of Spiritual and Aesthetic Altarities* (2007), Laura E. Pérez writes: "Vargas created dream-like collages of text and images to illustrate in a

diary-like narrative, child-hood memories of the cultural conflicts symbolized by the Alamo in San Antonio, particularly from her perspective as a Mexican American" (136). Kathy Vargas' I(s)/eyes dismember and re-member history. For Vargas, this is art is a critical component and catalyst in the discourses of politics and history. During a 1997 interview with Jacinto Quirarte, Vargas articulated the constructive potential of her work:

> I know that's what I try to do: that I try to make a beautiful object that will seduce you into dealing with the difficult issue, whether it's political or personal, whether it's the pain of death from a personal loss or the pain of death from a political loss. It's the same idea. It's that idea that you can be seduced into realizing the pain if you're seduced, if it's about beauty, if it's about something touching the eye and being very gratifying visually. If it's small text I write it around the image. When I did the Alamo series, there was lots of text, it was very narrative, so I actually wrote it into the photograph. When I photographed I left space for text in each image. I was looking in the camera and saying, okay, this is where the text is going to go (1997).

Vargas' makes clear her "beautiful objects" can "seduce" a viewer into confronting the "pain of death." This is significant because it demonstrates her conscious knowledge of ghostly power. Vargas followed *My Alamo* with *I Was Little, They Were Big* (1998). In each of the photographs included in this series, Vargas layers a photograph of a deceased family member within a photograph of an altar. The effect is each body is entombed. Figure Eleven is an excellent representation of this series. In this photograph, Vargas has placed a transparent image of an open front door over an image of her great-grandmother, grandmother and aunt. The photograph critically locates women within the domestic space of the house and at the same time re-members them. About this series of photographs, Vargas wrote: "Sometimes it is possible to photograph the missing being" (1998). In the work of Vargas, the photograph seethes with absent presences. These translucent figures re-member Vargas' experience as a Mexican American woman in San

Figure 13: Photograph from "I Was Little They Were Big" Series (1998). In this photograph are Vargas' great-grandmother, grandmother and aunt.

Antonio. From the margins of absence, they haunt inside the frame and disrupt the dominant narrative outside of the frame.

The beautiful work of Kathy Vargas lingers. For me, Vargas' work exemplifies the various arguments I make throughout this dissertation. To read the figures of ghosts as disembodied and unearthly is incorrect. On the contrary, ghosts in Mexican American life narrative are often bodied. Their absent presences are very much of this earth and their impact is real and pulsating with revolutionary effects.

End Notes

[1] See T.R. Fehrenbach's *Lone Star: A History of Texas and the Texans*. New York: American Legacy Press, 1968. Despite using racial epitaphs against Native Americans and Mexican Americans throughout the first edition of his work, Fehrenbach's history was still considered the "seminal history of Texas" as recently as February 2008. For more information see Paul Burka's *Texas Monthly* article on the rise to power of Hispanic lawyer Rafael Anchía, a Texas state representative. Burka critiques Fehrenbach's assertions that Mexican Americans were unwilling to assimilate into Euro-American culture. He argues that Anchía, Henry B. Gonzalez and Henry Cisneros are all examples of Mexican Americans who have done otherwise. (February 2008, 250). As this preface and the rest of my dissertation argues, assimilation is not so easily accomplished.

[2] See Emma Pérez's *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999, 127. Pérez is responding to Pilar Cruz's declaration to "Forget the Alamo" in the final scene of John Sayles' film *Lone Star* (1995).

[3] Irma García is my aunt and my mom's twin sister.

[4] The Battle of the Alamo took place on over 13 days in late February and early March 1836. A little more than 200 Euro-American settlers and *Tejanos* were defeated by Santa Anna. Later on March 20, Santa Anna forced the surrender of Fannin's militia at Goliad. 342 of Fannin's men were captured and later executed. On April 21, 1836 Santa Anna was defeated by Sam Houston at San Jacinto. In our classroom, Santa Anna is always portrayed as distracted by Emily D. West, a beautiful and mixed-race woman. However in our history lessons, she never had a name, and was only known as "The Yellow Rose of Texas." She was given the name "yellow" because she was of mixed-African descent.

[5] Although most of the 250 men who fought in the Battle of the Alamo were of *mexicano* descent, we never learned this in our Texas history classes. I never heard of Juan N. Seguin until graduate school. I had vaguely heard of Lorenzo de Zavala, the interim vice president of the Texas Republic, but we never learned anything about him in class.

[6] We watched both Disney productions of *Davy Crockett* (1955) and *The Alamo* (1960) several times in elementary school. The Disney version of *The Alamo* has become so incorporated into popular culture that when I lived in Austin, there was a radio show contest asking listeners to name five people who had been at the Alamo. That morning I counted four people who named John Wayne. John Wayne played Davy Crockett in the Disney version of *The Alamo*.

[7] The Battle of San Jacinto was 21 April 1836.

[8] A. Gabriel Meléndez. "Sombras de la Jicarita." *The Multi-cultural Southwest: A Reader*. Eds. A. Gabriel Meléndez, M. Jane Young, Patricia Moore and Patrick Pynes. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2001. 120-122.

[9] Juan Rulfo. *Pedro Páramo*. New York: Grove Press, 1994.

[10] According to Américo Paredes, Greater México "refers to the areas inhabited by people of Mexican culture – not only within the present limits of the Republic of México but in the United States as well – in a cultural rather than a political sense." Américo Paredes. *A Texas-Mexican Cancionero: Folksongs of the Lower Border*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976, p .xiv.

[11] An example for U.S. foreign investment prior to the Mexican Revolution is the copper mines developed by Colonel William E. Greene in Cananea, Sonora. The special tax breaks given to Greene by Porfirio Díaz's government saved Greene more than one million dollars a year. These types of concessions

promoted foreign development in México; they also made it possible for foreigners to control important sectors of the Mexican economy. Eventually, the influx of foreigners and the control they obtained caused the nationalist backlash that became the Mexican Revolution, particularly in Cananea where strikes in 1906 reached international proportions. Colonel Greene violently put down a strike of Mexican workers in Cananea by calling in the Arizona Rangers and receiving guns and ammunition from Phelps-Dodge in Douglas, Arizona. Greene's men killed 50 Mexican miners, 87 activists were imprisoned, including members of the *Partido Liberal Mexicano* (PLM) and foreign members of the Western Federation of Miners (WFM) were sent into exile. The strike and murders at Cananea is considered one of the Porfiriato's primary abuses and one of few nuclei that would explode into the Mexican Revolution. In 1915, Pancho Villa attacked the mines at Cananea, kidnapping two U.S. surgeons and killing a U.S. mining engineer. Villa's actions are acts of aggression against not only U.S. citizens, but U.S. incursion and imperialism in México. For more information, see Michael J. Gonzales. *The Mexican Revolution: 1910-1940*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002, p. 66-69, 151.

[12] Vicente Silva was one of the more controversial leaders of *Las Gorras Blancas*. For an interesting reading of Silva by one of his *nuevomexicana* contemporaries see Fabiola Cabeza de Baca's *We Fed Them Cactus*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994. In this memoir, Cabeza de Baca portrays Silva as a "bandit . . . who was charitable to the poor" (1994, 107).

[13] *Las Gorras Blancas*, which translates as the White Caps was an organized group whose hub was in San Miguel County, New Mexico during the late nineteenth century. At that time, Las Vegas, NM, the county seat was the largest city in New Mexico, which was 80 percent Mexican American or *mexicana/o*. *Las Gorras Blancas* resisted against Euro-American encroachment into New Mexico territory. "They also addressed the needs of the poor people of San Miguel County" (Arellano 2000, 64). *Las Gorras Blancas* posted a manifesto in Spanish in March 1890 throughout Las Vegas. Following is a brief summary:

- Our purpose will be to protect the rights of all people in general, and especially the rights of poor people.
- We want the Las Vegas Land Grant to be adjudicated in favor of all those it concerns, and we maintain that it belongs to all the people who reside within its boundaries.
- We want no more land thieves, or any obstructionists who might want to interfere. WE ARE WATCHING YOU.
- The people are no victims of partisan politics, and it would be best if politicians quietly maintain their peace; the people have been persecuted and mistreated in one thousand ways to satisfy the whims of politicians. They persist that their acts are customary. RETRIBUTION will be our reward (2000, 66). The members of *Las Gorras Blancas* resisted against Thomas Catron and the powerful members of the Santa Fe Ring. Examples of some of their work include the destruction of a barn belonging to one of the members of a commission who was "planning to construct an unpopular drainage canal in the area" (2000, 64). They also "destroyed four miles of new fenceline belonging to two Englishmen who were ranching near San Gerónimo. Fence posts were turned into kindling, and the barbed wire was cut into useless fragments" (64). All of these acts exemplify acts of resistance against U.S. occupation, exploitation, intrusion and colonization in the southwest borderlands. For more information see Anselmo Arellano's "The People's Movement: *Las Gorras Blancas*." *The Contested Homeland: A Chicano History of New Mexico*. Eds. Erlinda Gonzales-Berry and David R. Maciel. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 2000. 59-82.

[14] While *Las Gorras Blancas* dealt mostly with local issues such as the usurpation of land by Euro-Americans; they also corresponded with the Knights of Labor and dealt with issues such as wage labor. In New Mexico, Juan José Herrera was the district organizer of the San Miguel Knights of Labor (Rosenbaum 1981, 120-121). For more information, see Robert J. Rosenbaum's *Mexicano Resistance in the Southwest*. Dallas. Southern Methodist University Press, 1981.

[15] According to John O'Sullivan who coined the term "manifest destiny" in 1845 it was the manifest destiny of the United States to possess the entire continent and spread liberty. This rhetoric was then justification for expansion across U.S. territory, the annexation of the Texas Republic in 1845, invasion of México in 1846, the U.S.-Mexico War (1846-1848) the incorporation of half of México's territory into the U.S. in 1848 along with over 100,000 of its citizens, the Gadsden Treaty (1854), the subsequent establishment of the U.S.-Mexico border and the U.S. border patrol. The result of these events are decades of border violence and racism that continue today. Beyond these real physical effects of manifest destiny, ideologically manifest destiny works as a foundational concept in U.S. American Studies. For scholars such as Frederick Jackson Turner the U.S. West provided a blank landscape where he maintained U.S. civilization encountered "a new field of opportunities; a gate of escape from the bondage of the past; and freshness and confidence, and scorn of older society, impatience of its restraints and its ideas, and indifference to its lessons, have accompanied the frontier" (1996, 38). This encounter in the frontier created the exceptional U.S. American. Of course what Turner and the rhetoric of Manifest Destiny always left out was the West was already populated by Mexicans and indigenous people and not only was the U.S. West populated; it had governments, culture, social networks in place. There was no blank landscape. For more information see, Frederick Jackson Turner's *The Frontier in American History*. New York: Dover, 1996.

[16]As a result of U.S. colonization and imperialism, half of México's northern frontier after 1848 becomes the U.S. Southwest and *mexicana/os* become Mexican Americans.

[17] Autos is a Greek origin word meaning self. Combination words that come from it that are useful for *Haunted Fronteras* are autobiography and autoethnography. Both words mean a type of life writing done by oneself.

[18] Anthropologist Carlos G. Vélez-Ibáñez offers another way of understanding the encounters that occur inside the contact zone. He coins the term "cultural bumping" (5-6). According to Vélez-Ibáñez the process is sometimes difficult and sometimes refreshing; however, in his case-study of the U.S. Southwest border area, cultural bumping has produced what he calls an ethnic autobiography that will explain how this cultural bumping has formed the identity of Mexican Americans in the México-U.S. borderlands. Once again, the contact zone has given rise to a narrative of the self. For more information see, Carlos G. Vélez-Ibáñez's *Border Visions: Mexican Culture of the Southwest United States*. Tucson: University of Arizona. 1996.

[19] I use both *mexicana/o* and Mexican American because in the following discussion of autoethnographic life narratives I use narratives that were written both before and after the U.S. invasion of México. In some cases the authors of these narratives were Mexican nationals. In other cases, they had already become U.S. citizens.

[20] Autoethnography is always a dialogic project; therefore, it cannot be one that is monologic and "pure" in its discourse.

[21] *Tejano* is the Spanish term for a *mexicano/a* born in Texas. Juan N. Seguín's great-great grandfather arrived in San Antonio in the late 1740s. For more information, see Jesús F. de la Teja's "The Making of a Tejano." *A Revolution Remembered: The Memoirs and Selected Correspondence of Juan N. Seguín*. Ed. Jesús F. de la Teja. Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 2002, 1-70.

[22] Seguín's biography spans Texas' history as an independent Republic from 1836 to 1845 and then after its annexation into the Union as a slave state in 1845. He also fights on the side of México during the U.S. invasion of México in 1846 through the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo in 1848. He then returns to Texas in the late 1840s and lives in Texas and México through the 1800s until his death in 1890 in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, México.

[23] Juan Seguín also became the target of the Texas Rangers. After the annexation of Texas in 1845, Ben McCulloch and his company of Texas Rangers crossed the Río Grande in 1846 looking for Seguin. "McCulloch's brother declared that to kill Seguin 'would be doing God a service.'" For more information, see see Jesús F. de la Teja's "The Making of a Tejano." *A Revolution Remembered: The Memoirs and Selected Correspondence of Juan N. Seguín*. Ed. Jesús F. de la Teja. Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 2002, 1-70.

[24] In 1848, Senator Lewis Cass of Michigan said. "We do not want the people of Mexico, either as citizens or subjects." For more information see Reginald Horsman's *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981. 241. Although Texas was already a part of the United States when the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo was signed and the northern half of Mexico was incorporated into the United States, the racial, expansionist, and colonizing attitudes that went with territorial expansion into the U.S. Southwest came with the people who also came into Texas and encountered the *Tejanas/os* who were becoming Mexican American.

[25] The term *Neo-Mexicano* was coined in the Las Vegas, New Mexico newspaper *La Voz del Pueblo* in 1889. It is a term *mexicana/o* New Mexicans coined in order to "foster an image of themselves as a new and emerging group, heir on the one hand to the *Mexicano* culture of their forebears, and on the other, active in the technological and societal changes of the industrial age" (1997, 61). In other words, *Neo-Mexicano* was a self-assigned, bridge term used to span the cultural gap between Mexican America and Euro-America in the late 1800s and early 1900s in the U.S. Southwest. For more information, see A. Gabriel Meléndez's *So All Is Not Lost: The Poetics of Print in Nuevomexicano Communities, 1834-1958*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1997.

[26] *Sonorense* is the Spanish term used for a person who is from the Mexican state of Sonora or southern Arizona in the United States.

[27] The Opata are a tribe indigenous to northeastern Sonora and northwestern Chihuahua. The Opata are a branch of the Pima. Many Opata moved north across the México-U.S. border in the late nineteenth-century.

[28] Rosalía Salazar Whelan's father arrived in Aravaipa Canyon around 1865. Aravaipa Canyon is 60 miles northeast of Tucson, Arizona. Camp Grant was located within Aravaipa Canyon. Salazar Whelan mentions the Camp Grant Massacre. This massacre occurred 30 April 1871. Over 1,000 Western Apache lived in the area of Camp Grant at the time. While the Western Apache planned for a celebration, a force of Euro-Americans, Mexican Americans and Tohono O'odham came together to plan the massacre. In the end, 145 Western Apache were murdered. Most of the victims were women and children. One hundred men were charged with the murder of 108 Western Apache men, women and children. After a 19-minute deliberation, they were found not guilty. The Camp Grant Massacre was an important part of Salazar Whelan's account because her father who was Opata fears being mistaken for Apache. When the Camp Grant Massacre occurs he had to leave Aravaipa Canyon because his own life was in danger. In the eyes of U.S. soldiers, all Native peoples were Apaches. For more information, see Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh's "Western Apache Oral Histories and Traditions of the Camp Grant Massacre." *American Indian Quarterly*.27.3&4 (Summer & Fall 2003):639-666.

[29] Cleofas Jaramillo published several works of folklore and cultural preservation before she published her own autobiography. These other works include: *The Genuine New Mexico Tasty Recipes* (1939), *Shadows of the Past* (1942) and *Spanish Fairy Tales* (1939). All of these works have a significant autoethnographic component.

[30] Some of the women Cleofas Jaramillo felt appropriated her work were Mary Austin and Mabel Dodge Lujan.

[31] However, I also critique Jaramillo's nostalgia for peace in New Mexico because the Santa Fe Fiestas that Jaramillo creates reenact and celebrate the brutal conquest of indigenous tribes by Spanish *conquistadores*. In reality, there never has been a peaceful New Mexico. As Martha Menchaca argues in *Recovering History, Constructing Race: the Indian, Black and White Roots of Mexican Americans*, the U.S. Southwest exists at the crossroads of three conquests: the Spanish, the Mexican and the U.S. American.

[32] This excerpt comes from Américo Paredes's *With His Pistol in His Hand: A Border Ballad and its Hero*.

[33] This is an excerpt from raúlrsalinas's "El Corrido de Américo Paredes," which he published after Don Américo Paredes passed away.

[34] I take the word *Frontejas* from Tish Hinojosa's 1994 album *Frontejas*. On this album, Hinojosa who studied

[35] The Spanish version of "The Rio Grande" was published two years later in 1936. In the note that accompanies the English version in *Between Two Worlds*, Paredes informs us that the poem was published in the (Harlingen, Texas) *Valley Morning Star* in 1934. He also ironically notes that the Harlingen paper was quite racist and yet, still published his poems. Here I add the Spanish version. "Río Bravo, Río Bravo,/que en tu cauce lento vas/con frecuentes remolinos,/cual si quieres ir atrás/cual si quieren tus corrientes/sobre el cauce devolver/a buscar ignotas fuentes/que les dieron vida y ser,/así vas – mientras tus aguas/lloran, lloran sin cesar --/a morirte lentamente/a las márgenes del mar./Mis pasiones y mis cuitas/en tu seno quiero ahogar;/llévate el dolor de mi alma/en tu parda inmensidad./Que he nacido a tus orillas/y muy joven ya sentí/que hay en mi alma torbellinos,/que ella se parece a ti./Turbia, sí, de fondo obscure,/mas el Sol le hace brillar;/con suspiros – rebeliones – y bregando sin cesar./Cuando muera, cuando muera/y se pudra el cuerpo ya,/mi alma, como riachuelo/a tus aguas correrá./Pasaremos por los campos/que se mirarán verdear;/por jacales de rancheros,/a los ruinas de Bagdad . . ./Y tus aguas moribundas/en lo azul se perderán,/mientras duermo dulcemente/a las márgenes del mar." All of Paredes's poems were published in both Spanish and English in *Cantos de Adolescencia*/Songs of Youth. Eds. B.V. Olguín and Omar Vásquez Barbosa. Houston: Arte Público Press, 2007.

[36] In *Chicano Narrative: The Dialectics of Difference*, Ramon Saldívar argues that José Villareal's *Pocho*, Oscar Zeta Acosta's *The Autobiography of a Brown Buffalo* and *The Revolt of the Cockroach People*, Isabella Ríos' *Victuum*, Ernesto Galarza's *Barrio Boy* and Richard Rodríguez's *Hunger of Memory* hold primary positions in the canon of Chicana/o literature. This is important because with the exception of *Barrio Boy*, the rest of the life narratives in my dissertation either do not fit into the conventional definitions of autobiography and are relatively new publications in the Mexican American literary field. In other words, they have not yet put in the time to become members of a canon.

[37] The Ford Foundation established the Fund for the Republic October 4, 1951. The Fund for the Republic was the Ford Foundation's response to pressures from the political and cultural right. Its goal was to "support activities directed toward the elimination of restrictions on freedom of thought, inquiry and expression in the United States, and the development of policies and procedures best adapted to protect these rights." In its early stages, the Fund outlined three areas of special interest: "1) Assessment of the Communist menace in the United States, and the methods of confronting it, with the object of determining whether better methods could be developed. 2) Investigate the legalities of the government loyalty program. 3) A study of the State Department's issuance and denial of visas and passports." In February 1953, the Fund suggested the implementation of two immediate projects: 1) The American Legacy of Liberty Project and 2) an investigation of the threat and extent of the Communism in the United States. The Fund's planning committee intended the American Legacy of Liberty project to focus on areas where basic freedoms were endangered. Once these areas were identified, the Fund would lend its support to five immediate concerns: "1) Restrictions and assaults upon academic freedom; 2) Due process and the equal protection of the laws; 3) The promotion of the rights of minorities; 4) Censorship, boycotting and blacklisting activities by private groups; 5) The principle and application of guilt by association." With a

large grant from the Ford Foundation, the Fund's "primary method of operation would be projects directly sponsored by the Fund and carried out under contractual arrangements and that grants would be made to other organizations, groups and individuals for particular purposes. After completion of the various projects, the Fund would then decide whether or not to implement its educational role through the distribution, via various forms of mass media, of the project results." Ernesto Galarza's *Strangers in Our Fields* in an example of one of these various projects. For more information, see "Public Policy Papers" at the Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections. Princeton University Library.

[38] Galarza's commitment to the overall cause of migrant labor rights' can be traced in much of his less visible work. Some of these publications include: *Plantation workers in Louisiana.* Washington, DC: Inter-American Education Association. 1955. *A report on trade unions in Hawaii amid recommendations.* Washington, DC: National Agricultural Workers Union, (September 1) 1955.

[39] I list all the meetings here because I think it is important to explicitly illustrate the amount of meetings he had with the U.S. Congress and as a potential source for those scholars who are interested in finding the minutes of these meetings and pursuing further study. Select Committee to Investigate' interstate migration of destitute citizens. *Hearings.* Interstate Migration. 1940. 76th Congress, 3rd. Session, part -10, p. 3882-3887. U.S. Congress. House Select Committee Investigating National Defense Migration. 1942. *Hearings.* National Defense Migration, 77th Congress, 2nd. Session, part 33, p. 12432-12436. U.S. Congress. House Committee on Labor. *Hearings.* To prohibit discrimination in employment, 1944. 78th. Congress, 2nd. Session. Vol. -1, 34-15. U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Education and Labor. Special Investigating Subcommittee. *Hearings.* Investigation of Labor-Management Relations. 1950. 81st. Congress, 2nd. Session, 601-616. U.S. President's Commission on Migratory Labor Hearings. Unpublished hearings in National Archives. 1950. U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Labor and Public Welfare. Subcommittee on Labor and Management Relations. *Hearings.* Migratory Labor. 1952. 82nd. Congress, 2nd. Session. Part 1. Pp. 244-295. U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Agriculture *Hearings.* Mexican Farm Labor. 1954. 83rd. Congress, 2nd. Session, 156-185. U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on judiciary. Subcommittee on Immigration and Naturalization. *Hearings.* To Control Illegal Migration. 1954. 83rd. Congress, 2nd. Session, 63-75. U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Agriculture. *Hearings.* Amendments to Sugar Act of 1918. 1955. 84th. Congress, 1st. Session, 315-341. U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Agriculture. Subcommittee on Equipment, Supplies, and Manpower. *Hearings.* Mexican Farm Labor Program. 1955. 84th. Congress, 1st. Session, 17-1-198. U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Education and Labor. Subcommittee on Labor Standards. *Hearings.* Fair Labor Standards Act, 1957. 85th. Congress, 1st. Session, part 1, 1254-1266. U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Education and Labor. Subcommittee on Safety and Compensation. *Hearings.* Fair Labor Standards Act.1957. 85th. Congress, 1st. Session, part 2, 2686-2700. U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Agriculture. Subcommittee on Equipment, Supplies, and Manpower. *Hearings.* Extension of Mexican Farm Labor Program. 1960. 86th. Congress, 2nd. Session, 237-239. U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Education and Labor. 88th. Congress, 2nd. Session. Report on the farm labor transportation accident at Chualar, California on September 17, 1963. U.S. Cabinet Committee on Mexican American Affairs. *The Mexican American: A New Focus. on Opportunity.* Rural Community Development. Reprinted in *El Grito,* 1(2), (Winter), 22-27.1968. U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Labor and Public Welfare. Subcommittee on Migratory Labor. *Hearings.*. Migrant and Seasonal Farm worker Powerlessness: Part 2, the Migrant Subculture, 1969. 91st Congress, 2nd. Session, 460-483.

[40] Folsom, Lodi, Woodland and Florin are towns mentioned throughout the last two sections of his five part autobiographical narrative. Galarza's uncles Gustavo and José repeatedly return to the Sacramento barrio from these towns. Then when he is old enough Galarza joins them in their labors. Folsom and Florin are in Sacramento County. Lodi is in San Joaquín County and Woodland is in Yolo County. Until the early 1950s Folsom was known for its railway center and dam-building project. Lodi is in the heart of vineyard country. Woodland and Yolo County were and continue to be one of the largest crop-producing counties in

California. Florin was known for its crops of strawberries and for its successful and visible Japanese immigrant and Japanese American citizens. After Pearl Harbor, the U.S. forced Florin's Japanese immigrant and Japanese American population into internment camps. It is no accident Galarza chooses these towns to include in *Barrio Boy*. It is also no accident that he chooses to represent a multi-ethnic community of migrant workers. Through his narrative Galarza attempts to construct a collective experience of migrant labor in northern California during the twentieth century.

[41] Galarza's master's thesis is entitled "Mexico and the World War." He did fieldwork in México during his senior year at Occidental College in 1927. The title of the senior thesis he turned in at Occidental College is "The Roman Catholic Church as a Factor in the Political and Social History of Mexico."

[42] The title of Galarza's dissertation is "La Industria Electrica en México." In the 1940s, he was appointed Chief of the Division of Labor and Social Information at the Pan-American Union. The Bolivian government also named him as a consultant on labor and economic conditions. He became Director of Research and Education in California for the Southern Tenant Farmer's Union in 1947.

[43] Throughout his long life, Galarza published sociological studies, his autobiography, several bilingual children's books and a collection of poetry. I have listed the sociological studies above. I discuss *Barrio Boy* at length. The children's books include: *Rimas Tontas* (1971), *Poemas parvulos* (1971), *Historia verdadera de una gota miel* (1971), *Aquí y allá en California* (1971), *La Historia verdadera de una botella de leche* (1971), *Zoo-risa* (1971)Mas *poemas parvulos* (1972), *Poemas. Pe-que Pe-que-nitos* (1972), *Un poco de México* (1972), *Chogorron* (1973), *Todo mundo lee* (1973). And the collection of poetry: *Kodachromes in Rhyme* (1982).

[44] Many Chicano scholars have made the connection between *Barrio Boy* and the formation of Mexican American identity. Some of these scholars include: Juan Bruce-Novoa, Don Luís Leal, Genaro Padilla, Renato Rosaldo, and Ramón Saldivar.

[45] Acculturation is the word Ernesto Galarza uses in *Barrio Boy*.

[46] Quote from W.J.T. Mitchell's *Picture Theory: Essays on Visual and Verbal Representation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.

[47] "La Valentina is a *corrido* sung by a lover to Valentina. It was also popular during the Mexican Revolution. Valentina was a *soldadera* who fought with the *Villistas*. "Adelita" is a *corrido* of the Mexican Revolution. It tells the story of a woman who is in love with a soldier and travels with his regiment. The song is supposed to be based on an actual woman who was a nurse. Some names associated with this woman are Altagracia Martínez, Marieta Martínez and Adela Velarde. Adelita has become an archetype in Mexican culture. An Adelita was a *soldadera* in the Mexican Revolution. She not only cooked and cared for the men, but fought with them. For more information on *corridos* with women as their protagonists, see María Herrera-Sobek's *The Mexican Corrido: A Feminist Analysis*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993. Also see Alicia Arrizon's "Soldaderas' and the Staging of the Mexican Revolution." *TDR (1988-)* 42.1 (Spring 1998): 91. La *Cucaracha"* is a popular song that became popular during the Mexican Revolution. Its lyrics can change. Some substitute Victoriana Huerta for the cockroach because of his role in the assassination of Francisco Madero. "*El Quelite* [is] a simple love song to a small town with its plaza and friends who had been left behind." The main character in one of the stanzas is a rooster. This is probably why it appealed to the young Galarza. One of his favorite members of the household before he left Jalcocotán was Coronel, the family rooster.

[48] Filipino migrant worker, social organizer and autobiographer Carlos Bulosan is another example of someone who occupied both the Cultural Front and the Popular Front. Bulosan's autoethnographic autobiography *America is in the Heart: A Personal History* (1943) describes Bulosan's childhood in the

Philippines, his journey to the United States and his experiences as a migrant laborer. Carey McWilliams argues it may be doubtful whether Bulosan personally experienced every injustice described in *America is in the Heart*, but McWilliams also maintains that is not the point. Bulosan, like Galarza, constructs his autobiographical self to serve as witness to the crimes committed against migrant laborers in this country. *America is in the Heart*, like *Barrio Boy* is the collective experiences of a laboring population that will not be ignored or silent.

[49] The other migrant narratives Denning considers "portraits of a collective condition" are Carlos Bulosan's *America is in the Heart* (1943) and Woody Guthrie's *Bound for Glory* (1943) (1997, 274).

[50] Cananea is located in Sonora, México. According to many scholars of the Mexican Revolution the strike at the Nogales-based Cananea Consolidated Copper Company in 1906 was the beginning of the political unrest that would lead to the Mexican Revolution. Arizona Rangers crossed the border in an attempt to put down the strike. The strike was led by Juan Jose Ríos, Manuel M. Dieguez and Esteban Baca Calderón. Twenty-three people were killed. The dead included both strikers and labor management. Out of the strike at Cananea arose *El Corrido de Cananea*. Ricardo Flores Magón and Enrique Flores Magón were part of the Partido Liberal Mexicano and organized with the International Workers of the World (IWW); both brothers edited *Regeneración* which resisted the government of Porfirio Díaz. Both brothers were intellectuals of the Mexican Revolution and spent time in prison in the United States. They corresponded with leading leftist intellectuals of the early twentieth century such as Emma Goldman. Richard Flores Magón died in Leavenworth Prison in 1923. Enrique Flores Magón died in 1954.

[51] Diez y seis de septiembre is the day México celebrates its independence from Spanish colonial rule.

[52] The Bracero Program (1942-1964) turned unofficial migration from México into an official, government sanction movement. Of course Mexican migration prior to 1942 had also been government sanctioned. The Immigration Act of 1917 prohibited "undesirables" such as criminals, epileptics, the mentally ill, etc. In addition to these "undesirables" the Act also banned immigrants from Asia. While the Immigration Act of 1917 clearly demonstrates a nativist and xenophobic mentality, it particularly makes an exception for Mexican immigrants. They are not at all officially discouraged from unofficially migrating to the United States and providing their labor. In 1942, Mexico declared war against Japan, Germany and Italy and also entered into a joint agreement with the United States. It agreed to supply Mexican laborers to U.S. corporations who were experiencing a labor shortage due to the enlistment and drafting of many U.S. workers into the army. After the end of World War II, the U.S. government tried to end the program; however, agriculture companies prevailed and the Bracero Program continued. In an effort to deal with the difficult issues that came with increased migration, the U.S. Congress passed Public Law 78. This law further managed migration. It gave the Secretary of Labor authority to recruit Mexican workers for employment, including those who had entered the United States illegally, provided they had been in the United States for five years. For more information, see Ernesto Galarza, *Merchants of Labor: the Mexican Bracero Story*. Santa Barbara: McNally & Loftin, 1964.

[53] Braceros were sponsored and brought to the United States by a particular agricultural company. While in the United States, they were required to stay with that particular corporation. Migrant laborers who were not considered braceros and were not sponsored were those workers who had come into the United States to work without the sanction of the bracero program. Because of their unsanctioned status they accepted lower pay. For more information, see Ernesto Galarza, *Merchants of Labor*.

[54] The National Farm Labor Union (NFLU) was renamed the National Agricultural Workers Union (NAWU) in 1955.

[55] See Richard Steven Street's *Everyone Had Camera:Photography and Farmworkers in California, 1850-2000*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008., p. 64.

[56] For more information on cannery workers and labor in Watsonville, California during the mid-twentieth century, see Vicki Ruíz's *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987.

[57] The use of DDT to disinfect or 'delouse' Mexican migrant laborers was widespread in recruitment camps throughout México and in the processing centers along the U.S.-México border. However, as you will recall Mexican migration to the United States was nothing new in 1942. Mexican laborers had been entering the United States as labor since the nineteenth century. In the 1920s during a typhus outbreak that El Paso mayor Tom Lea blamed on Mexican laborers, the El Paso processing center began using Zyklon B to disinfect migrant labor. The use of Zyklon B in El Paso "inspired Dr. Gerhard Peters to call for its use in German Desinfektionskammern. 19 1938, Peters wrote an article for a German pest science journal, *Anzeiger für Schädlinskunde*, which included two photographs of El Paso delousing chambers. Dr. Peters used the El Paso example to demonstrate how effective hydrocyanic acid, or Zyklon B, was an agent for killing unwanted pests. He became the managing director of Degesch, one of two German firms which acquired the patent to mass-produce Zyklon B in 1940. During WWII, the Germans would use Zyklon B in concentrated doses in the gas chambers to exterminate nine million Jews, gypsies, homosexuals, communists and other human 'pests.' In 1946, Gerhard Peters would be tried and convicted at Nuremburg for this role in this." For more information, see David Dorado Romo, *Ringside Seat to a Revolution: An Underground Cultural History of El Paso and Juárez: 1893-1923*. El Paso: Cinco Puntos Press, 2005, 241-243.

[58] It is significant to note these post-mortem photographs were part of a collection put together by Ventura County's coroner Oliver Reardon. The collection was entitled *Book of Violent Deaths* and it was published in . . . Carl J. Wallace, the Ventura sheriff's photographer was responsible for these portraits. For more information, see Richard Steven Street's *Everyone Had Cameras: Farmworkers and Photography in California, 1950-2000* page 120.

[59] In February 1918, a potent strain of influenza broke out among U.S. soldiers at Camp Fuston in Haskell County, Kansas. These troops were deployed to Europe to fight against the Germans in France. Once in Europe, this strain of influenza spread throughout the continent. However, in order to maintain an upbeat morale no newspapers in France, England, or Germany printed any articles detailing the severity of the disease and the number of fatalities. The first newspapers to report on the influenza outbreak were in Spain; thus, the name Spanish influenza. From Europe, the Spanish influenza was carried around the world as troops from various nations returned to their homes. In the United States, the virus returned when a U.S. Navy ship docked in Boston in August 1918. From there the virus spread in waves across the United States. It reached San Francisco in September 1918. Three separate waves hit the city with the third striking in November 1918. This third wave made the final death rate for San Francisco the worst on the West Coast. Over 115,000 people contracted the disease. While the disease peaked in San Diego, Los Angeles and San Francisco in the fall and winter of 1918, it did not begin to wane in Sacramento until February 1919. Ernesto Galarza's mother died in Sacramento in 1918. She along with her brother Gustavo succumbed to the 1918 influenza outbreak. For more information, see John M. Barry's *The Great Influenza: the Story of the Deadliest Pandemic in History*. New York: Penguin, 2004.

[60] In *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* (1995), Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodríguez describe the implementation and eventual ban of the short-handled hoe in farmwork. "[Farmwork] was a dirty, miserable job that gave real meaning to the term 'backbreaking' labor . . . The work was done with [an] 'instrument of horror designed by the devil,' according to one worker . . . [This was] the infamous 'short hoe,' which had a handle twelve to eighteen inches long. A regular long-handled hoe could have been used, but it was considered harmful to the plants. With the short hoe, there was less margin for error. However, the modified hoe required the user to work in a bent over position and crawl along the dusty rows of beets for ten or twelve hours a day. At the end of the shift, it was nearly impossible

to stand up straight. For young bodies, it eventually meant assuming a partially stooped position and suffering painful backaches for life." For more information, see *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995.

[61] The United States Department of Labor and the Mexican Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores were the diplomatic channels which oversaw the negotiations regarding the renewal of the bracero program (an international agreement). Other departments and associations included in these policy-making sessions were: the U.S. Department of Labor, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and the Department of Agriculture. For more information, see Ernesto Galarza, *Farmworkers and Agri-business in California, 1947-1960*, p. 154-157.

[62] Here Galarza refers to Article 33 of the 1917 Constitución Politica de los Estado Unidos Mexicanos. Article 33 states that foreigners who have become naturalized Mexican citizens, or have married Mexican citizens and live within the nation's boundaries are entitled to all the rights and privileges of Mexican citizens. However, if a foreigner is not a naturalized citizen the Federal Executive of México has the power to compel any foreigner whose remaining he may deem inexpedient to abandon the national territory immediately and without the necessity of previous legal action. Foreigners may not in any way participate in the political affairs of the country. For more information, see www.ilstu.edu/class/hist263/docs/1917const.html. See also, *1917 in Mexico: the Political Constitution of the United Mexican States*. Books LLC, June 2010.

[63] "Kodachrome is a type of color-reversal film that was manufactured by Eastman Kodak from 1935-2009. Kodachrome was the first successfully mass-marketed color still film using a subtractive method, in contrast to earlier additive "screenplate" methods . . . Kodachrome is appreciated in the archival and professional market because of its color accuracy and dark-storage longevity. Because of these qualities, Kodachrome is used by professional photographers. As digital photography progressively reduced the demand for film in the first decade of the 21st century, Kodachrome sales steadily declined. On June 22, 2009 Eastman Kodak Co. announced the end of Kodachrome production, citing declining demand ." For more information see "Kodak: A Thousand Words - A Tribute to KODACHROME: A Photography Icon." (June 2009). http://homepage.1000words.kodak.com/default.asp?item=2388083.
[64] John Phillip Santos. "My Berlin Wall: The Rio Grande." *The New York Times*. December 18, 1989. A19.

[65] These "strategic sensibilities" of the Monroe Doctrine (1823) were the United States's pledge to stay neutral to internal European affairs as long as Europe pledged to stay out of the affairs of not only the United States, but of all the Americas. This was later amended by the Roosevelt Corollary.

[66] For example in the mid to late seventeenth century there were various revolts among the indigenous tribes of New Spain's northern frontier. All of these events culminated in the 1680 Pueblo Revolt in New Mexico. Over four hundred colonial settlers and 21 friars were killed. The nearly 2,000 that survived were pushed into El Paso del Norte, Chihuahua. Due to the inequality of the *casta* system in New Spain, the non-European born population could never attain the highest offices of administration and government. As a result, *criollos*, the Spanish descendents of *peninsulares*, along with *mestizos* and other racial castes also rebelled against the monarchy of Spain in the early 1800s. For more information on the Pueblo Revolt, see Ramon A. Gutiérrez. 1991. *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality and Power in New Mexico, 1500-1846*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, p. 133-35. For information on the nature of the *criollo* revolts in New Spain, see Benedict Anderson. 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. New York: Verso, p. 56-7.

[67] As I write this chapter, immigration laws that advocate for the building of a wall separating the U.S. and Mexico have passed through part of the legislative process. These same immigration laws would make crossing the border informally a felony. It would also be a felony to hire informal workers. For more information on the connection between informal immigration and felony laws see Mae M. Ngai. 2004.

Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1-14.

[68] NAFTA went into affect 1 January 1994. Its passage enabled free trade between the U.S. and Mexico. Not surprisingly the passage of NAFTA has allowed many U.S. corporations to move south of the U.S.-Mexico border in order to take advantage of Mexico's surplus of labor, lower wage scale and looser restrictions on environmental regulations. Not coincidentally 1 January 1994 was also the date the Zapatistas of Chiapas chose to rise up against the Mexican government and its promotion of globalization at the expense of the indigenous peoples of Mexico.

[69] Some of the other cities where construction on disinfection plants began were Brownsville, Eagle Pass, Del Rio (all border cities in Texas) and Nogales, AZ. For more information, see David Dorado Romo. 2005. *Ringside Seat to a Revolution: An Underground Cultural History of El Paso and Juárez: 1893-1923*. El Paso, TX: Cinco Puntos Press.

[70] Initially, the bracer program was a series of laws and agreements made between the United States and México during the early years of World War II (August 1942, to be exact) to bring in temporary migrant labor from México in to the U.S. These first agreements expired after World War II ended. They were renewed in 1947 and ended officially in 1964. In general, the bracer program's official starting date is considered to be 1947. For more information on the Bracero Program and its effects, see Kitty Calavita's *Inside the State: The Bracero Program, Immigration, and the I.N.S.*. Routledge, New York, 1992. See also Barbara Driscoll Alvarado's *The Tracks North: The Railroad Bracero Program of World War II.* Austin, Tex.: CMAS Books, Center for Mexican American Studies, University of Texas at Austin, 1998. For more studies on the Bracero Programs impact in particular regions of the United States, see Erasmo Gamboa's *Mexican Labor and World War II: Braceros in the Pacific Northwest, 1942-1947*. University of Texas Press, Austin, 1990 and Matt García's *A World of Its Own: Race, Labor, and Citrus in the making of greater Los Angeles, 1900-1970*. University of North Carolina Press, 2001.

[71] Amexica is the name of the entire issue. "A Whole New World" is the name of the lead article, and "A Country of 24 million" is the headline for a map illustrating the huge booms in the Mexican American population.

[72] The most popular Latin American *testimonio* is *I, Rigoberta Menchú*. Several arguments have surrounded this controversial work. These arguments have referred to the amount of participation involving Menchú's collaborator Elisabeth Burgos-Debray. As with many indigenous autobiographical narratives, critics question the authenticity of Menchú's narrative. Many wonder if Burgos-Debray's association corrupted the narrative. The other controversy surrounding Menchú concerns her narrating methodology. Because traditional Euroamerican autobiographical narratives follow an individual protagonist and individual truths, they do not understand how she tells stories of an entire community. Particularly, Menchú has been criticized by anthropologist David Stoll. He has accused her of "factual discrepancies or contradictions [,] questions of authority and representation, . . . the purposeful act of simplifying, embellishing, improvising, and orchestrating what is being said in order to emphasize specific points and to downplay or conceal others, but not to alter the substance of what actually happened; and political protest that is both conscious and overt" (172) In the case of *testimonio*, what Stoll and other critics who adhere to the rule of conventional Euramerican autobiographical narrative do not understand is individual truth is not important when it is possible to help one's community with *testimonio*. For more information, see Arturo Arias. "From Peasant to National Symbol." *Teaching and Testimony: Rigoberta Menchú and the North American Classroom*. Albany: SUNY, 1996. 29-46. See also, W. George Lovell and Christopher H. Lutz. "The Primacy of Larger Truths: Rigoberta Menchú and the Tradition of Native Testimony in Guatemala." See also, Dina Fernández García. "I Don't Seek to Destroy Menchú: Interview with David Stoll."

[73] Azucena translates to madonna lily; it is a yellow lily. Dahlia is a perennial that flowers in summer and autumn, it is native to México. It is México's national flower. The Méxica cultivated the dahlia for food, ceremonial purposes and decoration. Its woody stem was used for pipes. The esperanza is a yellow trumpet flower native to the southwest, particularly to the central Texas area where it grows wild around San Antonio and into Central and South America. The azalia is the largest, solitary flower in the world; it is native to eastern Asia. Margarita means daisy. Xóchitl is Nahuatl for flower. In Méxica cosmology, Xóchitl was the protector of the day.

[74]Lynchings in Texas did not only include hangings; they also included several burnings. Many of these were incidents of Mexican American and Mexican men being burned alive. For more information see, Benjamin Heber Johnson's *Revolution in Texas: How a Forgotten Rebellion And Its Bloody Suppression Turned Mexicans into Americans*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003.

[75] In her discussion of photography, Susan Sontag makes a crucial point: "As photographs give people an imaginary possession of a past that is unreal, they also help people take possession of a space in which they are insecure" (Sontag 1977). Sontag's argument is similar to that of Genaro Padilla's in that both argue that autobiographical narrative, whether visual or written, is formulated in order to control a past/present moment where the narrator feels endangered or insecure regarding her/his subjectivity within that place and space. For more information, see Genaro Padilla. *My History, Not Yours: The Formation of Mexican American Autobiography*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993. For more information, see Susan Sontag. *On Photography*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1977.

[76] Among these publications was the *New York Times* and *Aztlán*: *A Journal of Chicano Studies*.

[77] If the reader is familiar or fluent with Spanish than s/he knows the phrases translate as the following: "They are good children." "It is rude to speak English in front of your parents," and "When you walk in this house, children, you walk in Mexico."

[78] Pat Mora goes to great lengths to keep much of her writing bilingual or in Spanish. She does this with much of her poetry, but also and perhaps most importantly with her children's books.

[79] I take this concept of imagined community from Benedict Anderson. For more information, see Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. New York: Verso, 1991.

[80] According to David Romo, one of the possible reasons that Pancho Villa raided Columbus, New Mexico on 9 March 1916, killing 17 Americans is the explosion of an El Paso jail where 24 prisoners died, including 19 Mexicans, 1 African American and 4 Anglos. All of these prisoners were being disinfected in an old jail cell. "[They] were ordered to strip naked. They were first to soak their clothes in one of the tubs which was filled with a mixture of gasoline, creosote and formaldehyde. Then the inmates themselves had to step inside the other tub filled with a 'bucket of gasoline, a bucket of coal oil and a bucket of vinegar.' At about 3:30 p.m., someone struck a match. 'The air was so heavily impregnated with the explosive vapor that the flash of the match set the whole jail in a blaze instantly,' the *El Paso Herald* reported. 'The washtub in which the kerosene and gasoline were contained exploded' . . . Pancho Villa was on his way to Columbus, New Mexico when, according to the account of an American hostage, he heard about the El Paso jail fire. Maud Wright, who had been taken captive by Villistas before the raid, 'heard Villa continually reminding his men of the burning of the El Paso jail in which fire some of Villa's Mexican friends had lost their lives,' writes John Wright in a biographical essay about his mother. 'He accused the Americans of deliberately starting this fire.' Villa had reason to believe this. In the preceding weeks, scores of Mexicans had been murdered by the Texas Rangers along the Río Grande Valley. Pancho Villa promised his troops that he was going to show Anglos how it feels to burn. He threatened to 'make torches' of every

American he found. Four days after the El Paso jail fire, Villa's troops attacked Columbus, torched its main buildings, and killed 17 Americans" (2005, 226-228).

[81] In the rest of this passage Mora draws a distinction between public and private space that is very similar to that of Richard Rodriguez in *Hunger of Memory* (1982). Mora writes: "Torn by conflicting loyalties, insecure in a world different from her private world, Mother took with her the security that came from a house yes, with its own structural tensions, and yet where six adults cared about her, their concern in any language assisting her as she grew to incorporate her pain and doubt, to transform them" (1995, 181-182).

[82] I think it is interesting to consider the similarities between *Places Left Unfinished at the Time of Creation* and photographs. Although Santos does include 5 images in his memoir (including the cover shot), he spends the majority of his time describing photographs that he has never seen and people that he has never known. To me, this makes the text read like a photograph. As I have mentioned throughout this chapter and others Roland Barthes is an important figure for understanding the visual image, but I also think that the writers I include in this chapter take it a step further. I believe Santos's entire book could be another way of thinking about *studium*. The general content would be the place Mexican Americans occupy in the borderlands of both the U.S. and Mexico. This is in general what Santos is trying to illuminate; nevertheless, the *punctum*, the thing that pricks him, that stings is the death of his grandfather, which will morph into the death of his father. These experiences are central to the text.
[83] This excerpt comes from Lourdes Portillo's 1988 film *La Ofrenda: the Day of the Dead*.

[84] This quote is from Octavio Paz's *The Labyrinth of Solitude* (1975). I also offer the translation for this excerpt here: "The word death is not pronounced in New York, Paris or London because it burns the lips. The Mexican, in contrast, is familiar with death, jokes about it, caresses it, sleeps with it, celebrates, it is one of his favorite toys and most steadfast love."

[85] Following the lead of Emma Pérez in *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History* (1999), I apply the use of diaspora to Mexican American communities.

[86] According to Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, film lends itself to an analysis of the performative in autobiography.

[87] Here, I refer to some of the foundational works in Mexican American literature – Rudolfo Anaya's *Bless Me, Última* (1970), Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzáles' *I am Joaquín* (1967), Américo Paredes' *With His Pistol in His Hand* (1958). In each of these works, the Mexican and Mexican American family are upheld as a pillar of cultural strength and truth.

[88] I use the word Intellectuals because this is how Portillo chooses to identify these Mexican American critics as they discuss Selena. She films the four women sitting at a dining room table discussing the significance of Selena, female sexuality and Mexican American identity. As the clip begins, the label Intellectuals appears and identifies.

[89] Gente is a Chicana/o term used to signify "good people." It also signifies people who are engaged in issues identity. Gente decente" is another version of this term. Both of these terms derive from a Spanish colonial phrase, gente de razón which was used to distinguish people of Hispanic-origin and culture from others, i.e. indigenous people and African slaves.

[90] This phrase comes from Emma Pérez's definition of diaspora. For more information, see *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History* (1999).

[91] Once again, when I use the term "coax" I am returning to the work of Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson. As they argue, there are coaxers or coercers that bring the storyteller into the practice of life narrative.

[92]This epigraph is excerpted from Richard Rodriguez's *Brown: The Last Discovery of America*. New York: Viking, 2002, p. 209.

[93] Fiesta San Antonio, which is also known simply as Fiesta occurs every Spring in San Antonio Texas. From its inception in 1891 to 1960, the Fiesta was known as Fiesta San Jacinto. The purpose of the fiesta as to celebrate and honor the heroes of the Battle of the Alamo and San Jacinto. The first coronation of the Fiesta Queen took place in 1895. Initially, the fiesta was sponsored by the Battle of Flowers Parade Association. As the years passed, this changed and by the 1980s, the Daughters of the Texas Revolution sponsored the fiesta. The parade was replaced by a march from the city's Municipal Auditorium to the Alamo. When participants reach the Alamo, they listen as the names of each man who died during the 1836 battle of the Alamo are read over a loudspeaker. For more information see "The Handbook of Texas Online." http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/FF/lkf2.html

[94] It is important to note the date Fiesta San Antonio began – 1891. This date corresponds to Richard Flores' Texas Modern (1880-1920). Flores argues during this period of modernization Mexican Americans began to occupy a marginal position in the class, racial and social hierarchy of Texas.

[95] Some of the women who have been crowned Fiesta queen include: Ida Archer in 1896, Clara Driscoll in 1904, and Kay Bailey Hutchison in 1964. Ida Archer was the daughter of a well-known Texas ranching family. Clara Driscoll was the descendent of Irish pioneers who came into Texas during the early nineteenth century. Both her grandfathers fought in the Texas Revolution of 1836. Her father, Robert Driscoll, was a multi-millionaire from Corpus Christi Texas. During her tenure as Fiesta queen she began the project to preserve and restore the Alamo as a historical monument. Kay Bailey Hutchison is also the daughter of a prominent Texas businessman Allen Abner Bailey Jr. She went on to serve several terms as the Republican Senator from Texas.

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