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Redrawing the Boundary:

From Carlos Fuentes's *La frontera de cristal* (1995) to

Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita's *Lunar Braceros 2125-2148* (2009)*

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Abstract

This article traces the workings of the border in Carlos Fuentes' *La frontera de cristal,* Alejandro Morales' *The Rag Doll Plagues*, Alex Rivera's film *Sleep Dealer*, and Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita's *Lunar Braceros 2125-2140*. All the narratives can be considered borderland texts that illustrate the dialogue between literature and issues such as globalization, technology and colonial relations of power. While the border is still a place of detention and interdiction in Fuentes' novel, it mutates into virtual crossings in *The Rag Doll Plagues* and *Sleep Dealer*, to return to barbed wire in Sánchez and Pita's novella. From the logic of the border as a mechanism that may open or close, the article moves on to address the liminal situation of those who, although situated within the new versions of the nation-state, are considered permanent outsiders. This redrawing of boundaries allows us to revisit traditional categories of distinction such as the inside and the outside, and is evidence of the way colonial models of subjugation boomerang to the present.

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> Rather than resurgent expressions of nation-state sovereignty, the new walls are icons of its erosion. While they may appear as hyperbolic tokens of such sovereignty, like all hyperbole, they reveal a tremulousness, vulnerability, dubiousness, or instability at the core of that they aim to express—qualities that are themselves antithetical to sovereignty and thus elements of its undoing.
>
> (Wendy Brown, *Walled States* 24)

The wall, the fence, or the border have become recurrent talking points in presidential campaigns and political rhetoric. From Robert Frost's "Mending Wall" and its double message, in the verse lines "Something there is that does not love a wall" (35) and "Good fences make good neighbors" (45), to Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* and her refashioning of the Mexican-American borderlands as an *herida abierta* (25), American literature has reflected different border textures, and has shown the role of cultures and languages in suturing or breaking apart neighborly relations. Theatrically aggrandized in speeches and rallies, the wall's efficacy is sought after in a variety of prototypes, and its power is currently hyperbolically evoked in the repeated chant "build the wall." The exhortation lacks the in-between quality of the gerund in Frost's "mending." There is no dwelling on the temporal duration of the gerund, nor is there the ritual that brings together the two neighbors every spring, just the command to build it. The

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apparent straightforward message, however, is not as clear as it seems. Morphologically, the chant reflects the well-known imperative quality of border language (such as “stand over to the side”; “open your trunk”). Semantically, the exhortation is a call to action to create a separation that already exists. If the separation already exists, the question is: what is there to be built? The wall-to-be seems not like a line to separate the inside from the outside, but rather a mechanism that refracts itself on the inside and reveals, as Wendy Brown has advocated, the vulnerability and instability of the sovereignty the wall is supposed to protect (24).

Chicana/o literature reflects all these border textures and aggregates a changing border landscape: from the portrayal of the border as a physical place of detention and interdiction in Carlos Fuentes’ *La frontera de cristal*, the border mutates into a variety of contact zones and virtual crossings in Alejandro Morales’ “Lamex” (included in *The Rag Doll Plagues*) and Alex Rivera’s film *Sleep Dealer*, only to return to its manifestation as razor wire in Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita’s *Lunar Braceros 2125-2140*, a text that relocates workers to Reservations for people of color. It is our contention that these works can be considered borderland texts, texts that illustrate the dialogue between literature, culture and issues such as globalization, technology, colonial relations of power, (Rivera 418) as well as the creation of the category of the Other. As the works proposed for analysis demonstrate, the border mutates, it is constantly redrawn and may turn inconspicuous. It splits, multiplies and reproduces itself. Its dividing quality, however, does not disappear, but turns inward as different contingents are eventually put behind razor wire. Thus, this article follows a narrative loop: from the physicality of the border as a mechanism that secures the contours of the country in Fuentes’ novel to virtual crossings and an alleged post-border condition, back to the border as separation in Sánchez and Pita’s novella. Significantly, the tracing of the border in the works proposed for analysis seems to reflect the current political climate and intoxicating border rhetoric: the taller the outside demarcation, the more monumental and aggrandized as a theatrical gesture and as a rhetorical hyperbole against the outside; and the more revealing of the undoing of national sovereignty (Brown 24), the more it creates dividing lines and gaps within the country itself. The border, as the saying goes, cuts both ways. The wall exerts its power as a commanding metaphor not only as it interprets the outside (a no-man’s land full of delinquents and rapists), but also as it reconfigures and restructures the inside according to its own border logic. The restructuring is ideological, as it pits patriots against disloyal people, those on this side vs those on the other; a Yes or a No, a citizen vs a non-citizen; here vs there. To a certain extent, the exhortation to build the wall is somewhat unnecessary, for its multiple reflections, if inconspicuous, are already in place. As another saying goes, objects in the rear mirror may be closer than they seem. The border, from this refracted perspective, is much closer to us than we think.

1. Mexican Workers and Static Mobility

> The United States-Mexico border is a region in continuous flux. It is a borderspace in which cultural *hybridities* are formed, where people from different ethnicities and classes, cultural and geographic backgrounds come together daily to remake their lives. The border, the locus of transnational crossings, is part of the present monumental migrations bridging notions of past and present, home and abroad, global and local, and modernity and postmodernity.
>
> (Michael Dear and Gustavo Leclerc, "Preface" xi)

> The basic need of capitalism is to engineer an encounter between the deterritorialized wealth of capital and the labour capacity of the deterritorialized worker.
>
> (Robert Young, *Colonial Desire* 169)

> This is an era—it is often said—when things are speeding up, and spreading out. Capital is going through a new phase of internationalization, especially in its financial parts. More people travel more frequently and for longer distances.
>
> (Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* 146)

Because of its monumentality within the national image repertoire, not all of the border's meanings can be grasped from a single vantage point. No matter where we locate ourselves, there is an inherent, multidimensional quality to borders that stems from the fact that there is not one perspective from which we can take in the border as, "we are always situated in relation to the border" (Schimanski and Wolfe 11). Mary Pat Brady explains that this multidimensionality gives the U.S.-Mexico border a remarkable instrumentality and fungibility, "serving a variety of functions, operating now as the forgotten and settled edge of a nation, as the harbinger of crisis" (51), or as the protective, great wall against a demonized, southern Other. The different sides and dimensions of the border are anatomized in Carlos Fuentes' *La frontera de cristal.* Fuentes' kaleidoscopic vision of the border and its inhabitants portrays the dividing line as a figure of excess that is "more than a site, a metaphor, a location, an image, or a fantasy" (Brady 51). In its different manifestations as *cordon sanitaire*, membrane, wound, scar, fissure, fracture, gap, site of infection or liquid frontier, the border maintains its glassy texture. It may be invisible to the eye depending on the angle of vision, and it can also turn into a mirage that reflects dreams and aspirations. The myriads of connected stories in the novel crisscross this division, and make sure the movement continues. It is the movement that started with the people who followed the course of the Río Grande 30,000 years ago, a movement that continued with the colonizers, such as Vázquez de Coronado, Cabeza de Vaca and Oñate, and peaked with the migration of the *gringos* in the 19th-century and the war between Mexico and the United States. It is the crossing that never stops. Generations of migrant workers have increasingly seen their presence in the United States as the target of expulsions and clean-the-border operations. There was and still is the need for the Mexican workforce, but the need is accompanied by unrelenting and incremental hatred. For Byung-Chul Han, we do not perceive migrants and refugees as strange or alien to us (Han 28). We do not think that they posit a threat that makes us fearful of them. That fear is only a figment of our imagination. In reality, we think of migrants and refugees as a burden. What we

feel toward them, when we think of them as our potential neighbors, is resentment and envy. Were we to think of migrants and refugees as inherently different, we would not choose their countries as tourist destinations (Han 28). Difference does not travel well, and tolerated difference abroad means non-tolerated difference at home. It is the actual presence of migrants and refugees in the target countries, especially when these people are out of place, which mobilizes rejection. As migrants cross the border, transformations occur. Crossers go through what Brady calls an "abjection machine" that metamorphoses them into something else, into "aliens," "illegals," "wetbacks" or "undocumented," and renders them "unintelligible (and unintelligent), ontologically impossible, outside the real and the human" (50). Bearing in mind that the border has two sides or faces, it stands to reason that the border machine also participates in this doubleness. Split between abjection and desire, the machine absorbs those masses of potential workers that are essential to maintain the very mechanism that makes them abject. Robert Young coined the term "colonial desire" to address the simultaneous feeling of lust and aversion for the Other. Young suggests that a similar "border desire" addresses a dialectics of attraction and repulsion, a dialectics linked to different forms of the historical and economic machines.

The transformation of workers into the abject seems to find a logical solution in two key stories of the novel. Instead of having the workers cross the border into the United States, American corporations and their goods freely cross the border to make use of Mexican labor *in situ*, a solution that will be further explored in *Sleep Dealer* by Alex Rivera. Once assembled in Mexico, the objects find their way into the United States, crossing the border as reconstituted consumer objects. In consonance with the principles of transnational mobility, goods come and go, cross checkpoints freely, while the labor of the worker remains in place, organized in *maquiladora* assembly plants. In "Malintzin de las maquilas," the *maquila* is described as a mirage of glass and steel, a bubble of crystal air, as if the north had infiltrated the south with its verticality and seamless perfection. In spite of its promises, the *maquila* merely refracts the workers' aspirations, and works as another frontier of glass that perpetuates the difference between Mexico and the United States. With its brightness and the threshold it offers into the global and bilingual economy, the *maquila* only equivocates, for its border is tight and impenetrable. It is a Disneyland, as one of the characters comments, but populated by ogres and constantly watched by Leonardo Barroso, the entrepreneur and self-appointed messiah who defends before his American partners the liberating and modernizing role of the plants. The plants employ eight women for each man, liberate them from their villages, prostitution, ignorance and a male chauvinistic society, and transform them into the breadwinners of their families. But Barroso does not mention the unspeakable: the sexual harassment women are subjected to, the absence of insurance, benefits or any kind of compensation, the isolation of these deterritorialized women, who leave behind a supporting community, and the systematic and gruesome violence that has preyed on *maquila* female workers since the mid-nineties. In fact, the title of the chapter, "Malintzin de las maquilas," suggests the continuity between the colonial history of Spanish conquest and the neocolonial regime of exploitation of Mexican

women by American and other foreign-based companies. The *maquila*, therefore, represents the global within the local, the north in the south, an in-between or liminal space that manages to maintain power structures intact.

Not fully satisfied with the emplacement of the worker in the *maquila* system, Leonardo Barroso concocts a different scheme to export Mexican workers. The conflict arises at the border, the mechanism that brands the worker as illegal. The moment the workers cross the border (legally or illegally), they become part of the abject and the undesired. Barroso's ingenious solution to the quandary is simple: avoid the actual crossing by transforming the migrants into tourists. In short, avoid the abjection machine and replace it with postmodern mobility, the "central and accelerating force under globalization" (Jay 177). Instead of leading his workers across the policed line like a traditional *coyote*, Barroso can sit comfortably in the business part of an aircraft as he inspects the service workers boarding the economy cabin. Barroso, as a *coyote*-in-flight, watches over his group and ponders about their welfare, prepared, as they are, for the hardships of the desert, but not for the cold of New York. The flight is borderless and dismantles the stereotype of the wetback, now transformed into what we can call an "airback." Their job is simple: clean Manhattan office buildings over the weekend and return to Mexico on Sunday night. The operation is 25 or 30% cheaper than hiring local cleaners. Even if the workers do not physically cross the border, they carry their own coordinates of separation, for New York will never receive them into its hospitality industry nor will it welcome them as service workers. They are what Homi Bhabha describes as "shifting boundary" that "will never be contained within the *Heim* of the national culture and its unisonant discourse" (164). Fuentes individualizes one of the workers, Lisandro, the only *mojado* (wetback) that comes prepared for the trip. As he cleans the windows of a glass tower, he exchanges a gaze—full of courtesy and respect—with an office worker, Audrey, across the glass frontier. It is an arresting moment that shows how the glass frontier is relocated to New York. The scene presents the border as a geopolitical edge that is moved, transferred and flown over. Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson claim that borders have not only multiplied, but are also undergoing complex transformations. We can speak not only of a proliferation, but also of a heterogenization of borders (*Border as Method* 3). This constant mutation and the making, remaking and unmaking of dividing mechanisms is at the core of the alleged post-border condition as reflected in Morales', Rivera's and Sanchez and Pita's works.

2. A Post-Border Condition?

> At bottom, the specter is the future, it is always to come, it presents itself only as that which could come or come back.
>
> (Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx* 39)

> Parallax: the effect by which the position of an object seems to change when it is looked at from different positions.
>
> (*Cambridge English Dictionary*)

The glass divide, invisible and yet ever present in multiple and kaleidoscopic reflections in Fuentes' novel, is a useful image that allows us to assess a changing border landscape with a border mechanism that keeps mutating, depending on the perspective. The border, Brady explains, functions "as more than a site, a metaphor, a location, an image, or a fantasy ... It works, in other words, as a complex system with multiple and diverse nodes of production and reproduction" (50-51). These diverse nodes create what, borrowing from Henri Lefebvre in *The Production of Space* (1991), Brady identifies as a "multiplicity of meanings, a shifting hierarchy in which now one, now another meaning comes momentarily to the fore" (51). This indeterminacy at the semantic level is intimately related to the fact that borders constantly mutate and their reflections and refractions can equivocate us as to their location. From this perspective, the border/order turns into an example of the parallax effect, since its position, dimensions and lay-out seem to change when it is looked at from different standpoints or, for our purposes here, from different literary works. Furthermore, the line parallaxes itself, for, as Jacques Derrida has argued, there is a sense of instability within the line itself. The physical line cannot exist alone, but is encapsulated within two ends and two sides. The border divides itself from within, fragments itself and establishes within itself a difference within identity, an "Other" within the self, an alterity within sameness that compromises its presumed indivisibility and its stability at the semantic level (Derrida, *Aporias* 11).

The plane, which transports the Mexicans into the U.S., materializes this line in space. It produces a condensation trail that pinpoints the migrant's movement. As such, it makes border dynamics visible. Because migrant mobility is characterized by secrecy, silence and immateriality (there is no constructed road or path to follow), the liminal transformation of the traveler's identity is not easily traced. The moment in which the vertical axis of the nation and the horizontality of migrant movement intersect is not represented in space, yet the crossing line does play out in the air. With departure and arrival points clearly demarcated, the contrail behind the aircraft figures as a metaphor of the parallax that is realized in a physical and apparently non-politized threshold. The "airscape" is not politically demarcated, but the traces the planes leave behind bespeak different varieties of demarcations. These lines mirror the borderlines between the nations they traverse. If the airport figures as a non-place, in which the traveler has to repeatedly identify himself by his country of origin, the plane becomes part of the border machinery that apparently erases these boundaries. As the transparencies of the border are

reproduced inside the plane, the contrail evidences the rite of passage travelers undergo as they go through national demarcations. In doing so, the plane illustrates the parallactic nature of the border.

Examples of these different border regimes, realignments and repositionings abound in contemporary literature and culture.[1] The border stops being a clear-cut boundary to become an invisible threshold that favors colonial regulation. The three books of Alejandro Morales' *The Rag Doll Plagues* (1992) present the historical map of North America in progress, from colonial times in the first book to Lamex in the third book. Lamex is short for the Lamex Coastal Region of the Triple Alliance, a supranational configuration comprising old nationalities: Mexicans, Americans and Canadians. Literally blending Los Angeles and Mexico, Alta and Baja California, North and South, Lamex initially exemplifies the post-border condition. The old international boundary between Mexico and the United States has been erased and different population flows have rearranged the area. The undocumented Mexicans that used to be either stopped at the border or rounded up by *la migra* have settled north of what once was the international border. Euroamericans, in turn, occupy the relatively unspoiled Mexican coast. The fact that the geopolitical border is no longer operative does not mean that Lamex is a borderless territory. Other demarcations have replaced the old mapping, for the Triple Alliance is divided into Lower Life, Middle Life and Higher Life Existence. Whereas Lower Life Existence is made up of the lumpen, the criminals and the dregs of society, Higher Life Existence comprises a fully informed elite with access to mega knowledge banks. Middle Life Existence, located in Mexico City, is an example of racial and cultural hybridity. This dystopian vision of a newly striated society offers reconfigurations of space as well as a reconsideration of the body that will pave the way for the revision of border mechanisms, as explored in Rivera's film *Sleep Dealer* and in Sánchez and Pita's novella *Lunar Braceros*. Morales focuses on L.A. and the web of freeways, which used to be the most salient feature of the city, in order to illustrate a new vision of space. In the aftermath of ecological disasters, the former arteries that carved city space in mobile L.A. now lead nowhere. What Marc Augé termed the spaces of supermodernity have become useless and obsolete in the face of another articulation of space that now traverses Lamex, namely the system of supersonic travelways that instantly connect different points of the corridor. Gregory Revueltas and Gabi Chung, his partner, only need to punch in a code and a destination and their vehicle will be catapulted into the supersonic travelways. Thus, the book illustrates the uneasy coexistence of what Manuel Castells terms, "the space of places" and "the space of flows" (xxxi). This double articulation (physical/corporeal vs virtual) shapes the vision of the body in Lamex, for the book distinguishes between what we can term the old-fashioned, physical space of the body as represented by the narrator, and what we can term the "body of flows" as exemplified by Gaby, Revueltas' partner. Her body of flows is achieved through the recommended amputation of a severed limb, the arm and the hand, and its replacement with a computerized knowledge bank. The geopolitical borders that are no longer relevant in the novel

[1] Omar El Akkad's *American War* redraws the boundaries of the United States and focuses on dwellers at a camp fitfully called "Patience" during a new version of the Civil War.

migrate to the body as the contact or combat zone between the human and the machine. The post-border condition is aligned with the post-human condition, as a new, hybrid species created at the meeting point of biological organism and cybernetic mechanism.

Kate Rigby attests to the possibilities of this transformation when she defines "posthuman memory." She maintains that, "to regain a sense of inextricability of nature and culture, physis and techne, earth and artifact—consumption and destruction—would be to move beyond both the impasse of modernism and the arrogance of humanism" (152). Rigby debunks conceptualizations of bodies and borders, natural and artificial entities, to draw on their inextricable link. In doing so, she points to the destabilization of the ontological border, leading us to reconsider the post-border state as a bonding experience. In their post-border junction, body and border become one. The spatiality of the border is absorbed by the physicality of the body, which materializes at the crossroads between technological progress and economic exploitation. Rigby furthers this argument by claiming that, "culture constructs the prism through which we know nature" (153). It shapes our understanding of and relationship with the natural world and, in view of ecological catastrophe, it helps us adapt, transform, survive. Yet, if we perceive culture as the catalyst behind social development, it is no surprise that our areas of contact with nature turn into combat zones.

A similar redrawing of the geopolitical boundary in the triangulation of space, body and border underlies Alex Rivera's film *Sleep Dealer*, an example of what Sarah Ann Wells terms "Border Science Fiction" (72). Like in Lamex, physical borders have changed their role as dividing mechanisms. Tijuana still appears to be a magnet for migrants, who want to cross over to the United States, but the physical crossing has become obsolete in the face of a new and fluid incorporation into a new form of spatiality, quite akin to Morales' supersonic travelways in Lamex and Castells' notion of the "space of flows" (xxxii). This time, incorporation does not take place through the amputation of the arm and the hand, but through the electronic jacks that are inserted into the crosser's arms and with the expertise of the new version of the coyote. The jacks guarantee the migrant's passage to the other side, create a new virtual reality of alleged promise and freedom, but also leave migrants exposed to "the perils of a globalized economy" (Wells 79). Like in Lamex, the border is relocated to the migrant's body; the border aligns culture and technology to give way to a new form of posthumanity, based on exploitation and economic profit. Once again, the physical border is not erased, but its significance is recalibrated in the new SF setting. Memo's job, as a *cybracero* in a new version of the *maquilas*, appears as another reflection of the glass border Fuentes described. Workers do not cross the boundary, but their work does, thus satisfying the demands of the American market and avoiding the physicality of the worker on American soil, as Rivera's mock documentary *Why CyBraceros* illustrates. The mirage of glass and steel, described in Fuentes' "Malintzin de las maquilas," mutates into the new and *Panoptic* space of telecommuting, as rows of workers manage robots, which do their jobs on the other side of the divide.

This post-border condition, however, does not open vistas into a new borderless future. Rivera's film, just like Morales' novel, is an instance of a kind of future that does not represent a

"site of progress and humanistic harmony as much as a return to the colonial past. Without alternatives, these futures promise to repeat the worst of colonial histories along the US/Mexico border" (Rivera 418). Hence, the concept of "future history," a term that "enables sf writers to situate their imaginary futures somewhere along a projected historical time line, one that often begins during or shortly after their real-life historical moment and extends into the future" (Rivera 418). The chronological line that connects the three books in *The Rag Doll Plagues* does not end with the alleged post-border condition of the Triple Alliance of Lamex, but, instead and in a reverse move, seems to boomerang to colonial times. The amputation of the arm and the hand and its replacement with a computer terminal recall the graphic amputation of limbs in colonial Mexico as described in the first book of *The Rag Doll Plagues*, "Mexico City."

This "future history" is the time framework where Sánchez and Pita's novella *Lunar Braceros 2125-2148* is set. Like *The Rag Doll Plagues* and *Sleep Dealer*, the novella offers stories of migration across the U.S.-Mexican borderlands and includes episodes of reckless, capitalistic exploitation and murder, but also "insists on the importance of remembering colonial history in imagining the future" (Rivera 427). In Sanchez and Pita's dystopian novella, a civil war creates a drastic, political restructuring that gives rise to a new nation state, Cali-Texas, in 2070. Its emergence marks the end of the United States, as it incorporates the northern Mexican states as well. Cali-Texas ends up comprising the U.S., Canada and Mexico. But beyond this new political entity, Lidia explains to her son, Pedro, real power is waged by the NIO (the New Imperial Order), a political power made up of multinational consortia. Strictly speaking, Cali-Texas exemplifies the post-border condition. There is no national perimeter to protect against foreigners or crossers, yet Cali-Texas, like Lamex in Morales' novel, establishes another form of separation and detention within the new country. The border is relocated inside the country. Janette Turner Hospital eloquently comments in *North of Nowhere, South of Loss* that, "there are divisions and boundary lines that fissure any state more deeply than the moat it digs around nationhood. In every country, there are gaping holes. People fall through them and disappear. Yet, on every side there are also doors to a wider place, a covert geography under sleep where all the waters meet" (57). *Lunar Braceros* explores these boundary lines and fissures that dig deeply through the country, but it also pays attention to the double motion implicit in Hospital's words, that is to the process of undoing those very demarcations that Lidia calls "desalambrar." The new boundary that fissures Cali-Texas, as Lidia tells her son, is the reservation. The reference to Native American subjugation, and how patterns of marginalization are projected onto a neo-colonial future, is not hard to miss. The 19th century reservation system crosses over into the 20th century with a fully successful proliferation of internment, concentration, and extermination camps. Together, they create the new form of control and discipline of the 22nd century: "The reservations were and are a type of population control camp mechanism. They were started to keep the homeless and the unemployed off the streets and off welfare" (13).

Created around 2090 and fully functional by 2100, the reservations represent the perfect arrangement to separate the healthy inhabitants of the nation from those who threaten its normal

functioning, nothing new in American history, as George Lipsitz claims in *How Racism Takes Place*:

> From the theft of Native American and Mexican lands in the nineteenth century to the confiscation of Black and Latino property for urban renewal projects in the twentieth century, from the Trail of Tears to the Japanese Internment, from the creation of ghettos, barrios, reservations, and 'Chinatowns' to the disproportionate placement of toxic hazards in minority neighborhoods, the racial projects of U.S society have always been spatial projects as well. (52)

Lipsitz writes that "[t]he white spatial imaginary idealizes 'pure' and homogeneous spaces, controlled environments, and predictable patterns of design and behavior" (29). In order for these "pure and homogeneous spaces" to exist, "'impure' populations have to be removed and marginalized" (30), allocated to infected spaces. The ethnoracialized, subaltern, colonial or working-class subjects have been relocated to places of resettlement through different policies of spatial segregation, relocation and enclosure. This allocation is a spatial manifestation of control, dispossession and exclusion (Lipsitz 30), but also of discipline in the Foucauldian sense. Thus, the reservations stand as another stage in the history of spatial and racial segregation. This new version of impure and diseased spaces comes about because of massive unemployment and worldwide migrations. The latter emerged as a problem about the time when toxic hazards, such as waste deposits for radioactive materials, became uncontrollable. In *Lunar Braceros*, this surplus population, called "vagrants" or "migros," was forced into the reservations located throughout the Southwest, where they became "a wage-less labor pool, almost like slave labor" (15). The poor, the homeless and the ethnic others, called reslifers or "cholos," are considered expendable, a surplus population that are relocated to "internal colonial sites" (14), which in the novel figure as a spin-off of Dalia Kandiyoti's concept of "migrant sites" (41).[2]

This redrawing of boundaries allows us to revisit traditional categories, such as the inside and the outside. As Jacques Derrida and Hélène Cixous, have put it: "One can be inside without being inside, there is an inside in the inside, an outside in the inside and this goes on infinitely" (5). *Cholos*, from this perspective, live outside within the inside. Mezzadra and Neilson have explored the ambiguities of spaces between inclusion and exclusion, the grey areas that are not sufficiently explained in the dyad in/out. The *braceros* that Barroso flies to New York and the inhabitants of the reservations in Sánchez and Pita's novella are within the perimeter of the country, but they occupy a "proliferation of subject positions that are neither fully included nor fully excluded from the space of citizenship and from labour markets, of subjectivities that are neither fully insiders nor fully outsiders" (Mezzadra and Neilson "Between" 62). Both sets of characters illustrate what Mezzadra and Neilson call a "differential inclusion," one that "can be subject to varying degrees of subordination, rule, discrimination, and segmentation" ("Between"

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[2] Kandiyoti defines this concept as "the product of many migrations from Mexico and from within the United States and a bounded site of corporate exploitation" (136).

67). Comprising numbered neighborhoods, each has a number of housing projects with an internal patio surrounded by rectangular buildings, each seven floors high. All streets have surveillance cameras and the faces of the internees are automatically recognized (Sánchez and Pita 28). As Lydia explains to Pedro, "The Reservation was like a panopticon prison; from the tower they could scan the perimeter as well as every inch of the reservation and see everything and everybody. They could also hear everything, if they wanted to" (35). The reservations are another manifestation of the abstract space of a concentration camp that concatenates watchtowers, razor wire and surveillance. Although the surrounding fence could be easily cut or even jumped, rarely does anyone try to leave. Lydia explains that they "knew as kids that beyond a clearing there were patrols and that if you were caught trying to run away you could/be killed on the spot" (13). Lydia explains to Pedro that she and her brother had bikes and they enjoyed riding them to the edge of the Reservation. The ride is captured on a poignant illustration that shows the two at the edge of the camp. Their position is significant, for they are situated between a space-age watchtower in the background and the traditional barbed wire in the foreground. The image of mobility, as the image of the bikes suggests, is arrested by the barbed wire, which seems to sever the wheels of their bikes.

3. Border within, *Maquilas* within and the Boomerang Effect

> La frontière est à la fois l'institution la plus 'exterieure', celle qui s'impose de la façon la plus violente, la plus antidemocratique, la plus arbitraire, et celle que le sujet 'vit' et 's'assimile' de la façon la plus intime, celle qui cristallise ses sentiments d'appartenance à la communauté (l'imaginaire de la nationalité), et se metamorphose ainsi en ce que, dans une formule célèbre, Fichte appelait la 'frontière intérieure.
>
> (Étienne Balibar, *Nous, citoyens d'Europe?*)[3]

The image of the inner fence reveals the split at the heart of the border, for if, as Étienne Balibar explains, the border is the most exterior institution, the one that imposes itself in the most violent and arbitrary ways. It is, at the same time and paradoxically so, the most intimate one, as it crystallizes the feelings of belonging (or not) to a community. In Cali-Texas, bringing the border within the political entity is coupled with another familiar labor pattern. Relocation to reservations means the transformation of the individual into a disciplined labor force that Lidia compares to lab rats:

> We produced not only the usual goods that had formerly being shipped South to sweatshops and assembly plants, but also high-tech items not then under production elsewhere—like weapons, secret surveillance instrumentation, robotic instruments, and new telecommunication systems. Since our wages were mere subsistence wage, we were

[3] An official translation of this excerpt cannot be provided since Balibar's section "Identité/Normalité" is not included in the English version of the book. This epigraph, however, makes reference to the internalization of border dynamics that reproduce themselves in the form of interior and exterior lines of demarcation.

> even cheaper than any labor force in Asia or Africa. Plus we were guaranteed consumers. (14)

The *maquilas* that used to dot the Mexican border are brought within, and now employ the reservation *cholos*. Outsourcing becomes *insourcing*. If the U.S. successfully established *maquilas* along the U.S.-Mexico border, Cali-Texas has perfected the formula by recruiting wageless, indentured labor within the country. Thus, the colonial models of subjugation, which the United States (and Europe) exported to other countries and continents, come back home and are tested against the country's own citizens in what Michel Foucault calls "a boomerang effect": "A whole series of colonial models was brought back to the West, and the result was that the West could practice something resembling colonization, or an internal colonialism, on itself" (103). Just like the camp was successfully reintroduced into Europe as a means of repression to be used against its own Others (Diken and Bagge Lausten 43), Sánchez and Pita's novella illustrates a similar process on American soil. Although the colonization of the moon, the concept of moon duty and lunar *braceros* seem at odds with the institution of the reservation, this old form of population control seems another manifestation of a recurrent past and sketches out a future that folds reslifers within a similar pattern of exploitation. In short, the future is already predetermined by the juxtaposition of times and the recurrence of the colonial heritage.

The "boomerang effect" that Foucault identified in the reinstatement of colonial models seems to be noticeable in the way the border as separation comes back to us. The image of children behind barbed wire resonates in American history with different manifestations of internment, such as the reservation system, plantation slavery, urban ghettoes and the internment of Japanese and Japanese Americans. It also resonates with the separation of migrant families and their placement in cages during the summer of 2018.[4] The border does not sever the flesh, as Morales dramatizes in Lamex: there is no amputation of the lower arm; the border does not insert itself into the arm through electronic jacks, but it does separate families and puts children and families in confinement. The abundance of these scenes and the wide coverage of the refugees' current plight by the media[5] point in the direction we suggested at the beginning of this article. The more solid the border and the more efficacious in its portrayal, the more it seems as a distraction for its refraction within. The border as a dividing mechanism does not seem to be at the crux of the well-known series of contraries: this side/that side; here/there; citizen/non-citizen; the domestic/the alien; safety/danger. All these binary pairs seem like a sort of prestidigitation

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[4] The colonial echoes of the caging of immigrants are obvious. Coco Fusco writes that the practice of displaying the different Other goes back to Columbus, who returned from his first voyage with several Arawaks. Another instance which is closer to the history of the United States comes from the U.S.-Mexico War of 1836: "Anglo-Texan secessionists used to exhibit their Mexican prisoners in public plazas in cages, leaving them there to starve to death. The exhibits also gave credence to white supremacist worldviews by representing nonwhite peoples and cultures as being in need of discipline, civilization, and industry" (Fusco 148).

[5] See "Separation at the Border: Children Wait in Cages at South Texas Warehouse" in *The Guardian*; "Trump Migrant Separation Policy: Children 'In Cages' in Texas" in *BBC*; David A. Graham's "Are Children Being Kept in 'Cages' at the Border?" in *The Atlantic*; Associated Press' "Children Separated from Parents at US Border Held in Cages in Texas Warehouse" in *The Telegraph*.

for another kind of work within the contours of the country: The more solid the border, the more flexible, fluid and inconspicuous it becomes; the more visible the border is, the more invisible its effects; the more outspoken it is, the more quietly it does its own work of fracturing; the more pyrotechnics it evokes, the more invisible its internal fracturing.

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