

Studies in 20th Century Literature

Volume 25
Issue 1 *The Literature and Popular Culture of
the U.S.-Mexican Border*

Article 8

1-1-2001

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Recommended Citation

Durán, Javier (2001) "Border Crossings: Images of the Pachuco in Mexican Literature," *Studies in 20th Century Literature*: Vol. 25: Iss. 1, Article 8. <https://doi.org/10.4148/2334-4415.1497>

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Border Crossings: Images of the Pachuco in Mexican Literature

Abstract

This study suggests that an analysis of the image of the *pachuco* in Mexican literature can provide useful insights about the role and position of subaltern expressions as they become integrated into a larger mapping of cultural production. The paper argues that the *pachuco's* representation in Mexican culture undergoes a series of transformations that ultimately materialize in a symbolic entity which functions as a buffer mechanism of inclusion and/or exclusion. The *pachuco* is then a contra modern element that becomes de-territorialized from both Mexican and U.S. culture due to its aesthetic and linguistic hybridity which becomes a menace for essentialist and monolithic visions of the nation. Thus, the image of the *pachuco* is seen as a transnational and translational figure that develops into a two-sided cultural marker in the writings of Octavio Paz and José Revueltas, promoters of Mexico's post-revolutionary cultural project; while in the writings of Carlos Monsiváis the image of the *pachuco* becomes an indicator of the relationship between the centralized forces that dictate what is to be Mexican and its chaotic periphery, specifically the northern border with the U.S.

Keywords

border narrative, U.S.-Mexican border, border crossing, pachuco, Mexican literature, subaltern expressions, culture, symbolism, inclusion, exclusion, territory, U.S. culture, Mexican culture, Octavio Paz, transnationality, cultural markers, José Revueltas, Carlos Monsiváis, northern border, north

Border Crossings: Images of the *Pachuco*
in Mexican Literature

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Introduction

In this study, I discuss the image of the Pachuco as portrayed in the works of three Mexican writers: Octavio Paz, José Revueltas, and Carlos Monsiváis. Although the Pachuco has been studied as a particular theme by several critics,¹ especially after the publication of Paz's paradigmatic essay *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, I suggest that a close examination of the image of the Pachuco in Mexican literature can provide useful insights about the role and position of subaltern cultural expressions as they become integrated into a larger mapping of cultural production. Paz's chapter "The Pachuco and Other Extremes" becomes one of the cornerstones in his conception of nation in *The Labyrinth of Solitude*. Paz's view of the nation derives from a homogeneous, totalizing base that tends in principle to exclude any elements of a transnational identity such as the Pachuco from his "imagined community," a term Paz borrows from Benedict Anderson.² In contrast, José Revueltas writes a journalistic chronicle during his travels along the U.S.-Mexico border and in Southern California during the 1940s. Revueltas's discourse attempts to "objectively" describe and denounce the conditions of exploitation facing the Chicano, Mexican, and Pachuco populations of the Los Angeles area of the time. This view of the Chicano becomes an intertext in Revueltas' novel *Los motivos de Cain* (*Cain's Motives*, 1957). The writings of Carlos Monsiváis, on the other hand, deal with the image of the Pachuco in Mexican culture by analyzing the work of Mexican comedian Germán Valdés "Tin Tán." Monsiváis

observes a process of “despachuquización” in the development of Tin Tán’s career in the Mexican film industry during the 1940s and 1950s that reflects prejudices and particular characteristics of the Mexican postrevolutionary cultural project. In my view, this particular process coincides with Paz’s building of his imagined community: the exclusion of alienating elements from his idea of an essentially homogeneous Mexican nation.

In what follows, I argue that the Pachuco’s representation in Mexican culture undergoes a series of transformations that ultimately materialize in a symbolic entity which functions as a buffer mechanism of inclusion and/or exclusion within that particular system. Following Homi Bhabha’s reflections on postcolonial criticism, “[a criticism that] . . . formulate[s] [its] critical revisions around issues of cultural difference, social authority, and political discrimination in order to reveal the antagonistic and ambivalent moments within the ‘rationalizations’ of modernity” (*Location* 171), I see the image of the Pachuco as a transnational and translational figure that becomes a two-sided cultural marker for the promoters of Mexico’s post-revolutionary cultural project (Paz and to some extent Revueltas); while when taken by critics of such a system (Monsiváis), it becomes an indicator of the relationship between the centralized forces that dictate what is to be Mexican and its chaotic periphery, specifically the northern border with the U.S.. Nonetheless, and if, as Bhabha suggests, the nation state—with all its administrative structures of belonging, its powers of political affiliation, its determination of the institutional conditions of everyday life, its codified sense of social order and justice—is produced by the incessant crossing of borders (Papastergiadis), I am interested in looking at this process as it produces writings that depict such crossings. Moreover, my discussion is directed at how the Pachuco becomes inscribed (and deleted) in this process of nation (re)building, which takes place upon the U.S.-Mexico border and in the *barrios* of U.S. Southwestern cities.³

Framing the Pachuco

Homi Bhabha has stated that the postcolonial subject becomes a mixture of the persistence of neo-colonial relations

<https://newprairiepress.org/stcl/vol25/iss1/8>
DOI: 10.4148/2334-4415.1497

within a new world order that authenticates stories of exploitation and the evolution of strategies of resistance. Moreover, postcolonial critique bears witness to those countries and communities constituted “otherwise than modernity,” that is, spaces that fall within a notion of a “*contra modernity* which may be contingent to modernity, discontinuous or in contention with it, even resistant to its oppressive assimilative technologies . . .” (Bhabha 6; my emphasis).⁴ This set of possibilities of “contra modern” positions may also deploy a cultural hybridity produced by their borderline conditions to translate and therefore reinscribe the social imaginary of both metropolis and modernity (Bhabha). In my reading I view the Pachuco as a contra modern element that becomes de-territorialized from both Mexican and U.S. culture due to its aesthetic and linguistic hybridity.⁵ This process occurs not only within the incipient urban spaces of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, the *barrios*, at a time when the modern war industry dictated economic and social patterns in the region, but also within the sphere of Mexico’s high culture. If Chicano/a culture has been marked by a sign of survival during its historical evolution in which it is possible to identify elements of subjugation, domination, diaspora, and dislocation, we can then frame such a culture within Bhabha’s suggestion that cultures of survival do not reproduce themselves within the limits of the “imaginary museum” of national cultures. And here I would like to suggest that perhaps these cultures of survival reproduce and re-map themselves in what Nestor Garcia Canclini calls “cultural reconversions.” A cultural reconversion is a hybrid transformation generated by the horizontal coexistence of a number of symbolic systems that “. . . challenges the assumption that cultural identity is based on a patrimony, and that this patrimony is constituted by the occupation of a territory and by collections of works and monuments” (32). Thus, Chicano/a culture—and by extension the image of the Pachuco—becomes, as a result of such reconversion, “a transnational and translational strategy of survival” (Bhabha 172). This dual process integrates and registers the conflictive and ambivalent nature that surrounds the image of the Pachuco. According to Nikos Papastergiadis, Bhabha’s critical project focuses on the presence

of cultural difference as “[it] is primarily directed at the discourse on modernity and consequently—although often only by implication—its structures of modernization” (177). Moreover, Papastergiadis sees in Bhabha’s use of minority discourse a strategy “to investigate the socio-psychic determinants that disturb the ‘fit’ between the ideology and the legitimation of the nation state. His concern is with the ambivalent process of identification which sustains the authority of the nation and colonial discourse as objects of ‘desire and derision’” (178). In my view, the Pachuco as cultural entity shows signs of this ambivalence in its relation to both the Mexican and the North American nation states as it has also been the object of “desire and derision” in both cultures. Thus, the transnational process re-maps a series a binary oppositions (First World-Third World, inside-outside, North-South, center-periphery, nation-border) while the translational challenges the value of culture as sign, denaturalizing the master narratives of purity, progress and nation (Bhabha 172-75). The Pachuco thus becomes a “sujeto transfronterizo” ‘border-crossing subject, that appropriated a particular language, “caló” ‘slang,’ translating it in its own terms in order to produce and represent its conditions of existence. Contra modernity becomes then a trademark for the Pachuco through which a cultural reconversion challenges his exclusion from both the Mexican and U.S. national imaginaries and explains its position in Paz’s glorifying discourse of modernity in *The Labyrinth of Solitude*.

The Pachuco in his Labyrinth

But the Pachuco is not the only one crossing the border in this process. Paz crosses the border in order to write his view of Mexico and modernity. The essence of Mexican identity (Mexicanness or *mexicanidad*) is also defined from a North-South contradictory perspective; “we are what the North (U.S.) is not,” Paz seems to be telling us, yet he cannot omit referring to the U.S. in his argument. In this context, it is highly interesting and contradictory—as García Canclini has observed—that Paz keeps returning to the “pre-modern” in order to talk about modernity:

“We want to understand why one of the most subtle promoters

of modernity in Latin American literature and art is fascinated with returning to the pre-modern” (68; my translation). The answer is complex since for Paz, modernity becomes a place with particular surroundings (see Johnson, “Translation”). Notwithstanding all the discussions generated by Paz’s work, I am interested here in the role of the “other” assigned to the Pachuco in the essay. Paz sees the Pachuco as a being that “. . . is sheer negative impulse, a tangle of contradictions, an enigma” (14). Moreover, Paz considers the Pachuco an outsider, a cultural foreigner, that carries a particular ambiguity, again in contradiction with his thesis that the Pachuco is one of the extremes of the Mexican. This characterization of the Pachuco as a being that negates himself in turn negates his link with his Mexican origin and by extension with his connections to the Mexican nation-state, since the Pachuco—according to Paz—refuses to return to his origins. Whether Paz negates the Pachuco, its proper etymological and historical origins “. . . ‘pachuco,’ a word of uncertain derivation, [says] nothing and [says] everything. It is a strange word with no definite meaning; or to be more exact, it is charged like all popular creations with a diversity of meanings” (14). The problem of the Pachuco’s alterity (or lack thereof) resides in another two conditions observed by Paz in his essay: the Pachuco’s aesthetics and the impossibility of expressing himself in the national language, Spanish in this case, although the same argument could be made for English.

The Pachuco’s alterity in Paz’s essay is always opposed to a *mexicanidad*, that is, to the identity of the average Mexican, since he only represents “un extremo” ‘one side’ of that particular Mexican. Nonetheless, Paz’s magic mirror, that instrument that allows him to search the origins and decipher the mythical secrets of nationality, seems inadequate when dealing with the Pachuco.⁶ Paz does not see a Janus-faced image; rather, the Pachuco appears in his essay as a “shadow man,” a being incapable of reproducing his own image. Paz can only see a univocal image of the Pachuco, an aesthetic replication of his baroque apparel and a defiant attitude toward society: “The pachuco has lost his whole inheritance: language, religion, customs, beliefs. He is left with only a body and a soul with which he confronts

the elements, defenseless against the stares of everyone. His disguise is a protection, but it also differentiates and isolates him: it both hides him and points him out" (15). Paz takes the Pachuco and dresses him up with a costume and a mask. The masking of the Pachuco allows him to place him in his museum of imaginary national oddities. Let's not forget the importance of the motif of the mask in Paz's work, especially the strong bonds that he sees between myth, ritual, and image in pre-Columbian cultures. And this masking also allows Paz to justify the attitude of U.S. society toward the Pachuco and the violent campaigns against him at the time: "I believe that the North American's irritation results from his seeing the pachuco as mythological figure and therefore, in effect, a danger. His dangerousness lies in his singularity. Everyone agrees in finding something hybrid about him, something disturbing and fascinating" (16). Paz conveniently transforms the Pachuco not only into a hybrid, but also into a myth.

The Pachuco, then, cannot become an acceptable reflection of the Mexican because his aesthetics reflect other types of ethics and his language defies the national language(s). Thus the Pachuco can only be signified, can only exist, outside the nation, since—according to Paz—he wants to be neither Mexican nor "American." But, ironically, Paz himself notes his aesthetics, his dress code, as a sign of "resistance" without ever really explaining the object of the Pachuco's resistance. Paz consummates in his essay the de-nationalization of the Pachuco. With a colonizing twist, he attributes to the Pachuco savage and irrational characteristics (was he referring to a sort of Chicano noble savage?), demonizing him in a time when the official and systematic repression against the Pachucos was well documented. But perhaps what Paz fails to understand is that, as Bhabha has argued, minority discourse emerges from the "*in between* of image and sign, the accumulative and the adjunct, presence and proxy" (*Nation* 307). Thus, Paz's discursive condemnation of the Pachuco becomes ideologically allied with the hegemonic discourse that dominated the spaces of the internal colonies: the *barrios*.⁷ The organized raids and beatings of Chicano youths (whether or not they were Pachucos) became then openly justifiable. The Mexi-

can nation-state often looked the other way, paying little attention to this problem, in fact, even refusing to acknowledge the existence of a systematic persecution against these descendants of Mexican citizenry whose migratory status could be questionable. I mention this because just as in the present, many migrants at the time did not have legal status in the U.S., and they were still in fact Mexican citizens. Yet, as Carey McWilliams argues, there were several instances in which representatives of the Mexican government protested the violent acts against Mexican citizens, especially after the first groups of “braceros” ‘documented farm workers’ began to arrive in California after 1942 (210).⁸ Nevertheless, Paz’s statement in “The Present Day,” another essay of *The Labyrinth*, “For the first time in our history, we are contemporaries of all mankind” (194), seems to confirm, as Rubén Medina points out, the consolidation of the asymmetric relationship of subordination between the North American metropolis and its neocolonial southern neighbors (69). Was Paz a contemporary of the Pachuco, sharing the same solitude, as he stated in his essay? Doubtful. At a cultural and literary level, the image of the Pachuco, and by extension of the Chicano, does not transcend the judgment of this high priest of Mexican culture. In fact, the Pachuco becomes the target and the example of precisely what it is not to be Mexican. Nonetheless, it would be unfair to say that all the Mexican intelligentsia ignored the situation, as a reading of the writings of José Revueltas shows in the following section.

Revueltas and the Chronicle of a Foretold Repression (The Zoot-Suit Riots)

In 1943, José Revueltas traveled to Mexico’s northwest region as reporter for the magazine *Así*. Revueltas wrote several articles that appeared in several issues of the magazine. After traveling through the states of Sonora and Baja California Norte, Revueltas crossed the border and visited several places in Southern California where he met people from the film industry, gave talks about Mexican art, and was even illegally employed in a factory that produced oxygen boxes for fighter planes during World War II.⁹ I am particularly interested in his writings after

his arrival in Los Angeles, where he depicts the “México de fuera,” that other Mexico that propelled the writings of Paz roughly around the same time. World War II is a major theme in Revueltas’s chronicle. He constantly observes and points to those elements of the United States that relate to the armed conflict. If he admired the dedication, discipline, and patriotism of the North American people, he also criticized the immediate consequences of militarization and the increased role of the soldier in North American society. In a sense, Revueltas blames this attitude for the eventual abuse and brutality that many Mexicans in Southern California suffered at the hands of members of the armed forces (*Vision* 85). But how did Revueltas see this “México de fuera”? Perhaps not so differently from Paz, as we can see in this long but pertinent quote:

There is a brutal primitivism, unleashed, in the Mexicans that go out drinking at night [*pistear*, to drink in the Mexican slang of Los Angeles] to Olvera Street. It feels a little like there is a part of Mexico there. But a deformed and naked Mexico, full of darkness in its reactions, in its attitudes, like something sinister. This “México de fuera” that many talk about is bitter and rough: it has the spirit full of rage and resentment and it is as if it were stunned by things that it can not quite fully explain, as if they stole something from it, something deeply immaterial but necessary, indispensable, loved and sordid. I asked myself if what the Mexican of Los Angeles misses—subconsciously and without realizing it—is the fatherland [*la patria*]. But the sense that certain Mexicans of Los Angeles have of the fatherland is monstrous. They love the negative side of Mexico, making it hypertrophic; and the bravery and machismo, a wild attitude, are for them the defining signs. (85)

Revueltas concludes this reflection blaming the Mexican government for not attempting to educate the Mexican population abroad: “our authorities [the Mexican Consulate] over there have never bothered to distribute among the colony’s population not even a poorly written pamphlet. All of this has contributed so that California’s anti-Mexican press coverage exploits in its favor the incidents in the Mexican colony to stir Mexico’s enemy circles against our conationals” (85). And it is precisely this position assumed by Revueltas that highlights the process of contra-modernity ascribed to the Pachuco and suggested at the begin-

ning of this paper. That is, the Pachuco (the “mexicano de fuera,” and by extension the Chicano) developed a cultural reconversion due to the re-territorialization that occurs. By employing a notion of Mexicanness that uses as referent the monuments and museological signs of official culture (the Mexican Consulate), Revueltas—despite his strong Marxist formation, (but perhaps due to it) and like Paz—is incapable of escaping the official nationalist wave of his time. However, if Paz negates and deletes the presence of the Pachuco (or what I call his transnational and translational attributes), Revueltas seems to reject only his transnational status while trying to understand and accept his translational traits. This may be in part due to the recognition on Revueltas’s part of the supplemental role of minority discourse and of the asymmetry in which the Pachuco inserts itself. For Revueltas, the Pachuco’s marginality falls under what Papastergiadis sees as a re-articulation of the mode of addressing the national community, and a revelation of the ruptures within the totalizing discourse of the nationhood (185).¹⁰

Paz, in his essay, had already rejected trying to understand the reasons encompassing the Pachuco’s situation: “It is not important to examine the causes of this conflict, and even less so to ask whether or not it has a solution. There are minorities in many parts of the world who do not enjoy the same opportunities as the rest of the population” (15); on the other hand, Revueltas, in contrast, proceeds to develop a first hand investigation that can satisfactorily explain the situation of the “mexicano de allá” ‘the Mexican abroad.’ Revueltas’s writings focused on events that will prove central to Chicano historiography: the incident of the Sleepy Lagoon and the brutal campaign against the zoot-suiters. There are a number of studies that have dealt with the so called Zoot-Suit Riots (Acuña; Griffith; Madrid; Mazón; McWilliams). There are also literary representations of the events among them perhaps the most famous is Luis Valdez’s play *Zoot-Suit* (1978). Yet the writings of Revueltas fall within testimonial ground since he had the opportunity to be present in the area of the riots while interacting with this segment of the population. His first impressions deal with commentaries about the news published in the local newspapers during most of 1942, especially in those publi-

cations belonging to the rich entrepreneur William Randolph Hearst. The local press highlights in its headlines the problem of the “Mexican delinquency,” associating with these reports the terms “zoot-suits” and “gangs.”

Revueltas’s account of the events of the Sleepy Lagoon follow for the most part what has been recognized as the true account: a Mexican youth, José Díaz, was found dead outside a party that took place near the lagoon.¹¹ The police immediately blamed a group of Pachucos that had attended the party since several of them had participated in a fight at the party. But apparently, the youth was hit by a drunk driver who had fled the scene; nevertheless, the police—under the pretext of conducting an investigation of the mysterious death—declared that a homicide was committed and that the guilty parties, presumably the Pachucos, should be brought to justice. This inspired a campaign that mobilized not only the Los Angeles Police Department but also members of the armed forces stationed in the area, especially from the U.S. Navy. Beatings of Mexican youths outside movie theaters, dance halls, and local hangouts took place for several weeks, and they intensified fueled by the support shown by the local press (Mazón; McWilliams). After several incidents, it was obvious that the police and the sailors and Marines involved were not just looking for zoot-suiters, but they also began to beat and harass anyone whose appearance resembled a Mexican or Chicano. Revueltas’s chronicle documents these events, focusing on the actual youngsters accused in the Sleepy Lagoon case. The obvious incapacity of the local authorities to solve the case, the lack of evidence shown at the trials, constituted for Revueltas proof of the racist tactics and policies followed by the local criminal justice system. These tactics included long sentences for lesser crimes: “according to defense lawyer Bob Margolis any Anglo accused of the same crime would not have been condemned to more than six months in prison” (89). Moreover, Revueltas’s chronicle gives an identity to these alleged Pachucos. For Revueltas the de/re-territorialization of the Mexicans (and of the Pachucos) is due to economic reasons. His transnational and traslational status obeys a forced migration north in search of

plete profiles of the youngsters including their names, occupations, and plans. Revueltas highlights the fact that most of these young men were employed in different factories of the national defense system while others were actual recruits of the military forces ready to join their combat units during World War II:

José Ruiz, sentenced to life in prison, is an amateur baseball player. His ambition was to play in the Major Leagues . . . Roberto Téllez, eighteen years of age, sentenced to life in prison, worked in the defense industry. Manuel Reyes, sentenced to five years or life in prison, seventeen years of age, signed up with the Navy in July 1942. He was about to attend the required pledge of allegiance ceremony as a new member of the armed forces when he was arrested and incarcerated. (89)

It is hard to see in these cases recorded in Revueltas' chronicle the forgetful, unable-to-express themselves, good-for-nothing lot of Pachucos that Paz portrayed in his essay. Chicano youth were trying to belong to North American society, as Beatrice Griffith reminds us in *American Me* (1948), a series of vignettes and sociological commentary depicting the lives of Chicano youth of the time. However, North American society was having difficulty accepting these darker, rather baroque elements into its domains.

Revueltas visited areas inhabited by the Mexicans around Los Angeles, describing their meager and peripheral conditions: " 'On this side of the tracks'[en este lado del traque] in Los Angeles people live miserable and depressing lives, especially in certain Mexican barrios like Maravilla and El Hoyo. . . . It is here that several gangs of Pachucos wander around, wild youngsters, the by-product of an industrial civilization indifferent to human problems" (95). Far from condemning the Pachucos to a mythical ritual of exclusion, Revueltas attempts to present the causes that have created the Pachucos so his readership can understand their situation, by appealing to their translational position; he begins referring to the etymology of their name:

The Pachucos originated, it is said, in the city of El Paso. The word itself, pachuco, derives from the name El Paso. In the Mexican slang of the United States, the word "paciente" is used to name the people from El Paso. The corruption of this word eventually became the word pachuco. In the years 1924 to 1926 there was a great migra-

tion of *pacientes* to Los Angeles. Most of these immigrants remained in Maravilla, a Mexican barrio of Belvedere. (*Vision* 95)

In a 1975 interview with José Armas, Paz reconsidered some of his earlier judgments about the Pachuco, considering it perhaps an earlier model for the Chicano; according to Armas, “Paz clearly failed to recognize the pachuco as the forerunner of the Chicano Movement. In our exchange, he contends that he may have been mistaken, but he pointed out, as his defense, that he was looking at the pachuco more than twenty years ago . . .” (8). But what Paz fails to point out in his essay, as Luis Leal keenly observe, is that the Pachuco is rejected not only by North American society, but also by Mexico (117), a fact that Revueltas readily acknowledges, even if rather indirectly, in his chronicle. As Arturo Madrid has suggested: “. . . Paz was not interested in examining the historical causes of the conflictive existence of the Pachuco and even less its possible solutions. He was more interested in the Pachuco’s behavior—his will to be different—and then only insofar as what the behavior said about the character of the Mexican” (37). The above implication could not apparently be attributed to Revueltas, or could it?

Perhaps to answer this question we should look at Paz’s reply to Armas’s question about whether the Pachuco has been a precursor of the Chicano. Paz offered the following answer:

Yes. I believe that the pachuco, in a certain way, was the precursor of the Chicano. . . . When I examined him . . . I found two things. In the first place, an attitude of desperation in face of the situation he confronted. And the answer was a revolt. . . . A revolt that was somewhat like committing suicide, for there was no hope of it becoming anything. But anyway I found a rebellious attitude. Instead of saying let’s adapt to the Anglo-American world, they said we are going to be different from that world. . . . And that is what they decided to do. Instinctively, they dressed in an extravagant manner and used a special language, etc. (qtd. in Leal 118)

It is in this rebellious attitude that Paz sees the Pachuco as a precursor of the Chicano, but the Chicano has organized “himself” in a very different way, following political rather than aesthetic principles, but “nevertheless, the origins of this organization, of this revolt, are to be found in the world of the Pachuco,” adds Paz

(Leal 118).¹² Although Paz never really explains this world of the Pachuco that allowed the Chicano to organize politically, Revueltas attempts to do so. And it is in this attempt that Revueltas seems paradoxically to coincide with some of Paz's views about the Chicano.

Revueltas and the Chicano or the Revolts of the Chicanidad

In a 1975 article dealing with Revueltas's novel *Los motivos de Caín*, Sam Slick wrote: "While at times the novel reduces itself to a mere political polemic, there are various redeeming qualities. Of particular interest to the contemporary reader is the portrayal of two Chicanos as main characters" (53). With this text published in 1957, Revueltas becomes one of the first Mexican authors (if not the first one) to incorporate Chicanos as viable characters in their works. The Zoot-Suit Riots appear in the novel as a pre-text, serving also as a useful anachronism for the portrayal of the repression suffered by the Mexicans in North American society. Revueltas's interest in the Chicanos, according to Evodio Escalante, was perhaps due to the fact that for the Mexican author the Chicanos, with their identity under siege and a double dosage of patience for experiencing the effects of racial discrimination—in addition to economic exploitation—became an obligatory topic that he had to explore in his works (125).¹³ But Escalante also suggests that Revueltas's view of the Chicanos, or at least as they are portrayed in his literary works, tends to "see them as a population in flight [en fuga], a population that is always in the middle of escaping from something and that finds—in the uncertainty of their flight—the only way to assume their existence" (126; my translation). At this point, it is worth comparing Escalante's assessment with the following statement by Paz: "The pachuco is the prey of society, but instead of hiding he adorns himself to attract the hunter's attention. Persecution redeems him and breaks his solitude: his salvation depends on his becoming part of the very society he appears to deny" (17). Although Paz does not specify which society the Pachuco should be a part of (I assume he refers to North American society, although as we see later in the case of Tin Tán it could very well be Mexican society), and if indeed Escalante's suggestion is valid,

then I propose that its validity resides precisely in Revueltas's postrevolutionary concept of national identity and an idealistic will to create, in the 1950s, a Third World type of unifying, revolutionary theme that will serve as a blanket to cover, protect, and homogenize (ideologically) all proletarian struggles of the world. In other words, Revueltas succumbs to the temptation (at the height of the Cold War) to fictionalize extending the proletarian class struggle to the United States using the Chicanos as a vehicle to achieve this idealistic purpose. And it is through the Chicano characters Jack Mendoza and Bob Mascorro in *Cain's Motives* that we can observe this particular position because Revueltas, unlike Paz, does not see the Pachuco and the Chicano as extremes of the Mexican, but rather as examples of the de/re-territorialization of the Mexican and his or her possibilities as member of the North American proletariat. For Revueltas the future of Chicano identity lies between two options: assimilation to North American society via integration into the military service, as represented by Jack Mendoza—a sergeant in the U.S. army during the Korean War¹⁴—or political integration as in the characterization of Bob Mascorro, a Chicano proletarian activist and member of the Communist party.

But returning to Revueltas's depiction of the Pachuco situation, it seems that he locates the Pachuco not so much in a historical space, but rather in what Bhabha considers to be a liminal space. Bhabha's notion of liminality—following Raymond Williams—sees identity constituted by the interdependency between transformational power and historical displacement. Moreover, it argues that the alterity of the modern nation state is revealed in heterogeneity and in “the perpetual movement of the ‘marginal integration of individuals’ ” (*Nation* 300). Liminality thus becomes the process of identity formation in the experience of transition and the empowering perspective that results from the tension between the dominant culture's inability to recognize the aspirations of the margin (Papastergiadis 186). If, as Carlos Monsiváis suggests, “In the chronicle, the play with the literary uses at its discretion the first person or liberally narrates events as seen and lived from another interiorness” (*A ustedes* 13; my

text as well, using the available information and his own personal experience:

The pachuco is not a bad element of society, not even a simple disturber of public order. I do not find another way to define it but as a wild young man, resentful, ignorant of social reality. I attended a pachuco dance, organized, I think, as a fund raiser to support the case of the seventeen Mexicans confined in San Quentin prison [from the Sleepy Lagoon case]. . . . The dance was peaceful, without fights or disturbances, and the following morning, we even organized a trip to the beaches of Santa Monica and Venice. . . . The pachuco problem is, in reality, an educational and organizational problem. (*Tin Tán* 97)

There is no direct evidence of the impact of Revueltas's chronicles in Mexico at that time. What matters from his chronicles, however, is the projection that Revueltas offers not only about the Pachuco "problem," but also about what in time will constitute the Chicano situation. Revueltas reiterates the uncomfortable presence of the Pachuco, insinuating his neo-colonial and subaltern position. The Pachuco's agency of identification as portrayed in Revueltas's writings seems to be his social and linguistic ambivalence, and, as Bhabha reminds us, identity is always constituted in a process of substitution, displacement, or projection (*Nation* 313). This anti-essential model of subjectivity—which emphasizes the hybrid side of identity, foregrounding processes of mimicry, stereotyping and fetishism—contests Paz's essential negation of the Pachuco's identity. As we see in the next setting, the Pachuco crosses the border and becomes (at least temporarily) part of the Mexican imagination as show-business personalities such as Germán Valdés's "Tin Tán" moved from periphery to center, bringing with them a hybrid spectacle where the Pachuco found a transitory place in the cultural imaginary of the time.

This is the Pachuco, a Very Special Guy . . .

In "De México y los chicanos, de México y su cultura fronteriza," his prologue to *La otra cara de México el pueblo chicano* (*The Other Side of Mexico The Chicano People*), Carlos Monsiváis discusses the reasons why the Mexican cultural establishment sought to stop the cultural invasion represented by the

figure of the Pachuco interpreted by the comedian Germán Valdés “Tin Tán.” Moreover, Monsiváis proposes that Tin Tán is the first identified manifestation of the border in contemporary Mexico (14). Born in Mexico City in 1915, Tin Tán grew up in the border city of Ciudad Juárez, where he became involved with the local media when he worked for a local radio station. Tin Tán returned to Mexico City in the 1940s, playing the character of the Pachuco. In another piece, “Tin Tán: The Pachuco,” Monsiváis wrote: “While *Cantinflas*, dominating a film comedy that was more verbal than visual, remained trapped in the prison of his one great discovery (‘talking a lot without saying anything’), and the rest were mere variations on themes adapted from the Frivolous Theater (*carpa* or music hall), Tin Tán was a leap in the dark” (106).¹⁵ In what follows, I would like to center my discussion on Monsiváis’s writings and on what he calls Tin Tán’s *despachuquización* process, highlighting the reception of his *pachuquismo* in Mexico and its close ties with the *pelado*, *relajo* and *rasquachismo* as de-territorializing tropes of the monolithic pyramid of Mexicanness.

If Paz deals with the Pachuco situation through an essay, and *Revueltas* via journalistic chronicles, Monsiváis writes about the Pachuco from an “in-between” genres perspective; that is, his writings oscillate between the essay and the chronicle. And it is the radicalization of both generic forms that makes him one of the most important cultural critics in Mexico. As John Kraniauskas notes:

... he narrativizes his essays. They all tell histories, but they do so in order to focus all the better on issues of contemporary concern. ... He incorporates into his texts the heteroglossia which Bakhtin suggested, defines the novel as a cultural form (and which he associated with the experience of urban living), creating a dialogized environment (a city) of voices and sociolects, whose effect includes the vernacularization of his own voice. (x-xi)

Inasmuch as Paz’s and *Revueltas*’s writings tend to reaffirm the postrevolutionary project of modernity, Monsiváis’s texts have resisted contributing to the establishment of any kind of national identity. Kraniauskas identifies the presence of disorder as an

tance and a closeness to cultural process, while at the same time his essays “narrate real events, like history, but without its scientific apparatus; preferring to remain—ambiguously, from the generic point of view, but coherently, from the political point of view—anchored in the present and in the realm of literature” (xv). And if Revueltas locates himself diametrically opposed to Paz within the ideological and cultural spectrum of twentieth-century Mexico, Monsiváis appears as a counter reading of Paz’s modernizing project, not so much in contention with that project, but rather as a counter project.¹⁶

According to Monsiváis, Tin-Tán appears as a *sujeito transfronterizo* whose Pachuco characterization elicits a negative response from some sectors of the Mexican media because: “The defying dandism of the Pachuco (an aesthetics that is also an ethics, the stereotype that foresees the need of a counter culture, the result and premonition of the first battles of the Mexican Americans) finds in Tin Tán its sweetened and festive version, its adaptation and dissemination in Mexico” (14; my translation). Thus, Tin Tán builds his Pachuco characterization mixing fetishism, mimicry, and stereotyping, what Bhabha sees as the formula for hybridity. Since Pachuco culture was a form of assemblage, a cultural affirmation rather than a nostalgic return to an imaginary original past, its strategies of survival—appropriation, transgression, reassemblage, breaking and restructuring the laws of language with *caló* and *pochismos*—were also reflected in the codified language of the body (hair style, tattooing, dress, gestures, and dance) and in the codified language of space (marking territories with graffiti in the city, the *barrio*, and the street) (see Sanchez-Tranquilino and Tagg). The Pachuco’s fetishism becomes inscribed not only in the zoot-suit, but also in its relationship with all of these codes and languages. Wearing the big baggy drapes, posturing defiantly before others, claiming possession of a street corner, using “caló” ‘slang’ to communicate, all these gestures become stereotypical, but they also become mimicry. As Lacan reminds us: “Mimicry reveals something in so far as it is distinct from what might be called an itself that is behind. The effect of mimicry is camouflage. . . . It is not a question of harmonizing with the background, but against a mottled back-

ground, of becoming mottled—exactly like the technique of camouflage practiced in human warfare” (99). But in the case of the Pachuco, the camouflage made it visible and gave it a location in culture. Perhaps that is why the Los Angeles Police and the U.S. Navy sailors wanted to undress the Pachucos during the Zoot-Suit Riots. And perhaps this mimicry can be traceable within what Benedict Anderson described as “the inner compatibility of empire and nation” (88) (no doubt the case of the United States) problematizing the signs of racial and cultural priority, so that the ‘national’ is no longer naturalizable (Bhabha, *Location* 87). If what emerges between fetishism and mimicry is a language, it is also possible, as Bhabha suggests, to identify a writing, a mode of representation that marginalizes the monumentality of history simply by mocking its power to be a model for all. The menace of mimicry is its double vision, its ability to disclose the ambivalence of dominant discourse, disturbing accepted forms of cultural and linguistic difference (88). If this writing made the Pachucos visible, it also made them readable in such a way that they have to be denied as Paz attempted in his essay. It is in this liminal position, in this border line, in this third space (*Location*) that the Pachucos become inscribed (for better or for worse) in the dominant Anglo American or Mexican cultures that tried to suppress them (Sánchez-Tranquilino and Tagg). Displaced from mainstream avenues of representation, the street becomes, for the Pachuco, a major part of this third space where a new economy of identity and power can be articulated; a third space that the urban police forces attempt to deny by repressing its efforts to signify in the streets. And it is precisely in the streets of Ciudad Juárez, El Paso, and Los Angeles that Tin Tán acquires his *pachuquismo*.

Seen then in Mexico as a linguistic and aesthetic aberration, Tin Tán’s Pachuco was heavily criticized by the conservative wing of the cultural establishment because it was believed to be a corrupting influence in the good use of the Spanish language, as Monsiváis observes:

along with the protests of some members of the National Academy of the Language, began to place objections to the aspect and presentation of Tin Tán's Pachuco, demanding the "mexicanization" of his vocabulary to reduce the burden of obvious transculturation, negating the parodied reality and eliminating the tonalities of border culture that have made Tin Tán famous and significant for Mexican audiences. (14; my translation)

If, as Monsiváis further claims, "The Pachuco is thus affiliated with the American Way of Life only eccentrically, and becomes a part of Mexican culture by confronting racism," then, in Mexico, it later becomes associated with the lower classes, with the slums and with the picaresque type called "pelados" 'rogues.' And yet, for a period of time, Tin Tán articulated a script opposed to known convention: he was a Pachuco, a word that in Mexico City oscillated between irony and insult (Monsiváis). His linguistic hybridity, his mimicry, and his stereotyping (of *pochismo*—a derogatory term for Mexicans living in the U.S.) placed him in a liminal position that began unmasking and menacing the homogeneous realm of Mexican nationalism since the Pachuco's cultural survival strategy was not saying less or being silent, but saying more, saying too much and with the wrong accent (on either side of the border), constantly transforming language so it was never fully assimilable to an essential ethnicity or nationality (Sánchez-Tranquilino and Tagg 102). In this context, a significant reaction was Jose Vasconcelos's letter to a local newspaper in 1944. This prominent Mexican intellectual, author of *La raza cósmica* (*The Cosmic Race*), was critical of the "pochismo lingüístico" 'linguistic pochismo' and the mediocre and often vulgar shows that seemed to be invading Mexico City: "The good work of elementary schools in Nuevo Laredo and Coahuila—wrote Vasconcelos—and the efforts of illustrated patriots have been able to contain the abuse in the usage of the Tintanesque gibberish [jerigonza tintanesca]. But now it happens that the capital of the country is the one fostering, applauding, and enjoying this *pochismo*" (qtd. in Aguilera; my translation). And it is mainly Tin Tán's *pochismo* that places his Pachuco character outside the nation, on the border, on the boundary of mexicanidad, and that eventually takes him to the slums and barrios of Mexico City,

despachuquizándolo by making him just another popular comedian serving as a good example to show why Mexico should modernize.

As Monsiváis further observes, “By the time Tin Tán acquires his name, Pachucos have disappeared from the scene in the U.S.A., while in Mexico they had become synonymous with the idea of a vagabond with radical taste and, furthermore, associated with the suburban pimp, or the embodiment of a new neighborhood masculinity . . .” (“Tin Tán”110). It is difficult for me to agree with the first part of the above statement. Pachucos in the U.S. continued their liminal existence and they even became literary characters in several works of Chicano literature. But I must agree that the *despachuquización* process in Tin Tán’s characters reflected an open rejection of a “gringified” (Americanized) style that produced inflammatory reactions in an audience trained by many years of nationalist post-revolutionary rhetoric, especially in the film and entertainment industry. Nonetheless, Tin Tán’s Pachuco announced the upcoming of popular modernity in Mexican culture, a process that exploited the essentialist nature of Mexican nationalism, while portraying at the same time—from its liminal position of hybridity—the syncretism that marks the second half of the century. Tin Tán’s Pachuco does not offend the “other,” the North American other, that is (after all no U.S. Navy personnel were sent to beat the Mexico City Pachucos), but he offended the “respectable other,” perhaps someone like José Vasconcelos himself. If *Cantinflas* is accepted in the name of an incoherence proper to the crowd, Tin Tán is rejected for his offense against immutable speech, the ideal property of the elites (Monsiváis 112). Movie producers thus began lightening his linguistic expression, making him a fetish more than a mimic of society.

Tin Tán’s zoot-suit made all introductory preambles unnecessary: “Let my clothes introduce me so that I can just get on with it.” Tin Tán was not a great humorist, at least in the verbal sense, but he was rather a great impersonator and mimic, possessing a great enthusiasm for chaos and a lack of respect for formality. He appealed to his Pachuco attire and speech as well

with his “carnal” “brother” Marcelo Chávez, a well-mannered comedian that became Tin Tán’s balancing force. “Marcelo is to Tin Tán what Margaret Dumont is to Groucho Marx,” notes Monsiváis (112). Eventually, Tin Tán becomes a *pícaro* and a star when he is *despachuquizado*. If Monsiváis is correct in his assessment that “Tin Tán displays a modernity which . . . other comedians . . . never knew,” he thus becomes a contemporary of his own people, distancing himself from the early influences of Harlem’s star Cab Calloway. The film *El rey del barrio* (*King of the Neighborhood*, 1949) marks the beginning of Tin Tán’s process of *despachuquización* and his conversion to a *pelado*, precisely during Mexico’s modernizing campaign sponsored by President Miguel Alemán’s regime. Defending Tin Tán from Vasconcelos’s harsh written criticism, Salvador Novo (a well-known member of the cultural establishment) wrote: “Tin Tán’s critics miss the point. The good man is an effect of a more serious corruption, not just the cause of a mere linguistic one. It bothers us because while Cantinflas is Mexico’s subconscious, Tin Tán is its uncomfortable presence” (qtd. in Aguilera; my translation). Nevertheless, the fact remains that the modernizing forces of the Mexican nation-state collide so that Tin Tán’s Pachuco can be deleted from the cultural scene.

But it would be naive to believe the official government rhetoric that Mexico accomplished a high degree of modernization at the time. In fact, as García Canclini has taught us, Latin American nations developed strategies for entering and also for leaving modernity. Some of these strategies become cultural reconversions adopted by popular culture and the mass media. The influence of the U.S. dominated culture industries on a rapidly emerging middle class after World War II cannot be underestimated. Mexican society contracted new habits, but paradoxically, while it was becoming Americanized, it wanted simultaneously to be “de-Americanized”: “It wants to be modern and it fails, wants to hang on tradition but is unable,” according to Monsiváis (qtd. in Kraniauskas, xxii). For Monsiváis, Mexico—by resorting to the popular languages and urban attitudes generated by the process of modernization—produced elements of new types of racism and class chauvinism as fomented by the massive migra-

tion from the countryside to its capital and represented in the discourses of the marginal characters of mainstream media. In this context, melodrama becomes the common cultural bond that articulates these entrances and exits from modernity.

Melodrama thus represents in Mexico a particular form of cultural modernization. I concur with Kraniauskas when he observes that Monsiváis's writings focus on melodrama because they are deeply interested in the impact of everyday life on the culture industries and the state apparatus, providing pedagogies of, and into, modernity and nationhood, in a context of rapid urbanization. Thus, the melodramatic sensibility in Mexico is at the same time conservative and serious, and liberal and humoristically subversive. Love for the nation becomes a kind of state sentimentalism when it is evoked in romantic song by a brave "ranchero" 'folkloric' (Pedro Infante and Jorge Negrete would be paradigmatic examples) and the male chauvinistic (masculine) discourse of nationalism, subverted and feminized (Kraniauskas xviii). In this context, *de-pachuquization* converges with the growing melodramatic sensibility of the time. *Relajo*—the desacralizing of traditional dominant values which are not taken seriously, or, as Jorge Portilla has put it, "canceling the normal response to value [seriousness], and removing itself from any obligation to realize it" (19; my translation)—becomes, then, a common ground for such a convergence. If *relajo* was seen as a temporary form of popular self-defense and defiance, Roger Bartra sees it as a metadiscourse of the national in Mexico, capable of explaining national identity and the place from which come the myths which not only give unity to the nation, but also make it different from any other: "But on being incorporated into the myth of the national spirit, the use of *relajo* as an entangling device becomes a trap: once institutionalized *relajo* also functions as a diversion that reflects potential protests, thus ensuring the equilibrium and permanence of the relationships of domination" (140-41).

Melodramatic humor, as portrayed in Tin Tán's post-*pachuquista* characterizations, thus uses *relajo* as an effective vehicle of expression. The *pelado*, "a kind of urban peasant . . . half

not found the promised land” (Bartra 33), becomes the star of Mexico’s modernizing process and Cantinflas its best representative. I would have to agree with José Saldívar when he contends—following Bartra’s analysis of the *pelado* and *relajo*—that if the *pelado* is for Mexican philosopher Samuel Ramos the best exemplar to study the Mexican because he constitutes the most elemental and well-portrayed expression of the national character, the Pachuco in Los Angeles is for Paz (and for Revueltas, I could add) the perfect trope for describing Chicanos (148).

But the *pelado* and *relajo* are not only exclusive to Mexican culture; they also become part of Chicano sensibility through what Tomás Ybarra-Frausto calls *rasquachismo*, “a sensibility that is not elevated and serious, but playful and elemental” (155). In another border crossing, Ybarra-Frausto places both Cantinflas and Tin Tán within his conception of *rasquachismo*, although he differentiates between a “low” *rasquachismo* (“medio rasquache”) where he places Tin Tán and a “muy rasquache” ‘high *rasquachismo*’ where he locates Cantinflas. “Although Mexican vernacular traditions form its base, *rasquachismo* has evolved as bicultural sensibility among Mexican Americans. On both sides of the border, it retains its underclass perspective” (Ybarra-Frausto 156). *Rasquachismo* receives a definite push during the 1940s in the popular shows of “carpas” ‘street theaters’ and music halls, and adopts the hybrid mimic ways of performers such as Tin Tán and Cantinflas. During the Chicano Movement, *rasquachismo* became a cultural and a political strategy. The Teatro Campesino adopted several *rasquachista* methods including the incorporation of *peladitos* and other *relajiento* characters (Ybarra-Frausto 159). *Rasquachismo* represents another cultural reconversion and yet another border crossing of the Pachuco, even though, as a cultural artifact, it is eventually “deported” and deleted from the Mexican cultural scene. But the specific problem with this topic as I see it is what happened to the Pachuco after his Mexican “deportation” back to the U.S.? This in itself can be the topic of another study, but for now it suffices to say that the Pachuco, despite the efforts of the nationalist Chicano Movement to incorporate it as a myth (Sanchez-Tranquilino and Tagg 103-

05), has remained in its labyrinth, largely condemned to an isolated and nostalgic iconography.

(In)Conclusions

Mainstream Mexican culture has not effectively incorporated (and even now it barely does) *fronterizo* or Chicano elements into its making. Mexican views of the Pachuco, the Chicano, and the northern border have continued to be seen as grotesque and tacky copies of “real” Mexicanness. During the 1960s there were attempts to conciliate these views with show-business characters such as the comedian Eulalio González “Piporro.” However, Piporro represented the Mexican migrant that crossed the border as *bracero* in search of the American Dream, to eventually return to Mexico as a *pocho*. *Pochismo* then replaces *Pachuquismo* as a trope to represent the “mexicanidad de allá” ‘Mexicans across the border.’ Piporro’s *pochismo* thus becomes inscribed in the modernizing project of the Mexican nation, pushing the Pachuco definitively outside the imagined community. As Monsiváis reminds us, it was also during the 1960s that in Mexico, a younger generation of writers began to appropriate several linguistic versions of *caló* and slang, derived from the Pachuco language of the 1940s as well as some of its rebellious traits (*de México* 16). Yet it is an exaggeration to affirm that the writers of the *Onda* generation such as José Agustín and Gustavo Sainz brought the Pachuco back as a viable character. I see this linguistic appropriation more as a result of the Americanization of Mexican society and to the identification by its middle-class youth with the Hippie movement of the 1960s than to any type of nostalgic return to the dandyism and *pachuquismo* of the 1940s.

It is difficult for me to offer definite conclusions. What I have attempted to do is to discuss the Pachuco and its portrayal in the works of three major Mexican authors, in the hope of getting a better sense of its place in Mexican literature and culture. In my reading, the Pachuco is a contra modern element that becomes de-territorialized from both Mexican and U.S. culture due to an aesthetic and linguistic hybridity which becomes a menace for essentialist and monolithic visions of the nation. Although the

Pachuco captured the attention of Octavio Paz and José Revueltas as a cultural entity, the concept's hybrid traits demonstrated signs of its ambivalence in its relation both to Mexico and the United States. The Pachuco was not only the object of contempt, hatred, and persecution, but also the object of "desire and derision" in both cultures. To end, I must (unfortunately) agree with Monsiváis's implicit suggestion that border culture and border crossing have failed to capture the imagination of Mexico's imagined community (16-17). Perhaps the representation of the Pachuco (and the Chicano) in Mexican literature and culture will have a more deserving reception in this century.

Notes

1. The image of the Pachuco in Paz's *The Labyrinth of Solitude* has been studied by several critics in the U.S., such as Carlos Blanco Aguinaga, Chester Christian, Lauro Flores, Rafael Grajeda, David Johnson, Luis Leal, Arturo Madrid, Rubén Medina, Tino Villanueva, and others. It is not implausible to agree with Lois Leal that Paz's excerpt "The Pachuco and Other Extremes" becomes, along with the writings of José Vasoncelos, one of the most important pieces that link—for better or for worse—Mexican and Chicano/a culture ("Octavio Paz").

2. Anderson, in his seminal work *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, discusses the concepts of nation and nationalism. For Anderson, the nation:

... is an imagined political community. . . . It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion

The nation is imagined as limited. . . . No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind . . . it is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings. (6-7)

3. Yuri Lotman in his work *The Universe of the Mind* argues that throughout history, cultures that have built empires have also built their own forms of "otherness." In the section "On the Semiosphere," Lotman

suggests that subjects become created through a process of construction that allocates particular spaces to these new vassals. Lotman uses the case of the Roman Empire to illustrate his point contending that the Romans and other civilizations created their own types of barbarians in order to secure the Empire's borders. If it is indeed true that the Romans battled the barbarians, it is also true that by promoting violence and divisions among these barbarians they were able to form loyal groups that would defend the empire's borders and become thus "subjects" to the Caesars. This subjectivity becomes an important characteristic of any border. See Lotman, "On the Semiosphere."

4. For more about this topic see Papastergiadis, "Ambivalence in Cultural Theory: Reading Homi Bhabha's *Dissemi-Nation*."

5. Regarding the notion of hybridity I follow the ideas of Mikhail Bakhtin and Nestor García Canclini as articulated by Rita De Grandis. Although Bakhtin develops his notion of hybridity in his study of the modern novel, his views about the relationship between language, discourse, authority, and marginality offer valuable insights for studying "sujetos transfronterizos." For Bakhtin the novel is a hybrid space where many voices undermine the monolithic and authoritarian nature of language: "In an intentional novelistic hybrid, . . . the important activity is not only . . . the mixing of linguistic forms . . . as it is the collision between differing points of views on the world . . . each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life . . . [and] forms a concept of its own object in a dialogic way" (qtd. in De Grandis 279). The novel for Bakhtin becomes the arena where linguistic and cultural conflict takes place, where one subject and "(an)other" subject meet and collide. This dialogism takes place under conditions of what Bakhtin has called heteroglossia which for purposes of the present study, and following De Grandis, I define as "a place where opposing voices meet." Moreover, in this paper I exchange the notion of the novel for the notion of the text since I refer to essays, chronicles, poems, and novels. See De Grandis, Bakhtin *The Dialogical Imagination*, García Canclini *Culturas híbridas* . . . For a revision of Bakhtin's notions of dialogism from a subaltern viewpoint see Hitchcock's *Dialogics of the Oppressed*. For an insightful view of Bakhtin's discussions of dialogism, monologism and hybridity in a Chicano/a context see Arteaga's book *An Other Tongue*.

6. For more specific critiques of Paz's essay see Blanco Aguinaga; Leal, "Octavio Paz"; Madrid; Medina; Monsiváis, "De México"; and Saldívar.

7. The internal colony model was highly discussed among Chicano intellectuals during the 1960s and 1970s. Central to this socio-economic model was the *barrio*, an urban structure that reflected this particularly asymmetric class arrangement in North American society. For more about this concept see Tomás Almaguer and Mario Barrera. For an application of the concept to Chicano/a narrative see Hernández Gutiérrez.

8. According to Carey McWilliams, immediately after the Japanese residents of California had been banned from the West Coast and sent to several camps in 1942, the local press begins to print stories about the “Mexican delinquency problem.” For more on the topic see *North From Mexico* 206.

9. With the exception of his novel *El luto humano*—translated as *The Stone Knife* (1947) and as *Human Mourning* (1990)—there are no other translations of Revueltas’s works into English. Therefore all translations of his texts in this paper are mine. Revueltas’s chronicles have been compiled in the volume *Visión del Paricutín (y otras crónicas y reseñas) Obras Completas 18*. The writings of his travels in Southern California were placed in that volume under the title “Viaje al noroeste de México” (26-97). The particular titles of his Californian journey are: “A un paso de la frontera” (“Before the Border”); “El duro caso de la Laguna del Sueño” (“The Difficult Case of the Sleepy Lagoon”); and “Yo fabriqué armas para la victoria” (“I Manufactured Arms for the Victory”).

10. In his novel *El luto humano* Revueltas portrays some of these very same conceptual aspects while keeping himself within the overall nationalist postrevolutionary ideological grounds. For a good analysis of this text see Danny Anderson.

11. Revueltas’s version of the events coincides with Mc Williams’s narration in his work *North From Mexico*. See chapter 12, “The Pattern of Violence” (206-19).

12. It seems that despite Paz’s comments in the Armas interview, he never transcended some of his initial positions and condescending views of the Chicanos as Rubén Medina effectively argues in his “Del pachuco al hispano: Octavio Paz ataca de nuevo” ‘From the Pachuco to the Hispanic: Octavio Paz Strikes Again.’

13. Few studies have attempted to analyze the presence of Chicanos in Mexican literature. Of those in existence, Bruce-Novoa and Leal’s *Aztlán y México* focus on mainstream bourgeois writers, excluding texts such as Revueltas’s novel. Escalante’s article “Revueltas y la chicanidad” ana-

lyzes the representation of Chicanos in three works by Revueltas: a play, *Israel* (1947), *Los motivos de Caín* (*Cain's Motives*), and a short story, "Los hombres en el pantano" 'Men in the Swamp,' from his collection *Dormir en tierra* (*To Sleep Inland*, 1960). Although Escalante's study does not refer at all to Revueltas's chronicles published in *Visión del Paricutín* (*Vision of Paricutín*) it is still a welcome exception.

14. In *Los motivos de Caín*, Revueltas uses Jack Mendoza as a key figure to portray this tension that he ascribes to the Chicano. Jack escapes the war and then flees to Tijuana where he becomes an alienated stranger. Escalante suggests that perhaps Revueltas understands what it is to be a "la chicanidad" 'a Chicano' as a "situación límite" 'extreme situation' that is a situation that takes human beings to the most absolute forms of "despojamiento" 'dispossession' as he shows in the following quote taken from Jack's thoughts as he walks around the streets of Tijuana: "They live, dream and copulate; I am outside, strange, perhaps without a face, perhaps without lips, without a voice and it has nothing to do that I speak the same language and that I am also a Mexican—well, Mexican by descent, since I had the damn luck of being born in South Carolina—but in any event, [I am] a strange being that has broken its relationship with other beings and other things, and now does not know anything, not a thing with regards to anyone else or to oneself" (128 [32]). Jack then becomes a border-crossing character, a *sujeto transfronterizo*, who becomes de-territorialized as he returns to the land of his ancestors by encountering an estranged world closer to death. And it is precisely in Tijuana that Jack enters this alienating state, where he feels closer to death: "So this was death, a belief that we live . . . an unreachable attempt to live that it is never achieved . . . an absolute de-protagonization [una desprotagonización absoluta]" (32). I stop my comments here since an in-depth analysis of the Chicano in this novel escapes the purpose of this paper. For more on the subject see Escalante and Slick.

15. In Tin Tán's Pachuco theme song, the strong masculinist orientation of its discourse is noticeable. A brief overview of the text shows a gender positioning in which women are subordinated to men, and in particular to the Pachuco. Although I have not discussed the issue in this paper, it would be highly productive to explore gender relations in connection with the topic of the Pachuco considering that there were also Pachucas that adopted the baroque dress code of the zoot-suit as well. I include a fragment of Tin Tán's song by Marcelo Chávez to

Es el pachuco un sujeto singular
pero que nunca debiera de camellar
y que a las jainas las debe dominar
para que se sientan veri fain para bailar.
Toda carnala que quiere ser feliz
con un padrino que tenga su desliz
vaya a su chante y agarre su veliz.

There is nothing like a Pachuco,
Who should never work,
And dominate the “honeys,”
So that they feel “very fine” and want to dance.
Every sister who wants to be happy
Find a pimp full of tricks
Grab yer bag and off you go,
Off to work so as to keep the crook.
(Tin Tán’s song by Marcelo Chavez, qtd. in Kraniauskas 108)

16. Kraniauskas suggests that it is possible to read Monsiváis as a kind of “counter Paz” discourse (xx). He also mentions Paz’s critique of Monsiváis for “having occurrences rather than ideas” (xv). María Eugenia Mudrovcic, in her “Carlos Monsiváis, un intelectual post-68” ‘Carlos Monsiváis, A Post-68 Intellectual,’ discusses the gradual intellectual distancing between Monsiváis and Paz, and documents the sources that surrounded this low profile debate in the Mexican culture scene during the late 1960s and 1970s, in particular the open attacks on Monsiváis by members of the editorial board of the journal *Vuelta* such as Adolfo Castañón’s article “Un hombre llamado ciudad” ‘A Man Called the City.’ Paz acted as *Vuelta*’s editor until his death in 1998. For a detailed account of this debate see Mudrovcic, in particular pages 299-301.

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