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TRESPASSING AND TRANSCENDING:
Newcomer Crossing and Movement in
Latina and Latin American Literature

by

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DISSERTATION

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To *pai*,
the protagonist of my favorite newcomer story
and whose biggest investment was always my education.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: MOVEMENT DURING STAGNATION

While writing this dissertation, life moved.

I had a miscarriage and a complicated pregnancy;

I was given a good opportunity at work;

I had a sick baby;

I only read medical articles and wrote about trauma for two years;

I had advisement problems that cut deep into my core;

I had to re-invent who I was academically;

I became even more enthusiastic about teaching;

I fell in love with motherhood more than this project;

My dear friend, my sweet host *mom*, lost her long battle to cancer;

And after 5 months, my wonderful *pai* was abruptly taken by exactly the same cancer.

In the middle of so much movement, I stagnated.

During creative stagnation, a pandemic came and kept us all in lockdown.

Finally, lockdown was the space I found to finish these pages.

These pages that speak of the very opposite of stagnation.

These pages about freedom and movement were written during lockdown.

When stagnated, I realized the beauty of change, movement, and the fluidity of life.

And after it, I could not wait any longer for the next chapter.

Once I let go and trusted my course, this work also moved forward.

Now, these finished pages allow my personal story to keep moving.

Moving and leading the way to my new chapters.

This work was only possible because of:

The UNM Spanish and Portuguese Department and

the Latin American and Iberian Institute.

Martha and Fabi who for years, had the answers to all my questions.

My dissertation committee:

dr. K. López, my tireless advocate;

dr. Vaquera, who brought back my love for literature;

dr. Carey-Webb, whose careful suggestions kept me motivated;

and my adviser dr. M. López, for his kindness and his brilliant mind.

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Silvana, who gave me life twice.

John, my home.

And Lily, who changed the perspective of everything.

Thank you all.

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ABSTRACT

In times when walls are raised and human diversity condemned, stories that present the free urban movement of marginalized characters become political. While the system excludes the brown/black newcomer bodies and restricted them to the margins, the texts analyzed here bring these bodies to the center, claiming their active role in the construction of the urban fabric. This way, Latin American and Latina authors are contesting the idea of citizenship and the right to the city of newcomer subjects by narrating the freedom of geographic and symbolic movement of often disenfranchised peoples.

This dissertation analyzes the claims to urban rights of immigrant women in *Esperanza's Box of Saints* (1999) by María Amparo Escandón, *Dominicana* (2019) by Angie Cruz, and *American Street* (2017) by Ibi Zoboi. It defends that these texts bring to light the stroll of brown and black women by focusing on movement and belonging instead of stagnations. Similarly, I look at Brazilian urban mobility of marginalized

newcomer characters in the book *A máquina de revelar destinos não cumpridos* (2009) by Vário do Andaraí and the mockumentary *A cidade é uma só* (2012) by Adirley Queiros, where subjects of social class C demand inclusion in urban spaces previously reserved for elites.

Using the concepts of the right to the city by David Harvey and Henri Lefebvre and the theory of pedestrian enunciation by Michel de Certeau, I argue that these texts exemplify the claim of newcomers to access and construct a just city while also discussing the characters' breaks from symbolic oppressions. With that, I offer alternatives of how literature can serve as a tool to teach concepts and practices that go beyond the classroom, focusing on creating authentic meaning to students through community practice and, in consequence, a more inclusive geography and society for all.

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INTRODUCTION: Trespassing and Transcending

“Stories are the opposite of walls: they demand release, retelling, showing, connecting; each image chipping away at boundaries. Walls are full stops, but stories are like commas, always making possible the next clause.” (Charles D. Thompson, 2015)

Trespassing, or the act of entering a geographic space without permission (Cambridge Dictionary), assumes a characteristic of resistance. In the following analysis, the word trespassing shifts from an illegality status into a human right: the right to move freely, to transit, and to construct. When formal and artificial barriers are unjust, there is no other way but to trespass them, to fight against them, and to conquer new spaces. Trespassing here is complemented by the word **transcending**, which means to go beyond, to rise above limits, and to be greater than ordinary (Cambridge Dictionary). This dissertation will explore these two concepts in current Latina and Latin American works that deal with the crossing (geographical and/or symbolic) of borders imposed because of one’s ethnicity, race, social class, and/or gender. The authors and characters chosen here are nothing ordinary, like any migration personal story they are extraordinary. They all represent the very real human desires of exploring, traveling, belonging, and fleeing injustice. In times when walls are being built, these stories are tools of resistance. They are the intersection between art and politics and a means to

“chip away boundaries” (Thompson 2015) and construct a geography more inclusive to all.

Throughout history, literary stories have embodied human spaces and interactions, confirming the importance of territory in the construction of subjectivities and identities. However, for most of time, the great majority of the world population lived in rural zones and it was not until the nineteenth century that the world began to see large-scale migration and the conglomeration of people in urban areas.

In the United States, the peak of urbanization occurred between the 1840s to 1930s, when the total population living in the cities went from less than 10 percent to 60 percent. Towns emerged in geographically advantaged spots, such as places with waterway connections and proximity to farmlands, offering support to large populations and accessibility to trading markets. While most of economic transactions took place in newly established cities, a majority of people still lived in rural areas connected to jobs in the fields. This reality changed in the late 1880s, when the country saw the rise of industrial activity and an increase in the shift from rural jobs to industrial jobs, placing even more people in metropolitan areas (Boustan, Bunten, Hearey, 2013).

In Brazil, the other space discussed in this dissertation, urbanization begins later, after the 1930s. A combination of factors including the late abolition of slavery in 1888, the industrialization of the southwest region, a shift in economy,¹ and the global change in means of production,² led the density of cities to increase from 31 percent of the total

¹ Brazil had an economy based on the production of sugar cane in the northeast until the 1920s, when the country saw a shift to production of coffee in the center regional areas.

² The industrial revolution, began in Europe in the 1760s and extended to the USA shortly after. This era marked the shift from an agricultural handicraft economy to mass productions through machines and big industrial complexes. The change in economy was

population in 1940 to 70 percent in the 1980s. The 1950s marked an important decade in Brazilian urban life, when president Juscelino Kubitschek implemented a system of integrated internal market economy,³ pushing for the industrialization of the southern regions, bringing millions of workers to migrate from the north and the northeast into the urban areas of São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Belo Horizonte, and Brasília.

This process of urbanization and the constant migration of the nineteenth century allowed for urban representations to be solidified both in Brazil and the United States, truly making cities the centers of cultural productions and political life. At this time, first in Europe (more specifically France), we see the development of streets and sidewalks and with that, the literary portrait of a new type of character in written novels: the *flaneur*,⁴ or the urban white male stroller who has the privilege of walking and observing urban life. The first theorist to link the ideas of modernity and urban stroll was Walter Benjamin, who was academically obsessed with the streets of Paris and their symbolism. In *The Arcades Project* or *Paris: The Capital of the Nineteenth Century* (1939), the author reflects on the idea of modernity and the elements of urban life, including the human elements of the bohemian, the *flâneur*, and the modern subject. Basing his readings on Baudelaire's poetry, Benjamin registered the author's perception of temporality (modernity) in the construction and deconstruction of subjectivities. Characters were drawn according to their role in middle of the time they were

followed by a significant increase in the number and size of of urban centers and social and cultural changes. (Encyclopedia Britannica)

³ This economic plan had the goal of strengthening the internal market by decreasing the demand for imports. This was done by developing national industries, especially the automobile industry.

⁴ Concept developed in detail further in this same chapter.

experiencing, and that included the *flâneur*. In other words, the experience of modernity shaped subjectivities (Hansen 2006).

Using this concept of space and temporality, this dissertation argues that often, current border (physical and symbolic) crossing novels expand the idea of the *flâneur* as a means of affirming the movement rights of characters marginalized on the basis of their race, gender, citizenship status, and/or social class. In this work, the new marginal *flâneurs* and immigrant *flâneuses* provide new perspectives in the meaning of geographic and symbolic movement, drawing other types of city exploration and narration that go beyond the white male gaze.

Going further, I argue that space shapes and is shaped by these marginal bodies and the act of claiming this process is political. To make such arguments, this work will explore five urban texts produced by Latina authors in the USA and by marginal authors in Brazil. I start with a chapter on *Esperanza's Box of Saints* (1999) by María Amparo Escandón, where a female Mexican immigrant strolls the streets of San Diego. In the second chapter, I shift the analysis to novels that narrate the immigration and movement of young women from the Caribbean: *Dominicana* (2019) by Angie Cruz and *American Street* (2017) by Ibi Zoboi, one mapping the streets of Detroit and the other, New York City. Lastly, I focus on breaking down symbolic walls and geographically implicit segregation in the streets of Brasília and Rio de Janeiro in the texts *A máquina de revelar destinos não cumpridos* (2009) by Vário do Andaraí and *A cidade é uma só* (2013) by Ardiley Queirós. However, before diving into the symbolism of the interplay between physical stagnation and movement in these literary texts, we need to understand the

meaning of physical space and its power for influencing social, economic, and political configurations.

The Meaning of Space

Directions and coordinates that we use to make sense of our world and space are defined according to our physical human body. The spatial relations we make are all trying to make sense of our surroundings according to our own physical existence and forms, by transforming abstract concepts into a language that is accessible to our realities. For example, Leslie Kanés Weisman (1992) explains that different cultures use cardinal points of the human body – top, bottom, right, left, front and back – “as analogical models to structure social, built, and cosmological space. [...] Distance, directions, and locations are all defined in relation to the human bodyscapes” (Weisman 11). Something close by is within “reach” or ‘shouting distance’; there are twelve inches in a foot; the past is behind us; and the future is ahead of us. There are those on top of society, and those on the bottom, reinforcing the idea of the hierarchy of human bodies, through spatial recognition. *Marginal* is also a geographic term we use to refer to those bodies that are not included as citizens who enjoy a full range of social and geographical motion. In this same note, the feminine body is connected to the domestic, the passive, while the masculine is associated with adventure, aggression, and the outside realm. The visual idea of the larger superior masculine body imposing on the short feminine figure is another example of how bodies and space function together to create sense in the world we live in and the social norms we choose to obey. Because the connection between body

and space is so evident in the construction of meaning, we need to understand the space we live in as a political agent.

Following these ideas, Christopher Tilley (1994) describes how all urban space, differently from simply a container, is a fluid medium for human experience created entirely by and for social interactions. Tilley defends that since space is a means (a resource in which actors draw their activities and performances) it also becomes strongly political. I defend that Latina and Latin American authors that choose to narrate newcomer characters' mobility through the city are aware of the political power of space. They use the metropolis as the ground for the performance of their citizenship and/or belonging of an entire collective of people previously excluded that now are somehow being introduced as active social actors.

Edward Soja (2010) also adds to the understanding of this concept. For this scholar, making geographies always starts with occupancy – or with bodily presence and the performance of the self in the public sphere. He draws this idea from Stephen Greenblatt (1980) analysis of the sixteenth century and self-fashioning. To Greenblatt, the process of dressing was part of constructing one's identity and public character according to socially expected standards. These concepts are fundamental to my analysis in the sense that each character studied here marks their own presence as constructors of the urban fabric. According to Soja, this occupancy or performance would also involve the development of conflicts or new negotiations where one marks his/her own importance and relevance to the space in dispute. My analysis intends to understand these texts in this sense – the texts themselves as an occupation and the characters narrated in them as also examples of the bodily presence in a space of constant dispute – the

immigrant in the United States and the social class C in Brazil trying to affirm and negotiate their own full citizenship and/or belonging and their right to access and shape urban space. The characters discussed are not static, not segregated, not physically restricted in any way. Instead, they are introduced in these urban spaces as included newcomers (not outsiders). Additionally, they are narrated as a new type of *flâneur*, and by that, I mean that their place in the city is not being narrated as spaces of marginality and decay (as done in many other novels), but instead as territories of possibility. The protagonists in these novels are on an optimistic urban journey, where they observe, discover, and go on an urban quest, being a part of the social fabric.

Territories, or portions of geographic space which are claimed or occupied by a person, a group of persons, or by an institution (Storey 2001), are deeply embedded in social relations and are created as a consequence of social practices rather than being natural entities. They are something calculable, mappable and controllable by power classes. They impose artificial limitations with the intention of construction of the *others* as opposed to *oneself*. The ones inside that have access, as opposed to the danger, unwanted *outsiders*. When this dichotomy is strongly embedded in societal values, it easily shifts to the idea of good vs. evil – what we can relate to both the concept of lower social classes in relation to elites in Brazil, as well as unwanted immigrants and residents as opposed to citizens in the USA.

Otávio Cruz-Neto and María Minayo (1994) explain these interactions by arguing that in every society, there is a pre-existing division between good and bad, where citizens are understood as members of a group and not only individuals. The group that is related to evil is identified in general terms as having attributes that do not fit into social

life and consequently, are excluded symbolically and geographically, like Latinos and blacks. They are represented as the ones that should be blamed for social problems (such as economic crisis, violence, vandalism) and the ones that by their elimination or barring, the collective good can be achieved.

In this sense, the production of unjust geographies and borders promotes not simply the exclusion of communities, but also the construction of controlling images that limit the urban geographic access of subjects according to their race, ethnicity, social class, or gender or often, a conjunction of more than one of these, creating a layered system of exclusion. Controlling images are stereotypes that according to Patricia Collins (2000) are created to shape societal behavior and exercise cultural control. They can hide oppression by assuming that a certain group has negative trends as natural characteristics, which they are bound to. Collins explains that controlling images are transmitted by the media, popular culture, and government agencies, as we will see in the institutional discourses about immigration and marginality analyzed in the next chapters. These controlling images include the outsider characteristics of dangerous, dirty, unsanitary, uneducated, useless, and a threat to order and progress – concepts that dehumanize entire groups of people and somehow justify their geographic, economic, and social exclusions. It also clarifies the institutional effort to push these collectives into peripheries, *favelas*,⁵ ghettos, or *barrios*.⁶

⁵ Brazilian slums, or low-income communities, normally built in an informal manner or unclaimed lands appropriated on the outskirts of cities.

⁶ Spanish speaking neighborhoods normally related to lower income immigrant communities.

Manuel Castells (1997) goes further in this analysis of territory and space, affirming that geography is directly correlated to social justice. For this reason, the occupation of space and the transgression of geographic borders are significant to the topic of human rights in cultural productions. Castells demonstrates this by arguing that, like any other human made object, space will express and perform the interests of the leading class based on power relations and enforced dominations. Or as David Storey (2011) affirms, the urban fabric is geographically racialized and gendered. The processes of control and government abandonment of territories that are divided according to these characteristics are a form of injustice. This concept falls back to Edward Soja's definition of unjust geographies, where lower income/immigrant/black/brown community neighborhoods receive less government investments and attention. They also are the population that most deals with restrictions and exclusion on a bigger urban space scale, being denied access to desirable areas (for example, through difficult transportation, monetary restraints, architectural choices, or unwelcoming social practices).

Examples of this power structure are evident in any type of cultural production where marginal characters are, more often than not, portrayed by middle class white writers/directors as simply carriers of hardships and geographic restrictions. While one can argue that these works would simply reflect a reality, the representations of immigrant or marginal peoples restricted to *barrios/favelas* also helps maintain the artificial social hierarchical boundaries and inequalities we live with.

David Storey (2001) explores the same structure when affirming that we live in a highly territorialized world where spacial restrictions are attempts to impose forms of power over geography, which confirms the power of politics over the spaces we occupy.

To the author, the very basic definition of territory is already political, and it has its prototypical example in the Roman Empire, when the concept of political power through geographical expansion was consolidated. With the passing of years, this same concept has been intensified with the ideologies of nationalism and capitalism (Storey 2001) as well as through imperialism, neocolonialism, and internal colonialism, allowing marginal people to be excluded in terms of their ethnicity or class, which is highly connected to their power of consumption.

Iris Young (2000) also touches on the connection between justice and space by affirming that, through urbanization, power relations are expressed, and segregations are created. To the author, segregations and borders deny social justice in the sense that they promote an uneven development; discourage public encounters and sympathy between different social classes; inhibit communication between social groups; increase fears and judgements; and decrease the sense of community as a whole. Based on this idea, I later develop the importance of expanding the concept of the *flâneur* and the right of all subjectivities to see and to be seen as part of the urban fabric. For Manuel Castell (1997) “from time to time, social movements will rise to change the meaning of spatial structure and therefore attempt new functions and new forms” (4), which is what I argue is being done in these cultural productions.

The two national spaces in question in this dissertation, Brazil and the USA, faced different configurations of urban spaces through history. In Brazil, desirable areas that received more government attention and infrastructure funding during urbanization were related to the center areas, allowing the poor populations to be pushed to peripheries and what we later came to know as *favelas* (more on this will be found on chapter 3). In the

United States this process also happened in an institutionalized artificial way through redlining. This practice started in the 1930's and shaped the demographic and wealth of specific urban areas of the entire nation through a system of mapping of desirable and non-desirable areas created by the federal Home Owner's Loan Corporation (HOLC) from 1935 to 1939 and drew urban lines that are still very present until today.⁷ During redlining, government surveyors graded urban neighborhoods of several American cities according to four categories: 1) best; 2) still desirable; 3) definitely declining; and 4) hazardous. The areas in number four, were spaces discredited in large part because of resident's racial and ethnic demographics that were starting to move in to centered areas. These hazardous areas mostly occupied by immigrants and African Americans were also found to have higher temperatures (13 degrees higher average) than the desirable areas and with time, received less government investment in infrastructure. In this pattern, white elites abandoned the center urban areas, abandoning the "inner cities" to the urban poor and developing the suburbs. Today, 91 percent of areas classified as "best" in the 1930s remain middle-to-upper-income with a predominance of 85 percent white inhabitants.

While these artificial boundaries are artificially created, but also contested all the time, their contestation is a direct reflection on the resistance against what they represent: the exclusion and forced stagnation of people according to their gender, social class, race, and ethnicity. The argument here is that since common space is not a commodity or capital, it should be accessible and free to all people and transformed into a positive right.

⁷ Comparisons between historical maps made by HOLC and the modern census proves that those lines still influence the division of wealth in the country (Tracy Jan, 2018).

The historically institutionalized concept of minorities being restricted to their own *barrios/favelas* and becoming “out of place” in the urban desire areas both in Brazil and in the USA, is the very concept challenged in these literary works and will be developed in detail in the following pages. My argument is that these new productions are contesting limits on urban mobility and access, ideas that have been highly debated in the political scenario and are part of what is called the right to the city.

The Right to the City

The right to be able to actively occupy and construct one’s urban spaces is part of the concept of the right to the city, which was created by Henri Lefebvre in his book *Le droit à la ville* (1968); explored practically by city statutes in Brazil and Canada; and later amplified by David Harvey (2012). In Lefebvre’s original ideas in 1968, he stated that the oppressor’s systems deny the subjects’ right to construct their own city and that changing reality involved the right of citizens to construct their own urban social space. He was the first theorist to draw this concept of right to inclusion that included three major points: 1) The city is public and should be the space for social interactions and exchanges, where people should be agents of use and construction. 2) It demands heterogeneity between different cultures and subjectivities. 3) These differences create struggles and negotiations about the shape of urban areas and citizenship. (cited by The United Nations Urban Policies and the Right to the City Charter).

Years later, Harvey (2012) expanded the same concept, giving more emphasis to the political power of the right to the city by stating that in order to break from unjust social and political structures, it is necessary to develop forms of appropriation of city

spaces. Harvey explains that capitalist forms of government have, through the decades, promoted unjust geographies, which make urbanism a class phenomenon. For him, to claim the right to the city is to demand one's right to power and rights over the process of urbanization, including the right to have a voice and space in the formation of public spaces, not as a passive observer, but as an active political actor.

While Lefebvre and Harvey are responsible for the theory behind this concept, in practice, this idea was first proposed in a worldwide meeting at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) round table in 1995, highlighting the importance of an urbanism that allows for participatory democracy and urban access to all. However, it was only in 2005 that the UNESCO UN-HABITAT project launched, officially proposing that countries around the world should strive for “good governance and citizenship, to simulate equitable urban development and celebrate the cultural diversity of cities” (The World Charter for the Right to the City UNESCO). The document was based on two major ground-breaking governmental statutes, the Brazilian City Statute from 2001 discussed in chapter three below and the Montreal Charter of 2002.

The UNESCO World Charter for the Right to the City highlights an important chronology of civic rights to better understand this concept and its relevance to the broader concept of human rights. In previous decades, the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR 1948) had gradually become accepted and adopted in several societies. Although poverty and basic needs are still a major issue in several parts of the globe, in most countries, the fulfillment of basic rights was accompanied by the need for

a set of more complex positive rights, such as civil and cultural rights that focus on democratic social interactions.

Marshall and Bottomore (1992) develop the concept of three layers of citizenship affirming that it includes: 1) civil rights (individual freedoms – related to negative rights);⁸ 2) political rights (political participation); and 3) social rights (related to positive rights).⁹ According to these authors, as well as Iris Young (1990) and Engin Isin (2008), citizenship is a fluid concept, where new social realities produce new claims and in consequence the expansion of the term citizenship. While negative rights focus on basic needs, positive rights focus on a more inclusive further understanding of human rights as part of a just society, such as the right to vote, to participate, and to use and construct common spaces. In practice, city statutes and the charter in question focus on the improvement of this third layer of citizenship/human rights.

Evelina Dagnino (2007) also exemplifies this development of rights by saying that after the fulfillment of basic needs, the claim to citizenship became a project for a new sociability, where being a citizen meant a more egalitarian way to organize social relations. Citizenship expanded to include the claim to participate in the construction of society, such as the right to political participation, fair treatment before the law, equality of opportunities, and the right to occupy urban spaces freely, what came to be known as the right to the city.

⁸ Negative rights are rights that obliges others and/or governments to avoid interfering with someone's liberty. Some examples are freedom, life, property, freedom from torture, fair trial, etc.

⁹ Positive rights are obligations by others and/or government to provide some benefits to the holder of such rights. Some examples are the right to food, education, health care, etc.

The UNESCO Charter, based on urban theories and city charters, exemplifies the right to the city in 5 topics: 1) Liberty, freedom and the benefit of city life to all; 2) Transparency, equality and efficiency in city administration; 3) Participation and respect in local democratic decision making; 4) Recognition of diversity in economic, social and cultural life; 5) Reducing poverty, social exclusion and urban violence (UNESCO World Charter for the Right to the City). Under this definition, the ideas of free movement, security, participation, diversity, and economic equality are all under the same concept of the right to the city. This suggests the obvious idea that inclusion leads to equality, both concepts that are also linked in the narratives I will be discussing.

The UNESCO document adds an important layer to this work - the distinction between formal citizenship and the right to the city. While formal citizenship is the set of obligations and rights given to local nationals, the right to the city is founded on the idea of positive human rights acquired through participatory democracy and also on the inherent human right to movement and occupancy – again, following the basic ideas embedded in the term: the right to use and to construct. While citizens' rights are specific to diverse spaces (nations), the 2005 UNESCO document internationalizes the idea of the right to the city, claiming the human right to occupy, access, and transit in city areas. Similarly, this work defends that there is no such thing as illegal urban transit and occupancy and embraces Lefebvre's idea that the right to the city is based not on citizenship, but on inhabitation. All human beings should have the rights stated in the Right to the City Charter: the right to occupy, transit, and move around public areas.

When addressing rights and responsibilities of individuals, we must also consider the complex, fluid, and contested concept of citizenship. While there is not a global set of

rules on what defines the term, the judicial field of every nation uses the term as a binary concept: you either are a citizen carrier of full member recognition, or you are not, having partial access and limited rights (Plascencia 2012). In the United States, the term is even more complex with the increase in discussions about immigration. In most countries, the word citizenship comes regarding the birth right of residents and is used directly to exclude those that “do not belong” from those that are national born. Plascencia (2012) would call this the sociopolitical use of the term. In the same category, we can also say that both in the USA and in Brazil, the term is highly hierarchical, instead of egalitarian. Favoring the idea of a citizen being the one that is an active taxpayer and productive male.

The relationship between citizenship and city makes it even more complex to separate these concepts, as we should. The words city and citizenship both derive from the same Latin root, being *civis* (citizens) and *civitas* (city). In its original definition, *civitas* was an excluding term, that meant the junction of both space and the *civis*, which in Athens, and later in the Roman empire, were characterized for including simply adult male born of (free, not slave) *civis* parents (Rapp and Drake, 2014)

Confusion surrounding the definition and concept of citizenship seem to be present in Portuguese language. For example, in Brazil to call someone a *cidadão*, is a pejorative way to say that that type of person should not be a holder of any rights or is not deserving of such rights,¹⁰ giving the word a negative sarcastic social usage. Historically, the term is misunderstood and is a carrier of historical exclusions against minorities.

¹⁰ The concept of Differentiated Citizenship (Holston 2012), where different people are granted different types of rights, will be addressed in detail in Chapter three.

But even if the right to the city concept is not based on citizenship, but on basic human rights, recent feminist literature argues that the concepts developed by Lefebvre and Harvey fail to include the perspectives of women in their definition. Tovi Fenster (2005) argues that the concepts are not sensitive enough to individual and collective differences. By that, the author means that the definition does not challenge power relations (ethnic, racial, cultural or gendered) and it does not distinguish clearly between types and perceptions of occupancy, belonging, and participation in urban life. From personal testimonies, Fenster discovered that the right to the city is denied starting in the private sphere. For example, to understand the real restrictions of females in the streets, we need to first look at what they experience at home, and if they are allowed and supported to have a public life. The right to participate should also be seen from a more sensitive perspective. Are girls being able to democratically participate in the private sphere or are they denied a voice even behind closed doors? The author's findings suggests that when the right to occupy freely and participate in private is compromised by a patriarchal family system, this impacts directly on women's sense of belonging in the streets – where they also believe they do not have space. Narratives like the ones discussed in this dissertation deal with these same issues: the relationship between the private and the public in immigrant women's lives. These texts comment on how women must transform the private sphere to conquer their urban rights.

This difference between a human right and a citizenship right directly influences the right to the city of newcomers, the subjects of this work. Undocumented migrant women and men are unlikely to report violence and insecurities experienced in the domestic or public realm (work or streets) for fear of deportation, language barriers, or

distrust in the enforcement of the law. According to Sarah Escalante and Elizabeth Sweet (2013) this reality calls for reflection about the understanding of the intersectionality of gender, race, and citizen status when we draw conclusions regarding how migrant peoples relate to their geographic space. Newcomers, as the authors explain, are more likely to be unaware of their human rights, confusing them with citizenship rights, which they assume they do not carry.

Today, as Alissa Ackerman and Rich Furman (2014) explain, we have been seeing a general criminalization of immigration, or as the authors call “crimmigration”, which involves the personal and institutional lack of acceptance of immigrants, including refugees. In this new ideological global wave, we see more use of criminal law in immigration matters and the decrease of basic human rights of the ones coming from abroad. While the conservative idea of the *outsider* as a representation of a threat to the national order and purity of blood is historical, the terrorist attacks of 9/11/2001 brought a whole other layer of repulsion against immigration and newcomers. Government propaganda and the war on terror increased the popular constructed fear based on the danger of immigrants on American soil. The political crises added to the economic crises of 2008 and 2011 and the election of right-wing federal executive and senate, allowed for what we have now, the extreme criminalization of immigration. In that sense, again, the narratives analyzed below are empowering by focusing on positive human rights, instead of hardships of urban life as a migrant/newcomer.

Representation of Urban Mobility

While space and the right to the city are fundamental concepts for my analysis, I choose to focus on primary cultural texts that represent the movement of characters through spaces as a claim to their urban rights. By that, I mean that the characters in the books analyzed here travel through city areas (walking, on buses, and private cars) that historically have not been inclusive to them. For example, the immigrant, the young black female, and the low-income brown bodies are represented as traveling, mapping, and ensuring their belonging on sidewalks and public places. Characters in these chosen stories are not limited because of who they are (marginal, female, black, brown, immigrant), they are not restricted to their domestic realm, nor to their neighborhoods (*barrios* or *favelas*) but instead, they are lifted up as part of the urban fabric.

I argue that these characters' physical mobility and crossing of borders adds another level for the understanding of shaping/constructing urban spaces. By reading literary works that deviate from the typical urban narration from the perspective of white, middle-class males, society gains other views of the urban spaces. With the diversification of public areas, we also humanize and accept *others* as deserving of the same rights as *us*. The different subject that before was considered invasive, becomes in these novels, also worthy of belonging to the space in which they are inserted.

The primary theoretical approach I use to explain the politics of movement is the idea of pedestrian enunciation by Michel de Certeau (1984). Certeau states that the act of human passage becomes a process of appropriation and transformation of space. He affirms locomotion as a form of expression and enunciation. "The act of walking is to the urban system what the speech act is to language or to the statement uttered" (97). To

reinforce Certeau's ideas, Francesco Careri (2013) defends walking as a social dis-order or a person's social liberation from spaces that hierarchy restricts them. When we walk, we accumulate knowledge and power¹¹ over a territory, developing our sense of belonging and ownership. In that sense, the act of narrating the movement of previously marginalized characters in urban areas is a statement that their passage makes a mark and constructs the city space, as well as showing autonomy and liberation from hierarchically imposed segregations.

Jenny Donovan (2018) also works with the same concept, by stating that "when we design, build, manage, occupy or even just pass through a place, we change it" (1). The author understands bodies as carriers of meaning and physical mass that transform physical spaces. A small and daily representation of this idea is the common practice of writing "Jon¹² was here" in public spaces, demonstrating our human need to mark as we occupy. New ways to design cities, in Donovan's opinion, should no longer simply fit the capitalist market ruled by white privileged men. In other words, metropolitan areas should not be designed simply for upper- and middle-class car owners, but instead, should help all people meet their needs, thrive and fulfill their potential.

All the works chosen as primary texts in this dissertation use the symbolic and physical idea of challenging barriers/segregation, however, I focus on a detailed analysis of texts that use physical mobility to express a symbolic inclusion of newcomers into urban centers. I argue that by narrating transit and territorial knowledge, these authors are

11 For Foucault, power and knowledge are not independent concepts but instead closely interconnected. Knowledge is an exercise of power and power is always a function of knowledge. The theorist understood power and knowledge as productive as well as constraining; in other words, they can limit or promote possibility to subjects.

¹² Any individual's name.

claiming the right of previously marginalized groups to access, as well as shape, the society and the city spaces where they are inserted. By reconstructing the city as a text through narratives, they are creating a more inclusionary urban scenario. The trespassing and transcending in these works always come filled with the meaning of breaking symbolic and physical social stagnations. The body in movement goes beyond its physicality.

The introduction of newcomers in urban public spaces is not a new phenomenon. Both Brazil and the United States are countries founded by immigrants coming from Europe, Africa, and Asia. However, hierarchy and prejudice allow the historical belief that envisions public space as belonging exclusively to white citizens. This idea has, throughout history, promoted the exclusion and marginalization of subjects, as well as the development of poor peripheral areas or neighborhoods with less access to sanitary and mobility infrastructure, creating an unjust form of urbanization, as previously discussed. In the past decades, as explained, the fulfillment of basic needs promoted a claim for other positive rights in many countries, including the right to access and shape common spaces. Marginal populations have been creatively using new tools to claim these rights.

Among these creative tools is the use of social media in current years to serve as a platform to truly expose (and most of the time condemn) these traditional beliefs. On April 30, 2018, a white middle-class mother called the police to report two Native-American brothers on a tour through the University of Colorado Campus. To her, the teenagers were “acting odd and using black clothes”. On May 12, 2018, a white Yale student called the campus police to report a black female student napping in a common dormitory area. Similarly, on February 23, 2020 Ahmaud Arbery, a 25 years old black

male, was jogging in Brunswick, Georgia (in a neighborhood close to his house) when he was chased and killed by three white males in a truck. Later, a 911 call suggested that moments before, a neighbor contacted the police about a black male inside a house under construction in the neighborhood. Videos of the property showed Arbery stopping by and looking the house from inside, without engaging in any illegal activity.

These are examples of very often occurrences where white individuals call upon public law enforcement services not simply to respond to threat perception, but also to make a statement that the public space belongs to them, and marginal individuals who do not fit the norm should be restricted to certain marginal spaces. Online display and shaming of explicit social prejudices are also present towards the immigrant community in the USA. In the past years, there have been innumerable videos released on social media showing Spanish speakers being condemned and humiliated for speaking their own language in the U.S. public areas.

As previously stated, these ideas about transgressing boundaries, *belonging and not belonging* in common spaces are historically constructed, however, the difference now is that smart phones and social media connection allow for the recording and exposure of such expressions of racism and prejudice. Most of the time, social media spreads and condemns white privilege and shames the actors involved, stating the right to freedom and movement of any human being. The works analyzed in this dissertation follow the same trend. They implicitly affirm the right of marginal subjects to build and use public zones. While in some cases, works of art serve to expose the disenfranchisement of marginal people, in the texts here discussed, it goes a step further by strongly narrating the marginal subject as belonging and as a constructor of the city.

Their main goal is not to denounce, but instead to represent an inclusion as established and guaranteed in these fictional stories.

Social hierarchies based on race, gender, social class, and social status have always determined the occupancy of space in the Americas. While segregation¹³ was institutionalized in the USA until the Civil Rights movement,¹⁴ in Brazil, the unwritten, but well-established segregation was implicitly part of the social fabric.¹⁵ In both countries, we have urban areas constructed with the idea of who should have access and the right to movement and who should not. While brown and black populations were (and still are) excluded because they represent the danger – the *others* of society, the female bodies have also historically been excluded from city centers with the narrative of them being too fragile and pure for the streets. The patriarchal narrative that presents one group as the perpetrators and the other as victims, keeps them both out of the streets and city centers, taking the valuable right to move from minorities and women for opposite reasons.

While the development of a new layer of rights and the current social media trend help deconstruct those ideas, the symbolic image of the dark body in these societies still carries the stigmatization of both ghettos and *favelas*. For those reasons, the inclusion of

¹³ After the abolition of slavery in 1865, the Supreme Court ruled a series of laws, known collectively as “Jim Crow” laws, separating the African-American descendent from the white population, perpetuating the idea of blacks as second-class American citizens. Public transportation, private establishments, recreation facilities, schools, etc. were lawfully separated by race by its ruling in *H.A. Plessy v. J.H. Ferguson* (Library of Congress).

¹⁴ The US Civil Rights Movement was the long-lasting struggle for racial and social justice during 1950s and 1960s. The main goals were to eliminate racial discrimination, disenfranchisement, and segregation in the USA. (Library of Congress)

¹⁵ Developed in detail in Chapter three.

these “marginal” bodies inside “white spaces” (Anderson 2015) still causes conflicts and confusion in real life, but not in these chosen books.

With the changes in demographics (USA)¹⁶ and social classes (Brazil),¹⁷ public spaces also are being transformed in both of these countries. As Anderson (2015) points out, not only the occupancy of space is changing, but also the perceptions of those places. With all the transformation comes a change in mentality and an empowerment of previously marginalized peoples. So far, there has been no better place for the performance of one’s subjectivity and claims than the streets and the sidewalk, where now we shift our discussion.

The Meaning of the Sidewalk

Michel de Certeau (1993) describes the city as a story that unfolds as people transit through space on different journeys. Cities facilitate social interactions and encounters and expose new ways of being. As people see and are seen on a common ground, they become more aware and acceptable of diversity and inclusion – seeing each other as part of a community despite our physical differences.

In all the literary work analyzed in the following chapters, we will see an emphasis on the use of the sidewalk and the constant narration of city street names,

¹⁶ Related to the national increase in the Latino/Hispanic immigrant population. The US Census of 2000 showed that in 1990, Hispanics were 9% of the country’s population, in 2000 they represented 13%, and in 2020 they are expected to represent 20% of the people living in the country.

¹⁷ As will be developed in detail in chapter three, the rise of social class C, which came with the decrease of poverty during the years of the Partido dos Trabalhadores’ (PT) popular policies 2001-2013.

numbers, and geographic directions. To try to decode why authors choose to narrate the characters' journeys and observations in such a way, we need to first reflect on the importance of the sidewalk as a space of performance and rights claim.

Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris and Renia Ehrenfeucht (2009) trace the history and importance of sidewalks as a space for negotiation of democracy, with that, they suggest what I also defend in this work, that the sidewalk is political when used as an expression and performance of one's subjectivity and collective claims. They remind us that historically, sidewalks have been the reflection space for exclusions, but also an arena for negotiating and overcoming such social rejections.

While sidewalks and urban design were created to flourish and accommodate the early nineteenth century flourishing industrialization and beginning of urban conglomerates, the mid-twentieth-century urbanism and capitalism has pushed the pedestrian aside with several urban choices: building commercial versus residential areas; constructing wide fast in-city roads; single family houses with private yards; shopping malls; and tall buildings filling what we call "the cement jungle". In some European and American cities, between the 1930s and 1960s, the shift from pedestrians to cars was so intense, that sidewalks were no longer required by urban laws. City planners could choose to construct areas without offering any type of access to people on foot.

During the 1970s and 1980s, especially in downtown areas, the sidewalks were highly used for the display of products for sale, such as vegetables, fruit, furniture, etc; peddling; public orators and performers; and children playing. As imagined, the sight of informal and dispersed sidewalk activity generated discontent among municipal leaders and business owners. With the intention of making commerce more lucrative and

promoting order, sidewalk use restrictions were widely implemented in the USA. For example, by the 1980s, in Los Angeles, California sidewalk laws included the regular maintenance of vegetation and the prohibition of: signs and billboards; begging; street speaking; handbill distribution; advertising; stands; vending and exchange of goods; loitering; etc (Loukaitou-Sideris and Ehrenfeucht, 2009).

Despite the intense municipal restrictions in favor of efficient and fast movement of workers and urban sanitation and order, in recent decades, we are rediscovering our sidewalks and our streets and claiming them once again. Loukaitou-Sideris and Ehrenfeucht (2009) call this phenomenon the “renaissance” of urban life. In the authors’ words:

Still, in the decades that followed, people continued to make claims for promenading, public speaking, expression of dissent, and street vending as well as host of other activities on the sidewalks. In doing so, they took space again and again and negotiated and redefined their publicness. (33)

The act of publicly performing one’s subjectivity finds its ground in the busy sidewalks, allowing this physical space to be the carrier of deeper meaning in the negotiation of social interactions. The sidewalk is not simply a *no-lugar* (Augé, 1995), or an empty space, but instead, a political sphere. The next section develops the definition of the *flâneur*, the sidewalk habitant, and argues that the protagonists in the contemporary texts studied here expand the definition of the term and can be considered new marginal *flanêurs/flâneuses*.

The *flâneur*/ *flâneuse*

The *flâneur* is usually a literary character associated with a specific social class, gender, and race: he is a middle-class white male, often intellectual, that strolls around city spaces narrating his journey. This male urban character, first found in European texts from the nineteenth century, has the right to access all city areas. He meanders without a specific goal or destination, he is not rushed to get to work and is not restricted by segregation, signs that confirm his social class and privileges. In this sense, he represents the upper-class white male gaze of our metropolis and for a long time, the only one found in literature. These characters constructed a description of the city and its citizens based on the male privileged transit, which was not granted to all, but became for years the literary norm.

While the origins of the term are traced to the development of urbanism in Paris and to the poet Charles Baudelaire in the 1850s, it was first theorized by Walter Benjamin (1969), when interpreting Charles Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal*, 1857 (Dreyer and McDowall, 2012), as the base for *flâneur* theory. Etymologically, the noun stems from the French verb *fâner*, meaning to saunter or lounge. In Benjamin's analysis, the white male *flâneur* was a character that enjoyed strolling in the crowd absorbing and narrating the masses and the urban geography. He was an observer who had the authority of constructing the urban space through his narration and his main characteristics were observation, movement, and self-representation.

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, one of the favorite activities of white, upper class males was the ritual of walking, watching, and being watched in the streets of urban centers. In cities such as Paris, London, New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, and

even Rio de Janeiro, wealthy residents would perform their identities by displaying their best clothes and manner. This practice gave room to a set of oppressive rules against women and people of other races. For example, as Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris and Renia Ehrenfeucht (2009) explain, women were expected to walk on the sidewalk “wrapped in a mantle of proper reserve” (43), which includes fast walking, no laughing and talking in low voice. Middle and upper class women were expected to use the sidewalk with a purpose, different from white males who could wander aimlessly. While white men displayed their best images, white women had to remain as invisible as possible. Women that walked the streets without such proper attire and attitude, were immediately recognized as not having morals and values or as “street” women. These constructed images enforced already strong stereotypes about womanhood and the value of black and brown women everywhere, since they needed to walk to work and did not possess money to adequate clothing to cover themselves, they were often perceived as sinful. In this sense, when privileged white men allowed women to stroll on streets without comments, that reflected respect to their subjectivity, but when they would call out to women, it meant that they were deserving of it because of their socially unacceptable display in public. This practice is still very much present in modern society and now is called “catcalling”, where men affirm their hierarchies and social conservative norms that expect women to behave and stroll quietly and covered in public open areas.

Escalante and Sweet (2013) add to the complexities of feminist urbanism when discussing migrant women. Today, women represent 75 percent of all world refugees and 52 percent of the total population of migrants, estimated at 220 million (Barton and Tactaquin 2010). These females are normally employed in informal low-skilled jobs,

domestic service, and sexual-related industries. This reality makes them more vulnerable in and out of the streets, causing them to suffer a double or triple oppression: gender, social class, immigration status, and often race. This “reinforced exclusion” (Escalante and Sweet) gives migrant women an incredible vulnerability in the streets, where both they themselves do not know their rights and where people assume that they do not have them.

Going beyond the female body, the marginal black and brown body has historically also been excluded from the privilege of being a *flâneur*. To mention one simple historical American foundation, the 1857 Richmond (Virginia) code stated that:

Negros shall not at any time stand on a sidewalk to the inconvenience of [white] persons passing by. A negro meeting or overtaking, or being overtaken by a white person...shall pass on the outside; and if it to be necessary to enable such white person to pass, shall immediately get off the sidewalk” (1857 Richmond code, cited by Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris and Renia Ehrenfeucht, 87)

As explained in this passage, the right to the sidewalks was a right reserved for white elite men. The works analyzed in this dissertation extend the term *flâneur*, claiming that the inclusion of previously marginalized voices (the female, the poor, the immigrant, the brown, and the black) narrating city areas, gives us a look into our spaces from different perspectives. These new *flâneurs* and *flâneuses* rewrite urban spaces according to their own life experiences, which include now special and geographic restrictions that need to be broken. From these books, we see an entirely new construction of a subjective inside their new spaces – and the reinforcement of their belonging.

According to Yomna Saber (2013) in her analysis of the *flâneur* in the novel *House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros, *flâneurs* are characters that embark on journeys of reading the city as a multi-layered text where the space becomes full of meaning and a tool to construct their own subjectivity. When walking, observing, and describing the space, the character integrates herself into the urban fabric, having the autonomy to construct her own importance and meaning in the collective areas. This ability gives the narrator (in this case, Esperanza) not only power over the territory, but also agency to understand and create her own subjectivity. In this sense, the *flâneur* is a powerful representation of the transit privileges that the white male body has in urban areas – completely relatable and transferable to the reality of our current city spaces. Each chapter of this dissertation will explore how urban transit relates to the construction and self-understanding of these characters – their character construction is directly related to the space they occupy in the city.

While white male journeys are historically more present in literature, female transit as an observation walk¹⁸ was not included in the nineteenth century writing fictions, because, as known, women were still socially restricted to the domestic environment. The streets were considered dangerous to “proper” female bodies and often associated with prostitution. In that sense, women that frequented the streets were assumed to be the ones that were not “impure” and had no ownership of their bodies. Women were considered out of place in public areas, and that was reflected in literary works, where the female urban gaze was non-existent (Wolff, 1985). Also, in other

¹⁸ This simply includes novels where women walk around urban areas for pleasure and observation.

works, for example, the autobiographical writings of Carolina María de Jesus,¹⁹ women were in the streets, living in miserable conditions, in constant danger and vulnerable because of the type of urban spaces they were restricted to inhabit.

Yomma Saber (2013) describes that things changed in the beginning of the twentieth century, when women began to occupy the streets as consumers and workers. However, the introduction of these new female bodies in the metropolis took on very different characteristics, and women walkers now were connected with the idea of consumption and big commercial centers, adopting a constructed image (Collins) of women as “money spender” that stands very strong until today. At this time, department stores and shopping malls became safe public spaces for these new urban subjectivities and women were finally introduced in literature as also part of the social fabric, however, they were not observers, but instead, consumers – again, a stereotype that still is very much connected to the idea of female urban mobility. In these new narratives, the *flâneuse* was not an independent being that could draw her own space in the public areas (like the *flâneur*), she was instead restricted to strolling within limits of shops, and having the role of consuming and feeding the capitalist society, which didn’t include her right to construct her own space. She was not autonomous, but only a piece of the new market system. When not inserted into this capitalistic system (women without the power of consumption), they were again portrayed as marginalized, lacking agency and rights.²⁰

¹⁹ Both *Quarto de Despejo* (1960) and *Diário de Bitita* (1986) are autobiographical works that represent a woman using the public sphere, but at the same time that she has urban movement, she is also afraid of the space she is occupying. She is not strolling for pleasure, but instead narrating the struggles that come with black women’s urban movement.

²⁰ As an example of Latin American literature, we have the migrant Macabéia in the novel *A Hora da Estrela* (1977) by Clarice Lispector. The poor female protagonist here

Saber (2013) also touches on another important issue that can be easily related to the works studied here. The idea of the *flâneuse* was also not used in literature because women were expected to be too emotional, not being able to narrate and observe the urban fabric in an objective way. Over and over we will see in the books analyzed here, how feelings, history, and heritage are interconnected and integrated into the city narrations. Escandón's Esperanza sees her language everywhere, Cruz's Ana romanticizes the noises of New York City, and Zobo's Fabiola identifies her spirituality in the streets of Detroit. These emotional elements give life not just to their journeys, but also to the physical spaces they occupy. They construct an urban space carrier of meaning, suggesting a true feminist urbanism, a term that will be further developed below.

Saber (2013) adds that by shifting the *flâneur* to a female Chicana in *The House on Mango Street*²¹ that strolls around her *bairro*, Cisneros constructs a relationship between the city and the female body, allowing the understanding of outside urban spaces as also belonging to minority women. According to Saber, Cisneros' introduction of the female ambler is part of the 1970s rise of a non-white feminist wave of thought, where women of color were demanding introduction and equality under social and political realms. In Cisneros' work, the Latina breaks away from the idea of geographic and social restrictions and she is also freed from typical stereotypes related to suffering and domesticated females. However, there are two types of females in this narrative, the ones

strolls around the busy streets of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, while deprived of her social rights, agency, and eventually being fatally killed by a car.

²¹ It is inevitable to compare both titles, as well as the story of space and self-transformation (coming-of-age), in *The House of Mango Street* (1984), *American Street*, and *Dominicana*, novels mentioned and analyzed here.

that watch life through the window and the ones that stroll around and suffer the dangerous consequences of the streets (including Esperanza).

The *barrio*, or neighborhood, is a centerpiece of these early works that present Latinas' movement. The reason for that is the connection between a sense of belonging and self-subjectivity construction. While the big urban area is exclusionary, Latinos (as any minority) find home and space in small restricted areas, in most cases, segregated neighborhoods. For example, in *The House on Mango Street*, the sense of melancholy and social exclusion is still a very strong element in the book. Esperanza reminds us in several passages of how women are restricted to home, watching life pass by through the window.²² It seems that while her neighborhood is a safe space for the girl to stroll, the urban streets outside that area are not. In the first narration of Esperanza venturing outside the immigrant area, when she rides on a bus and goes to work, she is sexually harassed by a coworker. Along the same lines, when outside the housing areas, in a junkyard, she ends up being raped. At the end, Esperanza receives a message: "When you leave, you must always come back for the others [...] You will always be Esperanza. You will always be Mango Street." Again, this passage clearly confirms the idea of identity connected to a geographically restricted space. She leaves Mango Street, however, she is interconnected to her physical and symbolic space and she mainly belongs to the immigrant community where she was born.

²² Some characters in *The House on Mango Street* that confirm these ideas are: Marin, who likes to go to dances outside the community and in one of these strolls ends up run over by a car and killed. Mamacita, who does not come out of her house and prefers to watch life through the window because she does not speak English. Rafaela, whose husband will not let her come out because she might escape. Sally, who is very religious and not allowed to play in the streets. Esperanza's mother, who has lived in the city her entire life, but does not know what subway train to take to go downtown.

While *The House on Mango Street* is just one famous example of marginality and women's subjectivity in relation to geographic space in border literature, I defend here that there are new border crossing narratives that deviate from the earlier presentation of lack of rights, stagnations, and geographic restrictions. In the works explored in this dissertation, *American Street*, *Dominicana*, *Esperanza's Box of Saints*, *A Máquina de revelar destinos não cumpridos*, and *A cidade é uma só*, authors and protagonists go beyond the neighborhood, occupying and belonging to an entire metropolis. This new geographic extension translates into agency and political claim.

This recent geographic empowerment of minorities, intense globalization, and exchange of information through social media from the recent decades have impacted the way we see newcomers, or people that cross borders. While the intensification in change of geographic and symbolic spaces has brought new meanings to what are human rights, the backlash did not come easy. The books analyzed here resist this backlash by normalizing the free movement of any subject in urban areas, including racialized minorities and women.

The Newcomer as *Flâneur/ Flâneuse*

Keeping in mind that stagnations and changes in society and urban space have always influenced the production of narratives, my research will trace the development of urban representations that focus on border-crossers²³ in urban scenarios, emphasizing current Latina and Latin American works that claim the right to transit and occupation

²³ By border-crossing, I do not include simply the national geographic borders, but also segregation limitations, gender, and social norms.

of newcomer subjects. I choose to explore five works, three produced in the United States and two in Brazil. However, their protagonists and authors are all *newcomers* from Caribbean (Haiti and the Dominican Republic), North America (Mexico), and South America (Brazil). This choice was made to include a variety of types of geographic and symbolic crossings and occupying of urban scenarios.

Newcomer is one of the most relevant terms used in this work. I chose to use it in reference to subjects migrating into new physical and symbolic spaces, in which they are traditionally seen as not belonging. This definition includes, though is not exclusive to, geographic spaces such as countries' borders. It also includes symbolic spaces such as segregation implicit lines and gender specific restraints. It includes narratives from immigrant subjects from the Caribbean and Mexico, analyzed in chapters one and two and also marginal subjects introduced into upper class spaces, examined in chapter three about a new Brazilian middle class. However, these newcomers cross many geographic and symbolic boundaries through these stories, which will be fully discussed in each chapter. Other words such as *outsiders*, *refugees*, or *foreigners* were left outside the choice of wording because in themselves they reflect a negative connotation of lack of belonging. The word *newcomer* follows the spirit of the texts analyzed in this dissertation – subjects that break boundaries and state their own belonging into the new geographic and symbolic space. In itself, the word *newcomer* reflects the empowerment reproduced in the analyzed texts at the same time that it contrasts with the adverse socially imposed meanings of other words such as *foreigners* or *immigrants*.

While current border and marginal literature finds a broad range of techniques for the claiming of rights of newcomer subjects, my work focuses on narratives that use movement through the city areas to stake their claim of inclusion. I show that the new social, economic, and political spaces that newcomers achieve in current urban societies are also reflected in their cultural mobility – they are being cultural producers and making, through these productions, a claim for their right to the city. Each one of the five works analyzed in this dissertation has authors, as well as protagonists representing newcomers with the exception of Angie Cruz, author of *Dominicana*, who is a Dominican descendent, but American born.

Very often, newcomer authors use self-representation and the narration of precarious human living conditions, trauma, violence, and segregation as a strategy to claim the rights of immigrant and marginalized characters. However, I chose to focus on a particular strategy of newcomer literature: the inclusion of urban movement in narratives as a way to reclaim social and physical space. I will argue that differently from merely narrating violence, segregation, and the disenfranchisement of subjects (that previously was often done when narrating about marginality and immigration in urban centers), in these specific works, authors chose to introduce newcomers into the center of city areas - letting them transit freely in between spaces. In some works analyzed, authors make use of humor to address the lack of rights experienced in these new spaces. By using these techniques, they are challenging their own marginality and claiming the rights of newcomers to access, as well as to construct society and space. I defend that by presenting characters that cross social and spatial boundaries and that transit within the larger metropolis, peripheral cultural producers are signaling the newly

established fluidity of social hierarchies and borders, as well as denouncing historical unjust geographies and social exclusions.

Our five protagonists: Esperanza, Ana, Fabiana, Dildu, and Vário all use common *flâneur/flâneuse* techniques to make their claims of inclusion. They all offer us, through the texts' descriptions of urban scenes, street names and numbers, corners, passages, urban sounds, and their own urban observations. They all offer us a map of the city areas they occupy: Tijuana, San Diego, Detroit, New York City, Brasília, and Rio de Janeiro. Another factor in common among all these works is that by the end of the narratives, all with no exception, present us with an optimistic forward movement or liberation of protagonists. They are all aware of their own importance in the urban fabric and work to promote a more inclusive metropolis.

Marginal and Feminist Urbanism: An Inclusive Space

But what are we talking about when we mention the idea of an inclusive urban area? Certainly, it entails a space where all people have the freedom to come and go, however it goes beyond that by embracing the very concept of the right to the city and transformation of common spaces. It is a city where we all have the right to occupy and construct and a place that can be useful to all, including underprivileged minorities and women.

Cities have historically been constructed by and for white upper-class males. For example, as previously mentioned, by the mid twentieth century, cities had more concrete elements, smaller or non-existent sidewalks, and wide and fast roads. The conglomerates everywhere were being built for a small parcel of the population that had the means to pay for their own private transportation. In the USA, urban areas were divided into

residential and non-residential areas, which made access difficult for those without cars. Most big cities had some form of public transportation, since the elites needed the working class to have a way to get to work, but the new laws of the market and production systematically pushed aside government funding from common leisure spaces (such as parks, playgrounds, street art, public performances, etc.), sidewalks, and even public transportation to investment into roads, parking lots, and commercial centers.

Feminist geographers have pointed out how urban centers all over the world are strongly gendered and also racialized. The division of labor and conservative tradition allowed for the separation between public and private and the historical social reinforcement that women belong in the private sphere, going along with the notion of reproduction (female/domestic) and production (male/public). In this scenario, as narratives of violence against women in the public sphere arise, women transfer the fear of male violence into the fear of open common spaces, which has strong implications in the negotiation of city areas (Valentine 1989 qtd in Storey 2011). This reality promotes an urban center as a utility place for women and a space of enjoyment for men.

The achievement of women's and minority's rights were so great in recent decades, that it can be hard for some people to admit that urban planning is indeed meant for white middle class males. Small gestures such as "catcalling" are reminders that a woman alone in the streets still represents a foreign element. For a long time, women have stayed in the domestic realm and provided domestic work, while males work outside and earn wages. This way, the gender division of labor, dictates the geographic space of each of the sexes. According to Megan Heim LaFrombois (2017) citing feminist scholars, this historical notion of gendered spaces directly affects planning practices. Some

examples are separated work and home zones; fragmented public transportation; isolated poor communities; and economic wage differences between the genders.

These same societal norms also segregate people of color into their own spaces/neighborhoods/ghettos/*favelas/barrrios* restricting them to marginality and excluding them from the city desirable areas. When seen in these public desirable areas, underprivileged minorities are seen as *the dangerous other* of formal orderly society.²⁴ Here again, we can mention the examples seen in social media in the recent years. These elements are what explain the fear and strangeness of white middle class citizens in seeing the poor, immigrants, black and brown men as out of place in common entertainment areas such as pools, parks, and universities. On top of this discrimination, we also have a common space that is not prepared either/or built for minorities or women, but instead constructed thinking about the male-white-gaze.

By stereotyping the others as evil, they represent their own selves found in any metropolis. The lack of public funding and infrastructure such as sidewalk maintenance and streetlights are indicators of such problems. Jenny Donovan (2018) mentions that in research conducted with only women, it was found that yellow lighting increases female

²⁴ This concept derives from Foucault's ideas about the objectification of subjects by a process of social division within himself or from others. In this practice, humans are given social and personal identity that are modes of manipulation and consequently promote the practices of social exclusion and inclusion (socially and spatially). The historical division of subjectivities combined to the procedures of power and knowledge are used to dominate groups and give them dividing practices. In this idea, good citizens are not criminals because they are not in prison; we are sane if we are not in an insane asylum and well if we are not in a hospital. These ideas are found in *Madness and Civilization* (1961) and *The Birth of the Clinic* (1963). Foucault also introduced the critical examination of the configuration of space, primarily in the section on the Panopticon in *Discipline and Punish* (1975) what later is the foundation for several spatial theories used in this dissertation.

sense of security. However, because of cost, streetlights tend to be white – which are associated with horror and violent movies. In this same aspect, a common practice in Latin America is having open *bares* where men gather to drink and socialize on a daily basis often intoxicated and blocking streets and catcalling women passing.²⁵ Walking females need to zigzag around drunk males in their crossing, normally choosing to detour from their path, creating an internalization of an unjust geography. Small urban planning choices such as ground drainage grates in sidewalks are also a clear example of male dominance in architecture.

In terms of movement infrastructure, public transportation nowadays in big urban centers optimizes flow for people who are inserted into the capitalist market of production or the paid labor force. These designs exclude people that are making local journeys or journeys for pleasure. This has a social implication, since people (in most cases women) with caretaker responsibilities are excluded from these economic choices and in consequence, their movement becomes more of a challenge.

Since women are still expected to have a bigger role in the caretaking of children and the elderly, there are other clear examples that we can find. The very basic idea of a city divided between residential and commercial areas is one that does not consider women caretakers. Childcare (daycare and schools) should be accessible and offered close to commercial areas, where women can easily get to work and stop by to breastfeed

²⁵ This makes reference to my personal experience growing up in Brazil. My mother would allow me to buy bread and milk alone in the neighborhood *padaria*, however, I had to cross the busy street twice to get to my destination and come back to the house. This was done on my mother's orders to avoid the *bar* where men gathered and drank on a daily basis blocking the streets and catcalling all women who dared to pass through in their space. This use of the public sidewalk and the laws that allow it, can be easily related to an urbanism that excludes the female experience.

or check on children during break hours. In an inclusive urbanism, we would see wide sidewalks accessible to strollers and wheelchairs. To think about an urban center for all, we would think about a place where mothers and people with disabilities are offered help to get off of a bus; have access and are welcome to freely enjoy all public spaces; and have shade when standing and waiting for public transportation.

Jenny Donovan (2018) explains that the compassionate city for all would look a lot different than the ones we have right now, because it would consider the necessities of all. In parks, which should be built for the enjoyment of both children and adults, parents should not have to worry about the security of their children. For example, a duck pond in a park should not be deep enough at the edges that parents have to worry about the safety of their kids. These spaces should not be dangerous to the very people they were built for in the first place.

Another example is the segregation of parks by usage. Research shows (Donovan 2018) that girls play in parks less than boys after 5 years old. Donovan suggests that this could be solved with parks segregated by activities. While males tend to be more active, ball throwing, running and tagging can be intimidating to other kids (in general girls) that like to picnic or play less active games. Creating multiple areas for different types of play in parks would allow less active kids to feel more included in those areas. That would mean, no playing soccer on the playground and no running in a picnic grass area. Urban architects and engineers should understand the social impact of their urban design, not just on big corporations, but on individuals and communities.

The fears and lack of sense of belonging that women experience in city streets are undoubtedly the result of social patriarchy, however, they are also a reflection of urban

infrastructure. The inclusive city is about not just the lack of violence or animosity, but also the city where women and minorities feel safe and welcome, a city where we can find more green and less concrete; more streets and public parks named after women and after minority leaders; more monuments dedicated to women's and minorities' causes; more public tables for socialization and less sidewalk interference from privately owned restaurants; a city where interactive street art is available for all and enjoyment is free; a city where we are more turned to the green and local, instead of grey corporate buildings.

Initiatives of inclusive urbanism, such as participatory democracy in small towns in Brazil and Nicole Kalms' community project at Monash University, where a system of mapping is created, where women have the chance of tracing, locating, and reporting their good and bad experiences in an urban space based on their experience will be discussed in the conclusion of this dissertation, where I present social practices for the language and literature classroom. The intention is to close this dissertation with an optimistic connection between the literary texts analyzed and the classroom uses of these texts for a production of a just urban re-construction.

Working class immigrant women and minorities are an active part of the urban fabric. They are always seen on streets, going and coming from work, or shopping. Inclusive urbanism proposes to make cities that are designed by them and for them. These concepts cannot be detached from the practice of storytelling and narration. Narratives that describe marginal and female characters as enjoying, constructing, and owning their urban movement is part of the project to build such spaces. Again, the right and privilege of being a *flâneur/flâneuse* is the connecting element of all these narratives chosen here.

This Dissertation: Chapter by Chapter

Migration and movement have always allowed for the space of self-creation, cultural hybridity, and debate about political inclusion. These are the geographic and symbolic spaces under discussion throughout this dissertation. In the next pages, I will offer a discussion of each one of my primary sources chosen and develop how they are representations of one's trespassing and transcendence of conservative ideas about marginal and feminine space in urban society.

In chapter one, I look at *Esperanza's Box of Saints* (1999) by author María Amparo Escandón, a Mexican-born U.S. citizen. In this novel, Esperanza is a Mexican woman living in a conservative small town close to Tijuana. Losing her husband years ago, she knows how to behave like a perfect old-fashioned widow, taking care of her teenage daughter with her sister-in-law, who is also widowed. However, Esperanza's world is transformed when she is faced with the mysterious death of her only daughter, Blanca. Balancing on the thin line between life and fantasy and sanity and insanity, the widow receives a divine message that her daughter is still alive and was sold in a border prostitution deal. Esperanza packs her luggage (a box of saints) and crosses the Mexican American border in search of her daughter and her own self re-creation. During her quest, she constructs new spaces for women in between countries and cultures; between the pure and the sinful; and between the public and the private. Esperanza's independent movement through new urban spaces empowers her story and her subjectivity. At the end, she is liberated from places of oppression (symbolic and geographically). She not

only finds her new self and her daughter, but also her sexuality. In *Esperanza's Box of Saints*, I add the importance of female movement in an immigrant narrative constructing her own desire path (a concept that will be explored in chapter one) and developing herself as a sexual being. I also focus on her liberation from the rural Mexican patriarchal tradition during her journey and her previous domestic reality in contrast with her newly conquered public space.

Chapter two explores two coming-of-age contemporary Caribbean-American border novels. In *American Street* (2017) by Ibi Zoboi the protagonist Fabiola is a Haitian American teenager who was born in the USA but raised in Haiti because of her mother's immigration status. When mother and daughter decide to come back to the United States, they are challenged with family separation, a theme extremely relevant in current American politics. The two female characters in the text represent the contrast: the daughter with free urban movement and the mother incarcerated and immobile in an immigration detention center. Fabiola stays with an aunt and a cousin in Detroit and quickly has to learn how to negotiate her American citizenship and her Haitian heritage. She becomes a hybrid character who builds her own space in between cultures, languages, and spaces. At the end of the novel, after her big adventure through the streets of Detroit, Fabiola saves her family, sets her mother free and becomes a woman who claims her space as an American citizen.

Similarly, the second book studied in this chapter, *Dominicana* (2019) by Dominican-American Angie Cruz, is a strong construction of a newcomer as a *flâneuse*. I chose to examine these texts together because they are both coming from Caribbean American authors representing Caribbean immigrants in the USA in the process of

coming-of-age and discovering their symbolic and geographic space as newcomers. Ana, the protagonist of this narrative, is a 15 year old Dominican that arrives in the USA after marrying a much older man. In the first part of this novel, Ana watches life as it passes from her window in New York City, being entrapped and abused by her husband. Her initial stagnation contrasts with the freedom Ana achieves in the second part of the book. When her husband leaves for a trip, Ana is alone to explore the urban life and experience the streets. In the process, Ana studies, works, falls in love, and becomes a woman. In an ending similar to *American Street*, Ana achieves her independence and frees herself and her family from her husband's oppressions and the geographic challenges imposed on them.

Additionally, in chapter two, I look at Caribbean immigration history and intersectionality theory to discuss how race and politics add another layer to the oppression suffered by Fabiola and Ana. I defend that these elements make their journey even more meaningful, where the young female black immigrant body becomes a flag on the claims of rights. I discuss how authors give us these two young strong protagonists and affirm their claims to American urban territory.

The third chapter expands the concept of border to symbolic and physical forms of urban segregation. I look first at a short story collection and then at a mockumentary. In both works, protagonists Dildu and Vário and authors Queirós and Andaraí are members of a newly established social class C in Brazil, having access to symbolic and geographic spaces that were previously only used by upper social classes. Their journey, exploring and claiming their belonging in a new territory, can easily be associated with the works from the previous chapters, since they are both also newcomers affirming their

knowledge of and belonging to the new territory. *A Máquina de revelar destinos não cumpridos* (2009) by Vário do Andaraí is a series of short stories by a taxi driver, where he observes, narrates, and constructs the space of Rio de Janeiro. Vário transits freely and creates his own mapping of the city area, denying the common imaginary of Rio de Janeiro as a divided city, where favela and center do not connect.

In the same chapter, I explore the mockumentary *A cidade é uma só* (2013) by Ardilely Queirós. In this narrative, Dildu, a poor black man living in Cielândia,²⁶ is not content with the geographic and symbolic restrictions socially imposed on him. He buys his own car; runs his own local political campaign; and strolls around all urban areas of Brasília. Several elements of this work symbolize the power that comes with mapping and knowledge of one's territory, affirming his individual and by extension, black people's collective right to the city. I focus here on Brazilian political elements that transform marginal transit into a political act and how symbolic hierarchy can be transformed into physical urban walls.

With the intention of transcending theory, the conclusion to this dissertation will combine pedagogical materials and practices and Jenny Donovan's (2018) practical ideas for the inclusive and compassionate city. I will offer suggestions for classroom assessments and activities that make students (and teachers) think about inclusive citizenship and the political power of movement. My goal is to prove that these texts are a door that can serve to promote understanding and discussion about rights and citizenship in our local communities. When young students are driven to see urban space as their own territory, they gain empowerment in relationship to their own rights as world

²⁶ One of the many satellite cities, or how the periphery of Brasília is called.

citizens. In these activities and assessments, we will be mapping the community we are inserted into (in this case, Albuquerque, New Mexico) through personal stories and experiences, developing not only language skills, but also social responsibility practices.

CHAPTER 1:

Trespassing Borders and Transcending Tradition in Mexican American Literature

She stopped at a tourist information center downtown, picked up a map of California, and sat at a small restaurant to have a cup of coffee and sweet bread. [...] She highlighted the name of every city that got her attention: San Francisco, San Luis Obispo, San Clemente, Santa Barbara [...] “My saints are waiting for me in California”, she said aloud. (Escandón 155)

Lines, walls, and borders have always been part of human social configurations. The protection of some against the foreign *other*, our need to organize as well as shield people and possessions is a concept as old as human history and it did not have its origins in the US-Mexican border. However, the need to trespass, to transcend, and to break such limitations is also part of our social need. While the formal city is geographically organized through paths, roads, and walls, the informal urban fabric grows full of desire paths, or pathways created as a consequence of natural human experience that do not follow formal urban organizations. These desire paths express human aspiration for freedom and create a new poetic humanized mapping of our metropolis. They symbolize the pedestrian need to re-create a sidewalk that differs from the formal limits imposed by society. While this is an architectural term, it is a carrier of deeper meaning, connected to human creativity and the ability of humans to change and create spaces.



Figure 1: Desire paths (Kurt Kohlstedt. 99% Invisible.org)

This chapter will follow this need for geographic construction and human physical and symbolic freedom. More specifically, I will be looking at women's movement through international border crossing as well as female identity construction/re-construction. I will examine at María Amparo Escandón's novel *Esperanza's Box of Saints* (1999) and argue that it follows a trend in Mexican border literature, where female subjects trace their own desire paths in border towns (between the USA and Mexico), being agents of their own mobility and destiny. I argue that, as Francesco Careri (2002) suggests acts of transit often express the desire for existential change. The act of walking converts itself into a social dis-order, liberating the subject

from restricted spaces and allowing him/her to create his/her own path, not only physical, but also existential. In this story, Esperanza's journey becomes her search for autonomy and self-re-construction, involving a metamorphosis through the development of her own sexuality and liberation from social-cultural practices. Her trajectory crossing the border is transformed into a break with forms of tradition (cultural and geographical) that restrict female subjectivities in Latin America. Her box of saints is transformed into a fetish, in which she bases her sexuality. As in the myth of Pandora's Box, once the true content of her box is revealed, her sexual being is liberated and unable to once again be confined and hidden inside the small box.

This chapter is divided into three parts. First, I will construct Esperanza's journey and comment on her physical movement through urban areas. I argue that the novel constructs an inclusive female urban geography where Esperanza freely transits, discovers, and at the end achieves her autonomy. In this sense, the book claims the right for a female collective to create and inhabit either side of the border. Second, I will focus on the metamorphosis she experiences while traveling and the symbolic breaking of borders such as patriarchal society and the Catholic church. I argue here that her physical movement can be related to her desire to re-construct her own self from a domestic widow to an autonomous, sexual being. I bring to attention, how in several texts, we can see border crossing as a symbolic female identity change/empowerment. Third, I will discuss the metaphoric use of symbols in this novel, including her box of saints, and how it represents her transcending from Mexican traditions that restrict women to a domestic regulated realm into a public self-directed individual. I defend that in this magical realist

novel, fantastic symbols and humor are used to deconstruct Mexican patriarchal traditions and as a form of activism for liberation of the female body.

Trespassing Space

The analysis of what social architecture calls desire paths helps us understand the need for humans to trace their own path and how this is connected to a sense of human freedom. Desire paths are lines created as a consequence of natural human experience. They do not follow social rules and they happen in a context almost as defiance to order. They express a human necessity to transcend, trespass, and re-create their own route. A clear example of desire paths is pedestrian driven landscape erosion as a result of people following their own track and not the one established by formal social organization.

In this chapter, I chose to relate border crossing to the creation of desire paths, interpreting it as a human need to express oneself when transiting and occupying physical spaces. Border communities experience a disconnection between formal structures of organization and their lived experience. In this reality, crossing the border between two countries becomes, as Laura Nichols (2014) explains, the expression of a collective desire and an imprint on social structures. Here lies the importance of reading and analyzing works of border crossing. They are not merely individual narratives, but instead, a collective claim based on lived experience and a claim for change in normative patriarchal elitist structures that are reflected in our geography. Gloria Anzaldúa (2012) touches upon the same idea when she calls the borderland a “vague and undermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary” (25). When faced with unnatural boundaries, that are simply expressions of power relations, humans often

appropriate them by transforming them and giving them some type of collective meaning. Because of these appropriations, we see manifestations such as desire paths or even Do-it-Yourself urbanism, which are unauthorized, grassroots, citizen-led urban interventions that have the goal of reclaiming urban spaces outside formal structures (Heim, 2017).

Esperanza's geographic journey across the border (as well as the act of narrating her experience) is an unofficial expedition through geographic borders and it can most definitely be read as one of these collective statements. The way she uses, constructs (through desire paths), and narrates the geography is extremely political and it expresses a desire for a more inclusive urbanism. In the following pages, I offer examples of how Esperanza transits and breaks from formal configurations of her geographic and symbolic spaces.

Esperanza's Box of Saints is a magical realist²⁷ narrative following the trajectory of Esperanza, a beautiful Mexican widow, after the mysterious death of Blanca, her 12-year-old daughter during a simple tonsillectomy. The book, full of humor, religious elements, and passion, starts when the protagonist receives a sign from saint Judas Tadeo that her presumably deceased daughter is in fact still alive. Convinced that the teenager

²⁷ María Amparo Escandón explains on her personal website and in an interview: "I call Magical Reality my subtle departure from Magic Realism for lack of a more accurate term: I describe unexplainable incidents from the real world that can actually happen. To illustrate the point, here's an example of the difference: in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (Gabriel Garcia Marquez 1967) the blood of Úrsula Iguarán's son travels across town to notify her of his murder. Although the blood does exist, it does not have a will of its own. This would not happen in the real world. In *Esperanza's Box of Saints*, on the other hand, Esperanza witnesses an apparition in her oven window in which Saint Jude tells her that her daughter is not dead and instructs her to find her. This event may be improbable, but not impossible. Millions of people have claimed to have visions of saints, virgins, and dead ancestors. Factual minds question apparitions but cannot prove their inexistence. That's what I mean by Magical Reality" (Mujica 2001).

was kidnaped and sold in a human trafficking prostitution scheme, Esperanza embarks on a journey through brothels in Tijuana and Los Angeles in search of her daughter. She ends up working in these spaces as a cleaner and a showgirl, but never trading sex for money. Clients can sometimes touch her and look at her for their pleasure (through a sex-o-scope), but they do not cross her boundaries, Esperanza is in control of her body throughout the entire narrative. She also does not experience imprisonment in these spaces, she is in fact, portrayed as an autonomous subject that is using the space of brothels in the search of her daughter.

She crosses the Mexican American border, finding not Blanca, but another geographic and symbolic space, which she makes her own. The story in this book is told in first and third person, through narration by a third-person omniscient narrator, Esperanza's letters to her sister-in-law Soledad, Blanca's diary entries, and the small-town priest's confessions. All these different points of view construct Esperanza's journey and narrate her quest.

We start this novel in the city of Tlacotalpan, a space of conservative customs, where Esperanza lives a modest old-fashioned life as a young widow. The location of the narrative offers us an immediate connection to a Mexico of tradition and colonialism, since Tlacotalpan was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1998 for its historical architecture. This scenario hints that Esperanza lives bonded by the heavy weight of Latin American conservative practices and the legacy of colonialism, which here are represented by formal historical architecture sites.

In the first scene, Esperanza is confessing in church and while doing so, we learn about her life and losses. She works in a hardware store, has a good relationship with her

small community, is a fervent Catholic, and lives with her *comadre* Soledad, also a widow, in a relationship of interdependency. After they both lost their husbands in an accident, they joined in grief raising Esperanza's daughter, Blanca. Esperanza's life is surrounded with the normative tasks of a traditional woman – cooking, cleaning, and childcare. In the beginning of the book she is mainly seen in the church and in the house, her spaces of security.

Being a model of a conservative Mexican woman, Esperanza's journey can only be accepted as a quest to recover her daughter, who supposedly died of a rare epidemic after a minor surgery. After having a vision of Saint Judas Tadeo in her dirty oven, she is convinced that her daughter is alive and was actually captured and sold in a cross-national prostitution market. Following the direction of the holy apparition, Esperanza gathers a box full of statues and images of saints and starts her journey into the wide and sinful world of brothels in Alvarado, Tijuana, and finally Los Angeles.

In the beginning of her journey, when Esperanza arrives in Tijuana, we have a naïve country woman confused with the big city, who in the first moment is robbed and fooled by a young girl. The Mexican city Tijuana is the first big contrast between the protagonist's conservative provincial life and the outside world. During the 1920s, Tijuana was labeled Satan's Playground by the conservative preachers on both sides of the border. In the book *Satan's Playground* (2010), Paul Vanderwood affirms that in that time, the Catholic church would put up signposts along the road to Tijuana, warning people that they were headed for Satan's Playground and down below (in reference to hell). This reputation was possible because during this time, the United States was going through an era of prohibition, when it seemed everything was illegal up north (gambling,

drinking, dancing too close in public, etc.), but everything was possible south of the border. As time passed, even with the end of prohibition in the USA, Tijuana was already bonded to its image as the place of sin and sexual and addictive desires for Americans crossing the border.

In the narrative, Esperanza experiences a noticeable cultural shock when arriving in this new sinful reality. However, through her journey, she becomes more comfortable with the urban setting, stating her autonomy while transiting and belonging while showing her knowledge for the territory. In the following passage, already in the Mexican border town, she plans her trip to the United States with a high level of comfort and enjoyment. She also states her familiarity with the upcoming space when highlighting the name of well-known saints in her map.

She stopped at a tourist information center downtown, picked up a map of California, and sat at a small restaurant to have a cup of coffee and sweet bread. With a yellow marker, she highlighted the name of every city that got her attention: San Francisco, San Luis Obispo, San Clemente, Santa Barbara, San Diego, San Juan Capistrano, Santa Monica, San Onofre, San Bernardino. “My saints are waiting for me in California”, she said aloud.

(155)

In this passage, she is symbolically reading the map as her own world and reality. She is becoming familiar and comfortable with the unknown. After the first urban shock, Esperanza learns the city. She is not intimidated by the world anymore or by the sinful prostitution houses she attended and worked in. She has adapted and adjusted to her new geographic location, making it her acquainted territory. The use of a map expresses her

intimacy with the new urban space and her capacity to learn and adapt. David Storey (2001) explains that maps have always been useful weapons in large political projects and have been used for centuries as tools to claim and maintain control over territories. In the author's words: "Mapping of a territory itself functions so as to enhance power sending out a message signifying control over portions of geographic space" (25).

Stating one's familiarity and belonging to a territory is a fundamental part of border literature. While physically serving to divide marked spaces, border towns are a place in between or a contested territory where cultures, languages, and politics merge producing what could be understood as a third country (Anzaldúa 2012). As will be discussed below, the borderlands form what Homi Bhabha would call a third space that breaks with the idea of a world divided in a binary (USA versus Mexico; good and bad; legal or illegal).

Néstor García Canclini in *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (1990) also relates movement to hybridity, emphasizing again the importance of this term to the understanding of border crossing literature. He states that hybridization consists of "sociocultural processes in which discrete structures or practices, previously existing in separate form (here, two different countries and cultures), are combined to generate new structures, objects and practices" (xxv). He adds that the action of constructing a hybrid subject (in this case Esperanza) involves movement from a previous situation – for example, a culturally homogeneous one like Tlacotalpan in provincial Mexico - to a hybrid situation. She is not simplified to one spectrum or the other, she is both and she moves in between physical and symbolic spaces. Esperanza is not just a mother or a typical prostitute. She also does not belong simply in Tlacotalpan or in Los

Angeles. She is in between identities and in between spaces and her journey is full of informal desire paths created by the protagonist herself.

Similarly, Homi Bhabha (2004) also relates the rise of social movements and social changes with the formation of hybrid subjectivities that are an alternative to a binary and theorizes about the third space in conjunction with hybridity. Bhabha in the article “The Commitment to Theory” explores hybridity as an alternative to the polarization and to the antagonisms of ideas (or to the binary oppositions of Western thought as analyzed by Jacques Derrida). He defines hybrid subjects as the ones that are “neither the One nor the Other” (10). García Canclini (2005) also adds to the debate stating that in a hybridization process, we see a mixture and appropriation of diverse elements. However, he adds that it is important not to confuse the term with the simple imposition of some cultures over others. With *Esperanza*, the crossing does not promote an Americanization of a Mexican woman, but instead, the creation of a new hybrid identity in between cultural, social, and geographic spaces.

When Homi Bhabha talks about the third space he presents it as a space where hybridity emerges – or where we see a production of cultural differences, of subjectivities, or of meanings, which hold characteristics of two opposing elements. It is not a physical space, but actually a spatial metaphor that challenges previous boundaries or segregations, embracing the terms and territories of two or more elements. It does not restrict itself to one element, and in this case, it does not accept a special segregation.

This hybridity is highly marked in Escandón’s novel in several passages. For example, when arriving in the United States, the protagonist’s client Scott Haynes explains to her that in California, the “confusion of identity created hybrid town names

like Mexicali and Calexico” (158). Or when talking about Angel, Esperanza states: “No wonder you are more gringo than a cheeseburger and fries” and gets the answer: “Yeah, but with a lot of jalapeños” (224) or even the symbolic location of the Fiesta Theater brothel, which was on the northeast corner of “*Pico* and Union” (168). The symbolic connection between streets’ names meeting and creating a hybrid corner is a common tool used by authors that symbolizes the fluidity of cultures and geographies and it will come up again in future chapters.

Another example of this type hybridity is the use of language transfer during the narrative. The English form of the novel, which was published a year after the Spanish version called *Santitos* (1998), both written by the author herself, often uses Spanish words when describing Mexican cultural elements. One example of this hybrid use of language is a passage where the protagonist states: “I was baking pollo al chipotle for the funeral guests” (14). Other uses of Spanish include words such *piñata*, *peso* (currency), *santitos*, *Blanquita*, *curandero*, and the name of almost all saints mentioned. While this use of Spanish vocabulary offers the readers a peek into Mexican culture, it also emphasizes the author’s own hybridity through language switching, implying the same bilingual skill set in the reading audience. It is also a break into formal structures (in this case language), like the protagonist Esperanza, María Amparo Escandón creates her own desire path through linguistic formal texts. As Gloria Anzaldúa (2012) also touches on her fundamental analysis of language in *Borderlands: La Frontera* (1987), Chicano language, as she calls it, is a living language creatively connected to the identity of being a Spanish speaker in a space where English is the dominant language. This language is part of an identity and communicates specific realities and values, which “are neither

español or *inglés*, but both. We speak a patois, a forked tongue, a variation of two languages” (Anzaldúa 77).

What is defended in this study is the way in which the use of symbolic breaks in formal paths (through language, geography, narrative, and character journey) signal a broader claim for an inclusive society. Bhabha states that the formation of a third space and the rise of hybridity is the moment of political change and that theory should work in conjunction with political intervention. It is a moment of negotiation, when society should address the existence of a metaphorical space in between two poles. In this sense, narratives about the border are political in the sense that they work with the idea of territoriality and belonging, negating the traditional image of the *frontera* as empty space.

Urban travel narratives such as *Esperanza's Box of Saints* are affirming a belonging that goes beyond the binary Mexico-USA. It transforms the (im)migrant and also the person that lives along the borders from displaced to grounded. Esperanza belongs in Tlacotalpan, but also in Tijuana, and Los Angeles. She belongs in the house, but also in the streets. By transiting with security and by drawing her own map of the cities she lives in, the protagonist affirms her place and her right to exist and transit in this third space (between Mexican and North American society and geography). Or as Michel de Certeau (1984) explains: “The occupancy of the body in movement, gesticulating, walking, taking its pleasure, is what indefinitely organizes a *here* in relation to an abroad, a “familiarity” in relation to a “foreignness” (130). Following De Certeau’s ideas, Esperanza’s urban movement can also be understood as a construction of her own geography that creates a new space in between *here* and *there*, a space where she can be and express herself in all her complexities.

Edward Soja (2000) states that making geographies always start with occupancy – or with bodily presence and the performance of the self. According to Soja, this performance would also involve the development of conflicts or new negotiations where one marks his/her own importance and relevance to the space in dispute. My analysis understands Escandón's text as the statement of a Mexican feminine body in transit, constructing her own Desire Path, and making her own geography.

The right to be able to actively occupy and construct one's urban spaces is part of the concept of the right to the city, as previously discussed. Lefebvre believed that the oppressor's systems deny the subjects' right to construct their own city and that changing that reality involved the right of citizens to construct their own social urban space. Harvey (2012) gives more emphasis to the political power of the right to the city by stating that to break with unjust social and political structures it is necessary to develop forms of appropriation of city spaces. This individual claim is translated into a collective voice that reinforces the presence of a Mexican community, more specifically Mexican women in North America, who have freedom to move and occupy both sides of the border.

Esperanza's mobility also adds another level for the understanding of shaping/constructing political spaces. Michel de Certeau (1984) states that the act of human passage becomes a process of appropriation and transformation of space, allowing the act of strolling to mark space. Francesco Careri (2002) defends walking as a social dis-order or a person's social liberation from spaces in which the hierarchy restricts them. The act of narrating the movement of newcomer characters in urban areas is a statement that their passage makes a mark and constructs the city space, as well as showing

autonomy and liberation from hierarchical segregations. In the case of Esperanza, her journey is the only alternative for her liberation, she not just abandons the life she lived, but she also ensures her right to occupy different territories that would not be acceptable to a conservative woman, for example the dark streets, the border, and the brothels.

Christopher Tilley (1994) defends that since space is a means (a resource in which actors draw their activities and performances) it also becomes strongly political. In addition to this idea, the space in-between, the third space, or the *frontera/fronteira*, also becomes political when transformed from a simple connector into a place of narrative. Certeau also reflects on the power of border narratives. To him, the frontier territory possesses a practical problem because it is a middle space, or a representation of a void. Narratives about border crossing transform this empty space into plenitude establishing it as a political agent.

While so many Mexican narratives focus on the hardships of border crossing, *Esperanza's Box of Saints* does the opposite. The crossing becomes simply a moment in the journey. In Tijuana, she seduces an American judge (Scott Haynes), who ends up taking her to Los Angeles in the trunk of his car. The choice of profession inserted into the character of Judge Haynes suggests the injustice behind the formal geographic divisions in space and once again legitimize Esperanza's Desire Path and her right to movement outside social and physical constructed borders. Scott Haynes is a character that represents the enforcement of order, breaking an unfair law.

The image of an immigrant enclosed in a confined space, like the trunk of a car, contrasts with the idea of movement and freedom, extensively explored in North American culture. Here, as in many other book passages, Esperanza is presented as the

collective and for those small moments, she loses control of her journey being physically restricted. Once in Los Angeles, Esperanza recovers her sense of autonomy and chooses to continue her journey alone, without Haynes. She calls it her “private quest”, denying her need for a male protector. She confirms her belonging and her right to stay in this new geography by comparing spaces:

The streets looked like Mexico. All storefront signs were in Spanish. So was the music coming from huge speakers in nearly every clutter store. People walking by spoke Spanish Newsstand sold magazines in Spanish. The smell of tacos floated on the sidewalk. (*Esperanza’s Box of Saints* 190)

She observed the city space and “felt light and comfortable in the United States” (189). She learns bus routes and street names. She concludes that while in Mexico, there was so much history and tradition, in the USA people walked faster and were lighter. This symbolic image discusses the weight of tradition, especially on Esperanza as a representation of the collective of Mexican women. In the following pages, she also becomes lighter, allowing her to also move faster and transit freely similarly to North Americans. Here, we turn to Esperanza’s break of with tradition and identity reconstruction.

Transcending Tradition

I already argued in this chapter that Esperanza’s physical movement states her and a collective knowledge, power, and belonging in the border space between Mexico and the United States – ensuring and claiming these spaces and territoriality. In this section, I

comment on her own identity movement and metamorphosis when physically moving and claiming different territories. I also analyze how María Amparo Escandón promotes a critique of women's treatment and designated space under Latin American traditions and formal institutions through humor and fantasy.

As previously pointed out, Homi Bhabha (2004) comments on the opportunity of elaborating strategies by being in the spaces in between and how this is related to the construction of new identities. Understanding narratives about women's border crossing between Mexico and the USA serves as an identity change claim. It can be understood as a symbolic liberation from limitations imposed by tradition. When women cross the boundaries between these two countries, they leave behind not only the familiarity of space (their social space as well as their physical space), but they are also breaking with societal norms. These include conservative ideas such as that Mexican women belong in a domestic realm, surrounded by domestic tasks, and a lot of times sanctified by their role as mothers.

Esperanza is a grieving widow and mother in a small town in Mexico. She transits between the home and the church space, she is vigorously religious, and lives with her sister-in-law since the death of her husband. She is the personification of a traditional conservative Latin American woman. She is beautiful, but she does not use her sexuality. As we learn in the beginning of the book, she keeps men away by always referring to them as *sir* and shaking their hands formally. She lives with her sister-in-law, who is also a widow, which completely denies their need for a romantic relationship after the death of their husbands because they complete each other. This gives them both, but especially

Esperanza, saint-like characteristics. She is the beautiful creature that, like a Catholic statue – can be contemplated, but not touched; it also suffers, but it does not have desires.

However, after setting the scenario, the book follows Esperanza's routine and starts to show that her nature wants to break with some of those traditions. We see an emotionally unstable Esperanza, who is mourning the death of her only daughter during a home funeral service. In the middle of her own pain, she still needs to fit her role and feed the guests and while she does this, something goes wrong. As she narrates in confession, she finds herself in middle of a family recipe going wrong in a chaotic dirty kitchen. She comments: "I would have been embarrassed if my mother had seen me." (15). Already, Esperanza is breaking from her role of a perfect housewife through these small acts of microinsurgency.²⁸ While Mexican and Latin American culture connects food making as a quality or/and niche of women, Esperanza cannot fit this practice anymore, as she is already, on the first pages of the novel, disconnecting herself from this controlling image²⁹ and trespassing symbolic borders.

In María Amparo Escandón's text, the *frontera* goes beyond the geography. She explores the borders in each of the Latina women's lives: social borders built by a traditional patriarchal culture. Geographic transit becomes a symbolic narrative for a

²⁸ Microinsurgencies (term created by Leila Lehnen 2013) are small individual acts of social defiance. These small acts are often found in literary texts as political symbolisms against marginality or systems of oppression. In *Esperanza's Box of Saints*, the protagonist's small acts often symbolize a bigger break and defiance against her assigned social space.

²⁹ As discussed in the introduction, Patricia Collins (2000) offers relevant ideas for the understanding of representations and social identity construction. The author believes that controlling images are stereotypes created to shape societal behavior and exercise cultural control. They can hide oppression by assuming that a certain group has negative trends as natural characteristics, which they are bound to. Collins explains that controlling images are transmitted by the media, popular culture and government agencies.

gender role reconfiguration. Here, by gender role, I defend that Esperanza also becomes a feminine figure between the binary. She is not an almost-saint-like widow in a Mexican community. She is also not a prostitute hyper sexualized as a Latina in the United States. She is in between spaces and stereotypes: she is a mother and an individual sexual being; a brothel worker and feverous religious individual; a widow that is able to love again.

The power of her political and symbolic space can be even more important when we compare the book to its motion picture adaptation directed by Alejandro Springall and released in 1999. When discussing the movie *Santitos* (1999), Escandón affirms that:

In the book she (Esperanza) is not a prostitute, while in the film she becomes one. The film's director, Alejandro Springall, and I had our biggest debates about precisely this issue: I wanted Esperanza to go through the swamp and come out clean. Alejandro thought that it would make the movie more dramatic if Esperanza actually became a hooker. Over the years, as I thought about our discussions, I realized that our divergent points of view were explained by the masculine view of women in Mexico: for a Mexican man, women are either saints or demons, virgins or prostitutes, their own mother or "the other women." I wanted Esperanza to be a departure from that amazingly constraining and demeaning dichotomy. (Escandón in Interview)

While Escandón was attempting to construct a complex female character that broke boundaries and deviated from conservative readings of female social roles, the male director pulls Esperanza into the dichotomy, simplifying her symbolic space inside

the narrative and Latin American culture in general. The movie simplifies and sexualizes Esperanza's character, as seen so many times in cultural productions.

The most prominent metamorphosis lived by Esperanza during her journey is the establishment of her sexuality and the way she transcends the idea of an asexual widow and mother. Gloria Anzaldúa (2012) in her account of her own life, reflects on how she had to leave and detach herself from her *tierra* and her *gente* so she could find herself and her own nature that was in her words: "buried under the personality that had been imposed on me" (38) by the powerful cultural tyranny of men. She develops this idea by explaining the patriarchal Latin American culture:

The culture expects women to show greater acceptance of, and commitment to, the value system than men. The culture and the Church insist that women are subservient to male. For a woman of my culture there used to be only three directions she could turn: to the Church as a nun, to the streets as a prostitute, or to the home as a mother (Anzaldúa 39).

Esperanza's travels can also be understood in these terms. While shown at first as an almost saint-like, woman whose suffering is presented as a religious penitence, she soon detaches from this constructed image and leaves her town in search of her daughter or her own new self. Debra Castillo (1992) reflects on Jean Franco's diagram that divides Latinas into four categories: the mother, the virgin, the not mother or virgin (whore), and the mother virgin (Mary). Esperanza's character seems to be playing with these socially determined constructed images (Collins). She is an untouched prostitute and a mother

without children. She is breaking the borders of tradition and constructing a new possible female subjectivity.

The magical realism, or magical reality as the author calls it, of this book drives readers to constantly question the legitimacy and sanity of the protagonist and the narrative. Debra Castillo (1992) also discusses the madwoman – a very important stereotype for this analysis. Castillo observes that the domestic confinement of Mexican women is historically required by the Catholic church as well as formal institutions to insure purity of Spanish blood in society. Women that transcend this domestic realm tend to be seen not merely as racially impure, but also receive the label of madwomen. *Esperanza's Box of Saints* plays with this notion through the use of humor and magical realism. The protagonist's life and actions are at the border of the absurd, making the reader question if in fact Esperanza has lost her mind after the death of her daughter. For example, she sees and talks to saints, she believes her daughter is alive, she falls in love with a TV character, and she is a prostitute that does not allow herself to be touched. The critique proposed in María Amparo Escandón's novel lies in the fact that like the conservative community, we as readers are also connecting the transcendence and breaking of the established social order to female individual madness. In the end of the narrative, one does not question anymore the death of Blanca. The common assumption is to consider Esperanza a madwoman. However, some mysteries in the book are never solved such as the funeral made with a closed coffin, the disappearance of Blanca's doctor after the death of the girl, and finally the finding of her empty coffin indicating no body. The open end leaves us to decide if the protagonist has in fact gone crazy or if there was in fact a cover up of some type of crime committed against the girl (maybe as Blanca

previously predicted, to sell her in prostitution in the border between countries). In the end, the journey and the tragic losses of Esperanza (husband and daughter), actually liberate her as a woman.

Debra Castillo and María Tabuenca (2002), in *Border Women: Writing from La Frontera*, reflect on other examples of how motherhood and feminine identity has also been historically used as a tool in breaking unjust gender lines. They cite the example of the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo and how they made use of their role and eternal suffering as mothers to communicate a message and fight against political oppression in Argentina. In Escandón's text, we have the deeply sad story of a mother that loses her daughter; however, the use of humor changes the whole perspective. Esperanza enacts her role as a mourning mother to break from traditional geographic and gender boundaries. Since according to tradition, mothers are eternally portrayed as beings that abnegate all for their children, Esperanza travels through borders and whore houses in search of her daughter going through comic moments discovering her new hybrid identity in between spaces and cultures.

As suggested, as part of the identity as a mother is the idea of a desexualized female. While mothers are almost sanctified, they are also denied their body as sexual. The body that has birthed becomes a tool for the experience of nurturing. Once it has grown a life it becomes unable to be used for self-pleasure. Esperanza's journey breaks with this concept, as she works at first cleaning brothels (Alvarado), then, as an untouched prostitute (Tijuana), and later as a showgirl (in Los Angeles). While doing this, she does not feel guilt, she rather uses her body as she wishes with the intention of

achieving her goal (to get to her daughter). There is even a sense of self reward and pleasure expressed in the lack of remorse and normalization of sexual experiences.

While calling the Tlacotalpan priest several times, first for confession, and following, just to share her narrative, Esperanza does not show guilt for living in such promiscuous places. She, in a humorous way, always justifies her adventures by explaining that Saint Judas Tadeo is guiding her to find her daughter. In Tijuana, we start the protagonist's change. In the first brothel she lives in, she dresses and puts on make up to fit in so that she can pose as a prostitute. After going through the transformation, she faces her new image in front of the mirror and concludes that "to her eyes, she passed as a prostitute. The question was, "Is this the 'before sex' or 'after sex' look?" (100).

Marc Prieve (2012), in his analysis of *Esperanza's Box of Saints* as a diasporic narrative, defends that the protagonist's journey through brothels, meeting women who sell their bodies extends the *Latina* sense of femininity and works on constructing a "New Chicana" consciousness based on the ideas of Anzaldúa. Esperanza becomes this new multi-leveled Chicana. As Prieve points out, the protagonist's narration of those places of sin is "not condescending nor condemning" (588). She talks and relates with her colleagues and female boss in a humanized way and normalizes the space of brothels and their profession. Again, addressing the complex identities of marginalized groups – in this case, immigrant women working in sex industries in the USA.

Clara Román-Odio (2008) defends that the book *Esperanza's Box of Saints* goes further than extending the concept of Chicana, but also "interrogates and deconstructs static gender identities". Some examples are the inclusion of characters that blur the lines of sexual category. Some examples are Doroteo, the owner of Fiesta Theater and Doña

Trini and her personal assistant César, who according to Esperanza “seemed as if he had stolen Doña Trini’s femininity. Or maybe Doña Ana had stolen César’s masculinity” (*Esperanza’s Box of Saints* 112). Another clear example of a break in gender lines is Angel Justiciero, Esperanza’s lover, who is a strong wrestler with kind words, who lost his boots in a Cinderella moment. She walks in between empty rows of the stadium and picks up his lost boot, later giving it back to him during their first encounter. Angel, also crosses the borders of gender lines proving to be the delicate and sentimental piece in the romantic relationship.

Esperanza’s lover is also himself a representation of the sacred and divine. His holy name and his white outfit are what attracts Esperanza to him in the first place. She believes he is an angel sent from the heavens above and she cherishes and sanctifies him even before meeting him. While Esperanza’s religious altar is sexualized by other men, she is also transforming her own saint (Angel) into an object of sexual desire. This element of the narrative could be related to her own fetish of religious elements. Again, religion and spirituality are a big part of her own social restraint, but also the source of her feminine liberation.

Esperanza’s own femininity and identity becomes fluid throughout her journey. When one of the prostitutes, Flaca finds her on the kitchen floor crying over the loss of her daughter, this leads to one of the most symbolic passages in the book. Flaca clips Esperanza’s hair for the first time since the birth of Blanca and the loss of her husband.

As Flaca clipped away, Esperanza felt weightless for the first time in thirteen years, she hadn’t cut her hair since Luis was killed in homage to him. Her hair had been the one feature he adored the most. But he was

dead. Now she looked in the mirror and didn't see a widow anymore. [...] Esperanza rediscovered her neck, longer than she had thought. She pulled a tube of foundation from Flaca's makeup kit and applied it. Then, eyeliner, blush, lipstick. She had been practicing, and it showed.” (136)

This emotional passage develops the meaning of hair as one of the stronger physical signifiers of women's femininity. The act of chopping hair off marks a passage in the book, where Esperanza is freed from her socially imposed image of a desexualized widow. Hair is the element that shapes a woman's face, it tells her stories. Elizabeth Benedict (2015) explains that for a woman, hair is an entire library of information about social class, self-image, desire, sexuality, religion, values, and femininity. “A woman's hair is their glory”, points out the documentary *Good Hair* (2009) by Chris Rock.³⁰ Since her husband's death, thirteen years prior to her journey, Esperanza had not cut or put effort into her hair, wearing the waist-long hair in a braid, which also could be considered a symbol for her social restraints. The untouched and minimally groomed hair is a representation of her disconnection and disconcerting attitude about her physical image and the stagnations she faces. She does not invest in being attractive after her husband is gone because she disconnects her image from any sexual interest. However, the passage in the narrative where she lets go of this long mourning process symbolizes a resuscitation of her own feminine body and image. She is now freed from the weight of guilt, restraints, and Mexican tradition. As Soledad states in a letter sent to the sister-in-

³⁰ More on racialized thoughts on female hair will be discussed in the following chapter on Caribbean-American newcomer journeys.

law and begging her to come back home to Tlacotalpan, where she believes they are happy and safe:

You are not only wasting your time, you're devaluing yourself. Where is your integrity? Before, you wouldn't even dare to hang your underwear to dry out in the sun because you were afraid some man might see it over the fence. Now look at you. Showing your panties to strangers. (195)

Little by little throughout the journey, Esperanza finds and re-appropriates her own body and pleasure. By the end of the book, she finally discovers her full sexuality with Angel Justiciero, a professional fighter on World Wrestling Entertainment, who dresses in white with a belt with a huge gold medallion and a mask. Like Esperanza, Angel also lives in a fantastic world, suggesting that sometimes he confuses his *lucha libre* persona with the real self. In him, she finds real love and sex again, she has finally detached from the image of the Mexican widow and narrates the geography of her sexuality: "Esperanza and Angel first made love facing west. Then south. Then east and finally north. They couldn't get enough of their reflection in the closet's sliding mirrored doors." (216) Esperanza not only has power and knowledge over her geographic territory (by listing the coordinates), but also over the coordinates of her own body. Both, space and body become one and she finally masters them both in her favor.

The Narrative: Symbols and Form

Humor and symbols are literary tools used to break with the patriarchal traditions of Mexican literature and culture in *Esperanza's Box of Saints*. Without those two elements, this book would not communicate the claim of *Latina* liberation the same way.

Through these writing techniques, the book promotes reflection about Mexican/American immigration, formal family structure, the Catholic Church, and Mexican patriarchal tradition. It questions the readers' own values and stands and promotes a deconstruction of border subjectivities.

Román-Odio (2008) in her analysis of popular religion in Escandón's text affirms that globalization, mass media, and migration have transformed the relationship between women and religious authority. To the scholar, this is translated into the emergence of popular and local religious symbols. Saints, especially in border areas, are related to the local needs and people's own history. This way, spirituality becomes a source of "local power, identity, and acceptance not found in the institutional Church" (87). *Esperanza's Box of Saints* promotes this local religiosity by presenting a women-centered and community driven interpretation of Catholicism. (Román-Odio 87).

This women-centered Folk Catholicism in this book represents a feminine resistance that breaks with institutional Church tradition. Esperanza calls her religious images "her own saints", having conversations and arguments with them throughout the narrative. She constructs her own altar and uses it as her wish (as a prayer space and also a fetish to men that come to see her). The saints appear and talk to her, which also legitimizes her as a subject above the Church. During the book, we hear Father Salvador's own thoughts, who does not completely understand why Esperanza developed such a close relationship with God and questions his own connections in the middle of his sexual desires for the protagonist.

In terms of performance of gender roles, Diana Taylor (1997) in her analysis of performance in the Argentinian Dirty War³¹ explains how performance does not necessarily promote violence against women, but often does reaffirm power structures and hierarchies, however it can also contest these same forms of violence. After the dirty war, the performance of women in theater showed their sexuality by exposure at the same time it worked with the representation of torture and sexual desire. In *Esperanza's Box of Saints* we see a similar use of these elements. Esperanza is constantly performing her pain (as a widow and mother) and sexuality, blurring the limits between suffering and the erotic. The performance of these elements empowers the character and gives her autonomy and access as a martyr in a patriarchal society.

As part of the empowerment of Esperanza, she has her own religious autonomy that goes beyond her local Catholic church realm. In a clear example, she creates and incorporates her own saint to her altar: the picture of wrestler Angel Justiciero found in a magazine, before she even met him. Her power to create her own faith is symbolic of her resistance to formal rules and rigid structures. Again, she is navigating and creating her own authentic desire paths through life, geography, and religion.

Several examples of resistance to and critique of the church are found in the book. In a passage, Esperanza remembers the conversation with other women where it was said that because of a grammatical issue, only nine commandments applied to women.

“Nowhere did it say, ‘Thou shall not covet thy neighbor’s husband’ (66). While males

³¹ The period from 1976 to 1983 when Argentina was governed by a Military Junta, which imposed a dictatorship, cultural and political censorship, and the disappearances of around 30 thousand citizens.

are bonded to not craving the neighbor's wife, females are free to, again, express desire and sexuality according to this somehow feminist reading of the testaments.

Another example is Father Salvador, Esperanza's confessor, who is explicitly in love with her and, at some point, decides that he will give up the church to follow his desire for Esperanza. The two supposedly asexual beings – the celibate priest and the widowed mother – both become object and subject of carnal desire. When they meet for the last time, in upon the protagonist's regress to Tlacotalpan, the priest asks her if she needs to confess her sins and she responds: "At this point, I am even more confused about what a sin is and what isn't. I am sure I have much to confess, but I didn't come to do that." (243) Her statement implies that sins are a relative concept, as Esperanza explains and justifies so many times over the phone and letters to her *comadre* Soledad and the priest in her hometown.

Women Centered Folk Catholicism is also expressed by the image of Esperanza's "baggage" (Priewe 2012) or box that is carried though the places she goes to. While she starts the journey with two bags, the first one with clothes is stolen on the bus to Tijuana. What was left, was a cardboard box with Blanca's and her husband's pictures, the picture of a wrestling Angel torn from a magazine (Angel Justiciero), the Virgin of Guadalupe, San Judas Tadeo, prayer cards, statuettes, crucifixes, and candles. The loss of the first bag containing clothes can also be understood as a symbol of her liberation.

The protagonist's saints are symbolic of the ghost of her conservative Christian Mexican heritage and pieces of the homeland that she carries with herself everywhere she goes. They haunt her and also give her a sense of security during her journey into the sinful world of the brothels. Like the social pressure of her small community, the saints

are the absent, but present element. However, by the end of the narrative, her saints change their role and liberate her, becoming her symbol of sexuality in Tijuana and in San Diego. Her holy images, as well as her body, become exposed and transform into a fetish for men.

I've brought over twenty novena candles to light up from my saints. I put fresh carnations in a vase every other day. I've taped all the prayer cards to the mirror and placed the statuettes next to my makeup. The rosary hangs from the bedside. [...] Doroteo says his clients love my altar. (193)

When Esperanza leaves town unexpectedly, we learn from Doroteo that her altar was highly requested in the Fiesta Theater. The theater was the last brothel where the protagonist worked. There, she was never touched, but only observed by men through a sex-o-scope, or a hole in the wall. Esperanza always knew she was being watched and the eyes on the other side empowered her in a way when putting on makeup or building her altar. Men were attracted to the sense of purity, virginity, and innocence represented by the dozens of religious images around her room. As narrated in the previous passage, the altar starts to share space with Esperanza's makeup as also a symbol of her hybrid self. Again, she lies in between the border of sexuality and religious devotion.

Her box, which content is only revealed when arriving in the first brothel in Tijuana, can be related to the myth of Pandora's Box.³² The opened container in the myth is often interpreted as a source of trouble or a gift that is actually a curse. The opening and release of the contents of Esperanza's box also suggests the relationship between saints and sins and between gift and the curse of tradition. Her saints are her salvation

³² Pandora's box is taken from the myth of Pandora in Hesiod's *Works and Days*.

and her connection to her homeland, but they are also the weight of tradition that she must carry around, which finally liberates her, when they become the mark of her sexuality.

Ribas-Casasayas and Petersen (2015) explain that spectral criticism seeks to explain how ghosts are used in literature and represent the presence of the absence. *Esperanza's Box of Saints* carries ghosts and saints that represent not only the life of those missing, but also the traditions carried by Mexican American women. The authors discuss ghosts (and here I include Esperanza's saints) as the representation of something unfinished and unresolved. Those images that the protagonist carries, as well as Blanca in the end, are not dead or alive; past or present. They are a voice without the communicating body (Ribas-Casasayas and Petersen 2015) and they are also the representation of the border space, characterized by absence and simultaneously presence in the same way (Price 2004).

In Mexican border culture, it is common to find the popular sanctification of humanized individuals such as Juan Soldado³³ and Jesús Malverde,³⁴ images also carried

³³ Juan Soldado was Juan Castillo Morales, a twenty-four-year-old soldier convicted of and quickly executed for the rape and murder of eight-year-old Olga Camacho in Tijuana in 1938. Immediately after Morales's death, many people began to doubt the evidence of his guilt, or at least the justice of his brutal execution. People reported seeing blood seeping from his grave and hearing his soul cry out protesting his innocence. Soon the "martyred" Morales was known as Juan Soldado, or John the Soldier. Believing that those who have died unjustly sit closest to God, people began visiting Morales's grave asking for favors. Within months of his death, the young soldier had become a popular saint. He is not recognized by the Catholic Church, yet thousands of people have made pilgrimages to his gravesite. (Venderwood, 2004)

³⁴ According to legend, Jesús Malverde was born Jesús Juárez Mazo on December 24, 1870, just outside Culiacán, the state capital of Sinaloa. During Malverde's youth, railroads arrived in Sinaloa bringing large-scale hacienda agriculture. The profits of hacienda agriculture were enjoyed by the few elite while the vast majority of the population, the peasantry, faced even greater economic strain. Malverde is said to have

by the protagonist. This common tradition of humanization of holy figures (or sanctification of human figures) happens mainly because it makes them accessible connectors between men and God. Saints are on the border of the possible, the border between men and God and physical and spiritual. When they receive local and human attributes, they become symbolic connections between community and God, serving to people as interceptors of sacred requests and protection.

The idea of construction of local saints, with the intention of creating a sense of belonging also takes us to the end of this novel and the place of Blanca in the narrative. In the end, Esperanza receives a sign that Blanca, her deceased daughter, is still in Tlacotalpan, the place where it all started. She returns to the town in search of her daughter in the dirty oven. She is surprised to find Blanca in a rust stain from a leaky pipe dripping down in her bathroom wall. There, she sees Blanca's face and hears her voice. The protagonist finally concludes: "Blanca was not dead. Blanca was not alive. She is in that little space in between. [...] She's my own little saint, my little *santita*." (*Esperanza's Box of Saints* 245) Again, breaking with the traditional Church institution, Esperanza sanctifies her own daughter and re-invents her destiny by ripping off the bathroom wall and taking it back to California with her. With Blanca, Esperanza finally establish herself as belonging to a geographic and symbolic space. While Blanca is in between life and death, Esperanza is in between the U.S. and Mexican symbolic and physical space.

been a carpenter, tailor or railway worker during this period of rapid socioeconomic transformation. It was not until his parents died of either hunger or a curable disease (depending on the version of the story) that Malverde turned to a life of being a generous bandit who stole from the rich and distributed the plunder to the needy. (Chesnut, 2014)

To conclude, another good example of symbolism used by Escandón is the choice of obvious names of characters according to the roles they play in the story. Their names are already carriers of meanings and stereotypes that will need to be broken during the narrative. Esperanza is the mother who never gives up in hopes that her daughter is still alive. Soledad is the long-suffering widow, who in solidarity gives up on her own destiny to help her sister-in-law raise her daughter. Father Salvador is the image of the Church, who tries, but is ineffective at saving Esperanza from her sinful destiny. Angel is a good companion in Esperanza's life, but at the end is not the one that liberates her from her stagnations and restraints, since Esperanza achieves this by herself. Lastly, Blanca is the white and pure image of the perfect teenage daughter who in the end is sanctified.

Breaking Symbolic and Geographic Stagnations

Artificial geographic divisions that limit national territories are easily accepted by an outside population as an established truth. People commonly think about the United States and Mexican border as something pre-constructed while in fact, borders are fluid and unrealistic to local populations. Forced national borders often disrupt local communities, impact the environment negatively, and create human conflict and insecurity. The USA-MEX border has seen all the factors mentioned.

The geographic space of the border changed significantly during the nineteenth century, with the recurring occupation of Mexican land by the United States. The American monitoring through Border Patrol as a national force was created only in 1924, with more emphasis on the protection of land than human crossing. Only during president

Richard Nixon's government, in the 1960s, the region saw the creation of Operation Intercept, which was a strong sign of anti-immigration policy. In 1986, Immigration Laws were adjusted to allow people who had lived and worked for many years in the USA to apply for status as legal citizens. With that, we see a backlash and the increase of enforcement of punitive laws upon Mexican and Central American immigrants. George W. Bush's attorney general, William P. Barr — who also went to serve as attorney general under Donald Trump's presidency — extended immigrant detention centers and eliminated the right of due process for immigrants with any criminal background.

In the 1990s, with Bush and the fears brought by the international drug trade, we see the national military being placed in border towns, supporting local governments, and a political initiative called Joint Task Force Six. Through the years, this initiative had numerous negative consequences to both American and Mexican communities, increasing violence, destroying communities and the natural environments, and taking lives on both sides of the border. (Dear 2013)

Esperanza's Box of Saints was published in 1999, reflecting the fears, insecurities, and changes happening because of the militarization of the border. In October 1994, under the presidency of Democratic president Bill Clinton, the federal government announced what was called Operation Gatekeeper. This policy had the intention of dramatic militarization of the border through technological vigilance, as well as wall construction and wiring — the geographic artificial nationally imposed limitation was finally materialized.

Operation Gatekeeper happened at the same time as the signing of NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement between Canada, the United States and Mexico,

which was known for negatively affecting local agriculture in Mexico and causing thousands of people to be unemployed in the region. This new Mexican economic reality promoted by NAFTA triggered the increase of immigration to the USA, in search of better life conditions and jobs. (Dear 2013).

While written in this unstable era at the beginning of NAFTA and Operation Gatekeeper, this novel is still very much current. In the present world scenario of backlash against immigration and displacement - not only in the U.S. and Mexico borders, but across the world, works such as *Esperanza's Box of Saints* become politically engaged in the fight for equality of rights of all people and freedom of movement. It asserts their right to inhabit a space that was forcefully and artificially divided but still holds authentic cultural characteristics as a whole. In this book, literature crosses the boundaries of reality to create a new space (geographic and symbolic) where individuals crossing the border have the right to occupy and the right to create their own identities and their own representations in these new urban spaces.

Esperanza's Box of Saints tells the story of a woman creating her own Desire Path and space in between cultures, identities, and geography. The fluidity of movement is extended into the fluidity of subjectivity of the immigrant women. Esperanza, representing the collective, trespasses and transcends imposed social and spatial limitations. And by presenting this character, Escandón raises pertinent questions about the geographic and symbolic spaces that are today occupied by Mexican Female bodies in the United States. On that note, the author affirms the protagonist's right to trace her own journey and assures her belonging in different territories.

The breaking of barriers and crossing of borders has several meanings in this work – at the same time that geography is conquered, the female body is empowered, especially through sexuality. Escandón is not the only author to touch on sexual metamorphosis and the border. The works discussed in the next chapter *American Street* (2017) by Ibi Zoboi and *Dominicana* (2019) by Angie Cruz also present the fall of symbolic borders and feminine sexuality. In the short story book *Bajo la puente* (2008) by Rosario Sanmiguel, while several stories represent this idea, it is worth mentioning “The Other Room”. In this short story, the protagonist Anamaría, who also intensely observes, takes part in, and moves across the urban scenario, can only fully express her sexuality when crossing the Mexican American border. After her divorce, she moves to the USA and finds love with another woman. Years later, back in Mexico, she finds love again, on the other side of the hotel room wall - symbolizing her breaking of boundaries in different spaces. In this book, just like in the others mentioned, the idea of crossing borders and urban movement is intertwined with sexual discovery and liberation from patriarchal tradition.

In all these stories, geographic movement and crossing is followed by a desire to free oneself from societally constructed identity stagnations. The human need for movement is fulfilled despite barriers, restrictions, social rules, and especially physical and political walls. And while historically, physical urban and migratory movement is connected to masculinity, the female body, as in this novel represented, has been conquering its space outside the home’s restricted and safe environment and achieving the right to freely and independently walk the streets.

Baudelaire cited by Dawsey (2008) observes how, through art, the figure of prostitutes has been the closest female equivalent of a *flâneur* (this could also be related to Esperanza's hybrid identity). While according Dawsey, this reality was expanded with the introduction of late capitalism and department stores, that however would not give women the same role and rights as *flâneurs*. These narratives' characters not only independently observe the social urban fabric freely, but also ensure their belonging and knowledge over the urban territory. Women consumers are characters attached to the idea of consumerism and do not have the same rights and security as original *flâneurs* - they do not possess the same privileges. These new narratives that introduce women as *flâneuses* and not merely consumers, such as *Esperanza's Box of Saints*, demonstrate urban feminine movement as an opportunity for social engagement and enunciation (Cartier).

Esperanza's Box of Saints represents a struggle to ensure the inclusion of new subjectivity (immigrant women) inside the national plan, as well as their right to construct their own destiny and journey. Esperanza is not merely a marginal, working class character surviving in the city. In opposition to that idea, she is discovering, occupying, and mapping her own path. Escandón's book goes beyond the binary, suggesting - with the mobility of the protagonist - also the possible cultural, social, economic, and political mobility of a whole collective.

García Canclini (2014) explains that narrated spaces become an invention of the one who narrates them. In this sense, *Esperanza's Box of Saints* offers us the possibility of a new space, or a democratic portrait of our streets and sidewalks. In this new city,

there is space for a new type of feminine immigrant occupancy, one that is more fluid, inclusive, and autonomous.

CHAPTER 2:
**Trespassing Illegality and Transcending Childhood in Caribbean-American
 Literature**

The borders don't care if we're all human and my heart pumps blood the same as everyone else's. I try to walk a path that's perfectly in between. (*American Street*, 117)

My breath is finally in sync with the city's. I can hear sounds of music. A fire alarm, a police siren, a bus halting at its stop, a garbage truck backing up, and so on. (*Dominicana*, 226)

According to inside Federal American Government sources published by the media, in January 2018, the US president Donald Trump, in a meeting with political representatives from both Democratic and Republican parties in the White House, referred to El Salvador, Haiti, and African nations as 'shithole countries'. He also added to his racist discourse: "Why do we need more Haitians (?), take them out." However, these comments were not the first offensive remarks towards Haitians coming from the political leader of the United States. In December 2017, in a meeting about immigration, Trump stated that Haitians "all have AIDS", generalizing negative stereotypes and producing false information among the American people.

This current anti-immigration discourse promoted by the White House is one of the reasons why works such as *American Street* (2017) by Ibi Zoboi and *Dominicana* (2019) by Angie Cruz, teenager narratives that portray the urban journeys of a Haitian and Dominican young women in America, become a form of political resistance. In a time when racism, prejudice, and exclusion rule the political debate, the black female immigrant body that travels through the city and discovers her own space and belonging

is transformed from an individual immigration narrative into a claim to the rights of an entire group of people.

American Street is a novel about the journey of a teenage Haitian girl that by entering the USA is separated from her mother. After overstaying her visa years before with the intention of having her daughter born on American soil, the mother can no longer be accepted into the country years later and is held in immigration, while the American daughter (now a teenager) continues her voyage. Fabiola, the teen, ends up in Detroit, in an aunt's house where she travels through urban America, discovering not only her own adulthood, but also her space in this new territory. The book was one of the 2017 National Book Award Finalists receiving five star reviews. While it is a work of fiction, the author Zobi has very similar characteristics with Fabiola. She was born in Port-au-Prince, Haiti and immigrated to New York with her mother when she was only four years old. They lived together in a small apartment in Brooklyn and experienced firsthand the loneliness of urban America, which is very much present in *American Street*.

Dominicana (2019) by Angie Cruz is also a book about coming-of-age and articulating one's own physical and symbolic space. Ana is a young female newcomer that is forced at fifteen years old to marry an older man, Juan, in exchange for a better life in America for all her family. In 1965, in the middle of the American Vietnam War and the Civil Rights Struggle and Dominican Civil War, she moves with her new husband to New York City and similarly to Fabiola, Ana arrives in America as a scared, naïve child to eventually transform herself into part of the social fabric. In the first part of this book, we meet Ana Ruiz, a young teen who is trapped and scared in a NYC apartment, cooking,

cleaning, suffering abuses of a much older and alcoholic husband and observing the urban scenario from a window in her 6th floor Washington Heights building. She states: “I feel ant small among all those skyscrapers” (52). Juan makes sure to keep her inside the home locked up all day everyday assuring her about the danger of city streets. To him, the streets are not a place for a woman like Ana. “Don’t open the door to anyone. Don’t leave the apartment until I explain how things work around here. Keep the doors locked. Don’t be fooled, New York is dangerous” (56). He also keeps the teen locked up explaining that there is too much work to do with cleaning and cooking for her husband and his brother (Juan and César). Ana complains that she does not even have a key to the house because Juan did not have time to get it made. The book gives a detailed narration in first person of the city’s life through Ana’s window observations, as she examines the nature, the noises, the people and their movement and wishes she could be part of it.

Down below, the street lamps light up. In front of a showroom filled with cars, a young man shovels snow. He wipes fingerprints off the windows and stares into the store front with longing. They’re preparing to close. Above the store, the musicians in the building set up to play.

Already a line forms. Everyone’s dressed up. Maybe Juan will take me one day (58)

In her descriptions of the urban scenario, that she can observe from her window, she already behaves like a *flâneuse/voyeuse*, but she still does not have freedom of movement. However, as the violence and political instability increases in the Dominican Republic, Juan must fly to the country to take care of his business there, leaving a pregnant Ana in the care of his brother César. When freed from her husband’s physical

abuse and imprisonment, Ana finds herself in a constant geographic and self-discovery. With this geographic freedom also comes her personal independence. Ana starts going to English as a Second Language Classes (ESL), makes money selling food, and discovers romantic love with César. In the end, Ana makes her own choices, leaving both men behind and focusing on her family (including her baby who is born in the last pages of the narrative), and her independence. Angie Cruz, the author of *Dominicana*, also similarly to Zoboï, is a Latina-American of Dominican descent and her book in many ways reflects her family's own experience of immigration.

This chapter will accompany these two books and the movement of Fabiola and Ana as newcomers in the USA. First, it will discuss Haitian history and the recent immigration debate and policies in the USA under the Republican government of Donald Trump. Afterwards, we will briefly look at the history of political connection and interventions between the USA and Dominican Republic. With that, I will analyze how race is a key factor in the immigration process and how black newcomers deal with prejudices in a new land. Afterwards, I will turn to family separation promoted by those unjust policies and how Zoboï's work reflects this issue. Then, I will discuss the main themes of *American Street* and *Dominicana*: coming-of-age and belonging. I will discuss how the novels connect both of these metamorphoses in the life of Fabiola and Ana, the protagonists. Lastly, I will discuss the recurrent theme of this dissertation: movement and occupation. By analyzing Fabiola and Ana's urban journeys in pursuit/quest of their mothers and their own space as newcomers in the USA, I will argue that the protagonists conquer civil rights and achieve empowerment among the American streets, transforming them into their own territory.

Violet Johnson (2017), in an article about violence towards Black immigrants in America, states that race is the key factor in understanding Haitian immigration (and here I also add Dominican). This chapter defends this argument based on the idea of intersectionality developed by Patricia Collins (2009), defending that Fabiola and Ana represent intersectionality in themselves by being black female immigrants in America. While these books portray the life and movements of teenagers in America, they fall far from simple coming-of-age romances, dealing with serious issues surrounding immigration, race, and gender.

History and Immigration in the USA

While all American peoples, except Canadians and US citizens of European or African descent, are normally put under the same Pan-American label of Hispanics, Haitians history of immigration in this country has been marked by very different characteristics, not simply because of the language spoken,³⁵ but strongly because of their skin color and history. To comprehend the political power of Zoboï's novel, it is fundamental to trace this differentiated migratory experience. Haiti and Dominican Republic together form a Caribbean island³⁶ called Hispaniola. Haiti is populated by around 10 million people and is commonly cited as being the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. However, its celebratory history of black liberation is very often forgotten. Haiti slavery rebellion resulted in the creation of an independent nation that

³⁵ Haiti was first colonized by France and for this reason Haitian Creole and French are the country's official languages.

³⁶ The island of Hispaniola is divided between the Dominican Republic and Haiti, a factor that has influenced enormously the history of both nations.

lead to the creation of the first modern black republic and the second independent state in the north hemisphere in 1804. Up until the American Civil Rights Movement, Haiti was an example of black independence and strength for African North Americans.

However, white conservative America has seen Haiti from different perspectives, always focusing on the violent aspect of the expression “Black Revolt” and emphasizing the poverty that surrounds the region. The United States and France did not recognize Haiti’s independence until 1862. While France’s reason was to avoid the recognition of the defeat, America did not legitimize it earlier because the existence of a free black republic somehow challenged the idea of a slave trade economy, which the USA was based on. During slavery times, there were several emigration movements that encouraged African-Americans to settle in Haiti. Most Africa-American families that moved to Haiti returned to the US at some point due to linguistic and climatic issues, however, the Institute of Haitian Studies from Kansas University states that around twenty percent of free blacks from the northern United States went to Haiti before the Civil War in search of this utopian land where blacks ruled themselves. This connection between Haiti and America, both being the first and second independent countries in the Americas, started long lasting links between the two countries.³⁷

December 1906 marked the modern phase of the relationship between the United States and Haiti, with the start of a series of US interventions in the area. In an annual message to congress, President Theodore Roosevelt stated that “wrongdoing or an impotence which resulted in a general loosening of the ties of civilized society...” would require the USA to exercise an international police power and intervene in western

³⁷ Institute of Haitian Studies, University of Kansas.

hemisphere countries, meaning that political intervention was necessary in the Caribbean region based on the Monroe Doctrine,³⁸ with the intention of reestablishing stability in the region.

In the following years, Haiti was a politically unstable territory with a series of political assassinations and political coups resulting in six different presidents in a period of five years (1911 to 1915). Adding to the political instability in the region, by 1915, the German Empire owned companies and trade controlled around 80 percent of Haiti's external trade economy (Cwik, 2014), creating a system of economic dependency with the European nation. As World War I developed, the USA saw this relationship as a threat to the region and for this reason started to interfere politically in the area.

While Haitians are incomparable to most excluded Hispanic collective immigrants in America, the cruel regional history of violence and repression was directly promoted by the American desire for expansion and territorial dominance. Until 1844, the Haitian government had control over the entire island of Hispaniola and only in 1844 did the Dominican Republic achieve its independence. However, in 1906, the Dominican government signed a contract with the USA stating that the United States they had control over Dominican trade and customs for 50 years in exchange for its pardoning/paying its debt. During those years, the American government directly and indirectly took control over the territory, until 1930, when general Rafael Leonidas

³⁸ The Monroe Doctrine was a unilateral policy developed by the USA toward all countries from on the American continent. President James Monroe, in December 1823, stated that European countries should no longer interfere with and colonize American nations and that the United States would be in charge of assuring the independence of those nations. Throughout the decades, this doctrine was the baseline to explain American political interventions in sovereign nations in Latin America.

Trujillo Molina established a dictatorship and massacred 20,000 to 30,000 Haitian³⁹ citizens living in Dominican Republic.

After Trujillo's assassination in 1961, with the excuse of stopping the dissemination of communist ideas in the country, the USA invaded Dominican Republic, changed its constitution, and in many ways further contributed to ongoing instability in the region. US troops helped establish dictatorships in both countries, where people suffered systematic oppression, abuses, and censorship. As a reflection of this constant political instability on the island of Hispaniola we see an increase in documented and undocumented immigration from both countries to the USA.

Between 1971 and 1986, with the help of the USA, Haiti was ruled by the dictator Baby Doc Duvalier,⁴⁰ who promoted mass exile to North America of those fleeing from political persecution. During this time, Haitians had become, along with Jamaicans, the largest Caribbean group in the northern USA, while Cubans were predominantly in the Florida region. The mass Caribbean migration, and prejudices that followed, promoted a perceived need for separation and distinction of some against the others. With the intention of distinguishing Haitians from Cubans, institutional sanctions were implemented attempting to ensure that people from Haiti were fleeing economic poverty and not political oppression. A quick look into Haiti's political history of this time proves this theory wrong, since human rights violations were common on the island. However, Cubans had in their favor their lighter skin color and the fact they were running away

³⁹ Parsley Massacre of 1961.

⁴⁰ Jean-Claude Duvalier, also known as Baby Doc, ruled Haiti as a dictator for 15 years and was accused of systematic human rights violations that include money laundering, torture, killings, and violent forms of silencing political opposition (Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International).

from Communism (the USA's most feared enemy during the Cold War).⁴¹ This gave Cubans asylum status while Haitians and Dominicans were considered immigrants. Under illegal immigration policies, they were denied entry into the country and several were detained in Guantánamo Bay facilities (Johnson 2014).

Life in concentration/detention (as well as refugee) camps all around the world is often surrounded by lack of proper hygiene and poverty. Johnson (2014) explains that this reality led to a depiction of Haitians as a health hazard. In 1983, the American Center for Disease Control (CDC) publicly placed Haitians as one of the high-risk groups of AIDS carriers. They were the only nationality placed with the so-called 4-H group that includes homosexuals, hemophiliacs, and heroin users (Johnson 41). Later, in February 1990, the same government agency ruled that Haitians were prohibited from donating blood in the USA. The message contained in such a decision goes further than a form of exclusion. More than only being stigmatized for their color of skin and language, America was officially labeling Haitians as dangerous people. The suggestion that Haitian blood was impure goes further than just insalubrity; it also suggests the impurity of its history. This principle cannot be disconnected from the idea of black revolution – in its own way, the USA was delegitimizing Haitian history and blood.

Another important date in the relationship between the two countries was the implementation of the Temporary Protected Status (TPS)⁴² to Haitians and Dominicans

⁴¹ During this time, the USA was involved in a Cold War with the socialist Soviet Union. Several countries around the world served as scenarios to conflicts between the US and the USSR and their political ideals of Capitalism and Communism. The Caribbean area, including Haiti, was one of those territories.

⁴² Temporary protected status is offered to legal U.S. residents and undocumented immigrants when war, natural disaster or other "extraordinary" conditions temporarily make return to their native country unsafe. Foreign nationals can obtain work

affected by the recent earthquake. While Haiti was always a nation facing extreme poverty, in 2010, a magnitude 7 earthquake devastated the country killing between 200,000 to 300,000 people and leaving 1.5 million citizens displaced. Most of the country's structures such as schools, government buildings, and hospitals were also destroyed. For these reasons, then president Barack Obama declared the opening of TPS to Haiti and Dominican citizens affected by the disaster.

This policy allowed for the arrival of around 60,000 Caribbean citizens into the USA after January 2010, all currently facing removal from the country they have been living in for the past decade. President Donald Trump's cabinet announced the termination of the protected status by July 2019. The claim is that the extraordinary conditions presented by the natural disaster no longer exist, and Haitians should now be able to easily build a life in their own nation.

However, the revoking of the policy cannot be taken lightly. Within almost 10 years living in this land, Hispaniola nationals have married, had American children, built businesses, got degrees, and turned this land and its lifestyle into their own. An article in *The Guardian* (2018) narrates these resistance stories:

Monestime, 54, has similarly pledged himself to paying back a debt of gratitude he says he owes a country that provided opportunities unimaginable in Haiti, the poorest country in the western hemisphere. "I came here alone at the age of 17 and I put myself through school," he said.

documents, but the status does not "lead to lawful, permanent resident status." (Bacon 2017)

“I drove a cab in college to pay my dues because I wasn’t qualified for a student loan, and when my grades weren’t good enough for a scholarship.”

I started a business with a few dollars in my pocket and help from family and friends that’s grown exponentially. It has helped me put two sons through college and live the American middle-class dream, unlike Mr. Trump who was given a million dollars by his father and went bankrupt several times. I think mine is probably a more successful story, considering how low on the economic ladder I came from. (*The Guardian*, 2018)

Zoboi’s book *American Street* constructs some of the history of the Caribbean island. Fabiola’s aunt Marjorie (or Matant Jo) and her mother Valerie first arrived in the United States when they were teenagers. The aunt narrates that after Baby Doc Duvalier was gone, instead of democracy and freedom, the island was left broken and the two sisters alone went on an immigrant boat journey in search of their American dream. When narrating this history and story left behind, Matant Jo says: “But as thirteen- and fifteen-year-old girls, with no mother and father to watch over us, our bodies were like poor countries – there was always a dictator trying to rule over us” (Zoboi 168). By comparing the abused female black body to geographic colonization, the author is connecting space and belonging – ensuring the power of physical occupation as a form of resistance against any type of abuse. She uses this literary technique several times during the novel. Fabiola, through the narrative, learns that her body, her hair, and her

movement are under her own rule. She slowly becomes the master of her body and also her territory.

While the history of oppression experienced by Haitians in America is incomparable to any other Hispanic Latinos, the Dominican Republic and its people have also suffered enormously in American interventions. *Dominicana* narrates this painful history and the human desire to escape from violence. The narrative is set during the Dominican Civil War of 1965, in which Ana's beloved brother Yohnny dies a victim of the violence in the streets. The violence started when leftist democratically elected president Juan Bosch was overthrown by a military junta supported by the USA. Trying to fight popular revolt, in April 1968 the US military arrived on the island to reestablish order and ensure the implementation of a capitalist government in the traditions of the Monroe Doctrine, the Roosevelt Corollary, and the Cold War. Readers follow these historical accounts through Ana's family letters and Juan's accounts, when he goes back to Dominican Republic for three months to take care of his family's business. *Dominicana* presents history as contextualization for the need to move and for the characters to flee violence. First Ana, then her mother and younger brother desperately seek entrance into the USA as a way out of poverty and political instability.

The progressive empowerment of Fabiola, also illustrated by Matant Jo's story, Haitian history, as well as the struggle for freedom and movement of both Ana, her family and the Dominican Republic takes us to the next section of this chapter, where I will analyze the ways Zoboi and Cruz reflect on race and gender in America, or more specifically the experiences of a black immigrant female body in the USA.

Race, Gender, and Immigration

The black female immigrant descendent in the United States territory is an image of an outsider, or someone that does not belong in this space. *American Street* and *Dominicana* protagonists Fabiola and Ana's three fundamental characteristics - black, Haitian/Dominican immigrant, and woman - allows us to immediately recognize the lack of belonging of the protagonists and somehow predict that they will be going through a journey to find their own space. Fabiola and Ana are represented as the opposite of privileged America and throughout the novels, they need to discover how they fit in a new family, a new culture, and a new social position. As Patricia Collins (2015) points out:

As the 'Others' of society who can never really belong, strangers threaten the moral and social order. But they are simultaneously essential for its survival because those individuals who stand at the margins of society clarify its boundaries. African-American women, by not belonging, emphasize the significance of belonging. (Collins 77)

Collins, in an article about intersectionality, briefly pinpoints the differentiated interpretations of race in the Caribbean⁴³ and the USA. According to the theorist, in the North American country, we find color-conscious racism, grounded by historical forms of geographic/physical segregation. This segregation is applied to all aspects of social and cultural life. We could read this statement as an explanation for the intense cultural divisions and social norms between the two, white and black, races in America. That

⁴³ The author references Brazil and South Africa as the same type of historical race construction.

would include the way of dressing, speaking, and geographic segregation. In the Caribbean area, a very different form of historical racism takes place having at its base a system of colonization, slavery, and hierarchical structure, but not separation. This allowed a construction of an approach to race interactions as color blindness. In this reality, societies such as Haiti and Dominican Republic, build hierarchies around tones of skins, without putting emphasis on race, but instead on social class/group. In this type of mentality, darker skinned people are at the bottom of the hierarchy, not because of their skin color, but instead, because of their socioeconomic status. When living in misery is associated with social status and not race, poverty and exclusion become associated with lack of merit and not the lack of opportunity. Similarly to Brazil's myth of racial democracy,⁴⁴ in these societies, racism becomes somehow "hidden" and the idea of poverty becomes considered a simple result of the lack of will and ability.

These historical variations of racism would explain the differentiated racial mentality of immigrants in the USA. Black immigrants suffer a racial cultural shock when arriving here. However, Johnson (2016) states that they are increasingly adopting the self-definition of black Americans. According to the author, immigrants who arrived in early childhood and second-generation members can better understand racial issues in America and join forces with African-Americans in claims for racial justice. This transformation of race consciousness is demonstrated in *American Street* with the introduction of Fabiola into American Black Culture through her cousins, her boyfriend Kasim, and the gang leader Drayton. While Fabiola arrives in the USA as a young naïve

⁴⁴ Term developed on Chapter 3.

and lonely girl, as the book develops, the audience sees her transforming into a strong sexual woman who, as she says: “play[s] the part and puts[s] on the costume”, to achieve her goals. Ana in *Dominicana* also is introduced to her own racial awareness through her brother-in-love and lover, César, who is already more integrated in American culture and defines himself as a black Latino, involved in the Africa-American struggles of the 1960s. In a passage, Ana explains that César feels most at home in the streets of Harlem, where people look like him and “there is where he got the idea of letting his hair grow into a big puffball” (179). Other historical references also make Ana aware of racial tensions, such as the assassination of Malcolm X, that she could observe from her window, later calling herself Ana X.

Collins (2000) also touches on this issue from a feminist perspective pointing out that in a colonial context, often newcomers from black nations such as African countries and the Caribbean are faced with new social meanings when arriving in the USA. They have to process the different ideas embedded in the concepts of religion, race, citizenship, and ethnicity. This way, black women migrants encounter new forms of oppression in addition to gender related issues (which they are already familiar with).

This transition of racial imaginary is seen in *American Street*. While knowing Fabiola’s nationality from the first page, when we witness the separation between her and her mother at the US airport, the introduction of race only comes on chapter two. Alone in the new space, standing in the airport, Fabiola looks for her aunt’s familiar brown face. She states: “America is more colorful than I imagined. The people are a mix of white and not-white” (7). While this first mention of race is very simplified, as the book develops, Fabiola becomes more aware of her race, citizen status, and gender and how these

elements play a part in American culture. She learns by seeing and imitating her Haitian-American cousins.

While the book does not separately explore each of the factors (race, ethnicity, citizen status, and gender) that contribute to Fabiola's social position, it constructs the protagonist with the idea of intersectionality. Fabiola is transported from comfortable living and international schools in Haiti⁴⁵ to a low-income black Detroit community surrounded by violence, death, drugs, and poverty. She suddenly has to learn how to cope and live in such a different environment without her mother. I argue that presenting Fabiola's journey rising above these factors symbolizes a political empowerment for black immigrant women in America.

According to Patricia Collins (2000), the term intersectionality refers to a critical way of thinking about how race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality, ability, and age operate as a reciprocally constructing system that shapes social exclusions and inequalities. It goes beyond the mono-categorical focus of simply one type of inequality and introduces a system of layers that build up into social exclusions. Fabiola and Ana, as well as their families, are the representation of this concept, by being poor black immigrant women. On top of these levels of oppression, in *American Street* Pri, one of the twin cousins, also has a sexuality layer of oppression by being gay. As we learn through the story, this makes her the most feared and aggressive one of the Three Bees⁴⁶ since she constantly has to defend herself and her body from society.

⁴⁵ Her basic education and housing in Haiti were all paid by Matant Jo from America.

⁴⁶ The three Toussaint-François sisters are known in their neighborhood as the three bees, each sister characterized by an adjective starting with the letter B - Chantal (brains), Donna (beauty), and Pri (brawn).

In *American Street*, because of intersectionality, the character development of each Toussaint-François⁴⁷ woman becomes important - they could not simply fall into stereotypes, but rather show the complexities of being under many layers of oppression. When Fabiola is separated from her mother during an immigration inspection, she is sent to Detroit, more specifically to 8800 American Street, where her aunt (Matan Jo) and her three teenager cousins (the Three Bees) wait for her. While the life story and mystery around Matan Jo's work are important to the development of the narrative, the Three Bees are the key to comprehend the concept of intersectionality in the new country. Pri and Donna are the twins, one being masculine and aggressive (Princess, known as Pri) and the other one sexual and submissive to a violent boyfriend (Donna). Chantal, the oldest one, comes as a link between the American and the Haitian culture. "Creole and Haiti stick to my insides like glue. It's like in my bones and muscles" (116). She also tells Fabiola "...you force me to remember the home I left behind. You make me remember my bones" (116). As the story unfolds, we learn the struggles they go through as young black immigrant women in the USA and the violent ways they use to cope with it. Pri simplifies in a passage: "Chantal is the brains, Donna is the beauty, and me, I'm the brawn. Three Bees. The biggest, baddest bitches from the west side. Nobody, I mean nobody, fuck[s] with us" (45). As Fabiola later understands, they are this way because they not only have to protect their bodies, but also their name and story (173). The

⁴⁷ François-Dominique Toussaint L'Ouverture was a Haitian military leader (born into slavery) who conducted, in 1791, the Haitian Revolution for independence. In the narrative, the family's last name is a clear reference to the black leader, which is known as the greatest black revolutionary of the Americas. Again, giving emphasis to the greatness of Haitian blood and history.

Toussaint-François women do not simply transit in urban areas. They are presented as leaders or owners of the school and neighborhood. They rule the space they live in and all people around fear and respect their imposed power.

The girls are involved in a world of crime, violence, sexuality and drugs. Later in the book, Fabiola learns that all the money and community respect actually comes from money laundering and drug dealing, the main family business. At the end, with Fabiola's life completely transformed, we also see her own body and morals go through a metamorphosis. She will do whatever she has to do to protect her blood (family and mother). The use of the word blood as a reference to family is recurrent throughout the novel. This is a connection to history and the American perception of Haitian blood as impure. The novel breaks this image, by stating several times the importance and honor that comes with carrying Haitian blood in the girls' veins. The discussion of body symbolism is relevant in this analysis because it relates to the physicality of the black female body in the occupation of space. Their body and its descriptions connect history, identity, and space. Again, they are tracing marks and constructing a territory.

Blood is not only the corporeal symbolism used in these two novels, but also hair, one of black women's most discussed physical characteristics. Tracey Owens Patton (2006) examines the consequences of white standards of beauty on Afro-descendent women. To the author, throughout history, beauty has been determined by hegemonic standards of the ruling class and these so-called perfect white images have been internalized around the globe, even in Africa. Jones and Shorter-Gooden (cited by Patton) call this phenomenon the Lily Complex. This complex is responsible for black women's perceived need to change, disguise, and cover their own physical Afro-descendent

features in order to assimilate to the standard patterns of white European beauty. Black and white Latinas have adopted several strategies in America to express the Lily Complex and most of them are related to their hair styling. As Cheryl Thompson (2009) points out, the African hair contains emotive qualities related to opposing binaries such as natural/unnatural, good hair/bad hair, and authentic/inauthentic black.

While nowadays the practice of straightening one's hair can also be related to the history of black American culture, the oppression of these practices cannot be denied. Black women have historically ironed their hair for the sake of assimilation into standard white models of beauty. As Thompson states: "Black women [...] are asked not to just strive to attain mainstream standards of beauty, but to have such standards completely override [their] natural being." (854)

In *Dominicana*, hair takes on important role during the narrative. Each new person Ana encounters receives a hair description. In several passages, she references her own "thick and uncooperative hair" and she more than once references the difference between herself and her brothers and sisters (as well as Juan and his brothers) in terms of types of hair. During Juan's absence, Ana discovers the city as a *flâneuse* and in one relevant scene she observes:

I take long walks around the neighborhood. I go into Woolworth and study all the bottles of lotions and hair products. Write down the names of all the ingredients so I can later look up the translation (190).

In this passage, we are seeing Ana learning not simply a new language and geographic space, but also learning to own and control her own hair. The protagonist's final liberation from Juan's imprisonment comes also with a symbolic change in her hair.

I take the scissors from the medicine cabinet and chop half of the length off. The curls spring up around my face. All the dried highlighted ends from the sun back home are now gone. Suddenly my eyes look bigger. My neck naked. A weight off my head. Let Juan be mad. Let César think I look ugly. It's my hair (278).

Again, Ana's hair symbolically represents the weight of her responsibilities and the restraints that she faces as an immigrant black woman. Once it is gone, the weight is also gone and she does not feel like she needs to answer to anyone – not her husband Juan or her lover César. She owns her own movement and her own body.

For the protagonist of *American Street*, part of the process of becoming an American woman also requires the transformation of her black hair. As soon as she gets in the American Street, the first tender moment with her cousins is the one where Fabiola braids Pri's hair. There is not a lot in common between the cousins, however they bond through their most fundamental struggle: the brushing and braiding of the black female hair. Zoboï shows multiple times in the novel the connection between the young women through beauty rituals. The first time Fabiola goes to a party with the Three Bees, the girls conduct a makeover on Fabiola, so she would look less like an immigrant⁴⁸ or a Church girl. While Donna defends the adding of hair extensions for a sexier look for the boys around, Fabiola and Chantal opt for a more natural type of hairstyle following the guidance of a YouTube video, which according to Donna, makes Fabiola look like Rosa Parks. This comparison is extremely relevant. While the extensions and straight hair

⁴⁸ “Now I don't look so ... Haitian. So immigrant.” (*American Street* 138)

would give her a “whiter” and sexier look, the natural look is connected to black history and activism.

The transformation from an immigrant to a black American woman is complete in the hair salon. Fabiola finally agrees to long extensions that cover her own hair “It falls down to my elbows and it tickles the back of my neck” (179). She adds, “She tweezed my eyebrows and added fake eyelashes, too. Already I feel transformed” (179). In the same space, we experience the psychological pain that hides under these painful hair treatments with the pulls and turns. The fake extensions also hide Donna’s bruise marks from her boyfriend’s beating. Donna’s confidence and power disappears when the wig comes off, offering for the first time the image of a vulnerable teenager.

Fabiola’s introduction into the American culture and society requires a physical makeover and an emotional journey, but at the end, confident, she pulls out the extensions which have been constantly itching her scalp and releases herself, once again, from any form of controlling stereotypes. Fabiola can finally find her own space to be both Haitian and American in the streets of Detroit. She constructs her own symbolic third space. In the next section, we explore the metamorphosis experienced by Fabiola during her journey becoming an American and transitioning into womanhood.

Coming-of-Age and Becoming American

With human geographical border crossing comes an imaginary and emotional experience of transformation. It implies a changing and transformation of the self. Changing territories comes with the possibility of perceiving the self and being perceived

as a different being. By crossing not only geographic lines, but also symbolic limitations, humans acquire new subjectivities according to the space they are inserted in.

Similarly, coming-of-age is the phase where the individual develops awareness and discovery of the self and symbolic social-position. While each age comes with changes and human development, the passage to adulthood is marked by discovering one's value in the community and the questioning of existential interrogations such as "Who am I" and "Who do I seek to be". Novels that address this human transformation are not targeted solely at teenagers, but they mainly can be understood as tools that help teens' identity construction and sense of belonging.

Dianne Klein (1992) in an article about coming-of-age in Latino-American literature argues that while most coming-of-age narratives present white characters, the creation of immigrant Latinx subjects corresponds to an important change in perspectives that allow the awareness about the development of the immigrant self as part of US society. These novels offer a perspective into the search for identity of minority subjects. In the case of *American Street*, while society and culture define existential answers, both of these elements are unstable and this way the transition becomes a sensitive matter. The protagonist Fabiola is introduced to a new system of values and a new community at the same time that she approaches adolescence, and those factors change and transform her experience into womanhood. In the middle of the new territory, she struggles to fit into a space in which she does not belong, but at the same time remain true to her culture and history.

Dominicana could be read by teens as well as an older audience even though it has a teen protagonist. The social criticism carried in Ana's situations, for example, the

teen arranged marriage with an older man, her pregnancy, and her physical abuse are heavier themes which are directed of a more mature audience. Ana's coming-of-age seems to feel more forced than Fabiola's, especially because of her forced sexual experiences. However, her quest for independence and the development of her female empowerment are clear characteristics of a coming-of-age novel. Ana's marriage and first sexual experience mark her formal adulthood, but only when Juan leaves and she is free to express her independence by making her own money, going to classes, and strolling in the city streets, do we see her becoming a woman.

In *American Street*, Fabiola experiences coming-of-age through a series of rites of passage such as physical changes in hair and dress code, loss of her virginity, and change in space, but most importantly, through the loss of and search for her mother. It is relevant to point out that the protagonist's absent mother in this novel is also associated with to her Haitian blood and history. Upon landing in the USA, the protagonist is separated from her mother and sent to the house of an aunt and her three cousins. To free her mother from an immigrant detention center, Fabiola is invited by the police to participate in an operation to apprehend drug dealers in her neighborhood (which we learn involves her own family). Suddenly and unexpectedly she ends up having to become a woman, which involves the loss of her virginity, the bloom of her sexuality, and involvement with drinking, drugs, and violence.

The development of Fabiola as an American also goes side by side with her search for identity. During the narrative, the audience reads about Fabiola's feelings about her own transformation. While these are emotional and painful in the beginning: "The whole house seems to want to squeeze me in [...] I am losing myself to this new

place” (48), as the novel develops, they become a reason for individual pride. A passage reads: “It’s the most money I’ve ever had to myself. It makes me walk taller and speak with more confidence. This unearned cash makes me feel a little bit more American. This is the beginning of a good life, I think” (59). Matant Jo, since Fabiola’s arrival, does not allow the girl to speak in Creole and requires English to be the only language at home, which makes the protagonist feel a sense of loss, however, at the end of the narrative language is not mentioned anymore as an issue, and Fabiola states “I fit in like a well-placed brick” (239), confirming the existence of her hybrid space.

By the end of the book, Fabiola has gained awareness not only about the mysteries surrounding her family, but she also has become aware of her own place in American society and her own self-identity. Before leaving the house on American Street, she performs her Haitian identity: “The bath is like a baptism, and if black is the color of mourning, then white is the color of rebirth and new beginnings. Our brown skin glows against our sweaters, pants, and head scarves. We are made new again”. (321). In the last scene, she reflects on her newfound belonging: “...there are no limits to dreams here. But then I realize that everyone is climbing their own mountain here in America. They are tall and mighty, and they live in the hearts and everyday lives of people. And I am not a pebble in the valley. I am a mountain” (324).

Similarly, Ana in *Dominicana* also transcends her image as a newcomer by the end of the novel: “My breath is finally in sync with the city’s. I can hear sounds of music. A fire alarm, a police siren, a bus halting at its stop, a garbage truck backing up, and so on.” (226). She is finally home, she is finally herself, and she is finally part of the city: “New York looks good on you, he says [the man in the store]. You planning to stick

around? I look out to see Mamá and Lenny. They're all bundled up, eagerly waiting for me to return, their eyes wide and fresh. Yes, I say. Yes, I am" (319). With that, Angie Cruz ends the book by stating that Ana now not only is the owner of her own body and movement, but she also is part of the city: free to transit and to construct it.

As seen in other novels, analyzed in this work, *American Street* and *Dominicana* claim the right of the marginalized female subject to trespass barriers, construct individual pathways, and occupy public spaces. In a first meeting with the city, Fabiola and Ana cannot find a connection between themselves and the new spaces. Fabiola states: "darkness seeps into every crack and corner of this Detroit. Even with a few lampposts dotting the streets, I can't see the breadth and depth of this city that is my birthplace, that now is my home" (14). In the same way, when arriving in New York City, Ana describes herself as "ant small" and other times as "locked inside a snowball" that she has seen in store fronts, referring to snow globes.

However, just like their womanhood, the urban area little by little also reveals itself to the protagonists and the streets become familiar to them. In *American Street*, on several occasions, the book shows Fabiola walking around the city areas, going to cafes, restaurants, CVS pharmacies, riding a bus, and commenting on the wide streets and big skies. In *Dominicana*, Ana assumes the role of *flâneuse*, walking, observing, discovering, and narrating the city. She is handed a map at the pregnancy clinic and she studies the city constantly with it from the window and later, on her own walking experiences.

Tarrytown is north. The Empire State Building is south. The river is west and east. West and north are safe because the Jews live there. East and south are unsafe because the blacks live there – they burn cars and garbage

cans and throw themselves to the street for no good reason. Self-destructive, is what Juan calls them (153).⁴⁹

When citing the city coordinates and spaces, Ana is assuring her knowledge over the space and claiming to own the territory. Out of the house, she has the autonomy and the freedom of any white male *flâneur* previously portrayed in literature.

In *American Street* there is a clear emphasis given to street corners. The protagonist lives in a house on the corner of Joy Road and American Street, which symbolically is pointed out in several passages of the book. In the beginning of the narrative, the corner is presented as a crossroad symbolizing the decisions and dualities in Fabiola's life: girl/woman, Haitian/American, naïve/independent. As the novel develops, the same corner becomes symbolic of her own freedom and personal development. "I turn to each of the corners – the four directions – as if to bow to every single possibility around me: north, south, east, west." (213). Instead of a duality and indecisions, the corner of Joy Road and American Street is now the space of possibility. The street corner is the opposite of the walls – while walls restrict, corners represent the fluidity of the streets in an inclusive city. The corner is the possibility of connection between two streets and the connection between different spaces and different subjectivities.

The book *American Street* works with the two realities of Haitian women – the movement, empowerment, and belonging of Fabiola in opposition to the stagnation of her mother – arrested at the border and having her right to come and go taken away from her. This same dichotomy is found in *Dominicana*, where Ana is both the imprisoned teenager

⁴⁹ This is in reference of Civil Rights Movement fights and protests. Interesting to point out, that Juan is lighter brown than César and Ana and does not consider himself and herself as black.

who observes the urban space through the window, but also the *flâneuse* who owns and knows her territory.

An important transformation in both novels is also the start of the girls' sexual life. While Fabiola loses her virginity with her boyfriend, Ana has to suffer through her husband's sexual and physical abuses. In the months that Juan leaves Ana, she falls in love with César, her brother-in-law, and at seven months pregnant has her first consensual sexual pleasure with him. This scene is relevant for understanding Ana's sexuality. While mothers are historically denied any type of sexuality by social norms, the author of the book decides to make Ana experience her sexuality when she is pregnant – breaking so many artificial constructed stereotypes about motherhood.

After discussing the metamorphosis these two young women go through in these narratives, we shift to the connection the book makes to the current politics of immigration in the USA.

Family Separation and Immigrant Detention Centers

On May 7, 2018, Attorney General Jeff Sessions and Immigrant and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Director Thomas Homan announced in a press conference that the Trump administration was starting a “Zero Tolerance Policy” with the intention of fixing the so called “long broken” US immigration system and enforcing national security. This new system apprehended and separated thousands of families crossing the border in the following months. Parents were sent to detention centers and children were labeled “unaccompanied minors” and taken into government custody. These camps were later labeled by the media as child concentration camps (some with minors living in cages).

Similarly, families already living in the US were also separated in constant immigration check-ups around the country, where parents were detained and/or deported and their children left without them. The days following May 7 were marked by general national anxiety and anger. The media; public opinion; and public figures such as politicians from both parties, celebrities, and all former living first ladies have come out to denounce and condemn the separation of children from their parents and the cruelty with which the country was treating these minors.

The very core of American values and history was questioned during those days in June 2018. While some argued for the protection of human rights and compassion, others used laws to legitimize these actions. Conservatives strongly related immigration to crime rates and justified that taking children from criminals during incarceration is just an implementation of law. Similarly, President Trump repeatedly reinforced the national threat of immigration and vocalized statements in the media such as “These aren’t our kids”.⁵⁰ In contrast, a great part of the country protested against such harsh policies against immigrants stating that human beings have the right to flee persecution and poverty and for these reasons immigrants should not be treated as criminals.

Not being able to sustain excuses for such dehumanization of immigrants and their children, Trump signed on June 20, 2018 an executive order putting a stop to the separation of families that he himself had started. In just six weeks, 2,000 families were separated and thousands of children (including toddlers) were ripped away from their parents and put into jail-like facilities. The executive action served to calm down and silence public opinion, however, following such measures, not all children and parents

⁵⁰ Brian Kilmeade co-host of Fox & Friends” on June 21th, 2018 (Fox News).

were reunited, and many separations were still taking place on the border as this chapter was being written. On August 29, 2019, the Trump administration announced the intention of privatizing all tender-age⁵¹ immigrant shelters. This decision would cut non-profit organization ties with the care of these children and dehumanize even more the treatment of immigrant children.

American Street was published in 2017, before these events took place, however, while the family separation in this fiction does not compare to the cruelty of the reality we live in, it still produces deep scars in the protagonist and it is key to read Zobi's work as a political piece. The personal journey of the author is reflected in this novel. After immigrating with her mother to the USA when she was four, Ibi Zobi was raised in an American space and culture. When she was eight, her mother and she returned to Haiti and faced difficulties in their re-entrance to the USA. Her mother was admitted into the country and Ibi had to return to Haiti and did not know Haitian territory or culture at this point in childhood. She stayed with relatives separated from her mother for three months, similarly to Fabiola, the book's protagonist (Cary 2017)

The book starts with the separation scene, when her mother is sent to an immigration center in New Jersey and Fabiola to Detroit to live with her family. The first line of the book reads: "If only I could break the glass separating me and Manman with my thoughts alone" (1). The author translates the first pain: "We leave the airport. It feels like I'm leaving part of me behind – a leg, an arm. My whole heart." (13) During the first night, Fabiola imagines the absent mother and talks to her in a dream-like narration of the detention center. The adolescent pain is expressed always in terms of

⁵¹ Shelters that hold children from 0 to teen ages.

anatomy lost. For example, Fabiola cannot breathe without the mother, or feels like she does not have part of her heart, as if they were once one and Fabiola now is incomplete. “You raised me to be like another part of you – another arm or a leg. Even as you kept telling me that I’m becoming a woman, you never let me go out into the world to be free” (237). In another passage, she states: “[E]very cell of my body is starting to feel her absence” (147). The break in the link of the most fundamental biological connections between human beings (a mother and a child) is beautifully described in this novel and allows readers to connect and experience a pain that is today often caused by the US government when separating immigrant families.

Throughout the book, we find fragmented brief chapters’ about character’s lives apart from the main narrative. We hear the voices of each one of Fabiola’s three cousins, two of their friends, the house they live in, and aunt and uncle – they all give a first-hand perspective narrating their individual story. The only unheard voice is of Fabiola’s mother Valerie. Among all the characters, the one restricted in the detention center is the one that is voiceless throughout the book. Fabiola talks to her through letters and thoughts, but the voice of the mother responding is never present. The lack of movement is also reflected in her lack of voice. Fabiola has to live in a world of trauma because a piece of her has been ripped away.

Similarly to *Esperanza’s Box of Saints*, *American Street* explores the relationship between a single mother and a daughter and their struggles caused by borders and separation. Both Esperanza and Fabiola are anatomically incomplete. The pain of separation is so strong that they must reconstruct themselves to try to find wholeness again. Their personal journey in a new territory is necessary to cope with the traumas of

losing a piece of the self. While the journey is undertaken alone, similarly to Esperanza, Fabiola also grounds herself in her ghosts that remind her of her roots and guide her to her future. The next section focuses on them.

Ghosts and Saints in American Streets

As Fabiola transits through the streets of America, her Haitian culture presents itself in her thoughts. During hard times when missing her other part (the mother, the country, and her subjectivity in Haiti), Fabiola remembers her *lwás*,⁵² songs and prayers and calls her spirits to guide her journey.

Fabiola's lost mother, representing her lost part, also connects to the abandonment of the Island, however, like Esperanza, Fabiola also carries her ghosts around in the new land. Ribas-Casasayas and Petersen in *Espectros* (2015) explain that Spectral Criticism seeks to explain how ghosts are used in literature and represent the presence of the absent. Fabiola's Voodoo culture is expressed repeatedly throughout the book in a syncretic mix of U.S. culture and Haiti spiritism. A great example of this hybridity is the introduction of the Bad Leg character, a homeless man living in the streets that has as a favorite spot the Haitian women's house on the corner of Joy Road and American Street. Fabiola sees him as a spiritual guide calling him Papa Legba, the *lwa* of crossroads – the one that opens doors and unlocks gates (34). He represents the solution to her strongest obstacles: the gates and walls that restrict her experience and full existence in this country. Just as the protagonist, Bad Leg has also lost a limb. He explains to Fabiola that

⁵² Haitian Voodoo divine spirits, as Fabiola mentions in the narrative.

he lost his leg on the other side. He had to leave it with his immigrant father on the other side while visiting. He left a piece of his leg to give his father a “memory of a leg – give him the feeling of walking on two feet again” (81). In the mornings, Fabiola prays for Papa Legba and Bad Leg (as an impersonation of the spirit) by spinning around a mug representing the four directions – east, west, north, and south – claiming the spirit to guide her movement and journey.

At points of the novel where we see Fabiola being swallowed by American life, Papa Legba disappears. However, at the end of the journey, he once again appears standing on the corner of American Street and Joy Road guiding Fabiola into her new beginning: “I smile and nod and mouth *mesi*. Thank you. He has brought my mother to the other side” (324). While the “other side” is a spiritual world in Fabiola’s beliefs, here it also signals the geographic walls and restrictions imposed by USA government and the inability of movement of her mother while restricted in this “other” “dark” side.

Similarly to *Esperanza’s Box of Saints*, the newcomer Fabiola in this novel, also has an altar, the space where she has a statue of the Virgin Mary, a tea candle, a bottle of *florida* water, a beaded gourd, a tin cup, and white fabric.⁵³ She speaks to her spiritual guides and they listen. They also guide her through the journey in this new space and they are in charge of her entrapped mother – or Fabiola’s other half. Also, like *Esperanza*, Fabiola sees her mother and connects to her though these *lwas*, again, they represent the presence of her absent culture and familiar space. They connect her with her blood and roots – mother and homeland.

⁵³ These elements presented in the protagonist’s altar symbolize the fluidity and synchronism of Haitian spirituality. Catholic symbols and African religious ornaments are used for religious devotion expressions in her own form of grassroots religion.

Movement, Geography and Crossed Streets

Movement in contrast with stagnation is the main theme of *Dominicana*. Ana's immigration story at first is a tragic narrative, but as soon as she is in the streets of New York City, the empowerment achieved by the character is such that she has the strength to fight all her other socially imposed oppressions and abuses. The first time that Ana leaves the city with César, after the departure of Juan, everything is still too large and scary:

I try to remember the streets and the city numbers: 53rd and 55th, Sixth Avenue, and this different Broadway. Every few blocks another limb, each neighborhood with its secrets. This is the city, big and complicated. How easy it is to lose oneself. I hold on to César until we arrive home.” (182)

In this passage, Ana expresses her insecurities towards the complex city, however she also presents the space as an organic configuration of desire paths. Soon, Ana's insecurities decrease as her desire to see the metropolis, make her own money and learn English increase. The secrets and the complexity become her exploration grounds and her and the city limbs mix together. In one passage she eventually leaves the house alone to go out of her neighborhood to an ESL class.

I'm no longer the child my mother shipped. I'm about to become a mother. There's no reason to be afraid. People walk the city streets every day and survive. I just need to mind my own business and when I see trouble walk the other way (183).

As a gift, she receives a map from César, and she can for the first time walk with confidence in the city: “He places a map on the table. The city’s an island. Rivers on both sides. It’s a grid. Streets go up and down, avenues east to west. Remember, country girl, if you get lost, just follow the sun” (200). Another symbol for Ana’s learning of physical coordinates is during an ESL class, when there is a careful choice of words she learns in class: “We learn directions: right, left, straight ahead, behind you. Up and down, stop, and go” (219). The only scene in the novel that takes place in the classroom is the one when she is given the power of communicating her own space – education and knowledge are a direct representation of empowerment here. Ana is finally building her confidence to trace her own physical and symbolic journey in the new territory.

Ana starts to travel in the city alone, including walks for pleasure and discovery. She makes food to sell and brings it to the factory workers where César works. She tests her English skills, discovers her new sexual desires towards César, and dreams of conquering the city: “With time, I’ll buy a small cart like the hot-dog man’s. Eventually a small shop. Then a chain of shops all over the city” (238).

As the book finishes, Ana gives birth to baby girl Altagracia, is freed from her abusive husband, and is finally in the city with her mother and younger brother. She walks confident in the streets of New York:

When I take a walk on Broadway, I pretend I’m balancing a book on my head. I sway my hips, looking into store windows in search of a fur coat and a string of pearls. Some sheer stockings and a patent-leather purse (294).

One day, all of a sudden, Ana is faced with the “troubled streets” she was warned about during a march against traffic of anti-war protesters. She knows she should go home to avoid danger, but instead, Ana is part of the masses now, part of the collective. She joins them and links her arms to other women’s arms. They walk together, as one, chanting and together they are strong. The potential danger (according to Juan’s narratives) of the streets turned out to be the tool for collective empowerment. Ana walks the streets literally making the claim for racial equality.

In *American Street*, the first description of Detroit as soon as Fabiola leaves the airport follows her sadness of spirit when leaving her mother behind. The passages read: “Darkness seeps into every crack and corner of this Detroit” (14) and “I lean my forehead against the backseat window and try to see past the speeding dark and into this new world called Detroit” (15). However, the streets that were dark and unknown, soon open to Fabiola’s navigation. When first alone in the city, she comments:

I look up and down the block – Vernor Highway. Other kids are walking up to the bus stop. I have enough money to take the bus all the way to the end of Detroit and back if I want to. I can even walk into a restaurant to eat by myself or go to a store for clothes. I let my feet take me down the block to a big store called CVS pharmacy. (60)

While in this passage we can easily connect the urban movement confidence of Fabiola to her newly achieved power of consumption,⁵⁴ we can also see that the narrative is mapping the spaces through her eyes and experiences – Detroit is no longer filled with

⁵⁴ Fabiola receives money from her aunt as an allowance.

dark corners, but instead is a landscape full of possibilities and the possibility of movement through her own feet empowers her and gives her a sense of belonging.

In the narrative, Fabiola's geographic location is connected to her symbolic space as a black Haitian immigrant. She is in a house on the corner of Joy Road and American Street – or as she calls it, “a crossroad intersecting, but one is not the other.” Here, again, we see her impossibility of connection and completion of living in “American Joy” because she is lacking a body part (her mother). However, this could also be a symbol of her incapacity of being one or the other: American or Haitian. She is herself a crossroad between cultures and subjectivities, however, even with the uncertainty, the street location suggests a positive end to the story, where Fabiola will finally intersect the two terms, construct her hybrid space, and find her American Joy. The book reads:

I look down on Joy Road with its few streetlights dotting the wide path. There are not that many houses and lots of open land. It can either mean endless possibilities or dark, empty hope. I look down to American Street with its houses in neat rows and the open lots like missing teeth. I know so many people back in Haiti, so many families who would kiss the ground and thank Jesus for a street like this, especially one named American. (111)

After presenting the possible paths and placing her in between, Fabiola reflects on choosing the path of Joy Road, which will lead to her happiness, and she will walk freely without anything in her way. Fabiola is empowered by the possibility of creating her own space and path in the new land. As a newcomer, or as a hybrid subject, she is creating her own Desire Path. In several passages of the book, Fabiola strolls on the wide, open, and

endless roads and the possibilities it brings. By walking on the streets of Detroit, the newcomer is creating her own direction and affirming her belonging in the new space. When transiting in an urban scenario, the narration at times becomes fast paced and the introduction of several road and street corners are always mentioned to indicate the rapid walking and confidence of Fabiola's movements. She knows where she is going, and she is able to map her neighborhood. Almost all transitions of spaces in the book are followed by the narration of urban movement with emphasis on street names and corners. The mapping of space is a constant reminder that Fabiola has the power of autonomous movement and is constructing her own path and also that streets are not simply empty *no-lugares*,⁵⁵ but political territory.

Affirming the Haitian François-Toussaint family's belonging on American soil, the book traces in one chapter the history of their home, the house at the corner of Joy Road and American Street in the number 8800. Dating back to 1942, the girls' father, and Fabiola's uncle, bought the house with the intention "to be an American and to have some joy" (219). The ownership of this estate is a family achievement and marks their space in the city.

Just like the house, the city of Detroit in this narrative also shifts from a *no-lugar* to a character of the novel. The space is extremely present and important throughout the journey – often being blamed for the violence it produces, but also being praised for the opportunities it has given to the François-Toussaint girls. As the book draws to a peak moment before the end, it reads:

⁵⁵ No-lugares are described by Marc Augé (1995) as "non-place" referring to physical urban spaces where concerns of human relationships, history, and identity are erased and transformed into inhumane spaces of transit.

I remember walls. I remember concrete. Whole cities can seek vengeance, too. And even the very earth we stand on can turn on us. I remember the rumbling sound of falling walls, of angry earth. And maybe the dead rose up out of the ground the day my country split in half, and dozens of zombies, with their guardians, Baron Samedi, leading them, forced their way out of cemeteries in search of their murderers.

(307)

While here Fabiola is using a metaphor to speak about government killings during authoritarianism in Haiti, as well as the Earthquake of 2010, she is also expressing how the space and the city of Detroit, as well as her own family, have a part in the violence that happens in her surroundings. The urban violence she is witnessing in the United States, as well as what she saw in Haiti, can be produced by the furious spaces in which we live. Again, the space is not empty, but also an agent – it has the power to free her, but it can also seek revenge. As Christopher Tilley (1994) would say, the space itself is strongly political.

As Edward Soja (2000) observes, producing spaces and geographies always starts with occupancy – or with bodily presence and the performance of the self, where the introduction of new subjectivities would involve conflicts or new negotiations where one marks his/her own importance and relevance to the space in dispute. Fabiola and Ana are in constant dispute and search for their space in these new cities – observing, mapping, and claiming territories.

Confirming the importance of space in *American Street*, Zobo in the author's notes confirms that the idea of the book came after reading an article in *The New York*

Times about migration and gentrification between Brooklyn and Detroit, “Last Stop on the L train: Detroit.” The urban space and newcomer occupation are the centerpiece of this narrative proving its political claim behind the trajectory of a young teenager.

Another book that follows the same theme and is worth mentioning in this chapter is *Into the Beautiful North* (2009) by Luis Alberto Urrea, which similarly presents the story of young teen Nayeli who crosses the border with friends in search of men that have flown to the beautiful north, including her father. Similarly, to Fabiola and Esperanza, Nayeli crosses geographic borders and transits in the new urban space. Here, we also see the emphasis shifting from the lack of rights of undocumented newcomers, to the right to the city and the character’s own urban mapping.

Among all these books, *Into the Beautiful North*, *Esperanza’s Box of Saints*, *American Street*, and *Dominicana* we see a trend of constructing and deconstructing the image of a female newcomer as a naïve individual. All these protagonists border the ideas of ingenuity and insanity (Esperanza, Nayeli), however these first characteristics are transformed during the narrative progression because they end up gaining empowerment and a sense of belonging.

Transit and Belonging

The women in these three narratives freely transit in urban areas; they are a type of modern *flâneur* – or the *flâneuse*, as developed in the introduction. The female newcomers here walk for pleasure and also with a goal, they all are there to find a piece of themselves once lost by the creation of artificial symbolic or geographic borders (a daughter, in the case of Esperanza; a mother or family, in the case of Fabiola and Ana;

and a father, in the case of Nayeli). However, their journeys represent a self-statement of a territory belonging as a female newcomer. All these protagonists map and construct their city areas and freely transit as they wish, creating their own Desire Path. They not only observe, but also transform their environment as they occupy the city – politically claiming the true meaning of the right to the city, but this time through the black and brown female body.

American Street and *Dominicana* strongly use the transit in urban America to express a sense of belonging and territoriality. Fabiola transforms the unknown Detroit into a home, bringing her own Haitian identity into the streets and spaces she occupies. Her Haitian past and her American present come together in her experiences and journey and she gives a new meaning to her national blood in the United States. Ana breaks from her imprisonment and her tragic destiny as a teen bride and mother. She discovers the power of moving and learning her directions, and then, she is ready to fight other oppressions that restrict her life in New York City. Both Ana and Fabiola are no longer geographically restrained by any factor, as their black female immigrant bodies walking through American streets are a statement of their belonging in this territory.

While at first, we may see these novels as coming-of-age romances, in current times, their political value is clear. The protagonists are transformed from insecure lost immigrant girls into confident occupiers confirming that to be an American and to belong in this territory one does not have to follow nationality or cultural norms – but instead, these countries embrace the spaces in between – the third spaces of subjectivity. Fabiola and Ana, representing a collective, build their own trajectory and invent and transform themselves in America, keeping their own cultures and adopting others.

Adding to this message, *American Street* and *Dominicana* also discuss relevant and current questions of American politics and identity, even though one is set during the 1960s. As of the day of this writing, hundreds (if not thousands) of newcomer children are separated from their families at the border of Mexico and the USA and held in inhumane facilities, creating the biggest trauma a child can have: the loss of their fundamental part, a parent. In times when immigrants and refugees are dehumanized to the point of children being separated from their mothers and held in ice-cold jail-like facilities, narratives such as these are fundamental to try to recover the humanity in people and politics. Storytelling and narratives are tools for the acceptance of diversity.

Social representations according to Ramos and Novo (2013) are common concepts that are shared among a society with the intention of making sense of reality. They are the symbolic understanding of an individual in relation to the world. Social representations produce a link between individuals and the social environment in which they are inserted. This concept allows us to understand the governmental and some mass media portrayal of newcomers (immigrants and refugees) as the evil of society, not only in the USA, but in several countries in the world.

To Cruz-Neto and Minayo (1994), in every society there is a pre-existing division between good and evil, which shift over time. To Teresa Caldeira (2000), these same divisions are crucial to give order to the world and make sense of human experiences. This good and evil discourse is present in most political struggles and it shapes public opinions as well as social interactions, by building social representations. In this division of society between opposing conflicting sides, citizens are understood as members of a group and not only individuals.

The group that is related to evil is identified in general terms as having attributes that do not fit into social life. They are represented as the ones that should be blamed for the social problems (in this case for the US indicators on violence and unemployment) and the ones that by their elimination we can achieve the collective good. Since those groups do not fit into social life because of their negative representations, they are also considered outsiders. These narratives can be easily connected to Trump's official government statements about immigrants and asylum seekers.

These outsiders receive a great amount of negative associations. They are portrayed as evil, socially marginal, dangerous and useless to society. Along these lines, we understand the political propaganda made by the Trump administration connecting Latinos to drug trade, gun violence, and American unemployment and the Haitian narrative of insalubrity, poverty and laziness discussed earlier in this chapter. At the same time, this group is also presented as incapable, irrational, and unintelligent; all characteristics that would lean them towards crime (evil). According to Caldeira (2000) their behavior is condemned in such a way that they are believed to use bad words, use drugs, make too many kids, have broken families; all characteristics that break the pattern of propriety and order, strongly defended by conservative parts of American society and ensured by the executive political power.

By stereotyping the others as evil, they represent their own selves as the opposite: clean, good and honest citizens from good families. These social representations allow the placement of all undesirable and negative characteristics on the "others" of society. Ramos and Novo (2003) also touch on the same topic when they explain that this construction of the others as opposed to oneself aims at the protection of one group based

on the devaluation of the other. The authors, basing their argument on the Foucauldian concept of social objectification and categorization, add that every group identity is based on the exclusion of different individuals, the ones that are considered the others.

Newcomers today are dehumanized to such levels that there is a significant lack of information about those children held in detention centers by the American government. With the narrative that their parents are criminals, these children end up being understood as “not our kids”⁵⁶ and gain characteristics as the others of our society as well. The conflation between criminals and the immigrants seeking a better life and opportunity in a new space is dangerous for two main reasons. First, in times of economic crises, the negative social representations are intensified and become more than ideas, taking the form of feelings of despise and anger toward that otherness, which can lead to violence. Secondly, the negative dimensions increase and are transformed in degradation and dehumanization of a specific group of society. In this scenario, the claim for human rights protection of these newcomers is criticized in an absurd manner and associated, not to the idea of rights of human beings, but with privileges agedly given to criminals (Caldeira 1991) or in this case “illegals” (the way some people commonly refer to undocumented immigrants)

Literature as well as careful media coverage helps society regain a humanistic view towards people that are different from us in some way. The proximity of personal histories such as Fabiola and Ana’s intent to create a lost empathy towards a collective

⁵⁶ Brian Kilmeade co-host of Fox&Friends” on June 21th, 2018 (Fox News).

that is neither dangerous or unsafe, but instead also human and should have the same human right to come and go as any other person.

CHAPTER 3:
**Trespassing Spaces and Transcending Segregation in Brazilian Cultural
 Productions**

“O ônibus vem de lá parecendo uma anúncio”
 (Dildu, in *A cidade é uma só*)⁵⁷

“Vou de vidros abertos”
 (Vario do Andaraí, loc. 95)⁵⁸

Urban movement by car, the central piece of this chapter, is also often the central focus in modern Latin American urban planning. In countries such as Brazil, where economic inequality is a key issue, the creation of cities where private vehicles are more of a priority than pedestrians creates social divisions and exclusions affecting the right to the city of lower income citizens. Keeping in mind the historical segregation created by cars, which were previously material goods available only to the financially privileged, this chapter will first discuss data on city planning and automobile use in Brazil to draw conclusions on the economic and symbolic importance of private transportation in the lives of lower income citizens in the past decade for urban social inclusion. I will discuss how the 2003-2013 Brazilian economic *boom* has affected the automobile market in the country and in consequence changed urban configurations. Afterwards, I will analyze two contemporary Brazilian peripheral⁵⁹ productions: the collection of short stories *A*

⁵⁷ In this documentary scene, Dildu observes the bus coming from the poor peripheries into the city and announces: “The bus comes from there, looking like an enunciation”.

⁵⁸ “I drive with open windows”, claims Vário, stating that he likes to smell and feel the city through open windows.

⁵⁹ I chose the word peripheral, instead of marginal productions to talk about these works. Marginal cultural productions are a new appropriation of a 1970s artistic term that signals new texts coming from low income peripheral communities, having some social activism.

máquina de revelar destinos não cumpridos (2009) by Vário de Andaraí and the mockumentary *A cidade é uma só* (2012) directed by Ardiley Queirós. While different in format, these works represent a similar voice: the autonomy and social inclusion newly achieved by lower classes through the ownership of private vehicles, making them newcomers in urban spaces previously used almost exclusively by upper classes.

I argue that by presenting characters who cross traditional social and spatial boundaries and who transit by automobile freely within the streets/roads of the metropolis, Queirós and Andaraí challenge the established previous stagnation of social hierarchies in Brazil and denounce unjust symbolic and material geographies. While the mockumentary presents more of a critical view of the divided city and the use of road infrastructure in Brasília, the book draws its own symbolic map and assures the protagonist's knowledge, ownership, and autonomy while narrating his adventures through the roads and streets of Rio de Janeiro. In both pieces, private cars are a tool of social inclusion for the new emergent social classes, they are related to the assertion of subjectivity, autonomy, and mobility.

The Divided City

James Holston (2008), in his analysis of Brazilian citizenship, traces how, since early national construction, the inclusion and exclusion of people into the national

I chose to mainly use the word peripheral instead of marginal to describe these works because some authors do not identify with the denomination of marginal literature and affirm their texts as just literature. However, by peripheral, I am affirming that they are still coming from lower income areas and do not receive greater attention in the mainstream market.

citizenry was founded on race and social status. While citizenship was an inclusive concept, allowing slaves as well as landowners to hold this position, the term did not imply equality, making rights a system of grants and privileges for the rich. To Holston, this mechanism of distinction promoted the development of an inegalitarian citizenship,⁶⁰ based on ideas of superiority and inferiority, which was maintained when Brazil was re-democratized in 1985, making the country, what he calls, a disjunctive democracy. Teresa Caldeira and James Holston (1999) define the term by saying that in a disjunctive democracy:

[...] the development of citizenship is never cumulative, linear, or evenly distributed for all citizens, but it is always a mix of progressive and regressive elements, uneven, unbalanced, and heterogeneous – in short, what we call disjunctive (692).

Donna Goldstein (2013) explores the relationship between this racial tension and the construction of public spaces by arguing that it played an important role in the urban and architectural design of Brazilian cities. Public space was built exclusively for elites and foreign tourists, diplomats and businessman, to mirror the “civilized” capitals of Europe. In 1910, Rio de Janeiro, the then capital of the country, went through a process of re-urbanization,⁶¹ with the intention to “sanitize, civilize, and modernize the city” (Leu 182). In the process, low income inhabitants, migrants, ex-slaves, and the general poor

⁶⁰ A citizenship that includes all citizens but considers them differently in terms of rights granted. Also called Differentiated Citizenship.

⁶¹ Rio de Janeiro’s re-urbanization in 1910 happened during the Belle Epoque and for that reason followed the Haussmann architectural model of the cityscape of Paris.

masses were pushed aside and their living spaces⁶² demolished. This process was called *bota-abaixo*, or “tearing down” (Leu 2014). Also, their public display of culture and social gatherings was criminalized through law.

As Edward Telles (2004) explains, after the 3.353 law of 1888 which made all forms of slavery illegal, we see masses of black Brazilians and African descendants migrating to urban areas. The infrastructure and newly implemented job market in bigger cities did not accommodate the new influx of migration which produced an unprecedented amount of people in the streets, most of them black and brown from lower socio-economic status. These non-hegemonic bodies displayed in public threatened the European idea of a proper metropolis and produced discontentment in elites and authorities, who did not implement policies to assist formerly enslaved people, but instead believed that miscegenation would gradually exterminate the African and Afro-descendent population. From that reality, we have a new law put in place called *Lei da Vadiagem* of 1912, a policy that criminalized loafing, hanging around, and strolling without purpose.⁶³ While the law did not specify race, this principle was only implemented against the dark bodies presented in the streets and it worked systematically towards the elimination of poor minorities from the urban space.

⁶² The 1890 census estimated that a quarter of the city’s population lived in *cortiços* in central areas of Rio de Janeiro. These collective poor living spaces were the focus of demolitions (Leu 2014).

⁶³ Similarly, we see the already mentioned 1857 Richmond (Virginia) code in the USA.

This new law also restricted the display of African-Brazilian practices of leisure (*rodas de samba* and *capoeira*),⁶⁴ religious expressions (*candomblé*), and gatherings in public spaces. These activities needed to be restricted to private spaces and have permission from authorities and local police through licensing. This law created a historical and institutional controlling image that connects black bodies, predominantly male, to the idea of vagabond and useless subjects and reinforced the idea that their bodies on public display represent a sense of urban disorder (Ferreira 2009).

To perform their culture publicly, blacks in Brazil had to retreat and occupy remote places such as hills and peripheries, what nowadays we call *favelas*.⁶⁵ The elites saw these new marginal areas of the city as geographically and culturally inferior and unsanitary, starting a historical division between two cities: the civilized and the barbaric. But as Lorraine Leu (2014) explains, defiance against these geographic exclusions was always present. *Capoeira* fighters and *sambistas* continued to meet and perform in the streets just outside of city centers. The author states that through samba, we see narratives about the division of Rio de Janeiro urban spaces into divided regions representing distinct African heritages. This post-abolition practice offered a counter-hegemonic reading and mapping of the urban space in contrast to the Parisian urban plan.

As discussed below, the new capital of Brasília follows a very different trajectory than Rio de Janeiro. Unlike most cities around the world, Brasília did not grow

⁶⁴ Capoeira is an Afro-Brazilian martial art that combines dance, music, and movement. It was developed by black slaves in Brazil to fight cultural and physical oppression in the early 16th century. According to Lorraine Leu (2014), in 1890 a thousand *capoeiristas* were physically removed from Rio de Janeiro alone and exiled in prisons of Fernando de Noronha Island.

⁶⁵ At this time, favelas were spaces in hills (*morros*) outside the center area, but as RJ grew in the upcoming decades, they became geographically centered.

organically, but it is the result of careful urban planning, constructed beginning in 1956 under President Juscelino Kubitschek for the specific purpose of being a centrally-located capital city. Unlike colonial cities, which were initially built to be traversed on foot or by horse and carriage, this mid-twentieth-century urban area was intended to be navigated by car and is segregated with separate zones for living, working, and shopping. Like other cities, however, it has been impacted by the influx of a greater population than it was designed to handle, which has led to urban sprawl, and more organic admixtures of spaces occur on the periphery.

Since the time of the re-urbanization of Rio de Janeiro, there was no reserved space for blacks and browns to stroll on Brazilian sidewalks in the formal urban planning, but they were still producing their own territory and affirming belonging. In the process, some central neighborhoods spaces such as Praça Onze and Saúde, became claimed territories of African descendent Brazilians and space where they could perform their culture freely. This bilateral process of exclusion and possession, from the time of colonization until the 1920s, promoted the early geographic divisions of the fragmented city. As Edward Telles (2004) cites, and a popular saying states: “In Brazil, blacks know their place” (139). While the formal city does not include black bodies, these same bodies had to “remap”⁶⁶ their own territories.

The World War II era brought a new global idea of nationalistic ideology to Brazil. In the 1930’s, the then president Getúlio Vargas implemented a national identity project, seeking to detach the idea of Brazil from its European colonial origins, constructing a new authentic national image. This propaganda project, mainly spread

⁶⁶ Term used by Lorraine Leu (2014).

through the newly introduced radio, used popular cultural elements such as samba, nature, carnival, and soccer as building blocks of Brazilian individuality. Among these, the most powerful of these identity elements was the idea of Racial Democracy, which intended to explain the integration of indigenous, African, and European elements in a diverse and bright culture that embraced all Brazilians.

Vargas brings this concept of vigorous Brazilian diversity, from the artistic and elitist Modernism Movement of 1922, which constructed art that praised the concept that our country was made of three main races: white, yellow, and black and we all lived harmoniously, creating a joyful, colorful, tropical nation. With that, we see the release of *Casa grande e senzala* in 1933 by social scientist Gilberto Freyre who confirms this national sentiment of miscegenation of races and cultures to become one nation. While racial democracy celebrated the existence of African and indigenous blood in our Brazilian identity, it used it as a historical and symbolic narrative and not an acceptance of those subjectivities into the mainstream of current national life. The colonial idea of “whitening” of the race was still very present and served as primary reason why racial mixing was seen as something positive. In Telles’s words: “Brazil was in the process of breaking down racial differences assimilating the descendants of African slaves” and therefore this “whitening” project was more advanced than in the United States.

By the “advanced whitening project” I mean one that truly was carried out and accepted as a national narrative through the years to come and which is still very present until today. For example, in 1970, the military government in charge reported that: “Racial discrimination does not exist in Brazil, there is no need to take sporadic measures of a legislative, judicial, or administrative nature to assure the equality of races in Brazil”

(cited by Telles p. 41). Similarly, the current president Jair Bolsonaro, stated in 2019 that racism was a rare thing in Brazil despite indicators that confirm the oppression and social injustices suffered by blacks and browns in Brazil historically which has placed them at the bottom of a classist system of citizenship. As discussed above in chapter two, the class hierarchy stemming from the history of slavery is used to explain and justify ongoing racial discrimination.

In the period of post-dictatorship, citizenship was the tool used to challenge the disjunctive system and the social and economic exclusions which urban development and industrialization had deepened in the previous decades. Evelina Dagnino (2007) explains that the re-democratization, following two decades of military dictatorship, allowed the development of several social movements⁶⁷ that adopted the language of rights to express their demands for a never before experienced social equality of rights (such as the right to vote, to jobs, housing, health care, education, etc.). Dagnino argues: “it was a claim for the right to have rights” (551).

Citizenship is not an immutable idea, rather, as Marshall⁶⁸ and Bottomore (1992) suggest, it is fluid and constructed by social realities and new developments. Social, political, or economic changes produce new claims and extensions to the concept of citizenship and for this reason, Dagnino (2007) suggests that again in the 1990s, we saw a new expansion of the term citizenship. Citizenship at this time went beyond the previous formal legal acquisition of rights – “it represented a project for a new sociability” (551). In this new concept, citizenship meant a more egalitarian way to organize social relations.

⁶⁷ Women’s rights, Landless Workers (MST) rights, black movements, etc.

⁶⁸ As well as Engin Isin (2008) and Iris Young (1990)

Citizenship was transformed into, no longer simply the claim to basic needs, but also the claim of marginal subjects to participate actively in the construction of the society they were inserted into.

The introduction of new groups in the political realm as well as their claim to participate in the construction of society brought a backlash from upper social classes. Holston (2008) explains that at the same time that democracy offers a voice to the masses, in Brazil, it creates among the elites a climate of fear of the potential insurgency of the poor: “These new estrangements produce an abandonment of public spaces, fortification of residences, criminalization of the poor, and support for police violence” (Holston 271).

While democratization, ongoing inequalities, and new forms of violence were the direct factors that influenced the intensification in the physical and symbolic separation of social classes in recent decades Brazil, it is important to point out that, with the exception of democratization, they were driven by the economic model in place. The 1990s were also the time when the new neoliberalism project achieved its peak under the presidency of Fernando Collor de Melo, enormously increasing the economic gap between rich and poor in the country - which is the main factor contributing to the increase in urban violence during this time. The combination of factors - economic inequality; increase of urban violence; and the democratization that gave voice to previously marginalized sectors of society created even deeper segregations, fears, and distancing between Brazilian social classes.

Teresa Caldeira (2001) argues that during the 1990s, Brazilian poor and rich classes lived side by side, but separated by walls, gates and security systems.⁶⁹ In this scenario, fear of crime and violence from lower social classes justified upper classes' abandonment of public spaces⁷⁰ and the construction of fortified enclaves for the rich. According to the author, the symbolic distancing and geographic separations between social classes in the following years produced more fear of the "social other" and more spatial injustices.⁷¹ Kees Koonings and Dirk Kruijt (2007) also touch on the same social configurations by arguing that, until the 1980s, the concept of the divided city was symbolic of economic and social inequalities. However, in the 1990s, due to urban insecurity, this concept achieved clear spatial dimensions, creating fractured urban centers marked by extreme geographic exclusions. Zuenir Ventura (1994) in his study of the city of Rio de Janeiro during the 1980s and 1990s argues that social tensions and economic inequality had created such a climate of war between *favelas* and upscale neighborhoods making Rio what he called a *cidade partida*.⁷²

Following public geographic segregations, the Brazilian private sphere also reflects the same ideas, as Holston (1989) shows how contemporary architecture planning has reproduced racial conventions in the spatial dimensions. Most elite apartments have

⁶⁹ In reference to this phenomenon of segregation in São Paulo, she calls her book *City of Walls* (2001).

⁷⁰ More analysis on urban abandonment can be found in Koonings e Kruijt (2007) and Martín Barbero (1997).

⁷¹ The term spatial (in)justice according to Edward Soja (2010) refers to an analysis of human conditions that emphasize the space in which people live and access, and how this space offers them, in a fair or unfair manner, the distribution of resources and opportunities in comparison to other social groups.

⁷² The author here refers to the city of Rio de Janeiro alone, however I extend this term to other Brazilian urban centers.

service doors and elevators, used by maids and service people. Inside the apartments, there are often two completely independent circulation systems, one that directs the main entrance to the living room, and the other one to the kitchen. These architectural choices mirror the fragmentations of Brazilian geographic and symbolic spaces, which are a direct reflection of its history of unjust citizenship.

Following these social and geographic developments, cultural productions have represented the same tensions and urban binary, which are reflected in earlier cultural works. Tânia Pellegrini (2004) points out that since the beginning of Brazilian literary romanticism, we can see a dichotomy between the modern metropolis and rural sites, in works constituting the well-known contrast between *civilização e barbárie*. Pellegrini explains that after the rise of urban insecurity, this dichotomy was transformed, and the urban center became the contested space in which forces of civilization fought the barbaric agents of violence. The city space in narratives was transformed into a binary or what Ventura (1994) calls “cidade partida.” These works differentiate from the ones in question in this chapter because they are representations of the urban binary from a middle-class perspective of marginal protagonists, placing more emphasis on the lack of rights and strict borders, instead of social inclusion. I argue that, in these works, we find three distinct narratives characteristics used by middle class authors to represent urban marginality. First, the narration of lack of basic rights and the normalization of violence in spaces of exclusion; second, the crossing of symbolic and physical borders with dramatic consequences; and third, the representation of middle-class enclosure and abandonment of public spaces.

There are numerous examples to illustrate the first narration characteristic - how works about urban marginality in the post-authoritarian scenario narrate the lack of basic rights and the normalization of violence in spaces of exclusion. In the book of short stories *Violência e paixão* (2007), through the contrast between different narratives, scenarios, and social classes, the author Fernando Bonassi draws the image of a country facing a deep inequality between those who eat *caviar* and those who feed an entire family with a *cesta básica*. Similarly, *Angu de Sangue*, (2000) by Marcelino Freire also uses fragmentation of short stories to comment on violent human instincts when forced to adapt to less than human conditions.

One example of the lack of basic rights and the normalization of violence in film is the internationally acclaimed movie directed by Fernando Meirelles, *City of God* (*Cidade de Deus* 2002), where the favela is deconstructed, becoming the barbarous space of violence where basic human instincts come to the surface because of a historically social and economic exclusion of its residents. I argue that when building narratives about the binary city, which show the spatial and symbolic barriers and the lack of basic rights of marginal characters, these middle class authors are commenting on and criticizing the unjust system of disjunctive citizenship, which was outlined by Holston (2007). They participate in both establishing and discussing Brazilian social and geographic injustices.

Several texts about urban marginality produced by middle-class authors comment on the city binary by adopting the idea of the trespassing of segregation as the promoter of a dramatic consequence, the second characteristic I mention. In *Era uma vez* (2008), the director Breno Silveira gives us a Shakespearean narrative where a rich girl and a

poor boy from a *favela* fall in love, having no other option but the final death of both. Similarly, in Patricia Melo's book *O matador* (1995) and in the movie *O invasor* (2008) directed by Beto Brant, two marginal subjects cross the lines of segregation, working as executioners (hot men) for the upper classes. When introduced into these rich spaces, they do not blend in, but instead they bring barbarism into these spaces promoting, not just deaths but also the breakdown of moral values in themselves and the upper classes. I consider that in most examples, the narrative strategy of showing the negative consequences of marginal characters' trespassing physical and symbolic barriers, at the same time that it helps establish and maintain such segregations by focusing on the danger of a divided city, also serves to promote debate on the separation of society and space along social status lines.

The representation of middle-class enclosure and abandonment of public spaces is the third characteristic connecting previous works on urban movement and marginality. Perhaps because of the power of image, this characteristic is most visible in film and documentaries. First, we have the movies *O som ao redor* (2012) by Kléber Mendonça Filho and the short film *Ângelo anda sumido* (1997) by Jorge Furtado. In both narratives, we see the constant emphasis on empty streets, lack of socialization between the characters, and close ups on gates, walls, and security cameras. Watching these works, both characters and audience are locked inside fortified enclaves in a constant tension and fear of what might happen in the dangerous empty streets.

Insecurities and segregation are also the focus of *Um lugar ao sol* (2011), a documentary by Gabriel Mascaro, and *Disparos* (2012), a film by Juliana Reis. In the first, fear of the "social other" permits the creation of an upper class completely alienated

to the social and economic realities of the country and in the second, the threat perception by rich characters allows them to violate basic human rights of marginalized subjects. Again, in these narratives, spatial segregation is shown to negatively affect the exercise of democracy by discouraging public encounters, impeding communication between social groups, and decreasing the sense of community as a whole (which involves all social groups) (Young 2000).

To summarizing, the political and economic scenario of the period after re-democratization (1985-1990s), driven by a strong neo-liberalist agenda, created some degree of political space for the marginalized people including a space for them to question the disjunctive democracy – marked by a large economic gap between rich and poor, geographic segregations, and deep inequality of basic rights. Cultural productions that reflected urban marginality from this time, like *A última parada 174*, followed the same symbolic and geographic duality of the fractured city. They were mostly middle-class constructions of marginal lives and spaces. In them, we find a claim for the rights of those disenfranchised people through the representation of their harsh realities. However, their voices were still not often heard in cultural productions, with a few notable exceptions.⁷³ I argue that the new political reality of the 2000s increased the right to voice of marginalized segments of society. The years that followed this political change also brought economic and social mobility of these previously excluded social classes, which

⁷³ Here it is important to point out an exception to this argument. Carolina Maria de Jesus in 1960 became famous after narrating her life as a garbage picker in Rio de Janeiro's *favelas*. However, her books at the time were understood and seen as testimony rather than literary works. After her, we also have the exception of *Cidade de Deus* (1997), a book by Paulo Lins. Again, the argument here is that the novel only achieved popularity after the release of the motion picture *Cidade de Deus*, directed by Fernando Meireles in 2002.

in consequence expanded, once again, the concept of democratic citizenship rights. Now, this response turns to the political change of 2003 and the rise of marginal literature.

Political Change and the Rise of Brazilian Marginal Literature

At the end of the dictatorship and the beginning of re-democratization in the 1980s, Brazil experienced a rise of community-based resistance and in one of its expressions, we see the start of Orçamento Participativo⁷⁴ meetings. While these community meetings were often happening in small communities fueled by the rise of the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT), dictatorship defiance, and liberation theology, the intent was to open the channel for new forms of democratic politics in Brazil. These small meetings years later, serve as the base components of the Brazilian Estatuto da Cidade (City Statute) and inspiration for the UN Right to the City Charter.

The City Statute, or Estatuto da Cidade⁷⁵ became part of the 1988 Brazilian Constitution in 2001 and affirms in its general objectives: 1) that all inhabitants should have the basic rights to sanitary conditions, urban infrastructure, transportation, and public services; 2) inhabitants should be allowed to participate in democratic practices of administration; 3) cooperation and administration should always attend the social interest.

⁷⁴ Re-democratization of the 1980s in Brazil was marked by a decentralization of federal government, which allowed for local government to have larger autonomy in terms of fund use. The Orçamento Participativo was first adopted in 1989 in Porto Alegre, RS under the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT) local administration and soon spread all over the country. In these local meetings, community was invited to come and directly vote on local government decisions about budget use. Through this practice, citizens have direct decision-making power on how to build and influence the space where they live. The Orçamento Participativo is known worldwide for being a successful program in the construction and development of urban areas as well as the development of a democratic social practices after 20 years of dictatorship in Brazil. (Wampler 2008)

⁷⁵ Brazilian Law Number 10.257/2001 signed by Fernando Henrique Cardoso.

The statute also includes a practical Urban Development Plan that must be followed by all urban conglomerates with more than 20,000 inhabitants in all national territory.

Two years after the implementation of this law, in 2003, Brazil faced a political change that was followed by economic and social alterations. At this time, the leftist political party, Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT), was elected to the executive office, making Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, a former factory worker and union leader, the president of the country. The election of a leftist party leader to the federal office was symbolically a request of the masses for a change to the neo-liberal agenda that had socially, politically, and economically excluded so many in the previous decades.

Around the same time as this political turn, we see the rise of a new literary movement coming from lower socioeconomic classes. Érica do Nascimento (2008) traces this cultural movement back to 2001, when Ferréz, a marginal author from the low-income neighborhood Capão Redondo (RJ), organized, edited, and published through the magazine *Caros amigos*, a collection of short stories written by ten peripheral authors. This collection received the name *Literatura marginal: a cultura periférica*. Ferréz was the first Brazilian writer to associate a type of literature being created in the peripheries with the term “marginal”. He affirmed that he made such use of the term as reference to a form of literature of resistance being produced during the dictatorship in Brazil, but also because he was always called a “*marginal*” (Cited by Nascimento 2006).⁷⁶ In this sense, the literary movement appropriates a derogatory term used by upper classes as a definition of their own cultural position.

⁷⁶ The word marginal in Brazil is commonly used not in its literal sense of excluded, but simply as synonymous with criminal.

Literatura Marginal, according to Regina Dalcastagnè (2012), is literature from inside, that is, literature produced by those authors that were before represented as “the others” of society. Additionally, Rebecca Atencio (2006) also concludes that these authors engage against social injustices by assuming a confrontational stance toward mainstream literature and the marginal space in the market. Atencio argues that prior to this movement, marginalized authors were heard only when offering a testimony of their life, which put them as victims of a cruel reality⁷⁷ and their work as a testimony. By creating the concept of a cultural collective in 2001, Ferréz legitimized these peripheral productions as literature, challenging the traditional forms and hierarchies and declaring themselves as authors and producers of culture.

Dalcastagnè (2012) affirms that literature in Brazil is a contested territory and the productions from the peripheries cross hierarchical social boundaries that have been in place for so long. She makes a connection regarding of how writing and publication becomes symbolic for the breaking social segregations. For example, Dalcastagnè reminds us that in Brazil, historically not everyone can use certain elevators, not everyone can frequent a shopping mall, and not everyone can write literature. According to the author, in 15 years (from 1990 to 2004) 72.7 percent of the authors of all novels published by the main publishers in Brazil were male and 93.9 percent of them were white, numbers that indicate a middle class male majority. *Literatura Marginal* comes at a time when a whole segment of society is challenging the places of exclusion in which they had been historically restricted. The election of PT to the executive office confirms

⁷⁷ The most important example here is Carolina Maria de Jesus in *Quarto de Despejo: diário de uma favelada* (1960).

this phenomenon – new spaces in between the center and the marginal are being created, and a voice is being given to a whole segment of the Brazilian population previously excluded.

One of the most important characteristics of marginal literature is the fact that it gives peripheral subjects the power to create their own representations. Dalcastagnè (2012) explains how literature had historically been the act of narrating about others. In other terms, literature is normally a political authoritarian act, where “the silence of those marginalized is covered by voices that talk on behalf of them” (17). Aline Viera (2015) also touches on the same issue by affirming that *Literatura Marginal* detaches the idea of periphery as a space that simply produces dangerous subjectivities, and rather, affirms their identity as creators and consumers of culture.

In these first peripheral texts about urban exclusions of the peripheries, the narration of the binary city (geographic and symbolic) was still very present. Similarly, for middle class authors, these narrations show the normalization of violence and the lack of basic rights in spaces of exclusion denounces these realities. Furthermore, the same elements are used to educate upper classes about their community’s realities as well as to produce agency and drive collective action against the system of injustices.

These narratives are no longer exclusively for the middle-class market, rather they are produced for readers inside the communities from which they come. As an example, Ferréz in the first pages of *Capão Pecado* (2005) dedicates the book to “todas as pessoas que não puderam ser cidadãos, pois lhe impediram de ter direitos, mas lhe foram cobrados deverem.” Some other examples of the use of this technique are *Graduado em marginalidade* (2009) by Ademiro Alves, *Manual prático do ódio* (2003) by Ferréz, and

Ponciá Vicêncio (2003) by Conceição Evaristo. In all these examples, the strong narration of physical and symbolic forms of violence promote the feeling of injustice and draws the picture of a country divided along social and racial lines. As in early US American Latinx works it also geographically restricts these characters to *favelas* or *periferias*, confirming their stagnation and geographic segregation.

By contrasting privileged elites with the majority who is lacking basic rights, these authors are denouncing the walls of a fractured city and representing the reality of those that do not circulate within the city and society. The book *Ninguém é inocente em São Paulo* (2006), by Ferréz depicts an aerial picture of Rio de Janeiro, suggesting that the book will be dealing with the divisions of a city where the masses live in poverty, while the rich fence themselves in fortified enclaves. Similarly, in *O colecionador de pedras* (2007) Sérgio Vaz claims: “Deus criou o homem e o homem criou os muros [...] cercou o espaço, os sonhos, a mente e os pássaros” (49). To both authors, as well as in other works from this section, segregation is a form of exclusion of people that goes beyond the physical limitations, also promoting the disenfranchisement of the poor and their complete social exclusion.

Economic, Social, and Cultural Mobility of the Brazilian Social Class C

After 2004, the new PT government, under the leadership of Lula, invested heavily in cash transfer programs such as *Bolsa Família* and *Fome Zero* that had the goal of eradicating poverty and ameliorating other social indicators such as education, economic equality, etc. According to Marcio Pochmann (2014) these programs were a direct response to the struggles of previous decades and represent a defeat of the deep

neoliberalism model. To the author, *bolsas* have, in the past ten years, socially and economically incorporated large segments of Brazilians into society, offering the lower socioeconomic classes a way out of extreme poverty as well as a certain power of consumption never before experienced.

Official government reports show that in the past decade, 37 million⁷⁸ people were pulled out of extreme poverty in Brazil through these social programs. In addition to the decrease in poverty, Alessandro Pinzani (2013) emphasizes that the new political decisions also promoted a reduction in economic inequality and an increase in formal education among lower social classes, factors that are connected to the individual autonomy⁷⁹ and increase of understanding of democratic citizenship⁸⁰ among previously marginalized groups. The same neo-liberalism that previously excluded masses of people, now promotes the rise of the social class C and the introduction of millions into the consumer market. The power of purchase achieved by lower socioeconomic classes in the past decade allowed them to also demand their right to have voice and political rights and access to public spaces.

This new reality creates a middle ground, or a space for new subjectivities, that are not considered upper classes, but have overcome poverty. As a political strategy, this new class is often referred by the media and politicians, the new Brazilian middle class. Jessé Souza (2012) explains that this new collective, or as he referred to, the

⁷⁸ Number released by the Secretaria de Assuntos Estratégicos (Brazilian Executive Government) correspondent for the years of 2003 to 2013.

⁷⁹ According to Pinzani e Rego (2013), this indicator corresponds to one's ability to provide for oneself and their family in terms of basic human needs.

⁸⁰ According to Pinzani e Rego (2013), this indicator corresponds to one's perception of themselves as a participant in a political community.

emergentes/batalhadores,⁸¹ builds the idea of a strong economic country, that like countries such as in Europe and the United States would be composed of a strong and broad middle class and not by poor and excluded masses. However, the term is just a political strategy and to give them the denomination of the middle class is simplistic and premature (Souza 2010). They are in contrast, an unstable economic group that was given a certain power of consumption as a strategic market goal to reach more consumers, strengthen the domestic market of goods, and make capitalism broader through the production of lower cost goods (Pochman 24).

Despite the controversies, this new collective rises as a strong social power finding their own voice and space in twenty-first century Brazilian society. For this reason, I argue that the current economic mobility of lower classes is also being reflected in their cultural mobility. I defend that some literary productions coming from this new collective (class C) use symbolic and physical movement to represent their cultural, political, and economic mobility experienced in the last decade. I suggest that while early representations of urban exclusions claimed the right to social rights by showing the violence and precarious living conditions of marginalized characters, some of the new marginal texts expand the concept of citizenship, claiming the right of inclusion. First, let us develop the concept of citizenship.

As previously discussed in the introduction to the present study, Marshall and Bottomore (1992) trace the three layers of citizenship affirming that it includes civil

⁸¹ While *emergentes* refers to the emergence of lower working classes, the term *batalhadores* refers to how members of this new collective base their legitimacy as a social class on the idea of work. To Souza (2014), they work long hours and several jobs to assure their economic and social inclusion as active members of society.

rights (individual freedoms – related to negative rights),⁸² political rights (political participation), and social rights (related to the positive rights).⁸³ According to these authors, citizenship is a fluid concept, where new social realities produce new claims and in consequence the expansion of the term citizenship. Dagnino (2007) exemplifies this phenomenon by saying that the claims for citizenship rights in Brazil after 1985 expressed demands for basic rights of marginalized subjects. The definition of citizenship expanded to include the claim to participate in the construction of society, such as the right to political participation, fair treatment before the law, equality of opportunities, and the right to occupy urban spaces freely.

David Storey (2001) reminds us that the claiming of territory and the right to occupy is the reason why “various social movements and groupings have arisen to assert group identities and rights often through challenging particular territorializations” (188). A relevant current example of this dynamic in Brazil, are the Rolézinhos. In the past decade, elite shopping centers in Brazil, known as *Shoppings de Luxo*, have become extremely glamorous upper-class spaces, including not just expensive brand name stores, but also spas, cinemas, classy restaurants, and other forms of entertainment for the rich. In response to this ongoing trend of segregation in spite of the enlargement of a class C⁸⁴ in the country, on December 8, 2013 the first⁸⁵ *Rolezinho* took place in São Paulo at

⁸² Negative rights are rights such as freedom, life, property, freedom from torture, fair trial, etc.

⁸³ Positive rights are rights such as the right to food, education, health care, etc.

⁸⁴ In the past 10 years, 19 million people were pulled out of extreme poverty in Brazil, especially because of political programs of cash transfers such as *Bolsa Família* and *Fome Zero* (Ministério do Desenvolvimento Social e Combate a fome).

⁸⁵ In an interview to Profissão Repórter, Jonathan David, presidente da Associação dos Rolézinhos affirms that similar events have been taking place since 2007, where teenagers of lower socioeconomic status organize through Facebook and gather in public

Shopping Metrô Itaquera. Approximately 6,000 people participated in this first event according to the shopping center administration, and though no violence was reported, three teens were arrested and released shortly after. There was a spread of panic throughout the regular mall visitors and all the stores were closed. In these events, which are organized in the social media (normally through Facebook), poor young teenagers gather at high-end Shopping Centers. The more those events were reported by the media, the more they attracted participants and soon they started to happen in other urban centers of the country (Porto Alegre, Belo Horizonte and Rio de Janeiro). Some gathered thousands of teenagers walking together through malls, singing Funk Ostentação songs⁸⁶ and several times promoted a confrontation with the mall's private security as well as municipal police.

The reactions to *Rolezinhos* have been diverse. Several media vehicles have criminalized the events, calling it vandalism and apolitical (for example Veja and SBT). As a result of the fear promoted by those “occupations” several malls closed their doors and others obtained in courts the right to prohibit the events, fine the participants ten thousand *reais* each, as well as use private and state police to enforce the prohibition. However, other media outlets saw the events for what they really were, a claim for equality and access, or as an appropriation of places of exclusion by poor, young, black bodies strolling and marking their belonging in a new territory.

spaces such as schools, parking lots, and parks to “hang out”, meet, make connections and flirt.

⁸⁶Funk Ostentação, is a new type of music from the peripheries influenced by American Miami Bass and Gangsta Rap. The lyrics normally bring the idea of consumption of high-end brands, cars and women.

I argue that marginal cultural productions replicate this same development of the concept of citizenship. Before, the narration of lack of rights formed a claim to the rights to have rights. However, as the claim developed, so did the productions. The works that I analyze in this dissertation often follow a more optimistic representation of marginal subjects' movement. Here, they insert themselves in public spaces as constructors of their urban spaces and society. By creating narratives and characters that transgress spatial and symbolic segregations of the binary city space, contemporary authors offer the possibility of a construction of a more democratic society and a country with fair geographies.

Urban Planning and the Use of Private Cars

Urban planning is defined by the Encyclopedia Britannica as the planning, design, and regulation of the uses of public spaces focusing on physical form; social, economic, and political functions; and public participation. However, while the formal definition carries the idea of community development, the reality is that urban planning funds are very often spent on projects to fuel private economic gain. In developing countries in Latin America, the rapid implementation of neo-liberal policies in the 1980s and 1990s pushed for the increase of investment in the automobile industry and public spending that favored the private transportation sector.

Today, this is still a Brazilian trend. According to the Plano Nacional de Logística de Transporte (PNLT, 2012), private automobiles account for 36 percent of public mobility investments and projects at a national level. This reality leaves pedestrian sidewalks, bike lanes, and public transportation sharing the rest of the funds. Such

attention given to movement by cars, as pointed out by Oliveira Filho (2017), privileges certain social groups (the upper and middle classes), which have the economic means for using individual transportation, and excludes the urban needs and rights of a great part of the Brazilian population that exclusively uses buses, metros, etc.

This pattern is seen in several metropolises around the world and it has historically served as a form of exclusion of lower classes. When cities are planned for cars (and the social minority that has the privilege of owning them) instead of pedestrians, the movement of the wealthier becomes easier than that of lower income citizens. Added to the creation of poor peripheries far from urban centers, the precariousness of public transportation, due to low government investment, restricts city access and movement of those who cannot afford living in the desirable city areas and/or do not have a private car. In a sociological analysis, this could be related to the idea that, while movement is related to freedom of upper social classes, static and inability to access is related to the control of poor masses.

The political and economic changes in Brazil between 2003 and 2013, allowed for a bigger segment of the population to use cars as a tool for social introduction. According to the Observatório das Metrópolis (cited by Vilani and Oliveira 2017), while the Brazilian population grew 15% between 2001 to 2014, its automobile fleet saw a growth of 232%, going from 24.5 million cars in 2001 to 56.9 million in 2014. These numbers were converted to 281 cars per thousand in 2015 and a national record number of 3.63 million new private vehicles commercialized only in 2011.

To Marcio Pochmann (2014) the popular policies in the past decades have socially and economically incorporated large segments of Brazilians into society, offering

the lower socioeconomic classes a way out of extreme poverty. If previously the ownership of vehicles in Brazil was reserved for the higher social classes A and B, in the past decades, the economic changes have allowed for the lower middle classes to invest in private mobility. The Instituto Brasileiro de Pesquisa Economica Aplicada (IPEA 2013) shows that there is at least one vehicle in 28% of homes that currently are supported by $\frac{1}{4}$ of the families that make the minimum wage, which would correspond to families in the social class C, D and E. In households where the income corresponds to $\frac{1}{2}$ of minimum wage per person, this number jumps to 35%.

This introduction of lower social classes in the private car market was also due to the federal policy of tax cuts on industrialized products, adopted from 2012 to 2015. This initiative was ostensibly intended to boost the Brazilian economy overall, but according to Vilani and Oliveira (2015), it had the main goal to increase the selling of private vehicles. This is supported by the statistics showing that in 2011 the total sale of private cars in Brazil hit a record 3.63 million as stated above (Santini and Sampaio).

While this chapter will focus on the functionality of private cars as urban transport, and what that represents to the urban rights of citizens, we must consider other social symbolic values of private mobility. For example, the car is a private space that is introduced into the public sphere and carries not only the idea of mobility and status, but also identity construction. As Scheller (2003) explains, the car becomes an extension of the human being, introducing or excluding them from the metropolis and helping the individual communicate his/her place and identity in a capitalist society. Having the ability to inhabit public space with a private symbol of power intensifies the idea of two worlds or as we call it here: the divided city, those inside the cars and those in the streets.

In this narrative, the outside subject, the poor, and the deprived is part of the dangerous streets, while the richer subjects protect themselves in private restricted areas even while transiting in public.

To Rafael Lubeck (2014) the present time is characterized by technological influences and individual ideals. Private automobiles normally carry these two values and as a result can give a person a sense of social belonging. For Lubeck, the major social task of cars is to offer a state of freedom to individuals. Adding to his analysis, this freedom is even more meaningful to parts of the population that already live in peripheral areas with difficult access to the city. In both primaries studied in this chapter, the individuality and freedom achieved by the marginal characters are closely related to their car ownership, especially because they are free and detached from the precarious reality of urban transportation in Brazilian peripheries.

Ricardo Jato and Carlos Gil (2007), in a sociological research study, identified eight functions of private automobiles in Brazilian society: 1) Security and comfort; 2) Identity Communicator; 3) Freedom and Independence; 4) Affirmation of Individuality; 5) Social Integration; 6) Status Acquisition; 7) Power; and 8) Sexuality. Several of these functions are closely related to the meaning of transportation in this dissertation.

In a car, the driver has the physical and symbolic control of him/her own direction. Simmel (cited by Jato and Gil 2007) reminds us that independence and freedom are a continuous process of negotiation between individuals and the spaces they share. A person is never free by themselves, but always in relation to time, space, and human relations. For this reason, the daily control of movement (by private transportation) also allows the individual to acquire a certain social status in his/her community. In this sense,

the status of a car owner represents purchase power, mobility, and independence – all of which has been nearly achieved by Brazilian lower socioeconomic classes with their economic amelioration.

This independence and freedom allowed by the early twenty-first-century economic mobility of Brazilian lower classes and their ability to purchase popular automobiles is also reflected in their cultural productions. Andaraí and Queirós explicitly discuss the transformation in class C socio-economic transit by giving us marginal characters that own cars, and by consequence, travel freely and autonomously through urban areas. In this way, they contribute to shaping and constructing a more inclusive and democratic city, that challenges social exclusions and spatial segregations.

Private Mobility in Two Peripheral Works

In 2014, the Brazilian music group Pearls Negras released their second video called *Guerreira*. In this clip, the peripheral rap/funk group, composed of three young black women, sings: “Cantando o meu Rap / Do Rio até Berlim” on top of an open US military jeep that transits through Rio de Janeiro’s most diverse neighborhoods (*favelas*, beaches, downtown, etc). At a first look, this video offers a different image of poor subjectivities from the one we are used to seeing in the national and international media. If before, residents of favelas were stereotyped as violent, animalistic, spatially restricted, oppressed, and silent, now they are empowered, speaking loudly, occupying urban centers, and in constant movement.

The primary texts chosen for this analysis follow the same main idea. They all recognize and discuss segregation and the fragmented city. They also discuss social,

economic, and political exclusions, however, differently from previous peripheral works, they present us with protagonists that successfully cross boundaries of segregation. In these texts, movement assumes a role of resistance, or as Ivete Walty (2014) suggests about marginal urban Brazilian literary texts: “[eles contribuem] para deslocar espaços fixos, valores hegemônicos, como uma pequena fissura em um muro grande e espesso” (200). For example, in the music video of Pearl Negras, there is a symbolic denial of spatial segregation, they are not restricted to favelas as we have seen so many times in previous portrayals⁸⁷ about black women in Brazil. There are no limitations for them, not in Rio, not nationally, and not internationally. Like these new subjectivities, they confirm their power over their movement and territory.

Another one of these new subjectivities is the author Elder Antônio de Mendonça Figueiredo, known as Vário de Andaraí. Figueiredo is a taxi driver in Rio de Janeiro and the author of three books, one being *A máquina de revelar destinos não cumpridos* (2009), which won the Jabuti award for second best short story book in 2010. In this autobiographical novel, we have a compilation of short stories where a taxi driver narrates his movement through the city and his interaction with his passengers. In each story, we have a different city landscape and Vário interacting with a different subjectivity. These changeable spaces and the cab movement narrated in this book construct an urban space that differs from the ordered idea of the binary. Here, Rio de Janeiro is not a divided dangerous city, but an assemblage of different neighborhoods, which almost gives a sense of disorder to the urban sphere.

⁸⁷ Two examples of peripheral productions that show the feminine body restricted to lower income areas (*favelas*), are the two internationally known works of Maria Carolina de Jesus in *Quarto de Despejo* (1960) and *Cidade de Deus* (1997), by Paulo Lins.

The movement in this work is very important to be understood in terms of the character's autonomy. The private car is the tool that introduces Andaraí inside an often exclusionary space: the road. Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin (2001) explain that very often, networked infrastructure (roads, wires, tunnels, highways, communication, energy systems) are built by and for the connection of higher socioeconomic classes. This happens because of the high cost of tools to use such infrastructure (cars, phones, computers, electronics, etc). To the authors, the construction of spaces of mobility are always for the easier flow of some, always involve "the construction of barriers to others" (11).

When investing in private mobility with the construction of roads and highways and neglecting public transportation, governments are decreasing the distances and barriers for those with cars. At the same time, this geographically restricts and/or increases the distance between those in the peripheral areas. Developing this idea, the high cost of private cars in Brazil has allowed for the almost exclusive use of roads and connectors by upper social classes until the past decade. Andaraí's taxi breaks with this notion, by not only giving him access to roads in Brazil, but also allowing him to make these places his territory. The constant inclusion of street names, neighborhoods, and his ability to calculate distances are a form of appropriation of the urban areas. His cab creates paths and gives him autonomy in the construction/narration of Rio de Janeiro. His familiarity with the city space demonstrates his power and knowledge over his own territory and serves as a claim to his urban rights. He, the marginal citizen, becomes the owner of his own route (physically and symbolically) and includes himself in his metropolis.

As Lubeck (2014) points out, in public transportation, the citizen must follow a set of rules, regulations, schedules, and socialization rules. They are simply part of the masses, from which the car driver is set apart. A car frees the individual from such generalization and restrictions and allows for the communication of his/her own individuality through factors such as brand, color, decoration, etc. The *viatura 055* (taxicab) is an extension of Andaraí's being and puts him in a privileged position as an observer, but also constructor of the public sphere.

The autonomy demonstrated is related to the character's freedom to circulate and create. He is in no form restricted geographically or symbolically. As a taxi driver, Andaraí has the right to create his own paths and marks: "...velha condição de ambulante nossa aqui neste mundo autômato: cada um tem o seu itinerário querido – mas indefinido" (location 709). Careri (2015) explains that nomadic transit, which is uncertain and created by the walker (in this case, by the one who drives) offers freedom and autonomy. In this sense, the undefined itinerary liberates Andaraí from any social restriction. While Andaraí's movement is somehow restricted by his profession, and consequently dictated by the capitalist economy, he not once during the narrative suggest that his path is dictated by the clients. In a completely opposite way, he constantly affirms his independence and only mentions his passengers when narrating social interactions, affirming that he "transport[s] things and people" – the use of verb and subject here affirms that he is the one with the power over movement, and not the other way around.

Ser taxista tem um quê de romântico, de aventureiro, de *bas-fonds* e que traz consigo um misto de trabalho servil, subalterno,

desqualificado com o fascínio da liberdade e da autonomia que a lida tem.” (Vario do Andaraí location 41)

In this fragment, he recognizes his subaltern position, however, at the same time, he confirms his freedom and autonomy of movement. In several passages, he also calls himself an “espião da vida pública,” a description through which he gives himself characteristics of the original *flâneurs*, but now coming from lower socioeconomic status.

This freedom and fluidity of the author-narrator is also expressed in his transcendence of the binary. Andaraí recognizes the existence of segregation, however, he does not belong to any one side. His territory is the streets, making him a citizen of the entire urban space. From the beginning of the narrative, he defends his own physical and symbolic territory. He states: “Moro na fronteira entre Tijuca e Andaraí [...] entre a pretensão e a resignação” (preface). While Tijuca is a neighborhood for those of a higher social status, Andaraí is the opposite. The author lies in the middle, adopting the existence of a third space between this binary. However, he explains that his pseudonym appropriates the name of the second neighborhood because this one could also be understood as the combination of two words “andar” (to walk) and “aí” (there), which is related to his own identity as a subject who is always in movement.

Just like his name, the description of his personality also follows the inclusion of different adjectives. In his last book *A forjada Cidadela: Rio de Janeiro, 450 anos de sítio* (2016) the author calls himself *taxista* and *beletrista*, or we could also understand him as someone that has two powers: the one of movement and the one of arts. He also includes in the middle of his definitions: *boleiro*, *vagabundo*, *analista*, *noturno*, and *carioca*.

A máquina de revelar destinos não cumpridos also breaks from the idea of the binary with the sense that it demystifies the streets as spaces of danger. Andaraí likes to drive around with his window open to feel the humidity of the ocean, the smell of the food, and the perfumes of the trees:

Gosto de ir com as janelas abertas... O pretexto de segurança não me agrada. Em muitas vezes, por trás desta alegação bifronte está um antigo conhecido nosso: o aparte – fechamo-nos privados e, contudo que não nos respingue sangue no esmalte, imploda-se o mundo pra além do fosso!

(location 81)

In a city where it is common to see the upper classes driving bullet proof cars with windows always closed, the act of driving around without that protection – smelling the scents and hearing the noises of the city - becomes a political act. The open windows allow the driver to feel the humidity of the ocean, the smell of the food, and the perfume of the trees as well as to also stare into the eyes of urban beggars. It guarantees his insertion into the urban scenario and negates the common disconnect between the private and the public.

Throughout the book, when driving to remote areas (peripheries and *favelas*), the author constructs a tension almost as if violence were about to happen, however nothing occurs. This narrative technique pushes the reader to reflect on his/her own prejudices, confirming often unrealistic fears about marginal subjects and the spaces they occupy. Through the stories of marginal characters - the big poor family of five that insists on leaving a tip, or the poor black mother that happily takes a taxi to register her newborn

son at the registry – Andaraí deconstructs stereotypes and constructs a more complex picture of these subjectivities.

In another passage, the author demystifies another space, this time the *favela*, perceived as a dangerous zone. He states that the only reason he does not drive people all the way to the top is because of the difficulties of turning the car around. While doing so, he also focuses on the spatial injustices of such geographies by narrating the challenges of driving through these areas.

... a gente vai subindo e a coisa vai se estreitando: a rua vira viela, a viela vira beco e o beco vira corredor. Chega ao ponto de a gente mal conseguir abrir a porta do carro. E onde manobrar? Não tem lugar. Tem que se descer de ré, no escuro, às vezes sob chuva, enxergando nada atrás, arriscando atropelar alguém. (location 519).

Vário's taxi becomes the bridge that transports marginal and non-marginal subjects throughout the urban areas (including the narrator). It is the connector between distinct neighborhoods, in a city that here is not highlighted by polarity, but by its diversity and its urban disorder.

The narration of urban disorder is present in the work of both Andaraí and Queirós. The streets they observe are always full of workers and human sounds. In both works, there is an emphasis on the sounds of the poor masses, who work, move and occupy. In the case of Andaraí, we hear these sounds in the street vendors, the urban pedestrians, and the busy stoplights. In Queirós, we constantly see images of motion in blue-collar workers, street vendors, community gatherings, etc. However, in both works, the lack of order is not only evident in the content, but it is also expressed in the textual

fragmentation and informal use of language, factors that promote a break from traditional forms of stylistic narrations (in the book and in the film). In these elements lies a chaos that has nothing to do with confusion, but more to do with the challenging of hierarchies.

Similarly, but with a more explicit political agenda than Andaraí, Ferréz in the short story “Tipo assim”⁸⁸ narrates the trip of a taxi driver explaining to an affluent passenger the realities of poor Brazilian workers. In four pages, Ferréz expresses, through the voice of a taxi driver, the right of informal workers to occupy (and make their living) in the streets of São Paulo. When questioned by the passengers about where “we” are going to walk if the government allows the streets to be full of informal vendors, the taxi driver responds: “vamos andar, patrão, vamos andar como a gente anda onde tem zona azul” (171).⁸⁹ To Ferréz, in this short story, as well as Andaraí, the streets are not dangerous or empty, but spaces of socialization and performance of one’s citizenship. Instead of being restricted by segregation, marginal characters circulate affirming their right to city areas as well as their role in constructing the representation of these two metropolises (São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro).

Characters in all these narratives use their jobs as forms of legitimization against the status of illegality. For example, they move through the city but they are neither *vagabundos* nor *flâneurs*, rather they are honest black and brown poor workers who own their vehicles. This factor contributes to their right to occupy the urban spaces.⁹⁰ The

⁸⁸ Published in the collection In *Os ricos também morrem* (2015).

⁸⁹ Reference made to official paying parking spots on the streets of São Paulo.

⁹⁰ Holston (2008) reflects on the problematic Brazilian discourse that claims rights not in terms of equality, but in terms of honesty and decency. In this mentality, only those who are morally upright deserve citizenship rights – leaving aside the idea of equality before the law.

protagonists in *A máquina de revelar destinos não cumpridos* and *A cidade é uma só* are not just observing, but actually experiencing the city, their work and their movement are fundamental elements in the space in which they exist. Lehen (2014) suggests that transportation in these peripheral books is related to work however instead of isolation produced by exploitive labor, we have the public streets as places of socialization.

Work ethics are explored in Andaraí's narrative as a factor for the legitimacy of his social inclusion. In several passages, he explores not only his own status as a hardworking taxi driver, but also the work ethics of marginalized subjects, which he drives around the city. In a very symbolic short story, he takes a happy working black mother back to the periphery. She was in the city registering her newborn son and ensuring his citizenship. Here Vário's taxi is the bridge that introduces marginal and non-marginal characters into the shared city space, or as the author narrates: "posso levar alguém para um condomínio luxento na Barra da Tijuca ou me acabar no largo do Jacarézinho" (location 727).

The third and most recent book published by Andaraí called *A forjada cidadela: Rio de Janeiro, 450 anos de sítio* (2016) while outside the chronological framework of the present study, offers pertinent content for this analysis. The book, as explained by the author himself, is a narration of Rio de Janeiro's geographic map, divided by short poems/histories that carry names of different neighborhoods. Andaraí in his own words explains: "Aqui vai-se cantar a Cidade Maravilhosa [...] uma cidadela que existe fora do tempo, talvez a anos luz de agora [...]" (Location 6).

Andaraí clarifies that the city he traces and describes in this work is his own experienced and created city, far from that of Rio de Janeiro or the divided city presented

in so many other cultural productions. If in *A máquina de revelar destinos não cumpridos*, Andaraí narrated the city through the movement of his car and the interaction with his passengers, in this next book, he achieves confidence to call Rio de Janeiro its own territory and draws/creates a complete description of the metropolis according to his own experiences, memories, and imagination.

Memories and experiences are also present in the narration of Brasília in the mockumentary *A cidade é uma só* (2012) by Ardiley Queirós. This work is a mixture of fact and fiction – historical gathering, political criticism, and peripheral activism. The movie won an award for best film at the Festival de Cinema de Tiradentes 2012 and was well received by critics and audiences all around the country. Just like Andaraí in *A máquina de revelar destinos não cumpridos*, Queirós portrays the inclusion of marginal characters inside urban areas and by doing so, offers a more humane and popular view of the metropolis. While Andaraí's text takes place in the original capital of Rio de Janeiro, Queirós's film is set in the current capital of Brasília. As we will see below in greater detail, Brasília has a distinct history from that of Rio de Janeiro, or for that matter, from most cities. It is one of the "youngest" capitals in the world, having been designed and constructed from scratch little more than half a century ago.

A cidade é uma só tells the story of three main characters from the same family and their resistance against a system that insists on excluding them. Nancy is a singer who has a past connected to the urban disappropriations of Brasília in 1971 explained below. She is on a constant search to recover signs and evidence of an unjust past. Dildu, her nephew, is a rapper who works daily in the *plano*, central areas of Brasília, as a janitor and is also involved in a political campaign to be a local representative. Zé

Antônio is the third character, Dildu's brother-in-law and his campaign manager. He is a character that seems to be making more money than the others, and for this reason the one that owns a Santana, a car that is used as a campaign tool. He drives around the periphery and city areas in search of irregular or informal lots – which he buys and sells. Although filmed like a documentary and making use of several historical documents (audio, maps, and photos), the production also hints at elements of fiction such as Dildu's political campaign for the fictional PCN (Partido da Correria Nacional).

This documentary, just like the other primary peripheral sources cited here, embodies a new trend in the representation of Brazilian peripheries: the self-representation of marginal subjects. While *favelas* and peripheral areas are historically a recurrent theme of cinematic productions in Brazil, often they offer a portrayal of peripheral subjects through an upper-class lens.⁹¹ By this I mean that their directors and producers are normally non-peripheral subjects. This is problematic in the sense that these productions by the upper classes tend to perpetuate the narration of social “others” as violent and unstable. *A cidade é uma só*, in contrast, is the periphery speaking for itself – showing its own issues and discussions – creating its own identity and spaces of citizenship. Ardiley Queirós is himself a resident of Ceilândia and states:

⁹¹ *Quarto de Despejo* (1960) and *Diário de Bitita* (1986) by Maria Carolina de Jesus and *Cidade de Deus* (1997) by Paulo Lins are examples of two marginal/peripheral productions from prior eras that portray self-representation of lower income communities. While these are extremely important voices coming from the periphery, they focus on the narrative of the lack of basic rights experienced by lower income communities, while this dissertation focuses on peripheral texts that claim the right to the city of these people by introducing them into urban areas. Maria Carolina de Jesus and Paulo Lins both have characters restricted to the geographic areas of the *favelas*.

Meus pais foram expulsos da cidade de Brasília, sou da primeira geração pós-aborto territorial. Moro em Ceilândia, periferia de Brasília, há mais de 30 anos. Eu me tornei cineasta e grande parte do meu trabalho está relacionado a este tema. Tudo aquilo que sou, que penso, tudo aquilo que a minha geração é, como ela age, é fruto desta contradição de ser e não ser de Brasília. É fruto do acúmulo da experiência de 50 anos desta cidade – capital – Brasília. Esta experiência nos faz refletir sobre a cidade (Adirley Queirós cited by Clavery, Bogado and Oneto, 2012).

Queirós's documentary discusses Brazilian urbanization by contrasting a past of unjust policies (which promoted the current geographical inequalities) with a present of insurgency of lower social economic subjects based on the idea of the right to the city. The cinematic narrative is composed of two nuclei - with two different protagonists: Nancy, who represents the past, and Dildu, who represents the present.

To build on the current popular insurgency, Queirós presents the history of Brasília and its social exclusions. The idea of transferring the capital of Brazil from Rio de Janeiro to the center of the interior came from José Bonifácio in the 1890s, however, only in the 1950s was it finally embraced by the president in power Juscelino Kubitschek. The main platform of upon which Kubitschek was elected was the development of the *Plano de Metas*, a political proposal composed of thirty-one goals with the intention of transforming the country into a modern nation. The slogan of this plan was “50 years in 5” and the 31st goal was the construction of Brasília as the capital of Brazil, as part of a national project of modernization. It was understood that to bring the country into

modernity there was a necessity to occupy its big rural gaps such as the *planalto central*,⁹² an underpopulated, dry, and poor region. In 1956 the urban plan of Lúcio Costa was approved and after only a few years, in April of 1960, Brasília was inaugurated as the new and modern capital of Brazil (50 anos de Brasília).

The city, which has been a UNESCO world heritage site since 1987, was planned as the ideal contemporary city, with clean lines, rational planning and open spaces (which are emphasized in the documentary) – it was made to be the country's heartland. It is designed to be seen from the air in the shape of an airplane, where the wings are composed of residential areas and small stores called *superquadras* and the body consisting of government buildings and big commercial centers. *A cidade é uma só* gives us several historical documents that show this development. In the first and last scenes of the movie, we hear the national radio propaganda that reflects the national enthusiasm with the construction of Brasília. While the audio plays, in contrast, we see the images of the periphery and its dirt roads.

As the initial movie scene suggests, all the planning put into the creation of this city did not exempt Brasília from experiencing some of the same problems of most urban centers in Latin America. The city designed for half million people, today holds over 2.5 million inhabitants. Additionally, the open spaces, the great investment in private mobility makes Brasília a city easy to navigate for cars and not for pedestrians (BBC News). Luciana Saboia and Liz Sandoval (2012) explain that, while Brasília was an audacious urban plan, it still was not an exception in terms of social spatial segregation;

⁹² Planalto Central refers to the region of Brasília, it receives this name because of the flat grounds and geographical centrality.

like any city facing fast urban growth there was a question of what to do with the poor migrant population. While planning Brasília, the government did not anticipate what to do with workers and their families that migrated from all over the country to construct and make a living in the new promising city. Since the beginning, this new population that worked in the *plano*,⁹³ that is, the city center composed of the body and wings of the plane, but did not have economic resources to live in these same areas, started to settle in small communities outside the city limits, some being as far as 30 kilometers away from the city borders. Today, these communities are called satellite cities that never developed as a center, but instead have a codependency with the main urban area of Brasília. The daily movement of thousands of workers in and out of the *plano* through the bus station is highlighted in the movie.

Saboia and Sandoval (2012) argue that the dispute for urban spaces was even more problematic in Brasília than in other metropolises, due to pressure that this city had as being the planned capital of the country. The poor population that decided to settle inside the city limits was fast and violently removed. The authors narrate that by the end of the 1960s the city had innumerable *favelas* (called by the government *invasões*) with more than 82,000 people, and for this reason the government started the *Campanha de Erradicação de Invasões* (CEI) with the intention of getting rid of these disorderly and informal housings. As a result of these new urban organizations, thousands of poor families were removed from urban areas and moved to the periphery of Brasília. One of these peripheral areas was called Ceilândia, a name that derived from the campaign. The

⁹³ This work is used here to refer to the center of Brasília, composed by the body and wings of the plane.

government believed that in these remote areas, these people would become invisible and would not interfere anymore in the modern *plano*.

While the re-urbanization of Rio de Janeiro in the 1910s had similar impacts for the construction of a city divided along economic lines, Andaraí, differently from Queirós, does not point out explicitly the urban divisions and segregations. This also can be a result of the differences in media used. The images of a documentary allow *A cidade é uma só* to denounce and resist segregation more explicitly. Different from Andaraí, Queirós's work is a piece of activism.

Such activism is done by tracing the unjust Brasília urban construction in the 1960s. In *A cidade é uma só*, Adirley Queirós recovers the memory of these disappropriations. Nancy, who is now a singer from Ceilândia, was once one of the poor kids chosen to participate in the eradication operation by singing the CEI campaign's jingle in a chorus of poor children. The music used in the title of the documentary and several times during the narrative says: "Vamos sair da invasão. Você que tem um bom lugar para morar, nos dê a mão. Ajude a construir nosso lar para que possamos dizer juntos: a cidade é uma só."

While the disappropriations had the agenda of cleaning urban areas from slums that were forming, it was presented to the society as a necessity to ameliorate the lives of people living in miserable conditions. The expropriations came with the promise of better housing and home ownership in areas further away from the center. Nancy explains that government agents and propaganda presented the idea that they were finally moving to a "*lugar decente*", however when these families got to Ceilândia there was no infrastructure or proper housing waiting for them. She now sings her own composition

that parodies the governmental propaganda she was compelled to sing as a child: “Passados tantos anos, tantas lutas tantos planos, jogaram os meus planos na periferia [...] eu vou me embora. Me mande pelo menos um postal do plano.” In this song, she contrasts her life plans as a migrant with the disappointment of being thrown out of the urban plan⁹⁴ and sent to the periphery. By introducing this song and images of a periphery that contrasts with the organized streets and expensive high-rise buildings in the *plano*, the filmmaker offers a reflection about the injustices of urban planning.

Edward Soja (2010) develops an understanding of the term justice based on socially constructed geographic separations which allow privileges for a segment of the population over the other. Those geographic realities perpetuate a social hierarchy that deprives certain social groups from having a complete experience of citizenship. This concept of spatial (in)justice helps us understand how the unjust geography of Brasília (and several other metropolises) limits the poor not only geographically but also in terms of their citizenship. One of Dildu’s proposals as a candidate is to demand that hospitals from the *plano* accept patients from the periphery and prohibit health care providers from requiring identification cards and proof of address before treating patients. The unjust geography of Brasília denies peripheral subjects access to a quality healthcare system that is only offered in desired city area.

Teresa Caldeira (2001), in her analysis of phases of segregation in Brazil, acknowledges that Brazil initially experienced the construction of cities based on unjust geography because of social and economic hierarchies during colonial and imperial

⁹⁴ Here, the word *plano* refers to her life plans as an immigrant, the urban plan, in which she was not included, and also the physical urban space. The main area of Brasília (wings and body) are often referred to as *plano*.

periods. After this, there was a second phase of segregation when, during the 1930s to the 1970s, dis-appropriations occurred with the intention of cleansing urban spaces by removing the social “other” from public view. This phenomenon is the same one narrated by Queirós in the discussed movie.

The Right to the City

As previously discussed, Henri Lefebvre (1968) and later David Harvey (2012) shaped the concept of the right to the city, which is fundamental to this analysis and states that:

The right to the city is, therefore, far more than a right of individual or group access to the resources that the city embodies: it is the right to change and reinvent the city more after our heart’s desire. The freedom to make and remake ourselves and our cities is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights. (Harvey 4)

With that, Harvey (2009) explains that capitalist forms of government have, through the decades, promoted unjust geographies, which have made urbanism a class phenomenon. For him, to claim the right to the city is to demand one’s right to power and rights over the process of urbanization. It is more than the idea of having the right to transit (to transcend segregations), but also the right to mark one’s own space in the public arena, to have a voice and space in the formation of public spaces.

Andaraí not only transits in city areas, but in each short story narrates characteristics, configurations, and socioeconomic elements of the urban scenario. He, in both texts, constructs a picture of Rio de Janeiro freely, according to his experiences.

While Andaraí has a more optimistic narration that is not explicitly political, *A cidade é uma só* not only reflects on spatial and symbolic injustices of the past, but also discusses the recovery of urban spaces by those who were once excluded from it. While Nancy tries to recover a past and constructs a city full of history, Zê Antônio re-appropriates spaces, and Dildu is focused on social and political inclusion. In one scene he claims: “Nós também quer(emos) morar em Brasília.” While Queirós brings us the story of a population that was excluded and denied its right to the city, he also narrates its insurgency as marginal groups are now recovering and occupying urban spaces – the same insurgency that allows Queirós to experience the city centers autonomously.

In Queirós’s work, the symbolic connection between the past and the present is the letter X used by Dildu as his campaign symbol (constantly on his shirt). He explains that the X was used during the CEI campaign to push poorer residents to the periphery in 1969 to mark the door of the *barracos* (shacks) that would be destroyed. The X is also a representation of the *plano* (the body and the wings). Dildu re-appropriates the symbol of domination and uses it now as a check mark, or a vote mark on his campaign for *district* representative. He emphasizes that Brasília was not designed to embrace the people who made it (workers) and now it is time to *dar um tombo nas asas*.⁹⁵

This new awareness of the right to the city, found in both primary texts examined in this chapter, is also the theme of James Holston’s (2008) work. He emphasizes how the rapid urbanization of the twentieth century has produced great levels of urban poverty and inequality – which led to urban segregations. However, today, Brazilian urban areas,

⁹⁵ To knock down (or to make fall) the wings (in reference to the geographic shape of Brasília as an airplane).

especially the peripheries, have become spaces of collective insurgency. Holston addresses that in the past thirty years, the struggles promoted by unjust realities have produced a broad understanding of citizenship rights among the disenfranchised, and among these, urban rights. The development of this agency could be connected to the rise of a social class C in Brazil because it is a social class with improving levels of education and inserted – to an extent - into the consumer market. As Dildu states: “Vamos botar a favela para aprender e virar classe média.”

These elements (the improvement of purchasing power and education) allow this collective to have a better understanding of their rights as citizens. However, Holston (2008) points out that not only in city squares are the urban poor articulating their demands. It is rather in the peripheries: “It is an insurgency that begins with the struggle for rights to have a daily life in the city worthy of a citizen’s dignity” (Holston 246). *A cidade é uma só* and *A máquina de revelar destinos não cumpridos* represents this insurgency happening at the local level and achieving to access urban spaces, just like Holston observed.

Isin and Nielsen in “Acts of Citizenship” (2008) also debate this phenomenon of how, currently, there is a process of struggling over citizenship, where new subjectivities negotiate their identities on a national level and become claim makers. Old statuses and representations are being contested with the introduction of popular governments and policies, in practice, that articulate claims in favor of other subjectivities, which in this case, are the lower classes. In *A cidade é uma só* one of Dildu’s campaign goals is to demand that public schools offer degrees on public administration for the introduction of these kids into the politics and national decision making that is happening in Brasília. In a

more subtle manner, *A máquina de revelar destinos não cumpridos* also claim basic urban rights when narrating Andaraí's trip through the *favelas*, where he narrates the lack of infrastructure, especially in terms of mobility.

Another visual example of this popular insurgency is the graffiti presented in the documentary. Graffiti is the voice of the marginalized that appropriates city areas and buildings. In this movie, we see graffiti several times in the background of interviewed characters. However, in a very relevant scene, Dildu and Zé Alberto travel by car in the *plano*. When noticing the graffiti inside the tunnel, Dildu states: "É o poder popular até debaixo do chão!" Holston (2008) gives emphasis to the creativity of insurgent movements or strategies coming from the periphery that re-appropriate Brazilian city spheres. Graffiti art and cultural productions such as *A cidade é uma só* can most definitely be categorized as relevant examples of this phenomenon.

Following the same idea of popular insurgency, it is relevant to discuss the public reach of such peripheral productions nowadays. While art production has historically been a common element in *favelas* and lower income communities, today the periphery comes to the forefront of cultural productions in Brazil. *A máquina de revelar destinos não cumpridos* crosses symbolic boundaries by being distributed nationally and internationally for free on Kindle online format by Amazon.com. This interest in peripheral cultural production and the openness of the market to it is possible because of a recent trend of consumption of *favela culture* nationally and internationally. By recent trend, I do not suggest that lower economic classes have not been in the media previously. Brazilian *favelas* have long fascinated the public in Brazil and abroad, however, there was a shift in representation going from the consumption of violence and

poverty as a show, to the consumption of favelas as a space of creativity, joy, and spontaneity. To an extent, this new interest legitimizes and accepts peripheral productions into the mainstream cultural market.

Again, one of the reasons for such a shift comes from the fact that with the economic amelioration of a great part of the population and the introduction of social classes C and D into the consumption market, their own self-representation changes. The peripheries do not accept the previous simplistic representations of themselves found in the media: of the poor, the violent, or the disenfranchised. The concept of trespassing boundaries is not limited to physical spaces, it is also related to the symbolic idea of moving away from an established social identity. Zygmunt Bauman (2004) reminds us that identity implies movement and always accompanies the dynamics of a world in constant change. The Brazilian lower social classes move away from frequent representations imposed on them, emerging as a working collective, aware of their marginal position and empowered to change it by breaking spatial and symbolic boundaries. The sense of individual marginalization shifts to a collective power, as they reveal themselves as political agents, and active members of society. The physical movement of recent literary protagonists becomes symbolic for the economic, cultural, and social mobility of Brazilian class C.

Private Movement as Voice

The car, in both *A cidade é uma só* and *A máquina de revelar destinos não cumpridos* is the central scenario for the narratives. The mockumentary is filmed inside Zé Antônio's old Santana, while driving through the *plano* and the peripheral areas. Also,

we have long shots in the Brasília bus station, and Dildu inside buses that transport workers between remote areas and the city center. Andaraí, narrates all his stories from his perspective as a taxi driver, in the car he calls *Viatura 055*. He is always in charge of his own path. I argue in this chapter that the constant movement of characters in both works and the emphasis on private transportation is closely related to the idea of insurgency and social introduction of popular masses. Their autonomous movement translates their symbolic right to the city areas and transcends the traditional binary portrayal of Brasília and Rio de Janeiro, as well as limitations imposed on them by urban segregation.

Michel de Certeau (1984) offers some insights to understand the movement of marginal subjects as a political claim. To him, the act of passing by is “transformed into points that draw a totalizing and reversible line in the map” (97), thus becoming a process of appropriation and transformation of space. He goes further by affirming the act of locomotion as a form of expression and enunciation. “The act of walking is to the urban system what the speech act is to language or to the statement uttered” (97). Following Certeau’s idea, the current movement of marginal characters previously denied access to city centers becomes a voice, or a mark, and in this sense corresponds to a political act. Dildu and Andaraí are constantly creating their own urban marks.

In *A cidade é uma só*, Zé Antônio drives an old Santana – which we see in several long scenes – we have long shots of the car cruising in Brasília and also long shots inside the car where the vehicle owner and Dildu explore (and get lost) through the *plano*. The Santana is also used as a tool for campaigning, becoming the bridge between a space of exclusion and their introduction into the main areas. It becomes the vehicle for

disseminating their political voice when enunciating Dildu's jingle through the neighborhoods. The mockumentary begins and ends with scenes of the car. At the end, while Zé and Dildu are campaigning through the neighborhoods, the car stops, giving the audience a sense of failure and impotence of the characters. However, the problem is solved with gasoline and some pushes, and the car again goes back to moving – closing the film with the possibility of a construction of a more democratic form of urbanism.

In *A máquina de revelar destinos não cumpridos*, while the political claim for access to space is not as evident, Andaraí has the constant need to mention names and descriptions of regions, neighborhoods, streets, parks, etc. This would suggest his awareness of his own role in his urban area and the desire to show his knowledge over his territory. While in this first book he develops his awareness of urban space, in his following work *A forjada cidadela*, Andaraí is explicitly constructing his Rio de Janeiro based on personal memories and experiences.

Leila Lehnen (2013) in her analysis of Marcus Faustini's *Guia afetivo da periferia* also acknowledges that marginal characters that transit in city areas represent a social and cultural empowerment by simply affirming their presence in places of segregation and social exclusions. Through movement that crosses the boundaries of an implicit segregation, marginal narrators establish themselves as “citizens of an entire metropolis” (Lehnen 21).

Dildu is one of thousands of workers that come daily to the *plano* to work. There is an emphasis on his long commute – he waits for the bus at night at the bus terminal and during his commute sleeps on his way over back home to the periphery. When trafficking through the city areas he is an invisible worker, however, when in his cousin's

private car campaigning, he ensures his place as a citizen with political power. Zé's car introduces them in the *plano* as citizens. His fictional party (which is constantly referenced in the documentary) is the Partido da Correria Nacional (PCN). This name is a reference to his target voters, which are members of the periphery who are always rushing to work, and rushing to get back home - those that run, rush, and move through the multiple urban scenarios. Dildu campaigns in the terminal that connects the city central areas and the peripheries. While handing out political ads he says: "Chega de uns comerem o pão e os outros ficarem apenas vendo o que a rodoviária tem", stating the universal right to city access by people in the margins of society (symbolic and physically).

This mockumentary goes further than demystifying the deeply engrained understanding of the city as a binary. Similarly to *A máquina de revelar destinos não cumpridos* it also differs from previous cultural productions about the periphery that associate these spaces almost exclusively with violence. There is no violence in the documentary, on the contrary, we see several scenes of denial of these representations. While Dildu wants to produce a jingle that has rap beats and uses the sound of shooting, his campaign advisor Marquin (a black rapper in a wheelchair) warns him that he should not connect his political campaign to any type of negative sound or image. Also, at a concert, Dildu and his friends listen to rap that states: "violência não nos leva a nada." Just like as the graffiti, the marginal music (in this case rap) is related to an insurgency and construction of citizenship, however, not with violence.

It is relevant to point out that just like Andaraí, Queirós's work does not simply ignore any type of segregation. In several scenes, we have the contrast between the image

of areas in the *plano* and in the periphery. Also, the symbolic segregation can be observed in the fact that Dildu is a strong political agent in his spatial environment and seems to be insignificant and invisible in the *plano*. Queirós acknowledges the existence of separations, however I argue that he also denies the validity of this binary because he works with the idea of marginal characters transcending spatial and symbolic limitations imposed on them. Their movement is political in the sense that it liberates previously excluded subjects from spaces of exclusion (symbolic or physical) and establishes characters as citizens of the city of Brasília.

Queirós's mockumentary invites us to reflect on the very idea that the title proposes: is the city one? The answer is obviously no. However, the city is also not a simple binary space, where one side is good and the other bad. Today's Brazilian cities no longer follow this duality so present in early cultural productions. The city was not a unified "one" in the 1960s, nor is it today. The city is a lively sphere where negotiations and sociability are constantly happening. The rise of a social class C in Brazil has contributed to this fluidity of urban spaces, drastically changing urban politics and geography. Insurgencies represented in this documentary represent a struggle to ensure the inclusion of new subjectivities within the national plan.

By the end of the film, we learn that Nancy found very little documentation about the *Campanha de Erradicação de Invasões* (CEI). Yet, her memory itself is an act of insurgency. Nancy's mapping of the city follows a feminist urbanism, where history, emotions, and geography are connected. To replicate the 1971 children's chorus, a new choir is created and the film goes on to produce its own material based on the character's

memories. In 2010, when the city was celebrating its 50th anniversary, the question was still the same – is the city one?

To conclude, economic and political changes in Brazil, between the years of 2003 and 2013, have contributed to the introduction of lower social classes in the private automobile market. When owning their own means of transportation, subjects can easily empower themselves through the creation of individualized paths and movement. This fluidity in hierarchies is visible in urban spaces, drastically challenging urban politics and geography. Insurgencies consisting of trespassing through previously forbidden spaces represented in *A máquina de revelar destinos não cumpridos* and *A cidade é uma só* represent a struggle to ensure the inclusion of new subjectivities inside the national plan (geographic and symbolic), as well as their right to construct their own representations of themselves, their urban spaces (the right to the city), and their society (through the performance of their citizenship).

CONCLUSION:
Transcending the Classroom with Community-Based Practices

The right to the city is fulfilled when the right to difference is fulfilled too.
(Fenster, 2005, 225)

The quest for knowledge that allows us to unite theory and practice is one such passion. To the extent that professors bring this passion, which has to be fundamentally rooted in a love for ideas we are able to inspire, the classroom becomes a dynamic place where transformations in social relations are concretely actualized and the false dichotomy between the world outside and the inside world of academia disappears (bell hooks, 1994, 195)

Representations of excluded subjects in urban areas often emerge from a middle and upper class perspective and perpetuate the outsider status of said groups. While these hegemonic narratives are often effective in opening discussion of socio-economic and cultural disenfranchisement and can raise awareness about social inequality, the analysis of marginal and feminine cultural productions in this dissertation helps disseminate the voice and narratives of marginalized newcomer subjects, the poor, the black, the brown, the immigrant, and the female. As such, this work proposes that academic studies can

legitimize the political claims that these cultural texts make, considering them as legitimate works of art as well as political tools.

Further, the value of these texts also lies in presenting how the social and geographical mobility of lower classes and immigrant women is reflected in their cultural production, and how these productions in turn contribute to this groups' socio-cultural mobility. In the case of the works analyzed in the previous chapters, by representing public places as sites of social interactions and performance of human rights (narrating their belonging to and knowledge of the urban territory), authors/cultural producers are creatively demanding their right to, not only access, but also shape and construct a more inclusive and democratic city that challenges social exclusions and spatial segregations. For example, when choosing to narrate the urban excursions of newcomer characters and drawing an inclusionary urban space, these Latino and Latina authors are affirming their and their characters' belonging and knowledge of a territory that formally is not, but should be, attributed for them. In this sense, cultural productions become a medium through which socio-economic realities are expressed and performed.

I have argued that certain current Latin American and Latina marginal texts transcend the negative representation of a lack of urban rights in order to articulate marginal and female immigrant subjects as carriers of rights in the metropolis that they inhabit independently from their citizenship status. Fabiola, Ana, Dildu, Nancy, Vário, and Esperanza, while treated by the system as second class citizens or/and are not carriers of formal citizenship rights, are carriers of human rights which should allow them to come and go freely. In each of the stories discussed here, we find the claim for inclusion through the use of symbolic and physical directions, coordinates, maps, street numbers,

and street names all directing readers to understand the protagonists' power and knowledge over the territory they occupy. Their brown, black, female, immigrant bodies stroll, mark, and construct the metropolis in which they are inserted and as Careri suggested, become their enunciation. In these narratives, marginal and female characters are transported from invisibility to visibility, they are new *flâneurs/flâneuses* to see and to be seen. They also step out from the peripheries, favelas, and barrios to the urban center.

This analysis has shown that in fact female and male readings of urban geography are fundamentally different. In the chapters covering Latina readings of space, we observed an urban space full of symbolism, history, and emotions. Fabiola, Ana, and Esperanza (as well as Nancy in *A cidade é uma só*) produce a complex and symbolic gaze upon the streets they occupy. The transgression of geographic barriers and crossing of borders for Latinas came with the breaking of many symbolic societal barriers, such as the ones related to their bodies, sexuality, traditional roles, domestic restrictions, etc. Gender, in these narratives, adds a complex layer to the oppression that restricts the body symbolically and geographically. Differently from the women, Vário, Zé, and Dildu, for the most part, assumed a role of objective observers and did not have to slowly conquer their insecurities of transiting in order to gain their confidence. Their geographic mobility in the city was already implied from the beginning of the stories. These differences reinforce the idea of the need for a democratic (re)mapping of our spaces. The hegemonic white/male perception of territory is incomplete, and hearing new voices contributes to a more complete understanding of the social fabric.

However, the additional question created by this dissertation is how to use these narratives in social practice, toward the construction of a more inclusive and welcoming

urbanism to all. How can literature trespass the limitations of the classroom and, like in these stories, help our students find their own place in society, moving freely and constructing the urban fabric? In the next section, I connect the ideas of the language and literature classroom to social practices and inclusive urbanism giving examples of classroom dynamics and assessments while addressing literature, language, diversity, critical thinking, and social responsibility.

Literature in the Advanced Language Classroom: Community-Engaged Teaching Practices

As a teacher of language and literature, I ask myself daily the relevance of our analyses, not just for myself, but for the students in my classrooms. My personal big question throughout this dissertation process has always been the same: why does literature matter and how can I make it meaningful to students and by consequence, meaningful to instructors as well? I found my answers in the classroom, with the same students I try to engage. With each semester taught, with each connection between texts and social practices, my classes have become more meaningful to all of us as we trespass the limitations of the classroom and occupy and discuss community and social responsibility.

In this section, I will discuss how other authors have addressed the concept of social practice and critical thinking in the literature classroom. Afterwards, I will give my own classroom examples of how to use this dissertation's primary texts as tools to empower our literature and language students as active community members and

advocates of human rights everywhere. Besides creating awareness and social activism, my goal will be to bring texts and social practice together, making the classroom material more meaningful and authentic to instructors and students.

Ajay Heble (2017) in a work about human rights in the classroom, points out that “Democracy, after all, is predicted in the ability of ordinary citizens to become aware of issues in their communities and to develop a sense of responsibility for addressing these issues.” (Heble 5). In the case of urbanism and the right to the city, the idea is that through the reading of literary texts mapping the city areas, we can understand and accept the urban fabric as diverse and welcoming to us and to all. After establishing this awareness, we work together with alternatives and social practices that reclaim the city areas as our own - claiming our rights and responsibilities that break socially constructed segregations (explicit or implicit) and unjust boundaries.

As we know, in recent years, more emphasis has been put on the extension of instructors’ roles as language educators and literary scholars, focusing on their responsibility for empowering minds that promote structural and practical societal changes. As discussed by Henry Giroux, pedagogy should be thought about not only in terms of transmission of knowledge within the boundaries of a classroom, but instead, as the process of knowledge production, where skills are learned meaningfully and class material can be related to students' lives and realities. In the process, identities are shaped, desires are mobilized, and critical thinking becomes the key for discussion as social practices and alternatives arise (cited by Heble 2017, 6).

Heble in his analysis of social practices led by literary classroom discussions, reminds us that these pedagogical thoughts very often lead students to participate in acts

of voluntarism or community service. While these types of community participation have their benefits, what the author proposes and I reinforce here, is that can move beyond seeing the most needy as requiring of services and basic needs, and grow to see them as carriers of rights and agency. Students in these social practice led classroom activities should be engaged in four teaching standards according to universities' guidelines adopted all over the nation: 1) Communication 2) Diversity 3) Social Responsibility and 4) Critical Thinking. To achieve such standards, educators need to constantly ask ourselves the importance of the material being taught in the classroom and how we can transform it into authentic teaching tools.⁹⁶ Once theory and narratives are connected to social practices, students will understand themselves and those around them as carriers of rights and responsibilities within their community, neighborhood, city, and world. Following this idea, the language and literature classroom should be a space not only for reflection and discussion, but also a space to make connections with the space and community we live in. The classroom should engage in social practices that will influence the promotion of a better public space. Or as Heble suggests, we cannot let theory be so abstract and highly specialized to the point that it is completely meaningless to our students.

Stories, testimonies, and narratives have a “transformative potential” (Heble 14) because they allow us to see the other and to share perspectives and life experiences that are not similar to ours, which is the first step for empathy and successful community life. Following these ideas, personal narratives created by marginal and/or female writers

⁹⁶ By authentic, I mean themes/theories that even when abstract, can be related to daily life and the reality of our students.

allow for the humanization of people that are different from us. In the case of *Esperanza's Box of Saints, Dominicana*, and *American Street*, these personal stories allow us to see and experience the space that brown and black immigrant women have in the city and understand their rights as human beings. Similarly, in *A máquina de revelar destinos não cumpridos*, and *A cidade é uma só*, we have the chance to perceive the young black poor Brazilian male as not an agent of violence, but a citizen in the metropolis also deserving of rights.

While I do not intend to suggest here that books, classroom discussions, and small social practices by themselves will be able to change and transform the world we live in, I am instead pointing out that when language and literature are authentic, they become more meaningful, and with that, the discussions about them can be applied outside the classroom setting, transforming education. When we inspire learners and future educators to promote community outcomes based on classroom discussions, we are amplifying the chain of succession and working towards a societal and spatial transformation.

It is also fundamental to point out here the demographic of universities such as the one I am affiliated with during my dissertation years, the University of New Mexico. While the population in any university setting is a privileged sample of a region, because of an extended system of lottery scholarships, Students at the University of New Mexico (UNM) are predominantly Hispanic (47%) with a significant white population. The school has very high racial diversity. 65% percent of students represent a racial or ethnical minority. Of this 65%, 56% of them self-define as female gender, confirming the high number of female, racial and ethnical diversity at UNM. Also, data from the UNM website states that 39% of students can be considered low-income as indicated by their

receipt of Federal Pell Grant Aid, with \$49,538 median household income per year and 83% of them being New Mexico natives.⁹⁷ While there is a lack of data on specific departments, personal experience as an instructor in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at UNM suggests that these statistics are even higher in the language and literature classes, where low-income Hispanics represent the majority of students, a lot of times first or second generation Americans and first generation college graduates.

This demographic reality experienced in our Spanish and Portuguese language and literature classrooms leads us to three important considerations: 1) we need to introduce in our syllabi texts that are produced by Latina women and Latino men in order to offer democratic alternatives to hegemonic discourses. 2) It is important to work in the classroom to empower racial and ethnic minority students, focusing on their personal and collective geographic and symbolic spaces as Hispanic, black, brown, and female in the USA. 3) We need to educate students that do not have Hispanic heritage to understand their privileged geographic and symbolic spaces and become advocates for the right of diversity.

Bringing Paulo Freire's ideas (1968) into the discussion, an authentic vision of the world is needed to demonstrate how hierarchies that we live under have been for too long imposed on minority populations. A new reality that follows students' world experiences also must be introduced in the classroom. This way, their knowledge will be constructed having an objective to produce a society and a space where they and their community can thrive. A pedagogy for and by the oppressed entails that the oppressed take full responsibility for their fight and understand their right to "construct, admire, and

⁹⁷ University of New Mexico demographics (UNM.edu)

adventure” (Loc 906) through the social spaces we live in. To Paulo Freire, this objective can only be achieved through a humanitarian pedagogy that focuses on students’ realities and lived experiences. This form of teaching emphasizes the roles of all, oppressed and oppressors, for the achievement of a more just society.

This information is relevant in this research because our students represent the collectives we are reading about in these narratives. They may identify with protagonists in these stories as well as being motivated to create their own space and claim of urban rights. Social practices in a classroom filled with students that represent social minorities, has a goal to impact their understanding of their own rights in the space they occupy. It empowers them as political agents and promoters of change. It allows them to understand the restraints that bind them as a reflection of social hierarchies and historically grounded injustices and not personal failures or limitations. From this, we hope new active and engaged citizens emerge, who fight for the rights of their collective in the society we live in.

Bell hooks (1994) also reminds us that the classroom is the place for authentic educational practices and from these, from understanding the individual and collective spaces of struggle, hope to create positive transformation. “To believe in hope is to believe that it is worth taking the next step: that our actions, our families and cultures and society have meaning, are worth living and dying for” (hooks, 1994 loc. 131). What the author argues, and I defend in this dissertation, is the idea that progressive authentic forms of education teach how to create community and identify oneself as part of it. To her, great teaching is about enlightening and connecting students to a bigger sense of

community that is expanded outside the classroom. Learning must be understood as a tool to enrich life and community in its entirety.

When teaching language and literature, we must be aware that often we are teaching and giving the example of teaching for a next generation of educators. With that in mind, as educators, we need to remind ourselves that the value of academics lies in working for the good of the community and this can be done by helping to construct critical thinkers. Bell hooks argues that teaching community practices in the classroom goes in complete opposition to traditional academic hierarchies and competitiveness that follows our university space hooks 2003). Community-Based Education means teaching practices that start from the bottom up, and by that, she means understanding community needs instead of focusing on theoretical approaches. To the author, educators should always fight for a classroom space that is democratic and student driven instead of an authoritarian imposition of abstract ideas.

Students like the ones at UNM, when they face an academic space that involves authoritarian teaching that reproduces and favors the same structures as the outside world (white, rich, male), they are more likely to abandon the college classrooms. To achieve the diversity needed in the classroom and retain students, an authentic democratic form of teaching humanities is even more relevant in a college with demographics like those of UNM. Students need to feel like they are receiving tools and are by themselves able to change the space they occupy in an unjust society. In summary, using the ideas of Freire and hooks, we need to empower students to become agents of their own liberation.

The teaching of language and literature offers us the powerful tools of narrative and storytelling, which are basic forms of relating to our world. While narratives are a

construction of events that are meaningful and lead to a final message, storytelling is an informal recounting of our lives, exposing through small acts and experiences our ways of being. Woodhouse (2011) reminds us that stories are all we are and we cannot comprehend each other or our space without telling and hearing stories. To the author, through storytelling, we reinforce our sense of community and individual importance because human stories connect us to emotions, and emotions are what make us humans in the first place. Howard Woodhouse (2011) defends that the act of using stories and storytelling activities in the classroom is to “humanize” not just human differences, but also the process of learning. Again, through these tools, learning can become not something abstract, but embrace our small or large life experiences. When reading, sharing, and listening to stories and narratives, students consider themselves active participants in the pursuit of knowledge and feel empowered to tell stories about their own experiences, achievements, and struggles in the environment in which they live. An academic syllabus that embraces diverse voices allows for a more democratic classroom and meaningful learning experience. Similarly, former first lady Michelle Obama in *Becoming* (2018) states: “If we can open up a little more to each other and share our stories, our real stories, that’s what breaks down barriers. But in order to do that, you have to believe your story has value.”

Acknowledging this power, that story telling carries, I propose, a few classroom activities and assessments exemplifying how inclusive urbanism can be taught and discussed in the classroom after the reading of the previously mentioned stories. I propose community interventions through geographic mapping through storytelling and narrative construction. These activities allow students to search for tales of belonging

within themselves and their community that shape and claim the physical space we occupy. Afterwards, they are asked to develop in groups their own community-based practice and present it to the class as a final project. The next section explains in detail these activities.

Geographic Mapping, Storytelling, and Narratives in the Classroom

For many years, advanced level language and literature classes have been using narratives and personal testimonies to promote classroom discussions on literary theory and connect them to human rights. For example, in the advanced level Spanish classes at UNM, we use Rigoberta Manchú's testimonial⁹⁸ to address the problematics surrounding memory and storytelling, but at the same time, we use the book to promote critical thinking about history and politics surrounding the Guatemalan genocide. With that said, it is important to point out that literature has long been a vehicle for teaching critical thinking and social justice.

The very origin of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR 1948) has its foundations in the concept of storytelling through the Transitional Justice⁹⁹ mechanism carried out by the UN during the Nuremberg Trials in 1946. In those justice events, testimonies were listened to from victims and perpetrators of the Holocaust during World War II. While trials are historically the place where narratives are put together, in this case, the inhumanity of the narratives about the genocide

⁹⁸ Rigoberta Menchú: *An Indian Woman in Guatemala* (1984).

⁹⁹ Transitional Justice here includes the production of reports and trials, all based in testimonies.

produced the very idea that all human beings should have a set of fundamental rights, leading to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). This piece of history confirms the power of narratives and testimonies for the concept of rights and citizenship and officializes, through the endorsement of several nations, the common understanding about human dignity and respect to the human body.

However, even if this connection between narratives and human rights are obvious, our main focus in these advanced language and literature classes are often to address communication skills¹⁰⁰ of students (reading, listening, speaking, and writing, and in recent years, cultural competence as the fifth skill). However, following more progressive agendas, it is often suggested that instructors address and measure four new main pillars in undergraduate college classrooms: 1) Communication 2) Diversity 3) Social Responsibility and 4) Critical Thinking.

The goal of the following activities, as in any language classroom, is to address the communication skills of students, but doing so by giving them relevant intellectual material that challenges and complements the learning of a new language, material that will promote all four of the new teaching standards and allow them to use the target language in a more authentic manner through community projects and social practices. Adding to these new objectives, the classroom dynamics presented here intend to follow the main principles of task-based communicative language teaching proposed by Klaus Brandl (2008). The author draws six methodological principles to a language

¹⁰⁰ For many decades, the main method of language teaching worldwide was grammar-translation, but by the 1980s, we see a shift to communicative language teaching (CLT). In this new methodology, the primary goal of learners should be to develop communicative competence, or to use language successfully in real-life authentic scenarios (Brandl 2008).

communicative classroom, these are: 1) Use tasks as an organizational principle: which implies that syllabi are no more constructed according to grammar, but instead they will fit a natural flow of communication skill development. 2) Promote learning by doing it: based on the idea that hands-on projects increase engagement. 3) Input needs to be rich: students need to receive relevant and authentic material to read, watch, listen, etc. in the target language. 4) Input needs to be meaningful, comprehensive, and elaborate: students need to be able to understand the clear input and it needs to be relatable with pre-existing knowledge. 5) Promote cooperative and collaborative learning: a community environment where students work together to produce tasks. 6) Teaching grammar through context.

By engaging in activities that follow those communicative principles and at the same time pushing students to think critically about diversity and their social responsibility, I hope my students make a bigger connection between their life and the target language, and are empowered to address their rights and responsibilities in the community they live in.

Reading and Comprehension

During the semester, students read poems, short stories, novels, etc. in the target language (Spanish or Portuguese) that deal with the introduction of marginal bodies and voices into the urban centers. This could also be adapted to the version of the same novels in English if we were working with high school students. While the bigger plan for this project is to introduce a whole semester into our college curriculum of a class about Geographies and Mappings of Resistance, I would start with a two-week module in

a class that I already teach at UNM: Brazilian Voices of Resistance, an advanced level Portuguese class. Normally in this class, the semester is divided into four modules: 1) Black Voices of Resistance 2) Indigenous Voices of Resistance 3) LGBTQ Voices of Resistance and 4) Democratic Voices of Resistance. In each of these modules, students are presented with several types of cultural productions from Brazil: novels, short stories, music, movies, documentaries/mockumentaries, soap operas, poetry, visual arts, and photography. We discuss these texts in written and spoken form in terms of content and social/historical background.

When reading the texts about mapping in Spanish and Portuguese, we would debate in the classroom concepts such as the right to the city and the UN Charter on Urban Rights. Again, this material can always be used in the target language. Weekly short online written discussion boards are proposed with questions about the readings where students participate by answering questions, but also reading and commenting on peers' responses. While short answered comprehension questions are relevant to check the understanding of a text in a second language and the participation of students in reading activities, they are also normally conservative following a student-teacher form of correction. Online led discussion boards offer an alternative to this model where students cooperate and comment on each other's posts without the instructor's interventions. In classroom argument we also avoid hierarchical practices, allowing students to choose their own focus and learn with each other's reading experiences. For example, a simple and efficient activity would be to have students in pairs produce critical questions about the text for the entire classroom. The creation of critical questions

requires reading and basic understanding of the text and also allows for a democratic classroom through student led discussions.

Another alternative to classroom activities involve the use of news pieces. Learners would be asked to find news pieces online exemplifying the symbolic and geographic restrictions minorities experience in our community (university, county, city, country). This way, first they would be drawing the explicit and implicit segregations that bound us in our city. News pieces are relevant, authentic, and current tools when addressing human rights in the classroom. Another option is an activity that motivates students to think about their own identity and space, such as the Four Cs activity.¹⁰¹ In this classroom practice, students are invited to think and share with their colleagues what are their 4 Cs: Community, Culture, Color, and Corner. This way, there is an emphasis on comprehension of what are geographic spaces and how we feel differently about places where we think we do not belong. This activity could easily be transformed into a dynamic group project, where we physically draw circles on the board symbolizing physical and symbolic spaces. Circles could intersect, combine, and exclude each other, creating a big spatial diagram. Again, this drawing should be student led and instructors should only be facilitators in the assembly.

¹⁰¹ This activity was shared by Dr. Eva Rodríguez González.

Mapping Though Writing

Assessments for the Portuguese advanced-level class follow the theme of the module¹⁰² and the format explored. For example, students are asked to read, write and perform a poem when we address black voices of resistance through rap music and poetry; they work on a written argument when we study political voices and they produce podcasts when we are speaking of indigenous oral practices. In the new approach proposed here, students would create a human mapping as part of the written assessment for the urban rights module.

Following oral classroom discussions about identity and space, the instructor would bring to class a local neighborhood, county, or city map. Using the map gives the class not only the material visual element, but also the understanding of physicality in the discussion of space. The city is ours to draw, to explore, and to trace on. We transform the map into a tool that links students into the spaces requiring them to own such territory. Using sticky notes and cord, each person in the classroom is invited to write, in a few words, three experiences that they had in certain spaces in three different notepads.¹⁰³ After this, they would share it with the class and place the notes in specific locations, tracing our map and recreating it. With markers and tags, learners are invited to draw and mark the paper however they desire. The activity would allow the class to transform an official and formal map into something more human that follows their own experiences – making the territory their own. The tool Google Street View could also be enlarged using a projector to help locate spots of interest of students.

¹⁰² Modules of Portuguese 311 class: 1) Black Voices of Resistance 2) Indigenous Voices of Resistance 3) LGBTQ Voices of Resistance and 4) Democratic Voices of Resistance.

¹⁰³ Working not with formal narratives, but with spontaneous storytelling.

The objective of this activity is to authentically use the target language in an oral and written form and at the same time, get students talking and thinking about the space they occupy, developing a sense of belonging. When they put on paper and present their experiences, likes and dislikes, insecurities, and concerns about the territory in question, they are, like the characters in the novels, affirming that they belong and own the city we live in. Strings would connect narratives (written on sticky notes) and their spaces and together we would create a human patchwork of the urban fabric (see figure 2).

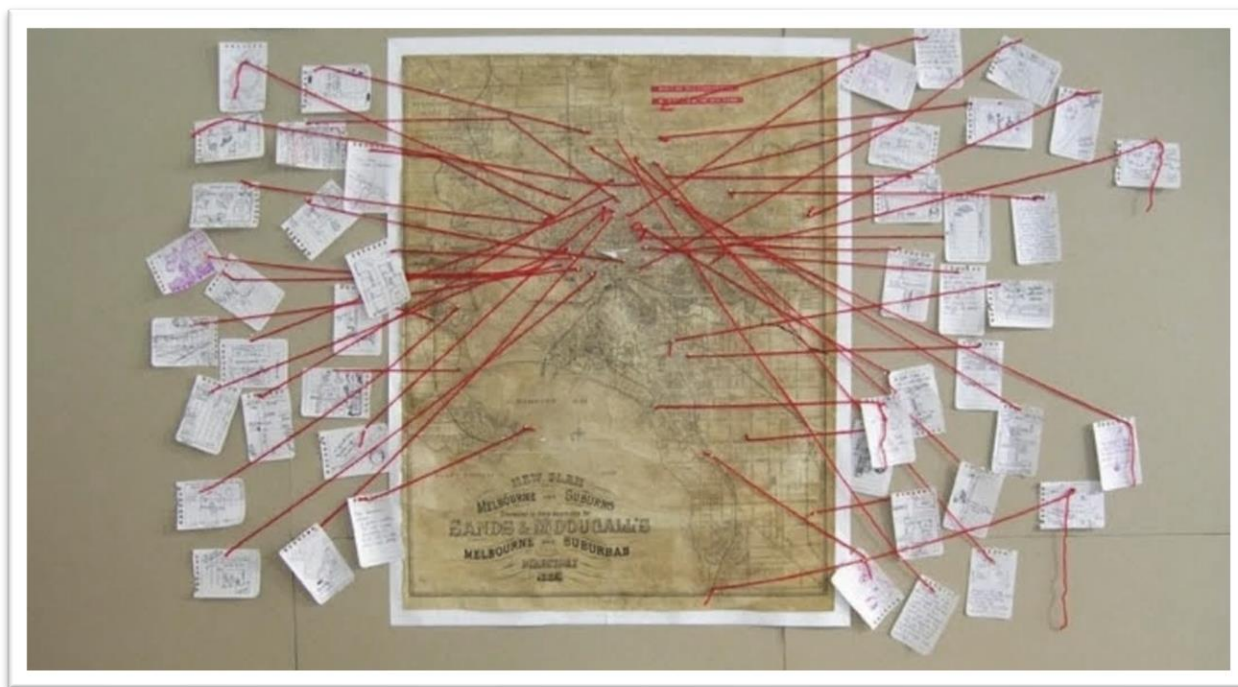


Figure 2: Example of a classroom mapping written activity

This dynamic mapping classroom activity would be connected to a more extensive take home individual assessment. Students would then be asked to produce, at home, a narrative in the target language where they are a *flâneur/flâneuse* in the streets of

their city or town. This could be drawn from a memory they have, from an experience they have lived in the streets, or a creative piece of writing about the space they inhabit. The prompt would focus on the grammar topic of choice. For example, for advanced Portuguese and Spanish, students would use both forms of preterit and detailed special descriptions to complete this assignment. As in any written assignment, it is important that standards and expectations are communicated when the prompt is given. An example of how to do that, is to discuss the rubric used in class.¹⁰⁴ Making students aware of their own learning process and expectations is a fundamental tool in a language and literature class. The grading process becomes more meaningful to students and less emotional to instructors when rubrics are clear and detailed, citing examples of expectations met or not met (see figure 3). While the writing rubric is an essential tool to address form and content in these assessments, during the grading of the final community-based project, a new rubric should be drawn, that includes new learning standards such as critical thinking, diversity, and social responsibility, creating an awareness about the learning objectives.

As part of the writing process of essays in a second language, errors are a great tool to the learning process and studies show that students benefit from a process-oriented approach to writing. In this concept, the final writing piece becomes the result of a succession of steps where students ameliorate their essays. Mary O'Donnell (2014) points out that this process-oriented writing often involves: 1) prewriting activities; 2) drafting; 3) sharing and responding; 4) editing and resubmission. O'Donnell suggests that

¹⁰⁴ An example of the rubric given to Portuguese students at UNM can be found in figure 3.

historically, the second language learning process has been focused on grammar and vocabulary corrections, however in the past years, the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning (1996), created by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) has been a key tool for guiding second language writing as a full process of communication development that is not simply restricted to form. In other words, students need to know not only grammar and vocabulary, but also what to do with the language, using it in meaningful and appropriate ways.¹⁰⁵

Following these national standards that put communication as the ultimate goal of a language class, instructor-guided corrections that focus on form are replaced by authentic corrections by peers that focus on the communication of a message. In the first scenario of the more conservative focus on form, the instructors mark compositions using an error correction code to access grammar and vocabulary (see figure 4), giving the students the chance to reevaluate and learn from their mistakes. After this, they turn in a final version of the assessment, which will increase points to their final composition grade.

A more democratic alternative to error correction is peer feedback, which has been common in language classrooms, providing a more authentic form of audience response to written assignments. The literature confirms that the relevance of peer feedback lies (opposed to instructor feedback) in the concept that it is more level appropriate and often more focused on the communicative aspect of the essay.

According to research, through classmates' feedback, writers can interact with each other in a more authentic setting and negotiate meaning together (O'Donnell 2014). While peer

¹⁰⁵ National ACTFL Standard (cited by O'Donnell 2014).

review does not substitute the conservative instructor's correction of form, it offers an alternative to the achievement of a better comprehension of language use by a true process of shared work.

O'Donnell also suggests that peer editing (focusing on form) and peer responses (focusing on content) to written assignments (instead of instructor correction) produce a sense of classroom community and have social, cognitive, and linguistic benefits. It not only gives students the practice in creating language, but also pushes them to be critical readers and work in the classroom to the benefit of others, which is also part of the content in a community-based literature class. With that in mind, a complete process of writing should be established in this activity, where students see a narrative construction as collaborative learning.

Writing Rubric PORT 300 Department of Spanish and Portuguese

	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Approaches Expectations	Does not meet expectations
CONTENT (20%)	20 Content is superior and fully addresses all aspects of the prompt. Main ideas are clear and well-developed with detailed support.	16 Content is satisfactory and addresses all aspects of the prompt. Main ideas are clear and are supported with some elaboration and detail.	14 Most or all aspects of the prompt are addressed. Content is generally adequate, but may be superficial and/or repetitive. Main ideas are usually clear, but lack detailed development or elaboration.	11 Content is inadequate and/or does not address all aspects of the prompt. Main ideas are unclear and/or have minimal or no elaboration or detail. Content may be unrelated and/or repetitive.
ORGANIZATION (10%)	10 All sentences and paragraphs are cohesive and flow logically. A variety of transitional words are used effectively	8 All sentences and paragraphs are cohesive, yet may not always flow logically. A few sentences may be discrete. Transitional words are included, though some may be repeated.	7 Sentences and paragraphs are somewhat cohesive, though several may be discrete and/or misplaced. Transitional words are used, but may be ineffective.	5 Few sentences are cohesive. Most sentences are discrete and are misplaced with limited flow. Transitional words are not used or are used ineffectively.
DISCOURSE LEVEL (10%)	10 Complete sentences are used throughout. Sentence structures are varied and include clauses, conjunctions and/or connectors.	8 Complete sentences are used throughout. Sentence structures may be varied but simple and include clauses, conjunctions and/or connectors.	7 Uses complete sentences most of the time. Sentence structure may be simple and/or repetitive. Clauses, conjunctions and/or connectors may be used.	5 Many incomplete sentences. Sentence structure is often simple and/or repetitive. Clauses, conjunctions and/or connectors are not used.
VOCABULARY (25%)	25 Vocabulary range is extensive. Word choice and usage are appropriate in almost all instances. Mistakes do not obscure meaning. There are few spelling mistakes. Idiomatic expressions and/or less common words are attempted. Literal translation from English or Spanish are not used.	20 Vocabulary range is satisfactory. Word choice and usage are generally appropriate. Mistakes rarely obscure meaning. Some spelling mistakes may be present. Idiomatic expressions and/or less common words may be attempted. Literal translations from English or Spanish are rarely used.	18 Vocabulary is generally satisfactory, but may be repetitive and/or basic. There may be several mistakes in word choice and usage. Mistakes may obscure meaning. There may be many spelling mistakes. Few literal translations from English and Spanish may be included.	13 Vocabulary range is inadequate, limited, and/or repetitive. There may be consistent and/or frequent mistakes in word choice and usage. Mistakes may often obscure meaning. There may be excessive spelling mistakes. Several English or Spanish words and/or literal translation may be included.
LANGUAGE CONTROL (35%)	35 There is excellent control of basic grammar, with few mistakes. Mistakes do not obscure meaning. Risks are taken in creating with language, though mistakes may be present.	28 There is satisfactory control of basic grammar, with some mistakes. Mistakes rarely obscure meaning for the reader. Risks may be taken in creating with language, though mistakes may be present.	24 There is general control of basic grammar, but there may be many or patterned mistakes. Mistakes may occasionally obscure meaning for the reader. Few or no risks are taken in creating with language.	19 There is minimal or no control of basic grammar, with frequent and/or consistent mistakes. Mistakes may obscure meaning for the reader. There are no attempted risks in creating with language.
TOTAL POSSIBLE	100	80	70	55
<p>1 Less common words in writing proficiency for PORT100/200 refer to vocabulary listed in the textbook that is not frequently used in classroom activities. 2 Basic grammar in writing proficiency for PORT100/200 includes correct word order, subject-verb agreement, noun-modifier agreement, question formation, punctuation, capitalization, use and conjugation of verbs in the present indicative, correct conjugation 3 To "exceed expectations" in Language Control, students must take risks by using more complex vocabulary and grammar structures IN ADDITION TO demonstrating excellent control of the basic grammar listed above.</p> <p>IN THE CASE OF IN-CLASS COMPOSITIONS, SPECIFIC grammar structures and vocabulary that are asked to produce in writing also constitute BASIC GRAMMAR AND/OR VOCABULARY (cf. above).</p>				

NOTE: This rubric incorporates descriptors from ACTFL's writing proficiency guidelines for the novice and/or intermediate level(s).

Final Grade (out of 100 pts. rubric)	
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Figure 3: PORT 311 writing rubric adapted from Spanish Second Language Program and used for Spanish intermediate level courses. Created in 2015 by UNM Second Language Program Coordinator, Dr. Eva Rodríguez-González.

ERROR CORRECTION CODE (Compositions/Writing assignments)




AREA	SYMBOL USED BY INSTRUCTOR IN THE PAPER	DESCRIPTION
CONTENT	_____ ?	Content not clear (reader has problems understanding the content: this kind of error interferes understanding/communication)
VOCABULARY		<u>False cognate</u> <u>Dictionary error</u> <u>Word choice</u> <u>Wrong verb</u>
GRAMMAR/ LANGUAGE USE		<u>Missing a word</u> <u>Extra word (not needed)</u> <u>Incorrect gender assignment to a noun</u> <u>Incorrect number assignment to a noun</u> <u>Concordance (agreement gender /number with nouns and adjectives)</u> <u>Por/para confusion</u> <u>Direct/indirect object pronouns</u> <u>Personal "a"</u> <u>Contraction error: na, à, pela, etc.</u> <u>Prepositional error</u> <u>Omission of definite article</u> <u>Subject-verb agreement</u> <u>Conjugation of a verb</u> <u>Preterite imperfect confusion</u> <u>Verb tense error (other than preterite-imperfect)</u> <u>Reflexive</u> <u>Participle error</u> <u>"gostar and similar constructions" error</u> <u>Ser/estar confusion</u> <u>Incorrect mode (confusion among indicative-subjunctive-infinitive)</u> <u>Subjunctive: present should be past or vice versa</u> <u>Impersonal "se" - passive voice</u> <u>Missing a verb</u> <u>Syntax (wrong word order)</u> <u>Not a sentence in Portuguese</u>
SPELLING		<u>Accent</u> <u>Spelling error</u>

Figure 4: Error Correction Code adapted from Spanish Second Language Program and used for Spanish courses. Created in 2015 by UNM Second Language Program Coordinator, Dr. Eva Rodríguez-González.

Social Practices and Claiming our Territory

The main goal of a final class project should be to gather what was learned during the semester into a practical meaningful assignment. In this case, the objective is to work on creative marks to construct a more inclusive urbanism. Students here are invited to make their own mark, to claim their own space, and to create a social project that reaches their community. This could be brainstormed and done in groups or in the class as a whole. What I have found from years as a learning facilitator, is that, when given the opportunity, students will develop incredible projects and goals for themselves. In Albuquerque, NM, Spanish learners will have a better chance to use the target language in applying these projects in the local community, while Portuguese learners could face challenges. However, it is important to communicate with students that the social practice does not need to make use of the language, but their delivery (report and presentation to the class) will. In English high school classes, the language would be a secondary factor.

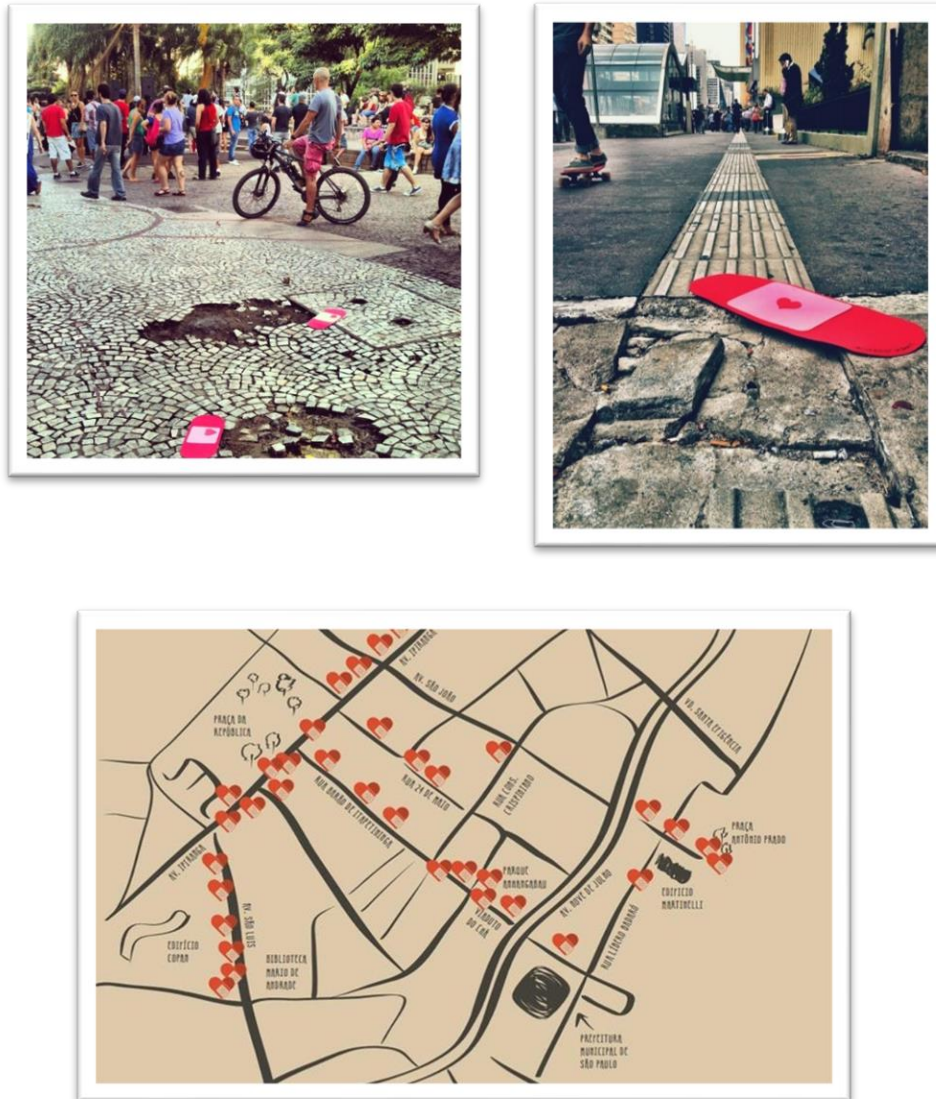
The questions that should be raised in the classroom should be related to the practice of content covered. For example, after all we had seen during the semester, after so many examples of voices that struggle to find their own symbolic and geographic space in the world we live, how do we introduce ourselves as also part of the urban fabric? What is our voice, what are our responsibilities, and rights as members of this community? How can we mark, see, and be seen in a positive way? How can we transform the space to be more inclusive?

While these are big questions, the projects do not have to be big, they can include small social practices followed by reflection pieces. In the next pages, I offer some examples of community-based practices that I have seen during my research that could

easily be implemented as a language and literature classroom final project in any type of educational setting.

1. *Curativos Urbanos* / Urban Band-Aids (Figures 5):

This is a low cost and easy meaningful urban project created in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 2012 by the NGO Bela Rua. Through the construction of colorful foam large band-aids, students place them strategically around the city singling out spaces of difficult access or spots that need maintenance. The goal is to draw attention to “sick” spots of our city, and with that, to also discuss the lack of accessibility of sidewalks and encourage not only government, but also inhabitants to take care of the common space we all share. This social practice would make students and community stop and think about the challenges that a broken sidewalk, the lack of a bench at a bus stop, or a hole in the ground can represent to people that are different than them, creating empathy and a sense of community. This project develops the idea of an inclusive urbanism that is appealing and welcoming to all and belongs to all. Immediately outside the UNM campus area would be a great space for such installations because it could open the debate to the maintenance of the space, which is highly deteriorated and severely littered. The completion of the assignment could be done through a visual and written report, short documentary, or even a magazine article about the project all in the target language.



Figures 5: Curativos Urbanos/ Urban Band Aids. Bela Rua, Porto Alegre, 2017.

2. Survey Installations (Figures 6):

Through this idea, students would conduct an interactive community survey about their urban area. This could be done by elaborate interviews, short question interviews, or interactive self-answer survey methods. The community would be asked

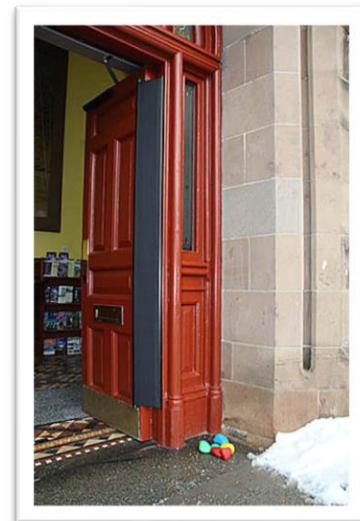
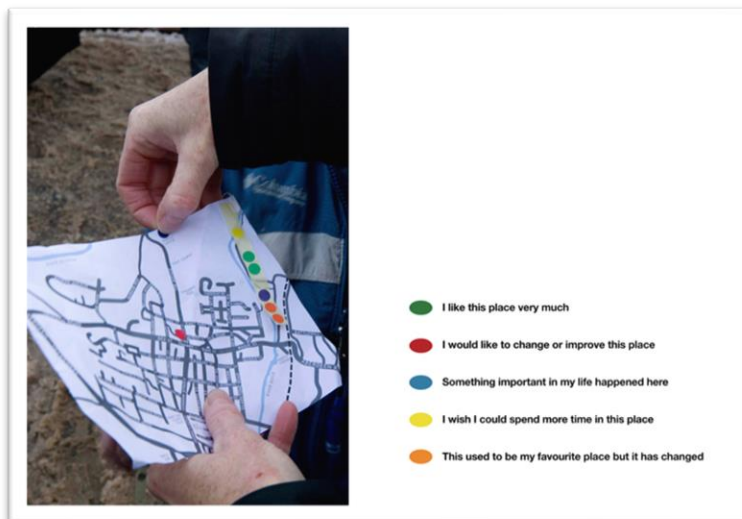
about the places they 1) like to attend or 2) the places they do or do not feel safe or 3) the places they would like to see improved or 4) how they think it should be changed. This gives the community and students the chance to come together understanding the city space as not simply an empty place for transit, but also a carrier of meaning. Taking ownership over the territory by voicing their opinions and understanding community needs is a first step for the construction of a more inclusive urban area. Instructors can also motivate students to use the results of this research to write to a local representative asking for practical changes.

This project is inspired by “How do you live this place” an installation by Maider López, where the artist asked members of a community (Huntly, Scotland) to choose and place around the neighborhood color stones assigned by different meanings. 1) Green: I like this place 2) Red: I would like to change this place 3) Blue: Something important happened in this place 4) Yellow: I wish I could spend more time in this place 5) Orange: This used to be my favorite place, but it has changed. Afterwards , people were invited to create a collective map of the area, placing emphasis on places and community and encouraging all to reflect on their ownership of space (López 2010).

Another version of this project would be inspired by Nicole Kalms’ (Monash University School of Design) community project, where an arrangement of mapping was created, where women in the community of Melbourne, Australia had the opportunity of tracing, locating, and reporting their good and bad experiences in their urban space. Through a phone app, the map was daily updated and accessed by members of the community with the intention of making a female mapping of the city and denouncing the limitations that the space imposed on people based on their gender. The results could

bring to light different ideas about threat perception versus violence, as well as positives and negatives of overlapping and different urban experiences of members of the community.

These activities would replicate a participative planning strategy, where the community would be heard about the issues concerning their space. According to Andrew and Legacy (2013) the introduction of a safer urban space for women and minorities can only be achieved through the act of listening to others through social learning and actually listening to individuals' experiences. By embracing this process, students would be contributing to the development of democratic democracy and inclusive citizenship. Again, the documentation of such practice through a report, a letter to a representative, or reflection paper would be the graded piece of the assessment here.





Figures 6: “How do you live this space” by Maider Lopez, 2010. Deveron Arts. Huntly, Scotland.

3. Humanizing Spaces

In this project, students would gather community stories of events that happened in certain urban areas with the goal of humanizing spaces. Working in a process of recording oral narratives and transforming them into short stories, students would get in touch with urban spaces and community members. Those stories could be documented in the language preferred. For example, in Albuquerque, NM, the use of Spanish and English could be relevant to a large bilingual population. Exactly in the place where these stories happened, the narratives would be displayed creatively according to students’ ideas. This could be done in any type of format, for example written form, installations, or art murals. Again, by humanizing the space that we live in, we acknowledge it as a carrier of meaning and therefore an important piece of our community life. The UNM area has so many abandoned buildings in a bad state, which could make this project even more interesting promoting the humanization of such spaces.

The assessment piece of this project, like any other, could be through an oral or written report or even an organized collection of community narratives written by students in the target language. A compassionate city is a city that embraces human interactions and histories, and the goal of this project is to work towards that.

4. Challenging a Wall

This idea is inspired by Charles D. Thompson's project, *Border Odyssey*, which also was turned into a book by the same author in 2015. The work is a collection of maps and narratives from places along the border between the USA and Mexico. It explores roads, sites, and spaces in between countries and cultures and adds local narratives to each of these spots, offering us a humanized text about a space that is often misread. In both the website and the book, we find photographs, maps, and additional resources about these hybrid locations.

The idea in this social practice project would be to mimic the *Border Odyssey* Project and offer narratives about segregation spots in our town. For example, students could research the story behind a wall, a fence, or a symbolic segregation. Afterwards, they could promote a community-based link to this story, for example a painted mural or an installation on the wall that tells the story of the reasons why it was built. Again, UNM campus, Nob Hill, and Downtown areas in Albuquerque with its many abandoned buildings, fences, and walls would be a good space for such a project. Once again, a historical project would link community and space, humanizing our urban areas and calling attention to spaces of divisions and segregations.

While these are just a few examples of practical social interventions, again, I would like to point out that students must be free to create their own mark or their own ways to intervening in their territory. The final project in a classroom should be a reflection of an entire semester of critical thinking and for this reason the prompt to this assessment should be distributed early in the semester. Syllabus, class programs, and rubrics should also be flexible to adapt to different types of projects chosen by the class as a whole. This way, students can focus from the beginning on practical forms of applying what we discuss in the classroom in a way that benefits their space and their community. This idea follows Paulo Freire's (1968) teachings that state that the pedagogy should not be created for the student to liberate them, but instead, created by the one that should be responsible for his/her self-liberation and self-awareness. From my experience teaching language and literature classes, undergraduates will rise to the challenge and create incredible projects when given the opportunity to be the subject of their own learning process.

The classroom activities and projects suggested here leave us with further considerations on how to transform community-based practice into course grades. The challenge that community-based practice teaching faces is how to construct a democratic classroom that focuses on students and community on top of conservative/conventional methods of teaching. In other words, how can we efficiently and fairly quantify students' achievements during these types of activities and how can we assess if they truly achieved objectives related to critical thinking, social responsibility, and diversity? However, these questions are not at all strange to the humanities field or any non-exact science. These inquiries come with further considerations about the real value of current

conservative models of grading in a more humanistic, student led, and democratic type of learning. Hopefully, this dissertation opens the door to further debate on this matter as well as to considerations on how we can re-shape learning outcomes in language and literature classroom in a way that accommodates teaching community practices and our students' marks on the community we live in. Following offer my final conclusions about the interconnection between classroom practices, space, and the fight for an inclusive urbanism.

A New Inclusive Urban Space

In the beginning of 2020, at the same time that this dissertation was being concluded, the world faced the spread of COVID-19, the announcement of a global pandemic. As a consequence, we experienced what we came to call social distancing and lockdown of any non-essential business and unnecessary social transit. While social isolation affected the higher social classes since they had the privilege of reclusion at home, we all faced, to some degree, the challenge of leaving the streets, staying at home, and avoiding any type of physical social interactions. With the empty streets, like no other time in previous history, we developed a nostalgic feeling for collective space and community life. For the first time, on a global level, society as a whole, faced the reality that the uses of urban space have an impact on our life, our success, and our personal happiness. Using this nostalgia, there is no better time to reflect on our movement, geographic space, and the design of our city areas. There is no better scenario to understand that public spaces must serve and be welcoming to all people.

On that same note, Jenny Donovan (2018) explains that urban design has the power of shaping people's lives and relationships. An urban space full of barriers transmits a message of non-belonging, not welcoming, and a lack of opportunity. To the author, barriers are not always physical (as we also see in this dissertation). Instead, they are made by "distancing, prejudice, lack of awareness or social stratification, reinforced by a qualitatively inadequate physical environment" (3). The strongest sign of a non-inclusive city is shown by the lack of ease of movement: lack of sidewalks, inadequate transit infrastructures, etc. When transportation and transit is difficult, it normally affects the poor populations, which live further from centers and have no conditions of affording expensive private cars. In this case, they are trapped, stagnated, and immobile in peripheries. When segregated in these restricted areas, they are not seen or accepted and this has a direct relationship with their lack of human and citizenship rights.

A well projected urban space is one that allows security, but also where humans can achieve their full potential and live their lives in the best way possible. Barbara Holtmann (2013) explains that when people do not feel safe, they are hesitant to imagine themselves fully integrated as part of a community. When asked about what changes they would like to see in their public space, women at the Third International Conference on the Safety of Women in Cities (November 2010) in Delhi responded with ideas involving the aesthetics of space, love and joy: love and happiness, joy in diversity, beautiful places, flowers, and communal gardens. They related these with economic empowerment, livelihoods, light and mobility, and a place of dialogue (Holtmann 2013). These ideas reinforce the perceptions of a compassionate city, like Donovan propose.

When we think about the perfect urban space, while we can draw some conclusions from research conducted, we do not have a set formula. It cannot be drawn or defined with a set of rules and applied to all spaces. The reason for this is that it is a representation of community and it should follow specific societal needs, which can change according to time, different economic scenarios, and cultures. The most important thing is that it be a democratic space, where subjects are in constant interaction to construct the territory. As Melanie Lambrick reminds us that:

When space is understood as discursive, and when our work engages with these characteristics of space, we recognize both the individual and the collective realities of the women (and minorities) around us. Our strategies must be as varied as the experiences that we seek to represent, and our tactics, to be successful, must find innovative and engaging ways to weave our narratives into the fabric of our cities, our neighborhoods and our common lives (180).

However, what we already know, and Janette Sadik-Khan and Seth Salomonow (2016) state, is that transforming our cities cannot be made by thinking about vehicle traffic. According to the authors, building more car lanes will only create more traffic. By reducing car lanes to make space for bike lanes, buses, and pedestrians we will once again be claiming the city as ours and giving people the alternative to transit and socialize differently. Shaping our cities differently, by giving space to human bodies instead of cars, will not only save us from the cement enclaves we are bound to, but it will also improve our individual and community quality of life. A city made for people - following

desire paths that are natural results of human presence - instead of catering to the needs of car owners, will create a city more diverse and welcoming to all.

As discussed above, only by walking and performing our subjectivities in common spaces will we be able to see the other as also deserving of rights and opportunities. Full, diverse, and welcoming sidewalks are the first step for us to “see” and accept one another. Only when we are all allowed to be *flâneurs* and *flâneuses* (to see and to be seen), independently of our citizenship status, gender, social class, race, or ethnicity, will the city be truly inclusive. Bringing that to a current reality, such as the Black Lives Matter Movement, a democratic urban sphere is the only way we will stop the common white hegemonic perception that brown and black bodies do not belong in desirable areas or that law enforcement has the right and the responsibility to restrain, segregate, and often exterminate these bodies when they cross symbolic and geographic borders. Marginal subjects cannot wait any longer for the day they will be included in the urban centers, they must claim their space, occupy the streets, and demand their equal access to urban rights – as they have done in the stories here discussed.

With that said, through reading and discussing these narratives that include historically excluded bodies moving freely in the urban fabric, we can empower our students to understand themselves as also part of these same spaces. We are pushing them to affirm their belonging, their knowledge, and their power over their territory, but most importantly, we are hopefully inspiring them to be political agents and constructors of the community they live in. We are presenting them with the concept that the city should be a space that not only welcomes all of us, but also serves us. Geography must be inclusive, and the language and literature classroom should also be a space for the understanding of

diversity, social responsibility, and critical thinking. Through these community practices that go beyond the classroom, we are acknowledging that our city has more boundaries for those in the margins, including women, immigrants, brown, and black populations. And by acknowledging these physical and symbolic walls, we are inspiring students to create stronger bridges that link community together through narratives, storytelling, theory, and social practice to hopefully one day, break the walls surrounding us all.

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