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By

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**Barrio Libre (the Free ‘Hood):
Transnational Policing and the ‘Contamination’
of Everyday Forms of Subaltern Agency
at the Neoliberal U.S.-Mexico Border
From Way, Way, Below**

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From Way, Way, Below

By

Gilbert Arthur Rosas; B.A.; M.A.; M.A

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Dedication

To my life partner, Korinta Maldonado, my parents, Gilbert and Cecilia Mora Rosas, my sister, Monica Rosas, and to my friends Rommel and Veronica.

In Memory of Begoña Aretxaga, Caraloco, and Ardilla.

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**Barrio Libre (the Free ‘Hood):
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Everyday Forms of Subaltern Agency
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From Way, Way, Below**

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Gilbert Arthur Rosas, Ph.D.
University of Texas, Austin, 2004

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This study analyzes a group of severely marginalized Mexican young people, and their vexing subject formation of Barrio Libre (the Free ‘Hood), along the Arizona-Sonora border in the 1990s and early in the 2000s. The young people’s survival strategies included occasionally living in a sewer system, which runs way, way, below the U.S.-Mexico border, incarnating a transnational subjectivity as inhabitants of an ethnically Mexican neighborhood of Tucson, Arizona, also called Barrio Libre, mugging other immigrants, and practicing substance abuse. The young people spoke of these practices in an idiom of freedom; they were crystallizations of living Barrio Libre.

Processes of deterritorialization, desires for reterritorialization, the dematerialization of capitalist relations, and sporadic, sometimes brutal, border policing, particularly by the Mexican authorities, configure this subject formation. In the context of the displacement of millions of Mexicans as result of the consolidation of neoliberal economic policies in Mexico in the early 1990s, popular regions for undocumented crossings of the border like Brownsville, El Paso, and San Diego, were rendered inaccessible. Immigrants were funneled to southern Arizona. By 1998, a local version of the intensification campaign was forcing immigrants to adopt dangerous border-crossing tactics. Indeed, since 1995, more than 2,300 immigrants have died trying to circumvent immigration controls. Notably, this has coincided with a similar, though largely undocumented, upsurge in policing practices on the Mexican side of the border, as is evident in Nogales, Sonora. I maintain that this regime of transnational governmentality, or the regulation of immigrant bodies, generates intensities informing the young people's subject formation of Barrio Libre.

This manuscript reflects a two-part study. The first part "studies up." It historicizes this nascent regime of transnational policing within the political economic history of Mexico-US relations and then renders my ethnographic research on border surveillance and policing and their effects on the everyday lives of the young people of Barrio Libre. The second part thickly describes the young people's "contaminating" agency, from way, way, below. It then explores

contemporary scholarly writings on agency and resistance; finding them reluctant to grapple with politically confounding or “contaminating,” exercises of agency.

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INTRODUCTION: BORDER CROSSING

A fence is all that separates Nogales, Arizona from Nogales, Sonora. Unlike the Rio Bravo that separates my hometown of El Paso from Juarez, and the rest of Texas from Mexico, there are no natural boundaries severing Nogales, Sonora from Nogales, Arizona. Indeed, a U.S. consul wrote in 1924: "the two towns are practically one, one street separates them" (as cited in Nevins 2002: 45). In the early 1990s, the U.S. military improved the border fence; they lengthened it, and substituted the chain link fence with the wartime artifacts of surplus mobile runways from the first Persian Gulf War. Someone has placed a plaque on the fence to commemorate the number of immigrants who have died crossing the border. Other than the policed international boundary, memory and landscape point to the two communities' one time unification: the aligned downtown boulevards of the two cities, the old west architecture of the Nogales, Sonora's church and Nogales, Arizona's museum, and among the older residents' quiet mutterings of "Ambos Nogales," (both Nogaleses), which seem to have dissipated the longer I have researched in the region.

Most everything in Nogales, Arizona and Nogales, Sonora evokes transnational flows, the movement of ideas, desires, and consumables, as well as certain privileged bodies, between the U.S. and Mexico in the cultural space of

the borderlands. Yet, these flows move decidedly freer southward. To cross through the port of entry into Nogales, Sonora from Nogales, Arizona, one simply treks through a turnstile. The return is often more complicated. Those with the proper documentation, pigmentation, and class markers often glide into the United States. Yet, those wishing to embody the northward flows into the United States and who do not possess these qualities face greater scrutiny, ranging from simple questions to interrogations and strip searches.

In Nogales, Sonora, sun-reddened tourists buy tequila, carved Oaxcan animal figurines, blankets, hats, and t-shirts, proclaiming "viva Mexico" and the benefits of tequila drinking. Bars that one time used to spill over with Mexican revolutionaries now sell buckets of Corona beer. Their *gritos* lack the revolutionary charge of before. At night, as in Juarez and Tijuana, the bars and discotechs of Nogales, Sonora, thump contemporary top-forty music in seeming orchestration with libidinal impulse of the bodies yearning to cross the border. In Nogales, Sonora, tourists in bright pastels and shorts comb the curio shops, the artisan and taco stands, and restaurants. Elderly hawkers, amidst heated haggling, wear cowboy hats. Younger ones don mirrored sunglasses and black baseball caps emblazoned with the figure of Michael Jordan, a marijuana leaf, or text saying "Sonora," "Red's trucks," or "Chicano." They bark in accented English: "Come en . . . Come en . . . look around." Other characters approach me and offer "pharmaceuticals. . .cheap"

Fast food is probably the dominant cuisine of Nogales, Arizona. McDonald's serves breakfast tacos. It has *mariachis* every Sunday. Condiments include ketchup, jalapeños, and McDonald's kitschy, trademarked salsa, which tastes like a vinegary version of Tabasco sauce. In 1997, the restaurant introduced chorizo, a spicy Mexican sausage, breakfast sandwich. Frequently tourists, perspiring from the intense desert heat, visit the restaurant to use the last clean facilities before entering Mexico. Others, after too many margaritas or too much beer, rush in to them on their return. They speak slow English, sometimes raising their voices, to the Spanish-speaking help. Bronze skinned workers flip those burgers, sweep the floors, guard the tourists' cars, and clean those toilets. Pesos can be converted to dollars and dollars to pesos.

Close by, Wal-Mart overflows with shoppers from "the other side," how people of Nogales, Arizona often refer to their not quite so different "others," the Mexicans from Nogales, Sonora. The vast majority probably enters the United States with official authorization. I have noticed in my time in Nogales, Arizona how as you walk into Wal-Mart those who are recognized as Mexican tend to have their bags searched. Interestingly, the intimate space of a woman's purse as a transnational gendered artifact frequently go ignored. As the loudspeakers announce first in Spanish then in English the sale items, surveillance cameras scan the shoppers in the rows of chips, plastic goods, diapers, games, household items, t-shirts with prints of American flags opposite those of low-riders and

"monster" trucks. Just outside the store's doors, an elderly woman sells the local paper, the *Nogales International*. "Internacional!" she yells. The newspaper keeps a daily tab of the number of immigrants caught for the year.

On this day in 1998, as I entered Nogales, Arizona from Nogales, Sonora, like I have done almost every day during over the past several months, the customs officer took particular interest in me when he saw my form of identification was a Texas Driver's license, and I when I showed him my passport as a secondary form. He then asked me my business in Mexico.

I respond that I research the street "youth" of Nogales, Sonora, Mexico.¹

"Do you mean the tunnel rats?" the officer asked.

I reply: "I research the youth who sometimes live in the tunnel."

We are referring to a sewer tunnel that runs under the border, which the young people who called themselves Barrio Libre (The "Free 'hood") inhabited in the 1990s. Estimates range on the numbers in the group. The young people whom I know claim upwards of 200. During my time with them, I met approximately fifty. The sewers enter the United States from below. They were constructed early in the twentieth century to relieve the city of Nogales, Sonora from flooding, industrial, and human waste. The tunnel, or the subterranean terrain of Barrio Libre, winds under the border. In them, darkness would dominate in this

¹ I avoid using the term "youth" in this dissertation. It tends to be associated with young people of color, while the term, "teenagers" is reserved for largely, white, largely suburban young people (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000: 307).

southward voyage except for the light that enters through manholes or pipes. Wastewater, the industrial and human waste that runs off from the dusty streets of Nogales, Sonora, and rain would form a light brown, fetid, fluid that flows downhill---northward---toward Nogales, Arizona. This northward flow paralleled another. For much of the 1990s, in the darkness of the transnational sewer system, small groups of immigrants, holding flashlights, some carrying with them their children, and their life savings, would seep under the border. At the end of the sewer tunnels in Nogales, Sonora, on the walls of a ditch, familiar signatures would be scrawled in iridescent gold or silver spray paint: Juanita, Juanatos, Monica, Salvador, Igor, Roman, El Chamuco, Santos, Willi, Santana, Garocho, La Morena, La Negra and many more. Many of these texts would likely share a moniker: Barrio Libre or BL, an acronym for Barrio Libre (The “Free” ‘hood’).² Others simply state “Barrio Libre.”

² I choose the term “‘hood’” over neighborhood, another meaning for the term ‘barrio,’ because of the term’s racialized significance; barrios in the United States have a long history for Mexicano and other Latin American immigrants as a site of racial formation and anti-racist struggle (Bourgois 1995; Diego Vigil 1988; Galarza 1971; Koptiuch 1997; Sánchez 1997; Velez-Ibañez 1996).



Other text in large gold letters would read: “Cristo te Odia, por eso te dio la vida.” (Christ hates you, that is why he gave you life) and: “Vivir para ser libres o morir para no ser esclavos” (To live is to be free or to die is not to be slaves).

“That kind of research requires money,” says the border guard.

I feel him evaluate my white t-shirt, anthropological khakis, my worn Nike tennis shoes, my then shaved head, and finally my goatee.

“You’re dressed like a *cholo*,” said Roman, one of my primary informants and a young man of Barrio Libre, when he saw my outfit earlier that day. Roman and the other young people of Barrio Libre sometimes identified themselves as *cholos*, a category, on both sides of the border that refers to rebellious urban young people of Mexican descent.

Grabbing my right shoulder, the Customs agent removes me from line and escorts me to a back room. They search my backpack. I am repeatedly asked about my finances. I imagine that they are trying to establish whether I am a drug courier, a routinized state practice enacted upon young, and in my case not so young, Mexican men, regardless of citizenship, that I encounter often at the border.

“Sir, are you carrying over \$10,000?”

I shake my head.

Sir, who do you work for?”

I explain again, like I told this same person two days ago, that I research the street kids of Nogales, Sonora.

“That requires money.”

I then explain that I also consult for Mi Nuevo Hogar.

“You’re . . . a consultant?”

As I had learned growing up in El Paso, Texas and spending many of my post undergraduate years in Southern Arizona, such officials at the border seek simple responses, where the category of Mexican, especially those of phenotypically darker Mexicans, on either side of the border, equates to a life of poverty (Vila 2000). My father and grandfather experienced such poverty but I, thanks to my father’s hard work and good fortune, did not. Indeed, my father often asks me, “why do such things matter to you?” These questions underpin our

sometimes tense political discussions, with my father from the Segundo Barrio of El Paso, “birthplace of the Pachuco,” what is today called a “cholo,” he reminds me, arguing that the American dream can indeed be fulfilled, while I argue the continued significance of asymmetrical power relations for Mexicans in the United States. Although they are not the subjects of my dissertation, they are part of my everyday life and my subjectivity.

After going through my backpack, which carried a tape recorder and note pad, an officer asks me to remove my shoes. He peers inside them. Then he asks me to un-tuck my shirt. I feel my pulse quicken. I am agitated. I reach under my belt to pull out the end of my t-shirt. I feel another officer step close to me.

The first officer hesitates. He requests that I turn around.

The first officer runs his hands up my inner thighs. Soon, he touches my groin. I try not to squirm. “Race and sexuality are constructs,” I hear my graduate school-trained internal monitor say. He touches my buttock. The irony cannot be lost that while my buttocks and groin call for state compelled examination only a few feet below the gray cement floors on which we stand, in the bowels of the border, the young people of Barrio Libre may be flowing through the international drainage tunnels that run under the U.S.-Mexico border connecting the sewage system of Nogales, Arizona to that of Nogales Sonora, Mexico.

Michel Foucault would argue that this form of invasive disciplining, sexualized as it is, renders me a subject. That is, it creates an individual

relationship to forms of power. At the same time, it spawns a resistance to power, yet never beyond the reach of power (Foucault 1979, 1990), here being the post-NAFTA regimes of domination and social struggle at the U.S.-Mexico border. Yet, given that it is being performed by state agents, it complicates one of Foucault's central tenets, that social power has superseded the state.

As the officers question me, I cannot help but imagine my friends and research consultants, the young people who call themselves the Free 'hood, undermining these official indignities. Underground in the tunnels, the imaginary line of the US-Mexico border is there, and not there. It does not run too deep. As Roman, one of the young people of Barrio Libre, and one of my primary ethnographic informants tells me; a door symbolizes the border underground, separating the US sewer from the Mexican. But, then again, it is dark, and "sometimes, you don't know where you are." Occasionally, the authorities managed to shut it, soldering rod iron over it, but the young people, or immigrants, force it open. On the surface, vigilant Mexican and American authorities regulate passage to and from their respective countries. To cross the border on the surface, a border which bisects the territory Barrio Libre, these young people would face a more harrowing trial. In the late 1990s, as border controls grew in severity, infrared sensors, night-vision goggles, and helicopters increased the likelihood of capture. Furthermore, as I explore in this dissertation, Mexican police forces have likewise begun regulating the boundary.

I had many experiences with this emerging regime of transnational policing that included the United States Border Patrol, US customs, the Santa Cruz County Sheriff Department, the Nogales Police Department, and in Mexico, Grupo Beta, Transito, the army, and Policia Federal Preventiva. These encounters bring to light why I cannot share Malinowski's imagery of "suddenly [setting down] surrounded by all [my] gear, alone in a tropical beach close to a native village, while the launch or dinghy which has brought me sails away out of sight" (Malinowski 1922: 4). My complex positioning, as a graduate school trained man of Mexican descent, a person of color, of middle class background, invested in a politics of liberation, studying Mexican young people in a border city of Mexico, belies this Malinowskian scenario even as it intersects with recent academic discourses in Latino studies. Of the later, Pedro Cabán has written,

The field of Latino studies occupies a distinct niche in the academic hierarchy and is characterized by a profoundly different set of analytical and political concerns. Latin American Studies was a top-down enterprise promoted by government agencies, university administrators and large foundations. In contrast, ethnic studies programs were interested in studying the "Third World within" the United States, and linking these studies to the "Third World without." (Cabán 1998: 202).

Both he and Walter Mignolo (2003) have noted the social histories of struggle from which Chicano and other ethnic studies program as fields invested in the genealogy of subjugated knowledges emerge in contrast to state-sponsored Latin

American Studies.³ Thus, due to demands of my research subjects, who undermine the border, and thus straddle Latin American and Chicano Studies, and given my experiences like the one outlined above, I, too, straddle these regional and disciplinary divides.

That said, I was not in-between *ambos Nogales* or both Nogaleses to write of the strange, the new, the exotic, and the different. As a friend who studies Anthropology has remarked, those that walk in “cold” with little experience of the field site see more of the taken-for-granted. Perhaps this accounts for their poetic, their writing of cultures in normative, objectifying accounts. With my intimacy of my site, I return to a one-time home rather than go to the field. Thus, in this dissertation, I blur genres (Geertz 1980), relying on first person narratives to be experimental and to imbed myself in the process of anthropological research.⁴ I have learned the value of decentered, postcolonial anthropology, of an

³ By subjugated knowledges, I refer to Foucault’s concept of those forms of knowledge that disrupt heretofore totalizing social theories that “

have been buried and disguised in a functionalist coherence or formal systemization. . . [these] historical contents allow us to rediscover the ruptural effects of conflict and struggle that the order imposed by functionalist or systematizing thought is designed to mask. . . [and] “a whole set of knowledges that have been patient, of the ill person, of the nurse, of the doctor. . . that of the delinquent disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborate: naïve knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy (82).

⁴ Kamala Visweswaran’s assertion that Zora Neale Hurston should be read as a feminist experimental ethnographer, thereby preceding the experimental moment in the human sciences, informs this point (Visweswaran 1994: 33-34; see: Marcus and Fischer 1994; Rabinow 1986; Behar and Gordon 1995). I also suggest that similar blurred genres occur in Chicano anthropology and literature before the experimental moment (see: Galarza 1971; Paredes 1971) (Anzaldúa 1987; Moraga 1983). For a discussion of postmodern ethnography and Chicano studies, see Davalos (1998).

anthropology which “takes sides” (Visweswaran 1994), or an anthropology which “takes a position in the war of position” (Lipsitz 2001: 286). I returned to the Arizona-Sonora borderlands having read the works of Gloria Anzaldúa, Timothy Dunn, Michel Foucault, Sigmund Freud, Antonio Gramsci, Ranajit Guha, Americo Paredes, to list a few more of my influences. Since my return to my new home, Austin, Texas, I have struggled mightily to make sense of the incomprehensible, struggled mightily to make sense of my research subjects, of a group of severely marginalized group of Mexican young people and their confounding, anti-normative, daily practices, including the mugging of immigrants and ingestion of spray paint, which they construed as practices of freedom.

Another acquaintance, also a student of anthropology at a premier institution and who is from Nogales, Sonora, told me that she was dissuaded from studying her hometown by her faculty and peers who insisted that her work would be perceived as tainted. She would be imagined as “too close,” to her topic, or not objective, even in this post-positivist moment of situated knowledges (Haraway 1991). There have been moments at academic conferences, seminars, and the like, where such questions have been raised about my work. I have been asked how does it feel to practice “native anthropology.” My now stock reply: I am not of the Barrio Libre. I have never lived in the tunnels. My home is El Paso.

My return to *ambos Nogales*, or “both Nogaleses,” a term signifying the deep historical and cultural interconnections between Nogales, Arizona and Nogales, Sonora, marked a return to part of my past and a return to *the* border. Until the 1853 Gadsen Purchase, which followed the US-Mexico war, Nogales, Arizona and Nogales, Sonora were the same city under Mexican rule. I had lived in southern Arizona from 1993 to 1997. As I will detail in this dissertation, Mexico was experiencing its worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. This period also marked when southern Arizona became the preferred route for undocumented immigration, a process which continues to today. Immigrants were funneled away from the traditional routes through the El Paso and San Diego regions through deliberate governmental policies. Indeed, Nogales, Sonora, in the mid-1990s evoked desperate movement. Upon my return in 1998, feelings of raw displacement and despair still reverberated through this town of recent immigrants, of politically economic compelled movement, somewhat akin to what Michael Taussig has conceptualized in his notion of a nervous system, a pervasive sense of anxiety, stimulated in an unnamed South American country by state terror (Taussig 1992).

My commitment to my subjects predates my arrival to the academy. I am the former director of what I will call in this dissertation “Mi Nuevo Hogar,” an international nongovernmental organization that attempted to intervene in the lives of the young people. It had opened in 1995, amidst a small-scale moral panic

about the “Tunnel Kids” and their practices of substance abuse and violence in the transnational underworld of the international sewer system.⁵ The then Santa Cruz County Attorney’s Office administered the program and its board of directors included many law enforcement officials including representatives from the local sheriff’s office, police department, public health, and the county, symbolizing the infrastructure of what many scholars are increasingly recognizing as the militarization of the US-Mexico border, which I will elaborate upon later in this dissertation. Thus, I begin my dissertation not in terms of a new, exciting, exotic field site, but as a chapter in my history and its complex articulations with those of a group of young people who call themselves Barrio Libre.

I draw on the ideas of Michel Foucault (1979, 1982, 1990), Louis Althusser (1971), and Jacques Lacan (1977), as well as some anthropologies of violence, to theorize the complex, shifting, and contradictory processes of subjectification in the historical context of neoliberalism. By neoliberalism, I refer to a series of governmental practices designed to instill the market form as the foundation for social organization and, as I argue, as a form of governance that seeks to facilitate the free flow of transnational capital, but not necessarily of people, which, again, I will elaborate upon later in this manuscript.⁶ A related

⁵For Hall et. al., the moral panic in Great Britain in the 1970s reflected a crisis in hegemony, coalescing around issues of race and class. They suggested that as the Britain's productive regime necessitated an interventionist state to criminalize forms of social protest to secure hegemonic domination. Thus, race, crime, youth condensed in the image of mugging (Hall, et al. 1978: viii).

⁶ I draw from Nicholas Rose (1999) discussion of advanced liberalism.

phenomena of neoliberalism, particularly in the North, nestled so close to the United States, is the dematerialization of capital relations, or the eclipse of relations of production by those of consumption, so that wealth becomes produced almost instantaneously in the magic of investments, and sites of production are shifted, out of sight or rendered semi-visible, in relations of flexible accumulation (Harvey 1989: 159) (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000). Such dynamics inform the young people's subject formation.

I also draw on the intellectual contributions of US Third World Feminism. Although I am risk of homogenizing these writings, I am influenced by their respective emphases on multipositionality. The idea that Third World women are not unilinearly defined by any dominant social category, modality of power, nor subject position, and, subsequently, they can embody multiple subjectivities, strategically, vis. a vis. race, class, and gender subject positions allows for critical reconsideration of dominant notions of subject formation, subjection, and agency (Alarcon 1991; Anzaldúa 1987; King 1988; Saldívar-Hull 2000; Sandoval 1991). For example, Chela Sandoval has argued that Third World feminists have mastered the art of operating below and beyond such dominant modes of subjection and subjectification (Sandoval 1991; Sandoval 2000). Thus, although I adopt Stuart Hall's term articulation, meaning a non-necessary linkage or unity, I do so cognizant that articulations may be multiple and thus can include a

gendered and sexualized dimension.⁷ Although I am mindful that relations of power and history configure identities (Visweswaran 1994: 8), it is my suggestion that the heterogeneous experiences of the young people necessitate thinking of Barrio Libre in terms of a multi-referential, somewhat seductive, repository of discourses, images, practices, and modes of thinking and feeling, which partially interpellate the young people and which they in turn partially generate in dialectical relations to an emerging, transnational configuration of power that articulates with dramatic transformations in the political economy of late twentieth century, neoliberal, capitalism.

Barrio Libre also has a spatial dimension. Typically, globalization is imagined as a scale of space that supersedes the state. The young people's incarnation of their transnational 'hood provides a juxtaposition as severely marginalized population who undermined the state system. I would frequently encounter *Barrio Libre* at the end of the tunnel, in Nogales, Arizona, in a drainage ditch, next to a fast-food Mexican restaurant, a Kentucky Fried Chicken, and the public library. Given the one time wide-ranging geography of Barrio Libre, my research was multi-sited (Kearney 1995). The bulk of my research took place in Nogales, Sonora, though I did research in Nogales and Tucson, Arizona.

⁷ In an interview, Hall describes his theory of articulation as “the form of connection that *can* make a unity of two different elements under certain conditions. It is a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute and essential for all time . . . [there is] no necessary ‘belongingness’” [Grossberg, 1996 #726: 141].

The young people's subject formation of Barrio Libre also draws upon immigrant knowledge, or the knowledge common among Mexicans of the potentialities of making a space for one's community, transnationally, as is increasingly evident among certain studies of Mexican "diasporic" practices (Clifford 1997; Mountz and Wright 1996; Rouse 1991; Sadowski-Smith 2002a; Sadowski-Smith 2002b; Saldívar 1997; Stephen 2001). Moreover, Barrio Libre was a dynamic geography that sometimes shifted in relation to the severity of US-Mexico policing. For example, in 1994, before the Border Patrol's local intensification of immigration controls had begun, a young person claimed that *Barrio Libre* consisted of territory in Nogales, Sonora, Nogales, Arizona, Tucson, El Paso, Los Angeles, Chicago, and the tunnels. Moreover, depending on the severity of immigration controls, the young people of Barrio Libre would move and back forth under the border, defying both the Mexico's and United States' regulation of movement while incarnating their transnational, often submerged, Barrio Libre (The Free Hood). The young people would stowaway on trains and go to a "real" Barrio Libre, that of Tucson, Arizona. In the context of Tucson, Barrio Libre refers to a square mile largely ethnically Mexican neighborhood. The Barrio Libre of Tucson Arizona also has specific historical resonance to my project. It refers to a neighborhood with porous boundaries that expanded and contracted in accordance to the needs of the larger Tucson community for a Mexican working force (Velez-Ibañez 1996: 67). In addition, as I discuss, the

area's name also comes from the one-time absence of state repression---as the community was in formation, the Tucson police department would not patrol it. Thus, in this dissertation, I relate the rise of the young people and their subjectivity to the intensification of immigration controls at the US-Mexico border and the often immaterial, yet felt, social power of neoliberalism.

***Mapping Barrio Libre (the Free 'Hood):
Transnational Policing and 'Contaminating' Agency on the Neoliberal U.S.-
Mexico Border***

This manuscript reflects the culmination of two-part study. The first two chapters represent a rather incomplete merging of two often competing, yet increasingly reconciled, understandings of power and subject formation: Marxian and Foucaultian. The first chapter, entitled "Policing las Crises: The Policing of Subaltern Mexicans in the Twentieth Century," historically contextualizes my research project. It is largely a political economic history of the US-Mexico immigration controls in the context of the border region, in which I explore James Cockcroft influential "revolving door" thesis or the suggestion that alternating periods of large-scale immigration and massive deportation, or in his terms a "revolving-door" immigration policy, constitute a form of labor control (Cockcroft 1986: 15). This idea pervades academic writing as well as the thinking of community organizations that I have worked with in southern Arizona, Nogales, Sonora, and Austin, Texas on issues related to Mexican immigration.

And, indeed, from the authoritarian dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz (1876-1910) through the contemporary moment, there has been a conjunction between immigration controls and economic crisis on both sides of the border. Yet, by drawing on border history, Mexican history, Chicana and Chicano history, as well as related works in immigration, cultural studies, and primary documentation, I critically re-evaluate the “revolving door thesis,” accentuating the non-economic features of immigration controls.

In chapter two, entitled “Transnational Governance and Emergent Subjectivities at the US-Mexico Border,” I maintain that the current intensification of social controls at the US-Mexico border denotes an emerging, transnational configuration of power that articulates to the dramatic transformations in the political economy of late twentieth century capitalism. I maintain that this developing transnational governmentality, a term which I will elaborate upon later, is designed to regulate the nomadic subjects of Mexico’s neoliberal turn, which I explore, and speak to its subjective dimensions in chapter two.⁸ Furthermore, I expand my theoretical framework. I draw on Foucault’s

⁸ I am adopting David Harvey’s critical reading of Deleuze and Guattari (1996) and Ana Tsing’s, in turn, criticism of it. For Harvey, the accumulation of capital perpetually deconstructs social power by reconfiguring its geographical basis. He writes, “[to] put the other way round, any struggle to reconstitute power relations is a struggle to reorganize their spatial basis. It is in this light that we can better understand 'why capitalism is continuously reterritorializing with one hand what it was deterritorializing with the other" (1989: 238). Tsing reads Harvey as arguing that the cultural aesthetic of the postmodern is related the economic logic of flexible accumulation. For Harvey, postmodernism mirrors post-Fordism, an economically determinist argument, in which culture mirrors economic realities. However, in this gap, space and time come in. Notably, Harvey fails to address ethnographic sources for the experience of space and time (2002: 340-341).

concepts of the Panopticon, governmentality, and bio-power, and their articulation to racism, to point to articulations between intensified immigration controls, neoliberalism, its deterritorialization of Mexico's subaltern sectors, and the conquest and colonization of what is now the southwestern United States. I hold that the calculated management of life (Foucault 1990: 143), or in this particularity the regulation of immigrants, constructs the border into a site of sporadic, state and extra-statal disciplinary forms, ranging from the banality of official surveillance, to acts of (transnational) policing, and, at times, complicit vigilante violence, in contrast to the premise of the scholarship on the militarization of the border, of an overarching military strategy.

In addition, I "study up" (Nader 1969). I introduce my ethnographic research on the Border Patrol, particularly my ethnography of the Border Patrol Station in Nogales, Arizona, and my interview with Officer Pankoke of the United States Border Patrol. I propose that the scholarship of the militarization of the US-Mexico border exaggerates the violence of US immigration controls and in so doing understates immigrant agency, their success at living transnationally and in forging transnational communities. I further complicate the scholarship on the militarization of the border in suggesting that the operations of power upon the body, both in terms of policing as well as in terms of the less tangible qualities of neoliberal governmentality, in part configure subjectivities. Routinized policing

by the Mexican police and displacements wrought by neoliberalism partially configure the social imaginary of Barrio Libre. I also use this chapter to further situate myself in relationship to the young people of Barrio Libre, narrating one of my routine encounters with the US border authorities.

In chapter three, “High Intensity Imaginaries,” I then begin my rendition of my study of the “below,” or the “way, way, below.”⁹ I turn to the everyday experiences of the young people in the context of neoliberal governmentality to discuss the consolidation of the Barrio Libre social imaginary. I pursue this line of inquiry by representing different domains in the young people’s everyday lives: their attempts to work in the informal economy; their frequent, historically specific, experiences with Mexican police forces; and the particularities of the experiences of the young women of Barrio Libre, whose gendered experiences of Barrio Libre partially configure their somewhat differentiated subjectivities. I represent a further deterritorialization or what I am calling a “micro-deterritorialization” of the young people, a level displacement beyond the processes of deterritorialization and that contributes to their creative imaginary subject formation of Barrio Libre. As the daily experiences of the young people of

⁹ I am referring to the works of social historians largely of Great Britain, and in subaltern studies in the United States, Latin America, South and Southeast Asia, Chicana/o Studies, and their intellectual precursors. See, for example: Thompson 1963; James 1963; Visweswaran, 1996; Beverly, 1999; Guha, 1988; Scott, 1985; Chakrabarty, 2000; Nugent, 1994; Latin American Subaltern Studies Group 1995; Guha, 1988; Guha, 1997; Saldívar-Hull, 2000; Spivak 1988; Trouillot, 1995.

Barrio Libre suggests, it is the often routine encounters with Mexican authorities, not US immigration authorities, which take a violent cast.

Chapter four, “Libre Total (Total Freedom),” continues with the study of way, way below. It ethnographically renders the young people’s perceptions of their survival, and their unorthodox and vexing practices of substance abuse and mugging. Moreover, it represents where neoliberal governmentality breaks down. There are gaps in neoliberal governance that the young people have exploited and to some degree actively created, evident in their transnational imaginary and practices, and despite their severe social marginality. Indeed, for most of the 1990s the young people incarnated a transnational subjectivity, undermining the border through a sewer system, and then living in Tucson Arizona. In so doing, I represent the young people’s agency beyond their problematic practices, showing how their neoliberal inflected notions of freedom mark a profound effort at survival and for some a marked attempt to transform their world.

The concluding chapter of my manuscript returns me to the realm of academic theory. My framework takes on another layer as I critically review what has come to be called border theory (Michaelson, 1997), a species of cultural theory associated with the likes of Renato Rosaldo (1989), Guillermo Gómez-Peña (1996) and inaugurated by Gloria Anzaldúa (1987). While initially a Chicana critique of Chicano cultural chauvinism, border theory has transformed into an academic imagining of agency, an enchantment with transnational

movement and fluidity. Border thinking privileges liminality, figurative borders, and hybrid spatial production. Yet, in so doing, it erases one of the contemporary sources of the social production of hybridity at the border, the aforementioned neoliberal processes of deterritorialization and resistances to it at the border. The success of Mexican diasporas in the United States seem to confirm much of what border theory premises. Yet, as the young people of Barrio Libre demonstrate, the border is also a space where subaltern subjects, even those severely marginalized like the young people of Barrio Libre, exercise agency. Border theory remains grounded in a notion of immigrants and borderlanders as subjects of larger, processes, of politically economic compelled movement, and not living subjects actively altering, transforming, and struggling against these very conditions.

I also explore how other ethnographers have grappled with vexing agency of the socially marginalized. Drawing from my ethnographic research on the young people of Barrio Libre, I suggest that underpinning many such framework are dominant political narratives, organized in binary oppositions that erase the subjectivities and at times problematic practices of subalternized subjects. By contrast, the day-to-day lives of the young people of Barrio Libre show how those at the margins challenge the normative power of society that is in the service of inherently unequal structural conditions. The problematic practices of the young people of Barrio Libre are not only “self-destructive” in nature, nor do they simply reproduce the dominant cultural logic. Instead, Barrio Libre represents a

struggle to survive within a hierarchical system. For others, Barrio Libre constitutes their particular, everyday forms of resistance (Scott, 1985; Scott, 1990; Scott, 1992), a problematic opting out of capitalist life ways. That is, the young people and their subject formation of Barrio Libre, partially produced by neoliberal power and at times statal and extra statal violence and disciplinary technology, mark a confounding, and strategic attempt to survive, and for some transform otherwise oppressive conditions.

A Note on Methods

Unconventional subjects require an unconventional methodology. The nomadic attributes of the *Barrio Libre* youth forced me to adopt ad-hoc research methods. For example, I spent time looking for the youth in Nogales, Sonora and other parts of the dispersed terrain of *Barrio Libre* with the help of my primary consultants, youth themselves who were members. When I did find others, I would invite them to meal or to have a (non-alcoholic) drink. I would then often either audio or videotape an interview, of limited duration. I would ask them about what was going on their lives and, frequently, I would then follow-up with a question linking their response to *Barrio Libre*. Other times, I would ask them: ¿Que significa Barrio Libre? What does Barrio Libre mean to you? Still other times, the youth would immediately introduce stories to explain their activities or to respond to my latter question. Occasionally, I would conduct formal interviews

where I would focus on life history. Often, however, my activities revolved around helping the young people with health issues and trying to make their lives easier.

Audio taped ethnographic interviews were central to this project. They served two purposes. These recordings will serve as mnemonic devices and allow me to develop situated, personal histories, pointing to how they became members of *Barrio Libre*. Again, however, they will serve as partial, situated knowledges, complemented by historical analysis and other ethnographic data. Moreover, I also interviewed individuals from the various agencies involved in immigration policing.

Another primary ethnographic fieldwork technique for this project was participant observation. I do not conceptualize participant observation in its totalizing, functionalist form. Instead, in my mind participant observation provides a situated or partial knowledge of the ethnographic subject. Participant observation indexes the power relations of ethnography; it accentuates the contrasting, yet fluid, subject positions of subject and ethnographer. Participation observation lends itself to an analysis of cultural poetics, “the aesthetically salient and culturally embedded textual ties and enactments,” (Limón 1994: 14), and nonverbal signs of style.

Throughout my research, I was careful to adhere to professional standards. I introduced myself as a doctoral student, doing doctoral research on their lives.

Since this sometimes met with confusion, a second way of identifying my activity was that I was “writing a book.” I made use of consent statements and signature pages in certain situations, or when taping them, I would record their assent. Moreover, I explained each subject’s option to participate, and that they were free to quit participating without any consequence.

**1. POLICING *LAS CRISES*:
THE POLICING OF SUBALTERN MEXICANS
IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY¹⁰**

It would be tempting to explain my ethnographic research on the young people of Barrio Libre in late twentieth century and early twenty first century *ambos Nogales* in terms of Mexico's latest economic crisis and the policing of identities and nationalities at the Mexico-U.S. border. According to the line of argumentation, daily life in *ambos Nogales*, and indeed throughout most of Mexico, could be comprehended in terms of what was occurring in Mexico, the United States, or the world as a whole, through an uncritical deployment of categories and concepts. Beyond the stories collected, which I as an ethnographer-author would write-up only after the events described were discussed and or interpreted by both my research consultants and me the analysis would reproduce some of the fallacies of early structural-functionalist anthropology. It would be *presentist* and *abstract*. It would be presentist because I would be assuming that I could explain historical developments, relations of power, and socioeconomic processes in terms of one particular and perhaps exceptional historical conjuncture (i.e. the "ethnographic present"). Moreover, I would fail to comprehend that Mexico's current economic crisis, which began officially in

¹⁰ I am indebted to Stuart Hall et. al.'s publication for the title to this chapter on the processes of criminalization. Hall et. al. explored the public "moral panic" about the black populations in post-War Great Britain, which for these authors signaled the formation of a new hegemonic bloc (Hall, et al. 1978).

1995, is the latest of a long series. And, the analysis would be abstract because it would presume to resolve the contradictions and conflicts and characterize distinctive processes and engagements in terms of set of unexamined *a priori*. That is, it would obviate the need to deal with the problem of transformation as it avoided deep historical continuities as well as disruptions of Mexican immigration to the United States, the global and local economies, and the political construction of the border.¹¹

Instead, for my historical ethnographic purposes, I am influenced by José Limón's suggestion that the large number of military forts in Texas provided a military guarantee to "the coming imposition of a new political economy and hegemonic sociocultural order" (Limón 1994:23). Taking the correlation between regimes of economy and violence in this part of the US-Mexico borderlands into consideration, I explore James Cockcroft influential thesis that alternating periods of large-scale immigration and massive deportation comprised a "revolving-door" immigration policy in the United States that served as a form of labor control (Cockcroft 1986: 15). This thesis pervades academic writing as well as the thinking of community organizations that I have worked with in southern Arizona, Nogales, Sonora, and Austin, Texas on issues related to Mexican immigration and US immigration controls. I propose that the revolving door thesis and its derivatives, particularly some of the emerging social science on the

¹¹ I draw from a rich literature that critiques structural functionalist anthropology (Nugent 1993: 27-28) (Rosaldo 1989)

militarization of the border, cannot fully account for the current moment. It cannot account for the excessive deaths at the border, which numbers grow daily, nor the structural degradation and indignities of everyday life at the border, which I link to the deeply social and subjective experiences and conditions of neoliberalism in Mexico. I draw on key moments and scholarship on twentieth century Mexican, border, Chicana, and Chicano history, as well as related works in immigration, cultural studies, and primary documentation, to suggest that the ongoing intensification of border policing at the end of the twentieth and early in the twenty-first centuries represents an emerging form of transnational governance.

The Rise of the Mexican State and Modern Political Economic Policing

It is difficult to do a brief chronology of Mexican history or for that matter the development of the border without discussing the Porfiriato (1876-1910). The formation of the state and the development of capitalism characterize the thirty-year period under the rule of the authoritarian dictator Porfirio Diaz. In addition, the Mexican north was penetrated by significant amount of US capital. These processes transformed the northern states into a showcase of Mexico's modernization. An impressive network of railroads linking cities, mining, and industrial sites, as well as agricultural sites, to the United States and central Mexico were built. These processes shifted the economic center of Mexico northward. The region became an economic appendage of the United States

(Mora-Torres 2001: 3) (Cockcroft 1986: 36). Moreover, during these years, the Mexican north developed its uniqueness, with respect to the rest of Mexico, including a political culture that revolved around federalism, liberalism, and anticlericalism. For my purposes it is also clear that I even at this early moment in Mexico's history, social forces conspired to form immigrant culture. Late in the nineteenth century, Mexico's President Porfirio Diaz seeded the migratory labor stream. He insisted on export-crop farming. He privatized communal lands, leaving many rural people landless and hungry. These conditions were exacerbated by a dramatic population boom. The painful reality of declining wages, rapidly rising cost of staples, and landlessness, lead to the adoption of the strategy of journeying northward (Gutierrez 1995: 44) (Lytle Hernandez 2002: 32).

In *The Secret War in Mexico: Europe, The United States, and the Mexican Revolution* (1981), the historian Friedrich Katz advanced a thesis that without an appreciation of the consequences of profound changes that the formation of the border brought northern society of Mexico the origins and outbreaks of the Mexican Revolution would be miscomprehended. For Katz, the incorporation of the north into the capitalist political economy as well as its integration into a centralized political system created the conditions that provoked the north to violently intervene in the national affairs of 1910-1920 (Katz 1981). In this respect, several scholars have detected a nationalist or anti-imperialist ethos

underlying the revolution. According to one prominent Mexican historian, in rebelling against the *Porfiriato*, Mexican peasants revolted against US imperial interests (Coatsworth 1998). Also, John Mason Hart maintains that the defense of the sovereignty and the economy of Mexico's national, state, and local regimes were the essence of the social revolution of 1910 and the nineteenth-century provincial uprisings that preceded it. In this respect, he describes a pattern of popular assaults on US properties and the US conflicts with one leader after another.¹²

In order to emphasize the transnational currents in terms of governance and subject formation during the Revolutionary period, I now turn to the year 1906. This date has the additional advantage of lending what Clifford Geertz calls “local knowledges” to the broad concerns I have sketched so far, knowledge specific to my ethnographic concerns (Geertz: x). In June of that year workers at a mine in Cananea, Sonora, only a few hours by car from Nogales, who were paid half as much as their US counterparts and forced to purchase in company stores while living in undesirable conditions, went on strike, under the leadership of the Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM) and anarchists from the United States (Hart 2002: 148). A posse of 270 cowboys, miners, and merchants from Arizona, lead by the Arizona Rangers, suppressed the strike. Notably, the Arizona Rangers were

¹² Hart further argues that Carranza's actions in protection of US property in 1913 tilted the scales in favor of a pro-Carranza policy (and anti-Villista) by the US. Important in Hart's analysis of the background to the revolution is the task of documenting the increasing favoring of U.S. interests in Mexico by Liberals, and even more by the Diaz regime.

created in 1901 by the Territorial Legislature of Arizona. They were molded after the Texas Rangers, a group known for its practices of racial terror against Texas-Mexicans (De Leon 1983; Limón 1994: 23; Rosenbaum 1981). A unit of a Mexican paramilitary force aided them (Nadelmann 1993: 70-72) (Martinez 1991). Here on a small scale marks a conjunction of policing and a political-economic crisis, illustrating Cockcroft's thesis, but notably with a transnational dimension.

Scholarly consensus dictates that the United States, through its imperialist ambitions and the actions of business class, played a decisive role in creating the conditions that fomented Mexico's revolution. Yet, such an analysis is only half of the equation. The United States also served as a crucial site in the organization, recruitment, and support for Mexican revolutionaries. As evidence of this, I point to Catarino Garza, Mexicano journalist, guerilla leader and intellectual, who from his base in south Texas, attempted to undermine the regime of Porfirio Diaz (Limón 1994: 29). I also read largely against the grain, noting that the US government and other governmental institutions criminalized PLM militants in the United States, beating and jailing them and keeping them on the run as 'illegal' immigrants (Cockcroft 1986: 52-54). This seems to add a political component to processes of criminalization beyond labor controls. Moreover, recent scholarship has suggested that the author's of the revolutionary document, the Plan de San

Diego, and the subsequent raids along the Texas-Mexico border, were the workings of the PLM.

Meanwhile, in Mexico, revolutionary nationalism helped cement caste and class divisions between peasants and intellectuals, making their revolutionary coalitions possible. Although the revolution itself is largely out of the scope of this chapter, a key legacy of this event is the coming to be of one of the most progressive constitutions in the Americas. It included a provision that entitled the government ownership to certain key territory in Mexico as well a significant constitutional provision Article 27, which initiated land reform.

In the immediate aftermath of the Revolution, as formal hostilities cooled, internecine warfare continued among the revolutionary leaders over control of the state (Cockcroft 1990). Following the assassination of Obregon, Calles and his supporters organized in 1929 the National Revolutionary Party, the origins of today's PRI, or the party of the Institutionalized Revolution. The PNR was able to unite most rival parties, military officers, social forces, and factions, while claiming to represent "The Revolution." From this point forward until the twenty first century, this party, representing the consolidation of the Mexican state, managed to maintain control of national elections (Cockcroft 1990: 120-121).

The intensity of the conflict near the border during the revolutionary period, including violence in Juarez and Nogales, Sonora, spilled into the United States. The conjunction between policing and crisis again occurred, as these

conditions brought a mobilization of US troops, Ranger and National Guard units to the border. Thousands of troops massed along the border as both a warning and deterrent to Mexican crossing. President Taft agreed for the federal financing of the Texas Rangers (Nadelmann 1993:73). Nevertheless, according to most scholars, from one to one and one half million Mexicans immigrated to the United States between 1890 and 1929 because of the violence and social instability of the Mexican Revolution (Gutierrez 1995: 40). Indeed, during the first third of the twentieth century it is estimated that one eighth of Mexico's population shifted north of the border. Initial channels for this migratory flow had been provided by the California Gold Rush and by the movement of people in Sonora, Sinaloa, and other northern Mexican states to an from the former Mexican territories of the US Southwest after 1848 (Cockcroft 1986: 49). The US southwest was rapidly expanding with the onset of intensive irrigation in agriculture and the new growth in mining and railroad sectors.

Yet, shifts in US immigration laws complicated Mexican immigration to the United States. The inauguration of the Chinese Exclusion Act and the Gentleman's Agreement, which restricted the immigration of Asian and certain European laborers, allowed for Mexican immigrants filled the steadily increasing demand for low wage jobs in the southwestern economy (Cockcroft 1986: 53). Yet, they also instituted the Border Patrol.

It is notable that even at its inception, the Border Patrol had a consciously constructed paramilitary quality. Notably, the Immigration and Naturalization commissioner characterized the actions of his agents in military terms in his first annual reports. The inauguration of the Border Patrols also occurred on the heels of the US invasions of Mexico in 1914 and 1916. It is also significant to my argument that several original members of the Border Patrol were former Texas Rangers (Dunn 1996: 13), considering this agency's legacy of anti-Mexican violence in the southwest. Moreover, since its inception, the Border Patrol has had questionable human rights practices. For example, under locally organized "repatriation drives," in INS authorities 'encouraged' Mexican immigrants to leave the U.S., the Mexican born population in Texas plummeted by 40% (see: Callahan 2003; Dunn 1996: 13).

Yet, the exigencies of the emerging transnational political economy overrode such concerns. The agency at this time was largely decentralized. Thus, it could be swayed by significant local pressure from agribusiness to minimize its enforcement activities (Lytle Hernandez, 2002: 31-32; 41). The first Border Patrol officers tended to be "local men," embedded in the borderland communities, and dependent upon a relatively porous international boundary (Lytle Hernandez 2002: 21). Thus, in the context of the Mexican Revolution, if a Mexican laborer could afford the \$18 head tax, and tolerate the weekly baths and humiliating medical exams, he or she would be considered a legal immigrant. Many chose to

evade such official degradations. They crossed the border without permission and became subjects to the Border Patrol. Some 85% of the Mexicans in the United States constituted a mobile army of such migrant laborers.

Meanwhile, the Mexican Revolution ideologically galvanized an already existing anti-US antipathy among those Mexicans who had the cultural memory of the US southwest being Mexico's northwest. Mexico's popular anti-imperialism inflamed the cultural memory of the Mexico-US war (1846-1848), as did the campaign racial terror enacted against Mexican communities, and the sometimes vicious other times subtle appropriation of Mexican lands, often in the form of legal chicanery, throughout the southwest (Menchaca 1999; Menchaca 2001; Montejano 1987). The aforementioned popular anti-imperialist ethos of Mexico's Revolution detected by Hart, Katz, and others inflamed a Mexicano insurgency in the former Mexican territory that had been colonized in the mid-nineteenth century. As these complex social formations developed, several well-chronicled examples of Mexico popular insurgency occurred, including the El Paso Salt War, the Cortina War, and the Plan San Diego (Acuña 1972; Almaguer 1994; Anzaldúa 1987; Callahan 2003; De Leon 1983; Flores 2002; Limón 1994; Montejano 1987; Paredes 1971) (Velez-Ibañez 1996). Notably, in this context, the policing of Mexicans takes on a violent cast during this early period. From the intense scrutiny of Del Rio Texas, where over 32,000 interviews were conducted to make a meager 108 arrests of undocumented subjects, to an attempted

lynching, and frequent shootings, a culture of racialized violence permeated the early period of the Border Patrol (Lytle Hernandez 2002: esp. pps. 42-72).

Soon, the political economic nature of immigration policing begins to further crystallize. The “Red scare” promulgated by Attorney General Mitchell Palmer in 1919 caused the violent deportation of hundred of “aliens,” “communists,” and “anarchists.” The primary targets of the Palmer raids were southern European and Mexican labor organizers who had been influential in the unionization of America working class during the previous two decades. These raids coincided with the return of US workers from the European battlefields of World War I (Cockcroft 1986: 56). A few years later, during the Great Depression, 400,000 persons of Mexican descent, more than half being US citizens, were repatriated (Ngai 2004: 8).

Meanwhile, the anti-imperialist, nationalist ethos from below continued to play out in Mexico as is evident in the presidency of Lázaro Cardenas. Cardenas is best remembered for his progressive policies such as the sanctioning of collective bargaining, increasing the minimum wage, the rejuvenation of agrarian reform, which had lost momentum following the Revolution, his public acknowledgements of the significance of class struggle, and his promises to assist the working class. His presidency exploited the anti-imperialist ethos from below to inaugurate Mexico’s tradition of state-sponsored capitalism (Cockcroft 1990: 124). Indicative of the simmering anti-United States ethos early in the Cardenas

regime, a large number of strikes occurred against such companies as Standard Oil's Huasteca Petroleum Company, and American Telephone and Telegraph, an ally of Mexican Telephone and Telegraph Company (Cockcroft 1990: 126).

The Cardenas administration distributed over 20 million hectares of land to the peasantry, more than double the amount of all previous post-revolutionary regimes. As a result, *ejidatorios* increased their irrigated land holdings fourfold, and large landholders unproductive and were subject to appropriation. Major American landholdings were affected in Puebla, the Laguna, the Yaqui, and Mexicali valleys, and elsewhere (Knight 1998: 36-37). In addition, Cardenas called in the federal troops when region political strongmen, allied with conservative and foreign interests tried to stop his program. Cardenas' agrarian reform also served to arouse the enthusiasm of hundreds of thousands of Mexicans and granted the peasantry a modicum of dignity not felt since the days of Zapata, the revolutionary leader of the peasantry. Nevertheless, these policies primarily served to preserve and stimulated a private system of farming for commercial agriculture. By 1937, the pace of land reform had slowed to a trickle (Cockcroft 1990: 132-135). Under Cardenas, with a weak and divided national bourgeoisie the state emerged as a mediator in the development of capital relations. It privileged the "modern" and "patriotic" elements of the bourgeoisie, appropriating anti-imperialism simmering from below. Nevertheless, the Cardenas regime, despite some of its more progressive acts, is regarded as the

regime that laid the basis for Mexico's rapid modernization. Cardenas changed the banking rules, allowing the government's major development corporation to borrow from the national bank to underwrite private investment. Cardenas also doubled the amount of federal expenditure for economic development. Moreover, Cardenas encouraged the popular classes to form a united front against industrialists, while at the same time he suggested that management should do the same. Cardenas' strategy was to divert class warfare into channels under state regulation (Cockcroft 1990:129-131). Cardenas drew on inchoate popular anti-imperialist sentiments to craft governmental policy sufficiently nationalist, but, perhaps conscious of the colossus to the north, nonetheless capitalist in nature.

The Acceleration of Transnational Policing

World War II soon intervened. The Second World War brought Mexican workers back to the United States under the "Bracero program" a series of contract labor programs designed to meet wartime labor shortages in agriculture but which continued until 1964. They allowed Mexico to officially export Mexican agricultural laborers to the US. Initiated as an emergency wartime measure to solve a labor shortage in the United States, the Bracero program was periodically re-enacted, while increasingly coming under the control of agribusiness. Braceros were subject to widespread abuse. They helped to spiral down the wages of other American workers. Eventually organized labor in the United States and other interests managed to bring about the end of the program in 1964. Yet, the migratory flow continued almost unabated, as did the abuses (Cockcroft 1990: 172). The program contributed to the unprecedented population movements from the interior of Mexico northward to the Mexico-US border and from their into the United States. The United States Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) apprehended an annual average of only 7,023 undocumented migrants between 1940 and 1943. The numbers increased from approximately 29,000 in 1944 to 69000 in 1945, to almost 200,000 in 1947 (Gutierrez 1995: 142).

Here the conjunction between political economic and border policing becomes again evident. Nine years after World War II, "Operation Wetback" in

1954 marked the first, large scale, systematic implementation of military strategy and tactics by the INS against subaltern Mexicans. During “Operation Wetback,” the INS conducted mass round ups of immigrants along the border along with a media campaign designed to intimidate immigrants. Debates range upon the effects of this operation; estimates range from 107,000 to 164,000 apprehensions while the INS claims 1.3 million, although some scholars regard the latter figure as an exaggeration (Dunn 1996: 16-17). The then attorney general sought initially to deploy U.S. Army troops to conduct the massive round up. He also allegedly advocated allowing the US border patrol to shoot some “wetbacks” to discourage them from crossing the border. Although these initiatives failed, he did manage to appoint a recent retired U.S. army personnel as commissioner of the INS, who guided the Border Patrol’s reorganization into a quasi-military organization evident in the tactics of “Operation Wetback.” The central tactic was the “mobile task force concept,” where a “special mobile force” of some 400 Border Patrol personnel was to be concentrated in designated sectors with a high concentration of ‘illegal aliens.’ They conducted mass round ups in these areas, working in concentric, widening circles to push the “illegal aliens” across the border. Then, other Border Patrol agents were to conduct “mop ups,” supported by aircraft, which helped to seek out the undocumented and to direct the ground forces. State and local law enforcement also contributed to this effort. Moreover, the operation graphically illustrated the principle that US citizens of Mexican descent had to be

prepared at all time to proved their US citizenship, or face deportation (Dunn 1996: 15-17). Again, an emerging regime of governance becomes evident, as the Mexican government fully approved of Operation Wetback. Indeed, it actively collaborated in it by transporting Mexican citizens from the immediate border region.

With the termination of the Bracero program and the mass deportation of Operation Wetback, immense pools of cheap labor coalesced in northern Mexico. In 1964-65, in part to absorb the shock of increased unemployment caused by the return of the braceros and 'dried-out wetbacks,' Mexico initiated the Border Industrialization Program (BIP). The government essentially codified US owned assembly plants on Mexican soil at the border. The BIP was also established to respond to changes in the world economy. Its main feature was the introduction of *maquiladoras* or assembly plants that imported components and raw goods from the United States, assembled them into finished products, and then exported them back across the border for sale. This state action constituted a formal acknowledgement the importance of the US market for Mexico's industrial development. It was developed at roughly the same time as, and at least as a response to, the emergence of the Export Processing Zones and Special Economic Zones of Asia. These assembly plants were the only firms exempt from the nation's laws requiring majority Mexican ownership. Labor was less organized in Mexican border cities than in either central Mexico or the United States (Lorey

1999:104-106). In contrast to other global locations, the border provided the amenity for managers to live on the US side, and take advantage of US schools, health care, and other services. While the program developed slowly at first, by 1972, nearly one-third of the value of all US components sent abroad for assembly was going to border plants in Mexico. After 1972, *maquiladoras* were no longer legally limited to the border region, though they spread slowly to other areas. By 1979, production by *maquiladoras* accounted for one-quarter of the nation's manufacturing exports. Although the average wage is 25% higher than other regions of Mexico, management has routinely engaged in underhanded practices to prevent labor organizing (Kopinak 1996; Pena 1997).

It must be noted that the Border Industrialization Program marked the end of state directed national capitalism. It occurred during a moment when the country had become celebrated as a model of state-led industrialization in the 'Third world.' Over several decades the country had "modernized" from a mainly rural, and agricultural nation to an industrializing and increasingly urban society. At the end of World War II, the Mexican government implemented import substitution policies (ISI), which served particular domestic sectors of the national economy. This strategy proved enormously successful. It is often referred to as the nation's so-called "miracle years" or "la epoca de oro." The economy expanded at a brisk pace and Mexico was able to meet a large part of consumer demand with domestic manufacture values. During this time, the government

worked closely with the country's financial elite and gave a high priority to stable domestic prices and foreign exchange rates. Early on the subalternized sector of Mexico's Indian-peasant producers managed to produce more agricultural products at rate higher than the growth of the population, assuaging the cost of living and permitting minimal agricultural imports (Bartra 1985: 94).

Nevertheless, over time import substitution worked against the interests of the majority of Mexicans. Mexico had soon transformed from a country that exported agricultural products to one that largely imported them (Bartra 1985: 940-941). Farming was reserved for export markets. By 1964, Mexico shipped 334 million pounds of vegetables north; 13 years later, the flow increased to 1,018 million pounds, supplying, in some seasons, 60 percent of US fresh vegetables (Acuña 2002:694). By the 1970s, ISI generated crisis in the countryside, a site, it need to be emphasized of significant unrest during the revolution. Meanwhile public services were being reduced and the government was mired in debt. Moreover, there was a major deficiency in consumer goods and agricultural products had to be bought at high prices in the international market. The mechanization of agriculture, again under state direction, helped generate the elimination of many subsistence farmers while increasing the division of labor (Bartra 1985:97-98).

By the 1970s, indigenous campesinos were experiencing not a miracle but a nightmare. During a moment when the Mexican state ideologies of *indigenismo*

and *mestizaje* celebrated the ancestral past of Indians and their cultural fusion with Euro-modern Spanish colonizers, Mexico's miracle was built through the subalternized, impoverished bodies of Mexico's largely indigenous peasantry (Barry 1992:80-81; Cockcroft 1986: 102-103; Saldaña-Portillo 2003: 279). Throughout the 1970s, peasant mobilizations initiated political actions over pricing, for democratic institutions, and for land tenure, and across the country in Chiapas, Coahuila, Sonora, Guerrero, and Sinaloa. These mobilizations rocked the government; they lead to the demise of the miracle years (Bartra 1985:103-105).

The economic nightmare in Mexico's countryside was accompanied by an unprecedented wave of political oppression, what has come to be recognized as Mexico's own dirty war [Mexico, 2003 #689]. The political violence of the dirty war included a significant urban component. In October 1968, somewhere between 5,000 and 15,000 demonstrators had gather at the Taltelolco housing complex to protest recent government repression against the Mexico City student movement. Between 5,000 and 10,000 soldiers met them (Gutman 2002: 63-64). Amnesty International has reported extensively on allegations of torture, including the use by Mexican police forces of "systematic beatings, near drowning and electric shocks" during this period.

These events exacerbated migrant flows. This is to say, immigration is not solely driven by economic crisis but also political ones as well. Indeed, by 1974, one-third of the border population consisted of immigrants. The Border

Industrialization Program thus vastly augmented the populations of Mexico's border cities and employees received wages at roughly one fifth to one seventh US wages (Cockcroft 1990: 107-110). Moreover, the expanded labor pool in turn spurred the economic transformation of industry that made the US southwest the region with the fastest economic growth of the post-1960 period (Cockcroft 1986: 107-108). A new era of massive legal and undocumented immigration occurred with a greater representation of women and entire families. Between 1960 and 1980, over 1 million Mexican legally immigrated to the United States, but the biggest statistical increases were seen in the records of apprehensions of the undocumented. Statistics bear out these trends: in the 1960s, the INS recorded more than 1 million arrests; by the 1970s, the figure reached over 7 million (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1997: 118).

At this point in this historical ethnography, another significant historical actor, from the other side of the modern border, requires acknowledgement. Notably, as immigrant campesinos flowed across the border, the Chicano movement arose. To the credit of the farm workers and their Chicano student supporters, creative cultural tactics, like marches to the state capital, fasts, folk church services, public theater, and the grape boycott, spread the word about the grape harvesters' strike and Mexican culture (Cockcroft 1986: 185). These and similar civil protest in California, Texas, and New Mexico, and other strategies from Reyes Lopez Tijerina's storming of the courthouse in Taos, New Mexico to

the rise of the Raza Unida Party in Texas, the “Blowouts” of the public schools in Los Angeles, and the youth militia called the Brown Berets, represented an articulation of an alternative subject formation for the nation’s then 10 million Mexicans. The appropriation of an array of elite indigenous groups and symbols from the Mexican Revolution mobilized the Mexican American community despite a diverse array of political agendas ranging from ethnic separatism to assimilationism in the 1960s and 1970s (Klor de Alva 1998:71).

It is notable that US immigration policy became increasingly embedded with national security issues in the historical and political context of insurgent political activity and state repression in Mexico and identitarian political formations in the United States. It is during this moment that the INS was transferred from the Department of Labor to the Department of Justice. Moreover, the agency increasingly took the character of similar agencies such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation, becoming more deceptive and secretive (Dunn 1996: 13-14). The forthcoming excerpt from a discussion between then presidents Luis Echevarría of Mexico and Richard Nixon of the United States points to a similar quality:

Echeverría: This problem in Latin America is reflected within American society itself in the Mexican-Americans and Puerto Ricans and other racial minority groups. Therefore either we find balanced economic solutions to these issues or [the communists] will gain ground in Latin America and that will have repercussions inside your own borders . . . There is no doubt whatsoever that President Nixon's meetings in China and Russia were great

successes, but at the same time anything that China and Russia can do to cause problems, they will do - and in Latin America we feel that directly. I have observed this in Mexico; I saw it in Chile directly and in every Latin American country in one form or another.

Nixon: Well I think that, ah - first, the President's analysis is very perceptive about the problems of the hemisphere. And second, I appreciate the fact that he is taking the lead - speaking up not only for his own country, which of course is his first responsibility [...] - but he's taking the lead in speaking up for the whole hemisphere. Because Mexico, as he said earlier, provides not only the U.S. border with Mexico but the U.S. border with all of Latin America. And Mexico you could say is the bridge - the bridge between the United States and the rest of Latin America. I think for the President of Mexico to take a leading role in speaking about the problems of the hemisphere is very constructive.

Nixon's comment suggests that the significance of immigration controls extend beyond the disciplining of bodies to the transnational economy. The purpose, it seems, is in part to disrupt potential transnational political identity formations and social movements (Acuña 2002: 697).

Indeed, Echeverría's next comment further illuminates this point.

Echeverría: When I was about to leave from Mexico for this trip, Mr. President, I was informed by my various people that groups of Mexicans had been in touch with friends of Angela Davis [a well-known Black activist at the University of California in Berkeley] in this country. And that we were aware of the plans of the organization that Angela Davis heads to mount a key demonstration in San Antonio protesting the existence of political prisoners in Mexico. All of this is connected to people in Chile, with people in Cuba, with the so-called "Chicano" groups in the United States, with certain groups in Berkeley, California - they're all working closely together . . . she would go to San Antonio to a demonstration in protest of internal affairs of Mexico with this idea

of saying that "all political prisoners in every country should be released," we were immediately informed.¹³

This elite level dialogue garners further potency when it is remembered that during the first year of the Echeverría government, the new president had promised a democratic opening, acknowledging the authoritarian character of the state. Nevertheless, on June 10, 1971 thousands of students and workers marched in the streets of Mexico City. They demanded the release of all political prisoners and basic political rights. They were attacked by a combined force of paramilitary forces and state financed terrorist group, known as *los halcones* (the Hawks) and police (Cockcroft 1990: 243).

Meanwhile in the United States, during the late 1960s and early 1970s individuals lives and organizations were devastated by state terror organized through the FBI's counter intelligence program (COINTELPRO) and the National Security Agency. Aside from surveilling the relatively conservative Mexican American organizations, like the League of United Latin American Citizens and the GI Forum, one of six COINTELPRO initiatives was the Border Coverage Program (BCP); it focused on the political links between organizations in the U.S.- Mexico Borderlands and of all the a counter intelligence program (COINTELPRO) initiatives, the least is known about BCP. It began in the late 1950s and it continued until at least 1971. It involved several regional Bureau

¹³ From recently declassified government documents. See Doyle (2003).

offices in the Southwest: San Diego, San Antonio, Albuquerque, El Paso, and Phoenix, and this COINTELPRO program had offices in Mexico City and Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, Mexico. Drawing from a variety of defamatory and disruptive tactics, FBI offices in El Paso and San Diego FBI offices came up with incredibly deceptive tactic of collaborating with INS to have their agents pose as INS agents and interview applicants for border crossing cards. Potential informants, infiltrators, and saboteurs were then recruited during the FBI/INS interviews in exchange for a border-crossing card. Several Communist party members, sympathizers, and relative of those suspected were targeted for harassment at border crossing by the INS and the FBI (Gutiérrez 1992-93: 41-43). Reading against the grain, one can see the emergence of counter-insurgent discourse and practices, which alludes to a conjunction of border policing with politically generated crisis.

Neoliberal Structural Adjustments and Intensified Policing

In the 1980s, Mexico suffered another severe political economic crisis. Early in the 1980s, Mexican bankers and industrialists began withdrawing up to \$100 million a day. In response, the government slashed oil export prices and broke nationalist promises by announcing that the state-owned oil company has signed a five-year deal to sell crude oil directly to the United States. In February

1982, the government devalued the peso by 65 percent, claiming this would prevent demands by the International Monetary Fund for an austerity program (Cockcroft 1986: 121). A full-scale financial panic erupted in 1982 when the government announcement it could not pay its debt for the next ninety days (Escobar 1995:90). The peso was severely devalued twice more. A large number of small businesses and farms shut down, and more than one million workers were laid off. Hunger stalked the land (Cockcroft 1986:121).

Mexico's 1980s crisis occurred during a transformation in development thought, what has come to be called neoliberalism, which I explore in terms of political rationality, in the next chapter (Kelley 2001:84; Rochlin 1997:24). Notably, again, the conjunction of policing, both domestically and transnationally, and crises becomes evident. The Immigration and Naturalization Service in early 1981, and with greater intensity in subsequent years, stepped up the pace of factory roundups of alleged 'illegals' for deportation. In May 1982. Operation Jobs" commenced. Thousands of Mexicans were rounded up for deportation. By September 1982, deportations of Mexicans were numbering about 1,000 a day and generating tensions in Mexican neighborhoods when older residents compared the deportation drive to the aforementioned 'Operation Wetback.' (Cockcroft 1986:151).

Following Dunn's groundbreaking study (1996), scholars of immigration and of the border have increasingly suggested that such policing are informed by

tactics of low intensity warfare. My manuscript explores how such processes have transformed everyday life at the border for the young people of Barrio Libre. \

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have complicated the largely taken for granted critical knowledge about immigration controls, specifically Cockcroft's revolving door thesis, where alternating periods of large-scale immigration and massive deportation are conceptualized as forms of labor control. As valuable as this thesis has proved in scholarship, in the policy arena, and in community organizations, it cannot account for the contemporary Mexican state and what I see as a regime of transnational policing within the context of neoliberalism. Certain political economically inflected moments in history seems to suggest that the Border Patrol's task is far more complicated than simply regulating or disciplining laborers. It serves to disrupt transnational political organization and discipline people of Mexican descent in the United States as is evident in the deportations of Mexicans during Operation Wetback as well as the excerpt from the Nixon meeting suggest. Thus, unlike those scholars of border militarization who tie the ongoing tactics of low intensity warfare at the border exclusively to the discursive construction of the "Drug War," a more processual understanding of it must reckon with its counter-insurgent and population management qualities (Guha 1988b).

Reading immigration controls against the grain recasts the tendency to understand them strictly as a form of labor control. Immigration controls certainly do serve to discipline Mexican immigrants for insertion in the global working

force. Similar phenomena have been evident in other parts of the globe, other historical contexts, and with respect to other populations (Balibar 1988; Basch, et al. 1994; Lowe 1996; Ngai 2004; Stolcke 1995). Yet, as has been evident in this chapter by looking at the US-Mexico border as a site of the regulation of immigrant flows, a notion that alludes to Foucault's ideas of governmentality which I will explore in the next chapter, the gradual development of intensified immigration controls point to a nascent regime of transnational governance at a moment where the processes of global economy highlight integration.

**2. LOW INTENSITY EFFECTS:
TRANSNATIONAL POLICING AND EMERGENT SUBJECTIVITIES
AT THE US-MEXICO BORDER**

Visibility is a trap.

Michel Foucault (1979)

On June 12, 1992, five agents of the United States Border Patrol were patrolling an area near Nogales, Arizona. In a remote canyon, they encountered three Mexican men. The agents took them to be look outs for Mexican narcotics smugglers. In violation of Immigration and Naturalization Service firearms policy, agent Michael Elmer fired three shots over the head of one of the men. The three men fled toward Mexico. Agent Elmer then shot a dozen times at one of the men, Dario Miranda Valenzuela, who was unarmed. Valenzuela was shot twice. Doctors estimate that Miranda may have been alive for thirty minutes after the shooting. Elmer became the first Border Patrol agent to be charged and tried for murder. During the trial, other troubling allegations against Elmer came forth, including the sexual harassment, and brutalization of another Mexican male as well as an allegation Elmer wounded another Mexican man when he shot into a group of 30 undocumented immigrants.

Nevertheless, Elmer's lawyer successfully depicted the shooting of the unarmed Valenzuela in the back as an act of self-defense. He was acquitted. The jury found that Valenzuela's murder was reasonable at the border. Eventually

Elmer pleaded no contest to a charge of reckless endangerment. Because he had already served six months after the shooting of Dario Miranda Valenzuela, Elmer spent little time in jail (Human Rights 1993: 4-7).¹⁴

As told to me by immigrant's rights activist and community historian, Lupita Castillo, a Tucson based immigrant's rights group, *Derechos Humanos/The Arizona Border Rights Project*, of which she is a founding member, sought to bring national attention to the Elmer case. The activists sought to draw an analogy between the Rodney King incident in California, the murder of Miranda Valenzuela, and other human rights violations at the hands of immigration authorities. Castillo tells that when she approached a *New York Times* correspondent to complain about the newspaper's lack of interest in the story, she was told that the American people do not care about the border: "it's a Third World country" (sic.).

On the evening of May 20, 1997, a U.S. Marine unit was patrolling an area of the border known as "'Polvo' Crossing," outside of Redford Texas. At about 6:05 p.m., Corporal Banuelos, a U.S. citizen of Mexican descent, reported by

¹⁴ On March 18, 1992, in the evening, Rene Romero alleges that agent Michael Elmer assaulted him. Elmer stopped Romero while he was driving in southern Arizona. According to Romero, Elmer yanked him from the car and threw him to the ground. Elmer then handcuffed him, kicked him, and struck Romero on his head with his gun. He then threatened to kill Romero. Romero claims that Elmer then pulled Romero's pants down and told him to "bend down as if [you're] going to get [expletive]." Then, he told him to "open up his [expletive]." Elmer then searched him. He struck Romero in the stomach and ribs. Romero was taken to the Border Patrol station in Nogales. Romero's ordeal was not over. His repeated requests for medical treatment were ignored. A Drug Enforcement agent interviewed him. At this time, he again requested medical attention. Approximately twenty-four hours later, Romero was treated at the Federal Correctional Institute. His infected head wound needed five stitches (Human Rights 1993:6).

radio that he had spotted an individual, Esequiel Hernandez, shepherding goats. He was carrying a rifle. At 6:07, Banuelos reported that his unit was taking fire. Investigators presume that Hernandez, a shepherd, has mistaken the camouflaged Marines for a predator and opened fire. After the Marine unit then stalked Hernandez for another 20 minutes, Banuelos aimed his high-powered, military issue, rifle at Hernandez and fired a round that entered the shepherd's body below his chest on his right side. It caused severe damage to internal organs and major blood vessels. Hernandez died shortly thereafter (United States House of Representatives: 3). Hernandez was a U.S. citizen of Mexican descent.

Most analyses presume that the moment of violence in the border's formation occurred largely in the nineteenth century and early in the twentieth century, or for the more mytho-poetically inclined at the moment of the Conquest (Acuña 1972; Almaguer 1994; Montejano 1999; Muñoz 1989; Paredes 1971; Perez 1999). Yet, as the above incidents suggest, contemporary official acts of violence require critical exploration in light of the region's legacy of conquest and colonization. In this chapter, I suggest that articulations between this legacy, intensified immigration controls, neoliberalism, and its processes of deterritorialization of Mexico's subaltern sectors, have transformed the border into a site of sporadic, state and extra-statal disciplinary forms that range from state surveillance to xenophobic, vigilante violence. I further suggest that the daily minutiae of these dynamics configure social imaginaries, a term which I will

elaborate upon shortly, and which I suggest the young people's then newly emergent subjectivity of Barrio Libre constitutes. I also contend that the scholarship on the militarization of the US-Mexico border exaggerates the extent of physical violence produced by the intensification of US policing of the border and underestimate or render invisible other effects of these broadly arrayed disciplinary forms, particularly their effects upon subjectivity. Relatedly, I contend that scholars of the militarization of the US-Mexico border understate the concomitant policing of Mexican immigrants by Mexican police forces.

Neoliberal Deterritorializations

Although an exegesis on liberalism is out of the scope of this dissertation, I wish to lay out what I find as some key characteristics of this concept as way to introduce my discussion of neoliberalism. Conceptually, liberalism is committed to securing individual liberty and human dignity through political procedures that typically involve democratic and representative institutions, the guarantee of individual rights of property, and the freedoms of expression, association, and conscience. These characteristics are taken as limitations on the legitimate use of the authority of the state. Moreover, at least since the mid-nineteenth century, although by no means a universal, liberal theorists have tended to champion the claims of minority groups. They have also respected religious bodies, seeing them as entitled to the same toleration as other groups, as long as they did not threaten

social peace and order. In general, liberals have looked with favor on the idea of national self-determination. Moreover, liberalism has prided itself on its politically inclusive character and its universality (Mehta 1999: 3-4; 46).

Yet, as Uday Singh Mehta has argued, liberalism retains certain exclusions, evident in certain of its key historic interlocutors such as John Locke's defense of the British Empire in the case of India. Liberal principles, despite their universal constituency, are undermined to politically disenfranchise, and indeed conquer, various peoples. Embedded in the endorsement of these universal capacities are specific cultural and psychological conditions that are taken for granted (Mehta 1999: 49-51). Liberal theorists tend to ignore these anthropological capacities and the "necessary conditions for their actualization" (1999: 47). Ironically, culture, in the broad sense, becomes mobilized as a discourse to conceptualize deficiencies of particular, non-liberal, frequently racialized, groups (see: Goldberg 1993).

That said, for modern liberal theory, the state ameliorates the hardship of the worst-off under capitalism. It maintains the principle of productive labor, while cushioning its harshness within the workplace and lessening the fear of unemployment by supporting those outside the labor market. Liberalism privileges an image of social progress through gradual amelioration of hardship and improvement of conditions of life over the image of social revolution on the one hand and the image of unfettered, instrumentalist, competition on the other

(Rose 1999:135). In this regard, tomes have been written on Mexican's version of liberal; its state corporatist politics that reflect this strategy of governance, and which notably, including its aforementioned state directed capitalism.

With fresh memories of fascism and Nazism in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, a number of intellectuals began to challenge the rationale of any social program organized by the state (Rose 1999). For Alexander Rustow and the group of jurists and economists known as the Ordoliberalen (from their association with the journal *Ordo*), what was required was a new form of liberalism absent the state's ameliorating project nor a revival of the old ideology of *laissez faire*. For them, the market economy had degenerated. It had been disrupted by monopolies, subsidies and government regulations brought about by the interventionist, protectionist, and monopoly-producing state measures. In their vision, the market was not a natural reality to be freed. On the contrary, for these thinkers, it was to be actively constructed. Government's rationality, for these architects of neoliberalism, is to conduct society for a market to exist and flourish. Institutional and legal forms had to be assembled to produce a market from private and state distortions. Moreover, for neoliberal thinkers, workers had grown lazy and dependent, and work itself a monotonous and meaningless curse. These processes had facilitated the rise of domination, barbarism, and violence, exemplified in Nazism. A new set of ethical and cultural values had to be created that would lead to the divestment of the state from the social and facilitate the rise

of the rationally based market society. A new configuration of the relation between, government, expertise, and subjectivity thus began to take hold (Rose 1999: 141). This would not be a return to liberalism of the nineteenth century, or, government by *laissez faire*. It was not a matter of 'freeing' an existing set of market relations from their social chains, but of organizing all features of one's national policy to enable a market to exist and to provide what it needs to function.

That is, neoliberalism endeavors to form subjects as players in the game of enterprise, instilling it as a pervasive style of conduct, and diffusing the enterprise-form throughout the social fabric as its generalized principle of functioning (Gordon 1991: 42). The great departure from the 18th century classic economic theory is whereas *homoeconomicus* originally meant that subject remains untouchable by government, the neoliberal person is manipulable, on that is perpetually responsive to modifications in his environment. It thus distributes the discipline of the competitive world marketed throughout the interstices of the social body (Gordon 1991). That is, neoliberalism introduces its own social and cultural logics or rationalities. Many analysts have noted neoliberalism's individuating, social Darwinist, cultural logics (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000; Harvey 1989; Sassen 1998).

Government in this formulation was to be restructured in the image of the market. As envisioned by its proponents, under neoliberalism all aspects of *social*

behavior are now re-conceptualized along economic lines---as calculative actions undertaken through the universal human faculty of choice. Choice was to be seen as dependent upon a relative assessment of costs and benefits. All kinds of practices, health, security, welfare and more were to be structured in the image of the market (Rose 1999: 141, 146). Indeed, whether convinced that it is an effect of the signifier or deep economic structures, both Marxian and Foucaultian thinkers agree that neoliberalism denotes a stage of advanced capitalism in which market forces progressively expand into areas of the heretofore non-economic cultural and social spheres (Gordon 1991; Jameson 1997; Harvey 1989).

Traditional visions of liberal government thus became understood as a hindrance. The cushioning offered by social welfare programs caused anti-competitive and anti-entrepreneurial consequences of government. Neoliberalism postulated government that observed the optimization of social and economic life with the augmentation of the powers of the state. The state, as explained by Margaret Thatcher, was to maintain law and order; the people were to promote individual and national well-being by their responsibility and enterprise.¹⁵ In the US, neo-liberals criticized the excessive government that had been developed since the New Deal and through the Great Society and the War on Poverty, with its welfare program, large bureaucracies, and interventionist social engineering. Notions of social good or social welfare were to be abandoned. It took three

¹⁵ Such a conceptualization of the state in Britain as purely an instrument of law and order has severe ramifications for racialized populations (Gilroy 1991; Hall 1988; Hall, et al. 1978).

decades for such ideas to become the ruling ideas (Rose 1999: 137-140). Yet, such descriptions by Rose and Gordon, which I have drawn upon up to this point, understate a crucial feature of neoliberalism. In the Global South, neoliberalism, as is evident in post 1982 Mexico, requires countries to organize themselves to facilitate the free flow of global or transnational capital (Barry 1995; Bartra 2002; Basch, et al. 1994; Grinspun and Cameron 1996; Ong 1999; Phillips 1998; Sassen 1998). As Thomas Biersteker (1995) has argued, up until the 1970s a basic premise of much economic development thinking was that the structure of the international economic relations was asymmetrical. It was biased against the countries of the developing world. Although, theoretically, at this time, little was seen as wrong with the operations of markets, imperfections impeded their effectiveness in the developing world. By the 1990s, neoliberalist developmental discourse proved profoundly different. It suggested that the principle obstacle to development was to be found in the developing countries themselves.¹⁶

Thus in this context, Mexico's neoliberal turn inaugurated the stripping down of Mexico corporatist, or liberal state. It signified for many the end of any hope of balancing social inequalities (Speed and Reyes 2002). Indeed, in 1991, Article 27 of the Mexican constitution, the revolutionary tenet of land reform in the Mexican constitution, was revised. It effectively ended any hope of future land reform. It also introduced a movement toward privatization of *ejidos*, a semi-

¹⁶ For a trenchant critique of development thinking and discourse, which draws on Foucault's notion of power-knowledge formations, see Escobar (1995).

collective land tenure structure, which had since the Mexican Revolution served as the basis for redistribution of more than 95 million hectares to some 3.1 million beneficiaries (Barry 1995: 5). The diminishment of social welfare programs was evident in my time in Nogales, Sonora. The principal funding for Mi Nuevo Hogar came from a grant from the Arizona Supreme Court Juvenile Crime Prevention Fund, while the Mexican government's programs such as DIF and others designed to manage street youth lacked both the funding and the initiative to deal with the young people of Barrio Libre.

Neoliberal structural adjustments likewise occurred on other terrain of the national political economy. An increasing reliance on market mechanisms and macro-economic policies characterizes Mexico's post-1982 economic policy. The state has liberalized imports, controlled inflation and the fiscal balance, and generated incentives to attract massive foreign investment. The 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement, a comprehensive, plan for liberalizing trade among Canada, Mexico and the United States, and the accompanying structural transformations in Mexico in obedience to it, mark the consolidation of neoliberalism in Mexico.

As can be seen in the social histories of the military regimes of Latin America of the 1960s and 1970s, forbearers of contemporary neoliberal democracies of Latin America, neoliberal structural adjustment policies often foment social unrest. Thus, I find it no coincidence that the Zapatista rebellion of January

1, 1994, the day the North American Free Trade Agreement commenced, coincides what immigrant rights activists, scholars, and progressive writers have come to recognize as an intensification of the militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border since the North American Free Trade Agreement commenced, a thesis which I will shortly explore.

On December 19, 1994, the same year that the North American Free Trade Agreement and the Zapatista revolt commenced, Mexico slid into its latest economic crisis, the worst since the Great Depression, what Mexicans in Nogales, Sonora and throughout the country commonly refer to as *la crisis* (Rochlin 1997: 26) (Morris and Passé-Smith 2001: 134-135). Between 1994 and 1995, the peso, the national currency, lost seventy percent of its value. Unemployment doubled. It approached fifty percent of the economically active population. Over the following year, Mexico's Gross Domestic Production shrank 6.9%. Approximately, 1/3 of Mexico's businesses went bankrupt, leaving industry operating at 40% of its capacity. It is estimated that Mexico lost \$4 to 5 billion loss off wealth in 1994 and 1995 (Morris and Passé-Smith 2001: 134-135). The national currency lost seventy percent of its value. Unemployment doubled. Millions of Mexicans were displaced from their livelihoods. An ethos of *crisis* pervaded the milieu during my time in the spaces of Barrio Libre and Nogales, Sonora.

It also threatened the integrity of the global financial system and triggered financial panics as far away as Argentina. In response, U.S. President William J. Clinton manufactured a \$50 billion dollar aid package. Notably, he justified it to the American public as a way to stem immigration (Ochoa and Wilson 2001:5). It was the largest aid package since the U.S. post-War investment in Europe, and it was secured by Mexico's pledge to guarantee payments with profits from Mexico state run petroleum industry (Rochlin 1997:26). Conditions for the relief included deeper structural adjustments, further cutbacks in public expenditures, increased taxes, and further reductions in workers' wages. Indexing *la crisis* statistically, the number of impoverished Mexicans increased from 50 million in 1994 to nearly 70 million by 1999 (Cooney 2001:56).

Meanwhile, a boom occurred in the *maquiladora* sector. The sector grew from 2,200 plants with 550, 000 workers at the end of 1994 to over 3,000 plants employing over 800,000 workers as of 1996 (Cooney 2001:55; Dussel Peters 1998). I should note that U.S. companies own the vast majority of *maquiladoras* in Nogales, Sonora (Kopinak 1996). By the late 1990s, the state of crisis has become taken for granted for subaltern Mexicanos. The term had largely fallen out of popular usage, although real income of Mexican workers has declined by 84.6 percent in comparison in the last 20 years. Moreover, as of 2001, an estimated seventy five percent of the Mexican population cannot afford the basic

goods required to raise them above the official poverty line (Cooney 2001: 55; Ochoa and Wilson 2001:5).

Although Mexico has always had immigrants, Mexico's latest *crisis* is evident in surging exodus of Mexicans to the United States.¹⁷ Indeed, since the mid-1990s, less than 400,000 jobs have been created annually, while every year 1,100,000 new laborers enter the market. Consider that since the mid-1990s, less than 400,000 jobs have been created annually, while every year 1,100,000 new laborers enter the market (Bartra 2003: 47). Of the some 22 million Mexicans currently living in the United States, it is estimated that half were born in Mexico, and more than half lack official documentation. Indeed, it is estimated that one fifth of Mexico lives transnationally, moving back and forth, and back and forth, between the United States and Mexico. Further indication of this trend is evident in remittances, or the money that immigrants send to Mexico. They exceeded 10 billion dollars in 2002 or three times more than agricultural exports, more than is spent on rural-aid programs, and as much as petroleum exports and direct foreign investment (Bartra 2003: 49). Perhaps signifying the aforementioned loss of hope, in the first half of the 1990s, 2.2 million immigrants entered legally and it is estimated that 5 million entered without documentation, stastically more than had immigrated the previous five decades (Phillips and Massey 2000: 33-34).

¹⁷ For scholarship on transnational communities see: (Andreas 1994; Andreas 2000; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Kearney 1991; Kearney 1998; Rouse 1991; Velez-Ibañez 1996). I should also note that recent scholarship suggests a strong linkage between immigration and transnational capitalism (Sassen 1988; Sassen 1998)

Transnational Managements of Life and Death

According to Foucault's account of sexuality, in the 19th century the calculated management of life became a key objective of liberal governance. Pace Foucault

power would no longer be dealing with legal subject over whom the ultimate dominion was death, but with living beings, and the mastery it would be able to exercise over them would have to be applied *at the level of life itself; it was the taking charge of life, more than the threat of death, that gave power its access to the body . . . one would have to speak of bio-power to designate what brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations* (Foucault 1990: 143 (my emphasis))

This new configuration of power marked a profound rupture from earlier rationalist incarnations of the state that were imagined through concepts of divine ordering or the power of monarch.

With the notable exception of Ann Laura Stoler (1995), those scholars who have advanced Foucault's notion of bio-power have elided a significant component of this theory. Foucault revitalizes war as a category of analysis. In his lectures at the College de France in 1975-76, Foucault maintains that previous thinking on warfare elides the bloody origins of modern states: their instantiation in relations of violence (Foucault 1997:50). Both liberal and Marxist theories of the state minimize the state's origins in relations of war; they both attribute warfare to ideological failure (Foucault 1997: 15, 34). Foucault writes:

political power does not begin when the war ends. The organization and juridical structure of power, of States,

monarchies, and societies, does not emerge when the clash of arms ceasesThe law is not born out of nature . . .the law is born of real battles, victories, massacres, and conquests. . Law is not pacification, for beneath the law, war continues to rage in all the mechanisms of power, even in the most regular. War is the motor behind institutions and order. In the smallest of its cogs, peace is waging a secret war (Foucault 1997: 50).¹⁸

This marks a profound reversal of conventional thinking about warfare, epitomized in the longstanding maxim where war denotes an extension of politics (Paret 1976: 373; as cited in Callahan, 2003 #689: 41).¹⁹ In contrast, for Foucault, war is not an extension of politics, but politics is suffused warfare. Politics or power relations constitute “a sort of generalized war that, at particular moments, assumes the forms of peace and the state” (Foucault 1997: 93). Political power represents the diffusion of war-like relations, the social inscription of relations of war carried forth in institutions, economic hierarchies, language, and bodies (Foucault 1997: 15). In this regard, Ann Laura Stoler has critiqued Foucault for failing to attend to the nation-making and imperial processes through which the

¹⁸ Walter Benjamin holds a similar position; he argues the uncanny relationship between violence and the law is the institution’s naturalized violence (Benjamin 1978).

¹⁹ Modern thought on warfare is exemplified in the thinking of Prussian General and scholar of war Karl von Clausewitz. He presents the phenomenon as an “organized, discipline, and discrete, project that fulfills the political necessities of nation-building and state formation” (Callahan 2003). von Clausewitz suggested that war not in the control of the nation-state nor with clearly defined political instrumentality was irrational (Herrera-Lasso M. 2002: 81-83). Yet, probably his most significant contribution to contemporary thinking is his suggestion that war denotes an extension of politics. von Clausewitz holds that “war is not a mere act of policy but a true political instrument, a continuation of political activity by other means.” He continues: “What remains peculiar to war . . .is simply the peculiar nature of its mean”(Paret 1976: 393); as cited in Callahan, 2003 #689: 41). Yet, his ideas must be historicized. He was writing when warfare signified formal declarations by states and combat was between professional armies seeking the capture of territory. In the current moment, wars are no longer so easily bounded in time or in space (Hirst and Abraham 2002).

histories of sexuality that he traces emerged (Stoler 1995). This criticism is directly relevant here; state formation and imperialism related directly U.S. immigration control and border policing (Luibhéid 2002: xii).

Racism, for Foucault, represents an artifact of the state's ordinary violence. The phenomenon introduces into the social a caesura, a demarcation between those worthy of life and those worthy of death (Foucault 1991; Gordon 1991). It denotes "a way of introducing a break into the domain of life that is under power's control: the break between what must live and what must die" (Foucault 1997:255). Elsewhere, Stuart Hall has argued that production of racial difference marks a fatal coupling of power and difference. Keeping within this theoretical trajectory, Giorgio Agamben, drawing from his analysis of the concentration camp, suggests that sovereignty has become new managements of life and death (Agamben 1998: 174). Moreover, both Agamben and Walter Benjamin speak of the state of crisis or exception, where a situation of conflict or chaos, "often in a discourse of legitimation affirms judicial order in which lawfulness, right, is suspended in the name of the law" (Aretxaga 2003: 405; see: Benjamin 1969), perhaps exemplified contemporaneously in Guantanamo Bay Cuba or the prisons of Iraq.

Foucault's notion of racism must be nuanced. It invests too heavily in warfare. The Holocaust haunts his notion of racism. It is racism of extermination or elimination; one that aims to purify the social body. Such typologies of racism

run the risk of being inappropriate to postcolonial situation (Balibar 2002: 39-40). It is opposed to the more inclusive racism of oppression or exploitation, and to its latest multiculturalist manifestation. Such new racisms in contrast, seek to impose hierarchies and partition society (Balibar 2002; Gilmore 2002; Hale 2004; Hale forthcoming; Koptiuch 1997; Prashad 1999; Brah 1996; Stolcke 1995; Volpp 2001). Yet, again, neither form of racism appears singularly. Moreover, in the context of the US-Mexico border, a complication arises in that there exists a plurality of states, each with its unique form of racializations (Almaguer 2003), nomadic subjects are multiply racialized, according to the regions and states in which they journey. Finally, Foucault's formulation disregards the gendered differentiations of racism and race. As Brah has commented:

race is an essentialist narrative of sexualized difference. It is an allegory of centering Western dynastic genealogies of the 'ascent' and 'descent' of 'Man.' That is, it is a trope for the 'Western' heterosexual economy of desire. Discourses of 'racial difference' are saturated with metaphors of origin, common ancestry, blood, and kin. The figure of the woman is a constitutive moment in the racialized desire for economic and political control.

Racism thus constructs the female gender differently from the male gender and it encodes gendered differentiations while seeming to subsume them. The process of subsumption imposes an imagined and imaginary unity upon the racialized group while inscribing patriarchal regimes of power (1996: 156-157).

In a later series of lectures, Foucault links bio-power with the theme of government in his notion of governmentality. He defines the concept as the

“conduct of conduct” (Foucault 1991). His notion of governmentality suggests that from at least the eighteenth century, rulers, politicians, and public officials came to see their task in terms of government. These modern conceptualizations of rule as government contrasted from earlier forms, such as those exercised by a prince over his territory, or lord over his domain. Rulers draw on previous genealogies of governing conduct, particularly the churches of early modern Europe. As Nicholas Rose writes,

authorities came to understand the task of ruling politically as requiring them to act upon the details of the conduct of the individuals and populations who were their subjects, individually and collectively, in order to increase their good order, their security, their tranquility, their prosperity, health, and happiness" (Rose 1999:6).

Studies of governmentality are thus studies of the “conduct of conduct,” or the ways of speaking truth, or how certain persons are authorized to speak truth, or the ways of enacting truths and the costs of so doing. It points to a number of authorities that have sought to govern conduct, and the variety of strategies, devices, ends sought, and their conflicts. It thus destabilizes a unitary notion of government. Governmentality marks a break from the notion of a centralized apparatus. That is, it is the suggestion the government is always intersected by other discourses notably the veridical discourses of science and morality, or the way in which "being" is made an object of management (Rose 1999: 19-22).

The notion of governmentality requires a reconsideration of the significance of the state. During the 1980s and mid-1990s studies of globalization suggested the radical weakening and transformation, if not disappearance, of the modern state (Aretxaga 2003:394; see: Kearney 1995; Kearney 1998; Ong 1999; Tsing 2002). Neoliberal transnational corporations, higher order political processes of unification like the United Nations, the North American Free Trade Agreement, and the GATT, refugees and migrants, challenge state borders, territorial sovereignty, and homogenous definitions of statehood. Diasporic identifications coexisted, and or competed with, nationalist identities (Clifford 1997; Gilroy 1993; Hall 1994; Kearney 1995; Lavie and Swedenburg 1996; Mountz and Wright 1996; Ong 1995; Ong 1999; Sadowski-Smith 2002a; Sadowski-Smith 2002b). These works charted challenges to the power of state (Aretxaga 2003: 394). The implications of governmentality is that the state must be reconsidered as a diffuse, dispersed power, subject to appropriation by various agents (Aretxaga 1995; Aretxaga 1997; Aretxaga 2000), which contrasts sharply with previous conceptualizations of it as a series of synergistically articulated apparatuses (Abrams 1988; Althusser 1971). Yet, it must be emphasized that the vast majority of such agents are citizens. Moreover, the state's imprimatur of legitimacy on violence, even on the brutal acts of border guards as with aforementioned Elmer's case, evidenced sporadically at the US-Mexico border, complicates such a formulation.

‘Govermentalizing’ the Militarization Thesis

I now turn to the scholarship on the militarization of the border. For these scholars, the militarization of the border refers to the gradual adoption of military techniques, strategy, and military equipment by the Border Patrol, as well as the actual deployment of U.S. troops at the border, the latter of which was suspended in 1997 following the aforementioned shooting of a U.S. citizen of Mexican descent (Dunn 2001).

For Timothy Dunn (1996), the coextensive discourses of the War on the Drugs and immigration and the overlapping policies and practices construct the border region as a site of low intensity conflict. Dunn emphasizes the erosion between military and police functions at the border. Dunn notes that there is frequent slippage between militarized anti-narcotic efforts and the Border Patrol’s anti-immigration activities in everyday social practices at the US-Mexico border, despite a federal prohibition against military involvement in domestic law enforcement, which does include immigration matters (Dunn 1996; Dunn 2000; Dunn 2001). Consider the below excerpt from a talk at conference at the University of Arizona, given Gus de la Vina, chief officer of the United States Border Patrol.

We are dealing primarily, predominantly with people and narcotics. Where you do a lot of that would be coming in legally or attempting legal entry through the ports of entry either in containers or things of that nature. So you have that segment of criminal activity, fortunately it is not a big segment but it is a

segment to deal with. It is a segment that has an impact. The problem with that is that it all blends in together. You have the good people, you have the bad guys, and they are all in one group. I wish that we had the border broken down into zones. Those that entering to seek jobs, could enter from here to here. Those that are dealing narcotics should enter here and those that are dealing with gangs and auto theft enter here. It would be very very easy. Unfortunately, the bad people know that and he mixes with the good people. So, it becomes really a problem for our men and women out on the border because we never know what we are dealing with. The majority of those that are entering are entering during the evening hours. They enter in groups. We are not like D.E.A. They have information that we don't. If there is going to be a narcotic bust, they know when and where and in which hotel. Same with the A.T.F, and F.B.I. The Border Patrol, they are going into these types of situations cold. We don't know what we are dealing with. We know that our mission is the border, and anything entering illegally is our responsibility. So when an agent approaches a group he doesn't know what he is dealing with. We never know. We are very fortunate, that the majority, as I mentioned are just seeking employment. Bringing this element of criminal activity into the border issue adds a dynamic to the border. That dynamic turns out to be in the form of danger and violence, unfortunately. Danger and violence normally translate into tragic incidences. Which means loss of life, injury, and not only to the migrant, also to the border patrol.²⁰

Low intensity conflict has three principles: an emphasis on targeting civilian populations rather than territory, a stress on the internal defense of the nation, the assumption by the police of military characteristics, and of the military of unconventional, frequently police-like roles (Dunn 1996: 96; Callahan 2003: 71). It is a non-episodic, removed form of warfare (Limón, N.d.). Dunn and Palafox find that the Pentagon's Center for the Study of Low Intensity Conflict

²⁰ Gus de la Vina, Chief Officer of the United States Border Patrol, 1997, address at the University of Arizona Border Academy.

wrote *The Border Patrol Strategic Plan: 1994 and Beyond* (2000:16). Border Patrol Chief, Gus de la Vina, has likewise stated:

In February 1994, Attorney General Reno and INS Commissioner Doris Messner announced a multi-year border enforcement strategy that committed this Nation to a new course of border control to combat illegal immigration. This was a practical and realistic strategy developed by law enforcement professionals in the Border Patrol, utilizing the advice of outside entities such as the Department of Defense Center for Low Intensity Conflict (US House Committee on Government Reform and Oversight (1996): 65, as cited in Falcón 2001: 33).

In the uneven flows of the global economy, low intensity warfare provides a productive framework to explore US-Mexico immigration controls. This form of irregular warfare symbolizes the dispersal of state power through the social to the level of life itself. That is, it articulates with Foucault's notion of bio-power. That is, it articulates with the notion of bio-power and governmentality (see: Lugo 1997).²¹ Since neoliberalism consolidated in Mexico, immigration controls have articulated with a particular virulence. In 1994, the same year that North American Free Trade Agreement indicated the consolidation of neoliberalism in Mexico, the Immigration and Naturalization Service amplified immigration controls at the border. In the El Paso area, Operation "Hold-the Line" commenced in September 1993, the eve of NAFTA. Four hundred Border Patrol agents and

²¹ On the flows of capital and labor see: Hall 1994; Heyman 1998; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Kearney 1991; Kearney 1995; Kearney 1998; Lowe 1996; Martin 1999; Morris and Passe-Smith 2001; Mountz and Wright 1996; Ong 1999; Sadowski-Smith 2002a; Sadowski-Smith 2002b; Saldívar 1999; Sassen 1988; Sassen 1998; Spener 2001; Stephen 2001; Stolcke 1995; Wilson 2000)

their vehicles were positioned along a twenty-mile stretch of the border and helicopters went up in a show of force (Fried 1994:i-1). Shortly thereafter, the Immigration and Naturalization Service modeled southern California's "Operation Gatekeeper," and south Texas' "Operation Lower Rio Grande," and southern Arizona's "Operation Safeguard," on "Operation Hold-the-Line" (Brownell 2001). With both the San Diego-Tijuana and El Paso-Juarez corridors heavily policed, undocumented immigration increased through Nogales. Shortly thereafter, Operation Safeguard commenced in Arizona in 1995. There has also been an amplification of immigration enforcement in the interior of the United States; the INS now joins law enforcement in raids in the interior of the United States (Parenti 1999b). For example, in 1997, the police department in Chandler, Arizona, a suburb of Phoenix, rounded up over 400 Mexican in raids that lasted five days. The U.S. Border Patrol, exemplifying the interagency cooperation of low intensity conflict doctrine, supported the police. Of those 400 plus people, only a handful turned out to be undocumented. Indicative of its bio-politically charged racialized logic, the majority were U.S. citizens or legal permanent residents (Martinez 2001).

Problematically, the literature on the militarization of the border understates the corresponding intensified policing on the Mexican side of the border. In 1990, Mexico's government formed *Grupo Beta* for the purpose of reducing violence in human trafficking at the Tijuana border area. This action

constituted the most profound effort by Mexican government to regulate its northern boundary (Dunn 1996: x). Other Mexican forces also began policing displaced, nomadic subjects. I have witnessed Mexican authorities rounding up *potential* immigrants throughout my fieldwork. They would target those who appeared to be about to attempt to cross the border through irregular means. I have seen them pull down immigrants from the border fence that separates *ambos Nogales*; they were then arrested. The policing of immigrants by Mexican police agencies suggests a need to reconsider transnational governance not just in terms of the production of neoliberal generation of subjects (Ferguson and Gupta 2002; Hardt and Negri 2000), but also in terms of regimes of transnational policing.

Indeed, indicative of the emerging transnational policing, the Border Patrol and Grupo Beta sometimes collaborate. In an interview, Border Patrol official Pankoke remarked: “We share frequency and often and are in radio contact. When we chase people back into Mexico, sometimes we will call them and they will intervene.” Notably, the vigilance of Mexican authorities of immigration roughly coincided with much of the criminalization process of Mexican immigrants in the United States, perhaps best exemplified in the passage of the popular referendum of Proposition 187 in California (Chavez 1997; Chavez 2001; Lipsitz 1998). Proposition 187 encouraged a similar popular movement in Arizona that has recently garnered some momentum. Such popular sentiments articulate with anti-immigrant sentiments in the United States. The coextensive

discourses of immigration control and narcotics control, and increasingly terrorism, have proved decisive in criminalizing the migratory, marginal, subject and in the concomitant production of a militarized border. Processes of criminalization closely link to racial projects (Agamben 2000: 106-107; Omi and Winant 1986). Moreover, since September 11, 2001, under the sign of America's "War on Terror," violence against immigrants by xenophobic vigilante groups has escalated. Twenty miles south of Tucson, masked attackers fired on a group of immigrants. Near Red Rock, two men clad in camouflage fatigues opened fire on a group of twelve immigrants, killing two. In the desert outside of Phoenix, eight bullet -riddled bodies of Mexican immigrants have been found. Recently, a nineteen year old in Tucson, Arizona was arrested for torturing and kidnapping three illegal immigrants. Elsewhere, two Arizona ranchers on horseback shot and critically wounded an immigrant in the process of crossing the border (Border Action 2002). Recently, reports have emerged of an anti-immigrant group that has opened up a permanent military base for training its members in Douglas, Arizona. Moreover, human rights groups have documented ties between these groups and white supremacist groups (Anti-Defamation 2003; Border Action 2002). The popular perception that the border is chaotic, as a site of runaway "illegal" immigration, rampant drug dealing, and terrorism, elides the dynamics of nation-states and the flows of the global political economy. The confluence of intensified border policing and the neoliberal produced processes of

detritorialization have transformed the border into a space of sporadic enforcements, and unremarkable deaths, which now exceed 2,300 (Carlsen 2003; La Jornada sin Frontera 2003; Nevins 2002).

Nevertheless, struggles for life as well as forms of resistance continue. Even the most sophisticated technologies of surveillance have fissures, or, perhaps it is better to say, agents produce them. It is currently estimated that only one out of every three immigrants are caught crossing the border, a figure I find high. This is to say, immigrant flows overwhelmingly continue. Since the mid-1900s, there has been an exodus of Mexicans to the United States, evident in the scholarship on transnational Mexican communities (Andreas 1994; Andreas 2000; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Kearney 1991; Kearney 1998; Mountz and Wright 1996; Rouse 1991; Stephen 2001; Velez-Ibañez 1996). It is estimated that twenty two million Mexicans currently living in the United States, of which half were born in Mexico, and more than half lack official documentation. Indeed, it is estimated that one fifth of Mexico lives transnationally, living in-between the United States and Mexico. Further indication of this trend is remittances, or the money that immigrants send to Mexico. It exceeded 10 billion dollars in 2002, three times more than acquired from agricultural exports, more than the Mexican state spends on rural-aid programs, and as much as petroleum exports and direct foreign investment (Bartra 2003: 49). Although I in no way wish to minimize state violence, which the literature on border militarization re-introduces to the

debates, the effects of the intensification of policing at the US-Mexico border exceeds the instantiation of official oppression. Moreover, the mass displacements and mass settlements of Mexicans in the United States partially produced by neoliberalism, and the fact that the US marine who shot Esequiel Hernandez is of Mexican descent, calls into question the premises of the scholarship on border militarization. Although many acts of anti-immigrant violence are officially unrepresentable because of the fear of the undocumented in officially reporting a crime, the success of so many Mexicans crossing the border and living diasporically suggests a need to reconsider the effects of intensified policing at the border. Problematically, for Dunn and other scholars of border militarization, violence is considered largely an external force of injury. Yet I follow an emerging anthropology of violence to suggest that it is productive in the generation of subject effects.

At this point, I wish to introduce another theoretical conceit, Foucault's notion of the Panopticon. Drawing from the implications of the prison architecture of Jeremy Bentham, Foucault describes an institution organized around a system of invisible surveillance (compare: Davis 1992). Foucault's concept of the Panopticon exemplifies the paradox of subjection as prisoners, or subjects, unsure of surveillance, subordinate themselves (Butler 1997). They perform their duties without compulsion, minimizing the need for supervision and disciplinary measures (Foucault 1979: 202-203).



Thus, I suggest that the surveillance towers with video cameras perched along the border fence and related policing technology have intensifying effects. The video cameras connect to the Border Patrol station in Nogales, Arizona. In an interview a border patrol officer told me that such cameras allow the agents in the communication center to pinpoint exactly where aliens, or drug smugglers cross and hide, so that that information can be relayed to officers patrolling the field.²² The cameras also film daily life at the port of entry, areas in the immediate vicinity of the border, and life south of the border.

It has been argued that the US immigration controls apparatus produces and reproduces sexual categories, identities, and norms within relations of

²² Personal Communication. Officer “Smith,” Nogales, Arizona.

inequality (Luibhéid 2002: x-x). It also been argued that such technologies force Mexican immigrants to live “shadowed lives,” which, as the following excerpt from Leo Chavez’s fine ethnography on the unnerving feelings of being “illegal” in the United States, foregrounds certain panoptic qualities:

in all these 16 years I feel like I’ve been in jail. I don’t feel free. I came to this country to work, not to do things on the street that you shouldn’t do. That’s not what I mean by freedom. I’m referring to the feeling of being in a prison because if you go out, like when we out for fun, it’s always in the back of your mind, will immigration show up? Or when you go to work yo9u think all the time, from the moment you walk out of your home, you think ‘Will immigration stop me on the way or when I’m at work. So I do feel like I’m in jail (Chavez 1992: 157).

Thus, in the context of the policing of the border by US agents and the everyday lives of the young people of Barrio Libre, I emphasize the panoptic qualities, the subject effects, of this everyday surveillance in this emerging transnational neoliberal governmentality.

Keeping theses generative qualities of surveillance and policing in mind, I now “study up” (Nader 1969). I introduce my ethnographic research on US-Mexico border surveillance, and transnational policing. I suggest that articulations between intensified immigration controls, neoliberalism, and it deterritorialization of Mexico’s subaltern sectors, and the conquest and colonization of what is now the southwestern United States, transform the border into a site of sporadic, state and extra-statal disciplinary forms that range from state surveillance to brutal, xenophobic, vigilante violence and that they, in turn, intensify the young people’s

social imaginary of Barrio Libre, which show that power, although diffused, still operates veridically in regimes of neoliberal governmentality (Hall 1988).

Oversight

On this Day of the Dead in summer 1998, I am at a cemetery in Nogales, Sonora, Mexico. It lies just across the street from the border fence, recently reinforced by the United States army corps of engineers with surplus metal landing strips that were originally designed to speed movement of U.S. troops and supplies during the first Gulf War. Around me, family's commune with their lost loved ones. Young girls dressed in white carry elaborate paper flowers to graves. I sense the respect, the solemnity. And, I observe.

Just outside the cemetery, on a main boulevard that parallels the United States-Mexico border, a young boy covers his cup of stewed corn dripping in mayonnaise and chili powder, which he has just bought from the vendor. His little sister smiles; she cherishes the glass of icy juice in her two small hands. A guitar player, for the equivalent of a few cents, takes requests. A man probably in his thirties, dressed in a black suit, holds the hand of his young wife. She caresses the hand of her daughter, who in turn, holds the hand of her sister. The last carries a basket, bulging with flowers and food. They walk through rows of graves, scanning the headstones. I see another family picnicking in the cemetery. At

another grave, four young people pray; one of them wipes tears from her eyes. I glance northward.

I see the familiar green and white vehicle of the U.S. Border Patrol beyond the border fence deep in the hills of Nogales, Arizona. It begins to move behind a border tower on the fence only a block away. Such guard towers shift along the international boundary as “Roman,” one of my primary informants, then a *niño callejero*, or street youth, pointed out to me in 1995.

Roman also told me in 1998 the story of how “Beto,” a young man from Barrio Libre died. Beto was trying to get to Barrio Libre *norte* (north), located in Tucson, Arizona about sixty miles away from Nogales, Sonora, Mexico. As with many others of this group of severely marginalized Mexican young people who called themselves Barrio Libre or the Free ‘hood, and who lacked the proper documentation to cross the Mexico-U.S. border, he had stowed away on a train to hide from the US immigration authorities to travel Tucson, Arizona. Yet, on this occasion something went terribly wrong. As he jumped from one boxcar to another, he slipped and fell on to the track. The train severed him, only a few blocks from the international boundary.

I then tell Roman of a report that, then, would soon be published. It was a University of Houston Study that estimated at least 1,600 immigrants had died trying to cross the border into the U.S, trying to circumvent the intensification of immigration controls, and being channeled into the inhospitable terrain of

Mexico's northern deserts, which again is now well over 2,300 (Carlsen 2003; La Jornada sin 2003; Nevins 2002). Previously, the average had been twenty-three or twenty four per year. I would note that these statistics are likely an underestimate; corpses decompose in the desert quickly. Roman replies: "Y este no se cuenta la violencia." (And that does not account for the violence).²³

On another day, a few months after the shooting of Esequiel Hernandez, I have returned to Nogales, Sonora, and Nogales, Arizona. As I am walking south to the border, two men climb over the border fence into the United States. A Border Patrol agent and police officer arrive. One of the immigrants flees. Neither officer gives chase. The police officer pulls his radio from his belt and communicates presumably with other officers in the area. A moment later, a police car arrives on the scene and pursues the fugitive. Resigned, the second immigrant waits. As I observe, he gets on his knees without orders from the agent; The Border Patrol agent cuffs him in handcuffs made of thick, durable plastic, which as I was told were used to keep costs down. On the preceding day, I saw another immigrant who was fleeing the border authorities. I later learned that a truck hit him.

Now, I am watching TV at a drop in facility of nongovernmental organization in Nogales, Sonora, Mexico, with several of the young people of Barrio Libre (the free 'hood). A commercial comes on. It is on a major television

²³ "Roman," [pseud.], communication with author July 1998.

network and probably being seen by hundreds of thousands of people at this moment. It shows images of a young Mexican man, suffering in the Sonora desert. It warns potential undocumented immigrants of the dangers of risking the arid Sonora desert in an attempt to cross the border. Since 1995, well over 2,300, largely Mexican, immigrants have died trying to circumvent immigration controls (Nevins 2002).

During my time in Nogales, Sonora, hotels across the street from the border fence would frequently be filled. Frequently, when I was near these hotels, young men, called *polleros*, waited outside of them. When the Mexican authorities were not visible, and surveillance cameras were looking elsewhere, I would hear the *polleros* whistle. Immigrants, or *pollos* (chickens), a term that points to the popular knowledge of their vulnerability, would sprint from the hotel, holding flashlights and carrying whatever could fit in their backpacks or bags. They would then seep under the border into the United States. The immigrants would enter the dark sewer and subvert the immigration controls through a transnational sewer that spilled into drainage ditches in Nogales, Arizona. It ends near a local *taqueria* and a Church's Chicken in Nogales, Arizona.

In 1994, the same year that North American Free Trade Agreement consolidated neoliberal economic model, the Immigration and Naturalization Service amplified immigration controls at the border. In the El Paso area,

Operation “Hold-the Line” commenced in September 1993, the eve of NAFTA. Four hundred Border Patrol agents and their vehicles were positioned along a twenty-mile stretch of the border and helicopters went up in a show of force (Fried 1994:i-1). Shortly thereafter, the Immigration and Naturalization Service modeled southern California’s “Operation Gatekeeper,” and south Texas’ “Operation Lower Rio Grande,” on “Operation Hold-the-Line” (Brownell 2001). With both the San Diego-Tijuana and El Paso-Juarez corridors heavily policed, undocumented immigration increased through southern Arizona. According to Rob Daniels of the public relations officer of the United States Border Patrol Tucson sector, Operation Safeguard commenced on October 14, 1994. Notably 1998, the year of my return to Nogales marks a surge in immigration and the highpoint of the Border Patrol’s “Safeguard” campaign.²⁴ It also marks a turning point in the young people’s subject formation as the emerging transnational governmentality severed their free ‘hood.

As I am about to enter the local office of the Tucson sector of the United States Border Patrol in Nogales, Arizona on this day late in 1998, I cannot help but notice the rows of vehicles, the patrol cars, and the green and white sport utility vehicles. As I enter the office, two officers look me over. In the early 1990s, aside from employment in Border Patrol, the police Department, and in the corrections industry, which primarily “corrected” US-bound immigrants, the

²⁴ Officer Rob Daniels, United States Border Patrol, Public Relations Officer, interview by author, July 1999.

economy of Nogales, Arizona depended primarily on seasonal harvesting of fruits and vegetables that passed back and forth from Mexico to the United States. Yet, when I returned to *ambos Nogales* to work with the young people of *Barrio Libre*, signs of Mexico's neoliberalization abounded. The trickle of trucks of the modern agricultural based economy increasingly had given way to the postmodern flow of trucks through the border carrying, TVs, circuit boards, and other items that had been assembled in transnational assembly plants called *maquiladoras*.

Officer Pankoke, my guide, squeezes my hand in greeting. The officer's squared shoulders and closely cropped hair tells of his military tour. "I was an EMT in Desert Storm," the officer explains.²⁵ He was a medic in the first Gulf War. His comment exemplified the military subculture of the Border Patrol that I found in other interviews. Many are former soldiers. As Timothy Dunn (1996) has documented, the Border Patrol has always had close ties to the military.

The sterile walls of Border Patrol station remind me of other institutions, hospitals, and psychiatric wards that Foucault would regard as sites of productive power, where attitudes, dispositions, and affects are disciplined in accordance to social power, instantiating subjects. We walk down a hall. To my right is a large bay window. In it, I can see several men on the cement bench; some sleep; others sit or stand. Although they ignore me, I cannot help but look down. They will be

²⁵ Officer Tracey Pankoke, United States Border Patrol, interview by author, Nogales, Arizona, August 1998.

in the cell for a few hours or for a few days. Some will be sent to the penitentiary for having committed a felony. Those that been caught more than fifteen times for illegally crossing the border risk incarceration, if they are older than fourteen years as are several of the young people in Barrio Libre, some who originally began undermining the border at the age of eight. Most wait for what the INS refers to as “voluntary departure,” which the INS frames as an alternative to deportation. Arrestees are escorted to the border and they are “released” into Mexico. There is a toilet in the corner and a small window with blurred glass lets some natural light in. Two video cameras are mounted high on the walls. There are two “holding tanks,” next to this one, one for women, and what seems to be a transnational space replete with heteronormative meanings, one for “families,” or immigrants arrested with their children. Pankoke states, “The INS does not wish to separate families.”²⁶ Relatedly, a recent study found that 150,000 Mexican young people attempt to enter the U.S. irregularly every year (Najar 2002).

Officer Pankoke leads me to another room. As the door closes behind me, I join the border patrol in their everyday practice of surveillance. Approximately twenty cameras leer into the everyday life in Nogales, Arizona and Nogales, Sonora Mexico. Next to, the cameras sit cellular phones and radios to communicate with agents who in the field.

²⁶ Pankoke, interview.

Cameras move from one blurry image to another. I see Nogales, Sonora east of the port of entry, what residents call la *colonia* Buenos Aires. The cameras move from one blurry image to another. In another grainy image, I believe I can make out a young woman selling tortillas. On another, I see several young people, I speculate, waiting for the cramped buses. On another is the desert beyond the border fence, where its physical presence ends. On another, I see the street in Nogales, Arizona, which runs next to the border. None of the subjects on the screen seem to notice the surveillance. Or, if they do, they do not seem to care. Another screen takes me to downtown Nogales, Arizona. I see the port itself; the familiar human wall of sheriff, police, and customs officers, with military fatigue pants patrolling the northward and southward streams. Another camera gazes deeper into Mexico, beyond the port into the tourist zone of Nogales, Sonora. Last night when I was there, “conducting fieldwork” at the local cantina, an elderly Mexican man, sang a *corrido* that lamented how the once revolutionary Mexican north had degenerated into a tourist site for “North Americans.” One screen in particular captures my attention. I pass the camera almost everyday. Its focus is west of the port of entry in Nogales, Sonora. A slouching young man in a white t-shirt, baggy jeans, and old tennis shoes struts by in the grainy image, and I wonder, “Was that Gabriel or Roman?” I wonder. On another screen, I see a border patrol sport utility vehicle cruising up the steep street just north of the border in Nogales, Arizona. It passes my second story apartment with its

panorama of Mexico, my own surveillance tower. Suddenly, over the radio I hear a voice crackle: “tunnel traffic.” A screen turns on I am transported to within the northern mouth of the sewer tunnel, part of the opening terrain of *Barrio Libre*. I see a group of figures trying to pass into the US. Officer Pankoke pulls from the room.

He takes me to another room. His enthusiasm grows as he shows the technological apex of America’s war on immigrants: the IDENT system, a technology designed to catch repeat transgressors, which belies the official rhetoric that the intense security along the U.S.-Mexico border is designed for drug traffickers, not immigrants. The system takes a digital photograph of the subject as well as electronic fingerprints of the right and left index fingers for a biometric database. Here, in contrast to Foucault (1979), it seems that bodies are not only disciplined, but their traces are captured. According to Pankoke, the biometric database provides the “subject’s history,” whether “the alien had been apprehended by immigration in the U.S. before at any time.”²⁷ It further details the number of times the subject has been apprehended by the INS, where he or she was caught and by whom and whether it was for an immigration or criminal offense. Previously, if agents were suspicious, they had to send fingerprints to the FBI, and to wait days for the results.

Captive immigrants states Pankoke:

²⁷ Pankoke, interview.

don't tell us their correct names . . . they never do . . . its not their style . . . they can now give us 1,000 different names and we will find out the information."²⁸

Pankoke's excitement reminds me of the rumors of the laser identification program that at this time was being developed for legal crossers. It became a reality in 2001. Such technology shows that immigrants and potential immigrants are positioned into the wider network of surveillance that Foucault vividly described as the "carceral archipelago" of modern society (1979: 297). The description of society as a carceral archipelago draws attention to the ways that disciplinary power does not inhabit one institution (though it is deployed through institutions) but rather works between and across institutions. Indeed, the term archipelago refuses a theory of the centralized state and its institutions, even while it draws attention to the ways that procedures utilized by institutions like the immigration service intersect with the functioning of other state institutions. The image of the archipelago illuminates the points that when immigrants were processed into the country or are arrested at the border, they are "situated them within larger relations of power to which they remained subjected after entry" (Luibhéid 2002: xv-xvi).

I am lead to another door. Before me emerges further architecture of the militarization of the border: racks of machine guns and high-powered rifles, pistols, stun guns, rounds of ammunition, and the bullet proof vests. Pankoke tells

²⁸ Pankoke, interview.

that officers must request permission to arm themselves with a high-powered weapon. "After all, we wouldn't want someone with a high powered rifle in downtown Nogales . . ." ²⁹

Perhaps sensing my discomfort, Pankoke then shifts to a discussion of the tactics of undocumented subjects. A veteran Border Patrol Agent reported that whereas before immigrants were cast as victims of circumstances and therefore they should be treated humanely, by 1991 immigrants were cast as "the enemy, and they had to be stopped by any means necessary" (American Friends Service 1992: 14). However, at a presentation at the University of Arizona's Border Academy in 1994, Gus de la Vina, chief of the Border Patrol, who was "born and raised near the border in Texas," stated:

We are basically dealing with good people. These are people, migrants, who are entering this country in search of a better way of life. They are not coming across, now I am talking about the majority of them, they are not coming across to do criminal harm. They are not coming across to cause problems. They are coming across because of an economic situation in Mexico. Now in dealing with immigration on the southwest border, 98% of those migrants that are detained, that are entering illegally, are from Mexico. . . They are entering this country illegally; they are entering this country in violation of law. Now even though their motivation is nothing more than making a better life for themselves or their families, it is still in violation of law. ³⁰

Indeed, late in the 1990s the Border Patrol had established certain units designed to render humanitarian aid to immigrants suffering from exposure in the

²⁹ Pankoke, interview.

³⁰ de la Vina, address.

Sonoran deserts. Some of the young people's experiences with the Border Patrol likewise would disrupt a singularly violent relationship, unless it is carefully historicized. In addition, largely before Operation Safeguard took effect some in the Nogales police force or the United States Border Patrol would buy boxes of chicken and for the young people in the tunnel. Roman and also Ron Saunders of the US Border Patrol recounted how in Christmas of 1995, the Border Patrol brought the young people a meal and gifts.

I return to my ethnography. Pankoke states: "When I'm driving at the border, they [Mexicans] throw large rocks from Mexico over the fence at us. Sometimes our agents have to call in for help."³¹ Likewise, de la Vina, stated

Two weeks ago, one of our agents was shot and killed by a narcotics smuggler near the Nogales, Arizona border. So, you have all these elements coming together.³²

As I prepare to leave the Border Patrol station, I ask officer Pankoke about communication between his agency and a Mexican police force, the Grupo Beta. Pankoke superior in another interview, frowned, and declined to comment about them. Then, he states:

We share frequency and often and are in radio contact. When we chase people back into Mexico, sometimes we will call them and they will intervene.³³

³¹ Pankoke, interview.

³² De la vina, address.

³³ Pankoke, interview.

Pankoke's disdain for his Mexican counterparts is hardly unique. In another conversation, an officer referred to them in highly derogatory terms. Two senior officers of the Tucson sector of the Border Patrol in an ethnographic interview expressed similar sentiments. The Mexican government formed *Grupo Beta* for the purpose of reducing violence in human trafficking at the Tijuana border area. This action constituted the most profound effort by Mexican government to regulate its northern boundary (Dunn 1996). I frequently witnessed Mexican authorities rounding up *potential* immigrants throughout my fieldwork. They would target those who appeared to be about to attempt to cross the border through irregular means, pulling down immigrants from the border fence that separates *ambos Nogales*; they were then arrested. Indeed, in informal interviews with the young people of *Barrio Libre*, I asked which of the multiple police forces that patrol the border would the youth rather encounter---all replied the United States Border Patrol. Moreover, suggestive of the banality of state disciplinary practices, which disrupts Foucault's abrupt dismissal of coercive state power, in the lives for the young people of *Barrio Libre*, both Roman and "Moco," one of the many young people of *Barrio Libre* who I would meet and then they would soon disappear, in an interview in the early 1990s described the Border Patrol as their sometimes bus service back to Mexico: "when we want to go back to Nogales . . . we let them catch us."³⁴

³⁴ "Moco," [pseud.], communication with author September 1995.

A few days later, I am in Nogales, Arizona, just north of the U.S.-Mexico border in 1998. As I am walking south to the border along a major boulevard of Nogales, Arizona, two men climb over the border fence into the United States. A Border Patrol agent and police officer arrive. One of the immigrants flees. Neither officer gives chase. The police officer pulls his radio from his belt and communicates presumably with other officers in the area. A moment later, a police car arrives on the scene and pursues the fugitive. Resigned, the second immigrant waits. He gets on his knees without orders from the agent. The Border Patrol agent cuffs him in handcuffs made of thick, durable plastic, which as I was told in were used to keep costs down.³⁵ There are almost always immigrants fleeing the border authorities in Nogales, Arizona. I have witnessed them being arrested, thrown onto the ground, being yelled at by the authorities, intimidated, tossed in paddy wagons, even struck by traffic.

As I walk down the main boulevard of Nogales, Arizona, I see a manhole open up. Seven people pop out and scurry into the sea of brown bodies in the small downtown of Nogales, Arizona.

There is a turnstile into Mexico that only turns north to south. It can be accessed directly from the street along the Grand Avenue sidewalk, or, one can come down the stairs from the above area where people catch transportation, typically unkempt shuttle buses, to destinations throughout Arizona. In fact,

³⁵ Pankoke, interview.

almost everyday, I see one of these shuttles pulled over and a Border Patrol questioning its occupants.

On this day in 1998, I was walking to Nogales, Sonora from Nogales, Arizona. As I approached the port of entry, it appeared as if another of their periodic official crackdowns was occurring. From the above area, a Border Patrol Officer leaned on the railing and chuckled with a customs officer. As I walked toward the turnstile into Mexico, below the laughing officers, I considered filming them (two officers chuckling laughing at those who cross the border, a border ethnographer's dream shot!) and knowing that if they saw me, they would probably reprimand me. To my left were two lanes that United States customs, immigration and Nogales police officers together, some dressed in military fatigues, patrolled where Grand Ave merged into two lanes that enter Mexico. Following the sidewalk to Mexico, I turned slightly to my right, west, putting my back to the group of officers. I heard one of them say to the *others*: "him . . . him." They yell and whistle, but I pretend not to hear. I refuse to be hailed (Althusser 1971), a common practice at the border where immigrants often run from border authorities. I walked side by side with a group of tourists, dressed in shorts and awful hats hiding them from the unforgiving sun, even in October. They talk about their homes in Michigan, and I, more sure than unsure that the officers seek my attention, continue slowly toward Mexico. I wait for the inevitable . . . On my left a beautiful, well-dressed couple, walks by . . .

And, then, it happens. I felt a sharp backward tug on my right shoulder. What I presume to be a Mexican American police officer had jumped the railing that separated the sidewalk from the street and pursued me.

“We want to talk to you. Why didn’t you turn around?”

“I didn’t know that you wanted to talk to me.”

I lie.

They escort me back to the railing.

A Border Patrol officer, with a crew cut, asks me:

A donde vas?

Meanwhile the others draw closer. One with military fatigue pants, and crew cut, wears dark sunglasses and stood to my left, across the railing. His muscular build filled out the NPD, or acronym for Nogales Police Department, shirt. A customs and immigration officer stood to my right. They, too, wore dark glasses. Six armed men stood ready.

“A trabajar” I respond.

“Donde?”

En Nogales.

Que haces?

I continue the charade no longer.

I’m going to do research on homeless kids in Nogales. I work at Mi Nuevo Hogar.

He then asked.

“Do you have ID?”

I begin searching for my passport in my backpack.

“What’s that?” asked officer Ahumada, the officer who had stopped me.

He was pointing to my video camera.

A camera.

Let me see it.

I hand him my camera to him.

I reach into my bag for my documents.

Having grown accustomed to rituals of racialized citizenship, I withdraw my passport, not waiting to be told again that a driver license was not sufficient proof of citizenship.

Then he asks me for my driver’s license. I withdraw it from my wallet.

One of the officers leaves with both forms of identification.

Officer Ahumada asks: Why are you angry? We are not going to hurt you.

As he said this I saw the large officer in fatigues snicker.

“I’m just tired being hassled by the authorities,” I reply, struggling to contain myself.

It’s our job. We question all those who aren’t from around here. That’s why we stopped you. You have an earring. Your hair. You’re not from here. Where are you from?

“I live in Nogales, but I was born in California and raised in Texas,” I reply.

We have to make sure that you have no malintent when you cross that border. Plenty of kids from the UA (University of Arizona) come down here and buy drugs and steroids. So we question all . . .

I interrupt.

“You and I know that plenty of people cross that border who are not from here, and they are not stopped . . .”

Its not your race. He said. Its our job

“Its random,” says the officer wearing fatigues.

By then, the other officer returned with my documents and said “thank you Mr. Rosas.”

Officer Ahumada adds: “Who knows? Maybe people are watching you.”

3. HIGH INTENSITY IMAGINARIES: THE PRODUCTION OF BARRIO LIBRE

The tunnel's cool 'cause its dark.
Roman 1998

I am at the “*mono biche*” or naked doll, a towering statue of an Adonis figure made of glistening black stone, with tremendous biceps and curly hair, on this day in 1998. The *mono biche* is located about a mile or two from the tourist zone. Close by is another statue of Father Kino, a Spanish priest who missionized to the Tohono O’odham, who once dominated the region. There is no statue to Native Americans. Close by is also a business that produces bottled water the latest, fashionable commodity in Nogales. “Don’t Drink” the tap water. Trucks circulate in and out; they deliver water in large containers to clients around the city. Streams of water flow into a drainage ditch from the plant and then flow through into the darkness of the underground, gray, cement orifice.

On the walls of the ditch that lead to the sewer tunnel are familiar names scrawled in iridescent spray paint: Juanita, Juanatos, Monica, Salvador, El Trabeiso, Igor, Roman, El Chamuco, Santos, Willi, Santana, Garocho, La Morena, La Negra and many more. Most share a moniker: BL, an acronym for *Barrio Libre*. Another text in large gold letters reads: *Barrio Libre*.



Still another reads: *Bajadores*, which literally translates as those who go down, yet in this context it signifies their “bad” practice of *bajando gente*, or mugging people, which I explore in greater detail in later chapters. The young people tell me that farther down in the tunnel is more graffiti. It reads: “Beta Rifa. Cuidado Delinquentes.”³⁶ (Beta Rules. Careful Delinquents. Grupo Beta, Mexico’s police force that constituted the first attempt by Mexico to police its border, warns the young people of *Barrio Libre*, while appropriating some of their tactics, as state terror has done elsewhere in the world (Siegel 1998).

³⁶ “Beto,” [pseud.], a young person of *Barrio Libre*, in communication with author May 1998.

More graffiti captures my attention. One reads: “Cristo te Odia por eso te dio la vida.” (Christ hates you that is why he gave you life) The other: “Vivir para ser libre o morir para no ser esclavos” (To live is to be free or to die is not to be slaves).

Roman had long ago told me that to be in Barrio Libre was to not work, or, in my translation, to survive on a life of petty crime in the tunnel or on the streets. Yet, what I observed and learned firsthand is that many of the young people of Barrio Libre worked a variety of jobs on the periphery of the neoliberal economy. They would pivot among the formal, informal, and underground options. The deterritorializing processes of neoliberalism multiply situated them with respect to the analytical category of labor. They would shift among work in the maquiladoras, or in small businesses, and the labor of panhandling, selling small packets of gum, washing windows at the *mono biche*, and their participation in street/tunnel crime. On this day, as I try to talk with several young men of the Barrio Libre, they are busy washing windshields of the snarled traffic which snakes back and forth from the border at stop lights on their way to the US-Mexico border.

Javi, in between his forays into the dense traffic, tells me that he is from a small agricultural village in Sonora. Indeed, when I approached him this morning to ask him if I could talk with him, he asked me for “una milpa,” signifying a peso. Literally, this term translates as cornfield. His choice of “milpa” for peso

marks how the agricultural communities of Mexico in the 1990s were put into crisis by government's obedience to neoliberal structural adjustment policies. "Milpa," in this respect, also denotes one of the constituencies comprising Barrio Libre.³⁷ Javi left his family left in 1995 looking for a new life in the United States. Then he found the amorphous, chaotic, formation of Barrio Libre. Indeed, the diverse origins of the young people of Barrio Libre signaled their experiences of deterritorialization. Individuals of the group were from throughout Mexico, including Oaxaca, Chiapas, Sonora, Guadalajara, and Mexico City. As one of the young people told me, "we are Barrio Libre because we have no families."³⁸ The elder of Barrio Libre, a man probably in his thirties was "from all over. He's lived in Juarez, El Paso, Chihuahua, Navajoa, here in Nogales."³⁹ Nevertheless, representing the instability of the category of homeless or street youth among these young people, they frequently return to small agricultural village in Sonora to spend time with Javi's family. "We come back to Barrio Libre to make money."

Javi then describes yet another layer of displacement that the young people of Barrio Libre experienced, what I refer to as the young people's micro-

³⁷ I want to note my reluctance to characterize Mexican culture before neoliberalism as somehow "traditional" or "local." Such characterizations understate the politics of place-making and temporalizing in chronological narratives; they deny the conjoined yet disjunctive genealogies of the present (Chakrabarty 2000; Gupta 1997) (Fabian 1983). Particularly at the border given its history of crossing and policing, the idea of locality proves problematic.

³⁸ "Guero," [pseud.], communication with author September 1998.

³⁹ "José" [pseud.], communication with author, Nogales, Sonora, December 1998.

deterritorializations. “[The authorities] came and started to demand that we get *credenciales* to wash windows.”⁴⁰ *Credenciales*, or official credentials typically denoting one’s level of schooling and which gave the state’s imprimatur to informal economic activities, became a disciplinary technique. To acquire one in the young people’s nomadic condition proved extremely difficult. One of the requirements, for example, was proof of schooling. Yet, many have not attended school or have attended it for only a few years. Acquiring documentation from their home communities proved difficult. Before this moment, this requirement was rarely enforced. Hearing our conversation, Gabriel, one of the three “hermanos Gonzalez” or Gonzalez brothers, of which two are in Barrio Libre, after hurdling a bucket of one his companions and sprinting to me recalls that this occurred roughly when the US army corps of engineers retrofitted the border wall with disposable runway strips left over from the US first Persian Gulf War early in the 1990s. This occurred when the Mexican police “came and chased out of tourist zones where we used to ask the gringos for money and where we used to wash the windows on the cars going to the 'other side.'”⁴¹ This strategy of governance rendered their livelihood in informal neoliberal economy, like washing windows or selling small packs of gum, difficult.

Until this juncture, many of the young people who were coming Barrio Libre were working in the informal economy of the Nogales, Sonora, in the

⁴⁰ “Javi” [pseud.], communication with author, Nogales, Sonora, November 1998.

⁴¹ “Gabriel” [pseud.], communication with author, Nogales, Sonora, November 1998.

tourist zone, selling gum, washing windshields, and panhandling. At a moment of the deregulation of transnational capitalist flows, the Mexican state's regulation of the young people's informal economic practices gradually criminalized them. The Mexican authorities had begun a campaign to clean up the image of the border in the context of the North American free trade agreement, the Mexican government sought to portray the country as a stable, democratic nation on the verge of First World membership.⁴² Meanwhile, *vagancia*," or the status of being a vagrant, suddenly garnered potency in the late 1990s, as Operation Safeguard, the Border Patrol's local intensification of policing, consolidated at the border.

To be a homeless, unemployed, young person rendered the young people criminals in the state's purview. It became grounds for the police to harass, threaten, and arrest the young people. Indeed, almost all of the young people, but particularly the young men, that I knew were regularly incarcerated in the Mexican or United Statesian youth authority. In 1998, I asked a young man of Barrio Libre, how much of 1995 he estimated that he spent in the Mexican or US juvenile authority. He estimated 5 months. The stepped up enforcement partially coalesced the young people who worked the border into Barrio Libre. It pushed them away from the tourist zone, deeper into Mexico as well as deeper underground.

⁴² On Mexico's First World aspirations, see del Castillo V 1996; Morris and Passe-Smith 2001; Otero 1996)

When I asked Juan why he thought the authorities had pushed the group farther south, he replied,

the border was where people got their first impressions of Mexico and the authorities didn't want to give your [expletive] *paisanos* (countrymen) a bad impression.⁴³

Quite understandably, the young people would tease about my citizenship. I was a privileged American citizen, regardless of my phenotype and ethno-political subjectivity. The border runs deep.

The following passage from a conversation with Javi crystallizes one of the effects of what I am calling micro-deterritorialization.

Javi: If they don't let me clean windshields, I will go to the tunnel, and mug. We are going to [his hometown] on the 30th. What does the police want ... for us to be stealing?

Flaco: We need money so that we can go back home.

He then comments under his breath:

Five more plebes arrived today from Hermosillo.⁴⁴

Barrio Libre was growing in number as we spoke.

Suddenly, Javi withdraws the squeegee from his back pocket in his jeans. He dives into the traffic, which is stopped due to the traffic light. As he approaches a light purple a 1970s Oldsmobile, the man behind the wheel frantically waves his hand, signifying no. Javi ignores him. The driver lowers a window and curses at the young man. Javi smiles and moves to another car. The

⁴³ Juan, communication.

⁴⁴ "Javi," and "Flaco" [pseud.], communication with author, Nogales, Sonora, October 1998.

light changes. Washing windshields is far from lucrative. Most drivers ignore the young people. Those that do not, and allow the young people to wash the windshields, pay them about twenty cents. They perhaps make between two and three dollars. This income varies according to traffic flow, the police presence, and of course, the weather. The desert heat, where temperatures broached one hundred ten degrees in the summer made working on the streets often unbearable, and the windshields, extremely hot.

Los hermanos “Gonzalez” likewise exemplify micro-deterritorializations. “Rubio,” or “Blondie,” was the eldest of the aforementioned hermanos Gonzales. He was so named for his blond skin. He had spent many years in the free hood. In 1998, he told me that he had not seen his father, who was in Chicago, since 1993. Rubio told me that he had attended school until the sixth grade. Those that knew him before he got into “trouble,” tell that he was a very bright young man. He was excelling in school. His family was from a city in Navajoa. His father had been working in construction, but “times got rough” in the economic downturn of the 1990s. According to Rubio, he and his young family had moved to Nogales, Sonora. His mother quickly found a job in a maquiladora. His father worked at one for a while.

Rubio continues the story: “But he hated it. People were telling him about life in the north, about the opportunities. He left with three other men in 1992. He

came back in 1993 for two weeks. That's the last time I saw him. He still sends us money, but its not very much."

"Why don't you think he hasn't come back?" I ask.

"People say its hard to come back now. Its too hot to cross."

The young people use the signifier of heat to indicate the extent the border was being policed.

When my dad left, I was the eldest, and I thought I needed to help provide. My mom was working in the factory, and my brothers, they needed supervision and more things.

He began working in a small store, to help supplement the household income, while going to school.

Rubio soon met some of people of Barrio Libre. He soon began traveling to the Barrio Libre of Tucson. "I made some money in Barrio Libre." He would not tell me how. I will return to my conversations with Rubio at a later point in this dissertation.⁴⁵

Gabriel his younger brother also recalls much of the same familial history as Rubio. Notably, He never mentioned the pressure to help support his family. What Gabriel emphasized was his pleasure at defying the authorities.

I like to anger the authorities, those from Beta and the migra. I like to be in the tunnel and frustrate them.

"You are not afraid of them?" I ask.

⁴⁵ "Rubio," [pseud.] interview by author, Nogales, Sonora, August 1998.

Well sometimes. They are very mean and they hit us, or throw us in jail. But we are too fast, and we hide in the dark tunnels, and they cannot see us.”⁴⁶

To invoke what I used as an epigraph, as Roman once told me, “the tunnel’s cool cause its dark.”

Roman’s life history brings a new dimension to this discussion of the origins of Barrio Libre. It emphasizes the articulation between Barrio Libre and immigration policing. Roman’s English is better than my *pocho* Spanish. He learned English when he went to school in Washington, before his father’s naturalization status was revoked, because he was alleged to have sold cocaine. Roman adamantly denies this charge, saying that it was his older brother who dealt. Before that, he had lived in Chicago. Once his father, Roman, and his brother were deported, the family went to Guadalajara. Roman’s father returned to the United States *por chuntaro*, as Roman put it, a colloquism for “illegal alien,” and his mother stayed behind. Roman, too, soon left his mother’s home in Guadalajara, in the footsteps of his father. Instead, however, he ended up in Nogales, Sonora, and Barrio Libre hailed him, and he acquiesced.

Immigrant policing as well as incarceration contour the subjective experiences of many of the young people of Barrio Libre. Roman and many of other young people of Barrio Libre, particularly early on, as Barrio Libre flowed

⁴⁶ “Gabriel,” [pseud.] communication with author, Nogales, Sonora, November 1998.

south and northward spent time in the Mexican juvenile system and the US.

Margarita tells of the 1990s:

I used to hang out at the McDonald's. People would buy me food or give us money. Every now and then the cops would come or the border Patrol, and, take us back to Nogales. Then I would climb back down into the tunnel, and go back. But, McDonald's hired security and they would yell at us and call the Border Patrol, so I stopped going.⁴⁷

This moment roughly corresponds to the consolidation of the local intensification of transnational social controls along the Arizona-Sonora border, what is officially dubbed Operation Safeguard, and what the scholarship of border militarization understand as extension of that project (Andreas 2000: 56).



“Margarita”

La Morena, or the “brown girl,” found Barrio Libre in a similar manner. Although she largely refused to talk to me about her family life, she did tell me

⁴⁷ “Margarita,” interview.

that she had come to Nogales on her own. Many of the people in her small town in Sonora had migrated during *la crisis*. At the age of sixteen, a young woman, bored, and excited by the stories of travel, and the potential wealth of the United States, she jumped on a bus and headed northward. In Mexico City, she was told that Sonora was the best place to cross.⁴⁸ Thus, as is evidenced in La Morena's and Roman's life histories, immigrant knowledge partially informs their subject formation of Barrio Libre.

Immigrant knowledges become apparent in the young people's relationship to *maquiladoras*. Several of the young people of Barrio Libre had relatives who work in *maquiladoras*. "Jaime's" mother worked off and on at a subcontractor for General Electric.⁴⁹ "Franco" father had lost three fingers in a machinery accident in the 1980s. Now, he shined shoes for a living. "Franco," a tall, skinny, dark-skinned youth, meanwhile, refused the suggestion of one of Mi Nuevo Hogar's board of directors to pursue employment in a *maquiladora*.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, although Mexican law outlaws child labor, many of the young people at some point in their lives managed to find temporary work in *maquiladoras*. They used false documents or lied.

When Margarita, became a mother, she sought to leave *Barrio Libre*. She had to care for her three younger siblings in addition to her two children in a 230

⁴⁸ "Morena," [pseud.], interview by author, August 1999, Nogales, Sonora.

⁴⁹ "Jamie," [pseud.], communication with author, Nogales, Sonora, October 1998.

⁵⁰ "Franco," [pseud.], communication with author, Nogales, Sonora, October 1998.

square foot shack. Her mother spent her ten-hour workday inserting screws, for what she was not sure, at a local *maquiladora*. After her mother returned home from work, it was then Juana's turn to work in a *maquila*. Her shift was from midnight to 10 am. Margarita soldered wires to circuitry at another *maquila*. She, too, was uncertain what product she was making. She would collapse on the couch at *Hogar*, when she dropped by for breakfast after work. Every few months, Margarita would quit her employment in a frustrated exhaustion to join her compatriots in *Barrio Libre*, often with her children in tow.

One day, when I arrived at Mi Nuevo Hogar, Negro, who had been seeking work at a *maquiladora*, was asleep on the couch. I tried to wake him, but he told me that he was feeling badly. Later that morning, I saw that the white of his eyes were pink. He had spent all of yesterday wandering from *maquiladora* to *maquiladora* trying to find work. Those he visited were CiMex, where circuit boards are made, Gualbro-calculators, Moles, and Noma where Negro admitted he did not know what they made. Each *maquila* had denied him work. Gualbro and Moles only were hiring women; Angelo used to hire sixteen-year-olds but not now; the others just were not hiring.⁵¹ *Maquiladoras*, as he found out, tend to hire only on the recommendation of someone important inside, a network that many of these kids do not have. Moreover, I should also note that by 1998, with the infrastructure of Plan Puebla Panama and the consolidation of the North

⁵¹ For literature on gender asymmetries in *maquiladoras*, see: Fernandez-Kelley 1998; Peña 1997; Kopinak 1996; Wright 1999; Gaspar de Alba 2003.

American Free Trade Agreement, maquiladoras, no longer restricted to the border region, were slowly spreading across Mexico. Once when he was younger, had lied and said he was eighteen at a *maquiladora*, and management had not asked him for verification, he had worked there for several months before following his family back to Nogales.⁵²

Rubio used to work in a maquiladora. Yet, after a few months, he left it to remain “libre” or free, refusing the discipline of the maquiladora labor force. He then tells me that one reason that he left the maquiladora was that the management of the maquiladora told him that he dressed like a *cholo*, a term for rebellious urban young people of Mexican descent.

“Well that’s who I am. I wear cholo clothes.”⁵³

Negro recounted to me a similar story, which signifies the coextension of normativity and the category of labor. He quit his job at a market, where he used to sweep floors and stock the aisles. In a similar fashion, the store’s owner had told this young man to quit dressing like a *cholo*.⁵⁴

Negro, Rubio, and Javi, like several of the young people in young people, went out of their way to don this subcultural style, baggy pants, sometimes a hair net, and tennis shoes, and t-shirts or base ball caps saying “my crazy life,” “mi vida loca,” or “Chicano power,” or a representation of *la Virgen de Guadalupe*, the

⁵² “Negro,” [pseud.], communication with author, Nogales, Sonora, May 1999.

⁵³ Rubio, interview.

⁵⁴ “Negro,” [pseud.], communication with author, Nogales, Sonora, October 1998.

patron saint of Mexico, or a marijuana leaves. Rubio then tells me that maquiladoras prefer employees who are on drugs:

They want us drugged . . .It makes you work better.⁵⁵

Michel Foucault has advanced a notion of docile bodies that emerges from disciplinary regimes. Discipline involves systems of surveillance, detailed behavioral regimes, and normative standards against which every action or aspect of one's being is continually evaluated. The result is production of docile, discipline bodies and individuals who are not just subjects but subjected (Luibhéid 2002: xiv)(Foucault 1982). Such bodies are rationalized for political economic purposes. As Guero's intervention suggests, normative disciplinary power invades the young people's problematic practice of substance abuse.

Notably, from what the young people tell me, they could make more money in the underground economy than working in a *maquiladora*. Wages approximate \$1.50 an hour, which in border city make ends difficult to meet.

In addition, many of the young people moved throughout Mexico to find work, but for some reason, they tended to come back to Nogales, Sonora, and Barrio Libre. "Shorty" had worked on a shrimp boat in Cualican. Roman left for much of 1998 to Guadalajara and through familial connections was able to work as a security guard for the transportation system. "Jesus" had worked for several months at a farm in Imuris, Sonora. He had quit in disgust, because the pay low

⁵⁵ "Rubio," interview.

\$120 pesos a week for back breaking work like lifting 50 kilo bags of soil. The young people of Barrio Libre also held other temporary positions, including one of them having been a chimney sweeper, several working as “pinches” or bus boys, and a few selling tacos on the street.

Yet, I wish to emphasize their fluidity, their frequent movement between positions, and thus differential relationships to the state and its category of labor, both of the legal and illegal variety. They shifted among economic positions, among the informal, formal, and underground economy. Indeed, such underground practices included: the selling of drugs, the transportation of drugs across the border, and on rare occasions they acted as the smugglers of people under the border. Indeed, on the same day of the above interview, someone who used to work with the young people in the Mexican youth authority claimed that the young people aside from washing windshields, sell drugs at the *mono biche*. Although, much of the ethnographic literature privileging multipositionality theorizes it in terms of identity-formation, the idea that human agents are multiply or simultaneously positioned domains of discourse, history, and power (see: Abu-Lughod 1991; Behar 1993; Hernandez 1995; Kondo 1990; Rabinow 1985; Stewart 1996), in the particular experiences of the young people, it is evidence of their status as deterritorialized or nomadic subjects.

The Routinization of Violence

In the historic context of an emerging transnational governmentality, Barrio Libre's encounters with the Mexican police grew in severity. I now turn to one of life history to illustrate. In the below, Margarita narrates a violent encounter with Grupo Beta, when she had just been caught exiting the underground terrain of Barrio Libre into Nogales, Sonora.

Margarita: I came out and one of Beta put his gun to my head and told me not to move because he was going to shoot.

Other young people, such as Roman, Negro, and Caraloco, have had guns put to their heads by Grupo Beta. I return to Margarita's narrative.

Negro ran... He took me outside . . .the Beta was going to hit me, and I told him, if your going to hit me, don't hit me on my stomach because I'm pregnant... he then handcuffed me and took me to the office. There they told me they were going to send me to the "correccional" in Hermosillo. El cuchillo (the knife) asked me, if I send you to the "correccional." I told him.... Send me... I'm here already... there's nothing I can do about it.

But they took me to the "consejo," or the Mexican youth authority in Nogales, Sonora. Roman came and took me out the next day. They just put me in there for "vagancia."⁵⁶

As the above history suggests, in the day-to-day lives of the young people of Barrio Libre, particularly when they were on the streets of Nogales, Sonora, that is when they were hyper-visible, were subject to oppressive policing tactics.

An excerpt from a conversation with "Franco," provides some insight:

⁵⁶ "Margarita," [pseud.], interview by author, October 1998, Tucson, Arizona.

Yesterday I was walking down Heroes St. when two from Beta stopped me. They thought that I had “brincas” (petty crime fines) that I need to pay. They handcuffed me and started kicking me pretty hard. I told them I didn’t have any “brincas.” They didn’t believe me. They wanted to take me to jail. I was just about to get to where I sell gum when this happened. They let me out at two, since I had no “brincas” to pay, but they still hit me. I got hit with the gun. They would push me down to the floor even harder. Over here, policemen are very mean. You have money . . . they take it away from you.⁵⁷

Yet, other times, Grupo Beta seemed even more unkind. Bolillo recounted to me the time that an officer from this Mexican paramilitary police force, designed to protect immigrants, arrested him.

They painted me like a woman. They put on lipstick, eye shadow, and they put me in a dress.⁵⁸

As he recounts this tale, he studies the floor. His discomfort with this subject matter forced me to end the interview.

Every now and then, the Mexican or US authorities attempted to regulate the underground transnational terrain of Barrio Libre often took on violent qualities. I intersperse conversations with Roman and Margarita to highlight their daily experiences within the violence of transnational governmentality.

From a conversation with Roman and Margarita:

Gilberto: They have told me that the Border Patrol and the Beta communicate through radios....

⁵⁷ “Franco,” [pseud.], communication with author, Nogales, Sonora, October 1998.

⁵⁸ “Bolillo,” [pseud.], communication with author, Nogales, Sonora, January 1999.

Margarita: Margarita: Mmm... well, they have chased [us] inside the tunnel... from one side the migra, and from the other Beta.⁵⁹

Roman: When they get all the way inside.... The Border Patrol calls them.

Gilberto: I don't understand quite well.

Roman: When they have chased us... they have chased us all the way outside. Or, they get in and we're outside... and they chase us all the way over there. The have chased us up to where the bridge is....

Gilberto: I've seen videos where they have gotten in, the Border Patrol, with rifles...

Roman: Yes, the go in with everything.

Gilberto: Beta too?

Margarita: Beta goes in with guns in their hands.

Gilberto: Have you seen Beta or Border Patrol kill someone?

Roman: I've seen Beta shooting their guns.... Actually, kill no.⁶⁰

The young people also claim that the Mexican authorities commit acts of malfeasance in the tunnels.

Margarita: The policemen [when they catch us] take all of your money...As long as you have money they won't do anything to you. If you don't have money, then they take you to jail. It happens the same thing with drug dealers. They give them money and they let them be. Same thing with polleros... They let them cross people and won't tell them anything as long as they pay them.

⁵⁹ "Roman" [pseud.] and "Margarita," [pseud.], communication with author, Nogales, Sonora, June 1999.

⁶⁰ "Roman" [pseud.], communication with author, Nogales, Sonora, July 1999; "Margarita" [pseud.], communication with author, Nogales, Sonora, June 1999.

Roman: They've always smuggled drugs through there. They have told us to leave while shooting at us... the cross coke, pot...

Gilberto: Are you sure? How do you know?

Roman: Because I've seen them. They have smuggled and also killed.

Margarita: I've seen when they get the bags of green stuff.... And take them inside... I've seen where they take it out too.

Gilberto: What does the Border Patrol do?

Margarita: They take it out when they are not there.⁶¹

The young people's familiarity with the officers of Grupo Beta is also telling. It suggests the extent that policing has become routinized for them. Again, my conversation with Margarita proves instructive.

Gilberto: Tell me something... you said something about the Beta... Cuchi.. .

Margarita: They call him Cuchillo (the knife).

Gilberto: Why?

Margarita: Because he carries a big knife, its scary. Then there's Arce, Sabolla, Victor, Cabeza de Borrego, Adrian.⁶²

Although relatively infrequent, the young people of Barrio Libre do have violent encounters with the United States Border Patrol.

⁶¹ "Roman" [pseud.], communication with author, Nogales, Sonora, July 1999; "Margarita" [pseud.], communication with author, Nogales, Sonora, June 1999.

⁶² "Margarita," [pseud.], interview by author, October 1998, Tucson, Arizona.

Roman: The chiles verdes go into the tunnels with everything machine guns, bullet proof vests, helmets, batons. They often go with the armed police.

Yet, more often than not the young people's experiences with the violence of US immigration apparatus is indirect. Javi tells of his experiences being bitten by a dog under the supervision of the Border Patrol.

Javi: I came out of the tunnel [in Nogales, Arizona] hey told me to stop, and I didn't obey them, and I was walking and they wanted to catch me and there was a tube... so I got inside of it and they said, "You know what, we are going to sick the dogs on you." and I didn't obey them. I didn't get out and they said, "You aren't going to listen to us, I am going to have the dogs on you." and they had them attack me and they bit me.⁶³

Yet, to grapple with the problematic of violence I must also note that young people themselves, as Margarita readily admits in the excerpt below also perpetuated violence.

Margarita: We've gotten in physical fights, thrown rocks... stabbed people...

Gilbert: Has anybody died?

Margarita: Some have. Like Ardilla...⁶⁴

They also mug, which I explore in the next chapter.

⁶³ "Flaco" [pseud.], communication with author, Nogales, Sonora, October 1998.

⁶⁴ "Margarita," interview.

Gendered Dimensions of Barrio Libre

The restrictions and demands of being a marginalized, young woman it seems, contributed to the formation of the subjectivities of some of the young women, who were in the process of becoming Barrio Libre. Margarita's life history, from which I will excerpt from, reveals the complexities of power at the US-Mexico border. She had become a member of Barrio Libre when her mother had left in charge of the house while she had to go to work at a maquiladora. The series of events that triggered her incarnation of Barrio Libre would probably had not been the case had she not had particular history deeply entangled with neoliberal power at the border, and found in this respect the promise of total freedom alluring.

Margarita, her mother and stepfather, moved to Nogales, Sonora, when she was four years old. Like the many of the young people in the barrio, she was unsure of where her real father is. He had left for the United States, years ago. He had never returned. And her stepfather was in and out of jail for engaging in the underground economy. He was a pollero or smuggler of immigrants across the border. Indeed, it seems likely that her stepfather was in the tunnels well before Margarita. Her stepfather, the father of her brother, brought them to Nogales to first pursue employment in construction. Soon her stepfather began working in the underground economy of the border, as a pollero, or smuggler of persons across

the border. Her mother began work with a maquiladora. At about this time ten years old, her younger brother began hanging out with street youth.

Listen as Margarita explains.

Margarita: He would just leave home... and started asking for money.

Gilberto: How old was your brother?

Margarita: Six years old when he started.

Gilberto: With those of Barrio Libre?

Margarita: No, not really. With some others... One time he left to Obregon. They came and told my mom he was over there and my mom went looking for him. I stayed with my aunt. I remember she brought food and everything... and since we had ran out of gas, and she had bought some chicken, she told me to go heat it at a friend's house. So I went and I left.... So, I left the chicken on the table, and I went looking for her, but she wasn't home and when I got back, the dog had eaten them all.

Gilberto: How old were you?

Margarita: 10 years. Then she told me that we could go looking for money. The first moros I met were Enano, and Casabantes. I met him first. Then they took me to the tunnel, to Barrio Libre. Then we went to Circle K and then I met Chava...We went to McDonalds, and there I found Enano. He knew the other girl... not me. We went to Circle K, and then I met Chava, Omar, Juanito... and Kino...Kino was 14. Juan 11 or 12. Enano 10 or 11. Omar 12 too... who else was there? Tito was 16. Mafafa 14... The train passed by and we got on it. We got to Tucson and we were there for like a week... then the migra got us.

Gilberto: So you were in Tucson?

Margarita: Yes, we were in Barrio Libre, asking for money. Then a "plebe" told me if I wanted to be Libre (free)... and I said yes.

Margarita: Someone told them we were there. I wanted to come to Nogales... I was too young to be there... So we left... But I crossed again.

Gilbert: Why?

Margarita: I don't know... I didn't want to go home...

Gilbert: When did you decide you didn't want to go home?

Margarita: When they were taking me back to Nogales.

Gilbert: Where did they dropped you off?

Margarita: At the border. But we crossed again... but my mom was already looking for us. They were looking for me... my mom and the other girl's mom. They found us in a McDonald's. My mom was crying because the security had told her that I was real slutty with all the Moro...

Gilbert: It wasn't true?

Margarita: No, it was the other girl. . I told my mom that how could she think that... that I was too young. I told her it was the other girl that was with me. Because she likes it, she was real slutty.

Dominant norms regarding gender expectations lace this conversation.

Gilbert: Why do you think she is like that?

Margarita: I don't know, but she was taking off her clothes... Her mom hit her really bad... Her mom left bruises all over her.

Gilbert: And your mom?

Margarita: My mom doesn't hit me. She talked to me and told me that why was the reason I left... and things like that... [I] stayed home for like a month... then I left.

Gilbert: Why?

Margarita: I don't know... I preferred the streets... but I don't know... I would get bored in my house...I wanted to go to Barrio Libre.⁶⁵

Margarita's gender brought her specific challenges being on the streets, in the tunnels, and subject to official harassment. Yet, in her life history interview, she emphasized to me that the young men of Barrio Libre protected her in the tunnels and on the streets. She also had had two boyfriends who were part of Barrio Libre. She, too, has had several experiences with Grupo Beta.

Margarita: One time they caught me and I was two months pregnant. We were coming out of it, and one of the Beta place his gun on my head. He told him not to move. I stayed still, and then Negra and Botello ran. Then they got Negra and hit him on her ribs.... Then they were kicking Botello's ass really bad. They took him outside and they were still hitting them... They took Botello's money away... had money but they didn't find it.

Gilbert: Where did you have it?

Margarita: In my wallet... I had 650 pesos.

Gilbert: When was this?

Margarita: In 96. We were there, and they made us take out all our things.... Then they put them all on the floor. They took Botello's money and went and talked in the back. The none of them came and told us that we had 10 seconds to get our things and run... And that if in 10 seconds we didn't do that, he was going to get us and put us all in jail... He started counting really fast, and the only thing that I aimed for was my wallet. And they stayed with Botello's money.

⁶⁵ "Margarita," interview.

She also narrates how normative gender expectations, specifically her pregnancy, allowed to exercise agency, to avoid state violence.

Margarita: Another time they caught me, and I was seven months pregnant. Adan put a gun to my head and then he pushed me and I fell down on the sidewalk. Then he got me from my hands and pressed my stomach. I told him not to do that because I was pregnant. He stopped. So, he just got my hands and asked me who else was with me because there was a lot of chuntaros and all the plebes had gone out running. He asked me how many had run, and that if they had guns.... I had money, but they didn't take it away from me. I had like 1000 pesos... They took me through the tunnel and when we got out, and we were on the street, they started talking on the radio. Adan told me that there were six Betas, and where did I want to go, to the "correccional" or home. I told him home. He then told me that if he were to catch me again there, I was going to feel sorry for me.... He just told me that. I thought he was going to take away my money, or put me in jail. I told him that I wasn't going to go there anymore.... And then he said.... "You promise. " I told him yes and he let me go. Ever since then, I stopped going there, until recently...⁶⁶

This pregnancy also proved transformative. It was when she began to distance herself from the Barrio Libre subject formation.

⁶⁶ Margarita, interview.

Conclusion:

Consequences follow for any society from the presence or absence of full-time military specialists (Barretta, et al. 1978: 578). Violence tends to be naturalized as “brute force.” Often analysts fail to consider the subtle effects of the ways in which the capacity for violence is structured in social life. Such an instrumentalist notion of violence misses the intrinsically mysterious, convoluting, mystifying, and plain scary, nature of a disembodied social organization of violence (Taussig 1992:116). Such a postmodern understanding of violence does risk rendering useless notions of violence and warfare. Yet, I wish to avoid the positivist fallacy of reducing violence only to its physical manifestations. (Nordstrom and Martin 1992:8) (Barretta, et al. 1978: 578; Noriega 2003). Reconsidering the analytical category of violence in this way shows that the coercive underpinnings of neoliberalism in the everyday live of the young people which, in turn, partially forms their subject formation of Barrio Libre.

The available critical vocabularies struggle to communicate the depth, density, and intricacies of the dialectic of structure and agency and subjection and subjectivity with relation to violence and subject formation. In this respect, Michael Taussig writes of the insubstantiality of the state power in the regime of state terror in an unnamed country in South America. For Taussig, one of the chief qualities of low intensity warfare is its tendency to blur accustomed realities

and boundaries and keep them blurred (Taussig 1992: 22). The ordinary disappears, in conditions of low intensity conflict, and the mundane blurs. As has been written about violence in other parts of the world, there occurs loss of context in face-to-face relations; faith in categories collapse (Lawrence 2000).

The processes of deterritorialization in Mexico due to the structural adjustments, and the sporadic, militarized regulation of immigration, point to an historically varied, form of power, which in its gaps provides avenues of pleasure, agency, and quotidian resistances, evident deep down in the lives of the young people of Barrio Libre. Indeed, these “gaps” of social order, return me to my discussion of transnationalism. As Ong has noted, transnationalism should be thought of “not in terms of unstructured flows but in term of the tensions and between movements and social orders” (Ong 1999:6). For this very reason, as I will elaborate upon in this dissertation, a major turning point in the lives of the street youth and their social imaginary of Barrio Libre was when the Border Patrol’s local militarization campaign that had initiated in Southern Arizona in 1994 had consolidated by 1998 in “Operation Safeguard.” It foreclosed, at least for the time being, the tunnel, and its intensifying effects on their imaginary.

The residues of structuralism in Foucault disallows for such analysis to see the articulations between racialized bio-power and racialized political economy (Hardt and Negri 2000:28). His is a largely agentless domination (Limón 1994:139) (Garland 1990: 171). I wish to avoid reducing culture, subjectification,

and social practices to solely an underlying economic causation, given that the cultural and the economic are not mutually exclusive. What has been described as the spectral mode of production of neoliberalism is worthy of mention. I refer to the privileging of consumption over production, or as Comaroff and Comaroff write:

The spiraling virtuality of fiscal circulation, of the accumulation of wealth purely through exchange . . . enables the spectral side of capitalism to act as if it were entirely independently of human manufacture" (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000: 301)

Rather than positing a division between a cause and its effects, which would suggest an underlying essence to practices, discourses, subjectivities, and formations, I turn to Louis Althusser's notion of immanent causality. It posits a cause that exists nowhere outside its effects, which is another way of saying that all effects are equally and at the same time causes. This provides an avenue in which to consider a materiality or effectivity of subjectivity (Read 2003:9).⁶⁷. The dematerialization of capital relations, so that wealth becomes produced almost instantaneously in the magic of investments, and mystification of production, where its processes are pushed out of sight, in relations of flexible accumulation(Comaroff and Comaroff 2000; Harvey 1989: 159), partially configure the indeterminate nature of social power. It also articulates to subaltern Mexicans experiences with processes of neoliberal deterritorialization.

⁶⁷ Cultures can exist autonomous to Western forms of power, and retain their own momentum (Chakrabarty 2000; Holloway 2002).

It is in turn complemented by the indeterminate nature of neoliberal state. This position invites a non-determinist, anti-positivist, conceptualization with respect to border militarization. Such a conceptualization provides an avenue to explore the young people's "contaminating" agency, evident in the incarnation the young people's nascent, hybrid, and sporadically manifesting geography, positionalities, and counter-discursive sites, which I will render ethnographically in the next chapter. Low intensity conflict at the border does and does not inflect the young people's pronouncements of freedom and jubilation; it does and does not configure their everyday struggles for survival. To adopt some of Avery Gordon's provocative terminology from her sociology of African American literatures (1997), the "seething absences and muted presences" of the social organization of power at the US-Mexico border configures, yet does not determine, the young people's formation. That said, the on and off again, often transnational, policing exercised against the young people of Barrio Libre, in what they envision as their transnational 'hood, alongside Mexico's deteriorating economic situation in the 1990s seemed to create an unnerving contingency among the marginal young people of Barrio Libre.

In such a context, the young people frequently found refuge in the underground, transnational sewer system, which runs under the U.S.-Mexico border, which the young people mapped into *Barrio Libre*. While some scholars have suggested that neoliberalism, through multicultural policies, granted

“limited” spaces for collective indigenous subjects in the arena of the state, in the everyday life of young people of Barrio Libre at the US-Mexico border (Hale 2004), the young people took space. They appropriate public works as their territory. The neoliberal divestment from social welfare programs that is allowed them some room to maneuver and one of their strategies was the adoption of the transnational sewer system as part of their transnational terrain.

Nevertheless, as the young people of Barrio Libre show, even the most sophisticated technologies of surveillance have fissures. It is currently estimated that four out of five immigrants are caught attempting to cross the border without documentation, which I find remarkably high, and those that are caught deported to try again. In such a context, “illegal immigration” constitutes a form of "controlled illegality," sanctioned and even procured by the very disciplinary power that claims to regulate transgressions of the law. The strategies of border control produce delinquent immigrants whose quick deportation makes them only more motivated to try another 'illegal' crossing (Behdad 1998).

The Border Patrol, the police department of Nogales, Arizona as well as the local sheriff, DEA, US customs, Grupo Beta, Federales, the US and Mexico armies, the Drug Enforcement Agency, the Tucson Police Department, the Pima County Sheriff, haunt the young people’s oppositional terrain of Barrio Libre. Repressive state power at the moment of neoliberal border militarization operates phantasmatically. There are no tanks or armies (now) patrolling the border. Yet,

throughout my time at the border, the militarization of the border would be evident. Then, it would not. This sporadic, social organization of violence, that is the on and off yet nonetheless increasing presence of domestic, militarized border guards along the US-Mexico border in the context of the processes of mass deterritorialization, it seems, relies on this very ambiguity, as a form of regulation.

Pace Foucault, the combination of power/knowledge diffuses through the social. It creates particular forms of thinking, feeling, and desiring---that is particular subjectivities. This framework perhaps provides an avenue to those that would argue that there is a direct correspondence between historical injustices of the US-Mexico war, its legacy of conflict and policing of labor and citizenship, and the postmodern militarization of the border, and the young people's problematic practices. Nonetheless, the young people's social imaginary of Barrio Libre is not solely an effect of discourse or disembodied structures of power. It is in part an effect of power directly operating on their bodies (see: Aretxaga 2001: 38) (Das 2000; Das and Kleinman 2000; Feldman 1991).

Yet, what Foucault fails to elaborate upon is the mechanism by which practices and discourses are in turn transformed by the very subjectivities they enable. Begoña Aretxaga draws on what de Certeau (1984) has called the "oppositional practices of everyday life" to argue that a privileged site for the exploration of such transformation, its possibilities, and limits. These practices flourish in the interstices of institutional technologies and dominant discourses

and they may give rise to specific discursive configurations. Yet, they provide space for subtle transformations in social and personal meanings (Aretxaga 1997: 19). The textured histories and anthropologies of subaltern studies are another option. James Scott, for example, introduced the political efficacy of the “weapons of the weak” in debates regarding resistance, which, in turn, has influenced anti-racist scholarship in the United States and led to a formation of a body of subaltern studies in Latin American and Chicano studies (see: Kelley 1996)(Alonso 1995; Beverly 1999; Guha 1988b; Katz 1988; Nugent 1993; Nugent 1994; Rebaso 1997; Saldívar-Hull 2000). Relatedly, Ranajit Guha argues that the subaltern peasant consciously engaged in acts of resistance, in a domain of politics beyond the reach of the colonizer and its allies in India (Guha 1988a; Guha 1988b; Guha 1997; Guha 1999). In this respect, the work of south Texas folklorist Americo Paredes, particularly his critique of the Texas Legend, in which he documents the strategic cultural “folk” practices of *corridos*, a form of Mexican balladry and joking, anticipates many of these interventions (Callahan 2003: 83)(Paredes 1971). Yet, such analyses remain bound to a binary understanding of power. The workings of neoliberal power, even in a context of sporadic state coercion, are more complex, and less readily subsumable under such rubrics.

Thus, in this moment of my analysis, I follow Judith Butler’s suggestion of deploying psychoanalysis into analysis of subjectification to grapple with the

subjective experience of power in the historical context of neoliberalism (Butler 1997). In this respect, I drew from Jacques Lacan's essay "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," in which the author introduces the first of his three registers of subjectivity, the imaginary. In my reading, this conceit refers to the inability of the infant child to distinguish between him or her-self and the mother, inaugurating the subject's thereafter longing for wholeness found in the other. I deploy the imaginary as a way to destabilize an otherwise essentialist notion of Mexican identity, which would transcend time and space, between my personal history as a U.S. citizen of Mexican descent and the 'real' Mexican young people of Barrio Libre (Rosas 2001). Moreover, I also draw on a strain of postcolonial writing invested that articulates the imaginary to the domain of the social to refer to the young people's erotically charged, semi-conscious, fluid, inchoate, and multi-referential repository of images, values, and discourses that comprise the subject-formation of Barrio Libre. I maintain that the young people's frequent and sometimes violent experiences of subjection to neoliberalism, as well as those of other technologies of population management, intensify the bodies and intimacies that result from those technologies of management (Aretxaga 2003: 406).

4. LIVING TOTALLY FREE



I now turn to an informal interview conducted in the summer of 1998. Two Border Patrol officers have just left a taco stand about a half-mile from the border, next to the sewer tunnel. Particularly in the early 1990s, and to a far lesser degree in 1998 following Operation Safeguard, I would encounter the young people *Barrio Libre* at the northern end of the tunnel, in Nogales, Arizona, USA, in a drainage ditch, next to the taco stand, a Kentucky Fried Chicken, and the Nogales, Arizona Public Library. In the early 1990s, before Operation Safeguard had taken effect, in the shadow of the tunnel, they would eat fast food, play cat and mouse with the Border patrol, consume spray paint, live, or travel to other parts of Barrio Libre.

Two young women of Barrio Libre slip out from the tunnel from into Nogales, Arizona. They walk over to me.

A few minutes into our conversation, I ask them: “What does Barrio Libre mean for you?”

Margarita: Es que somos todos libre. (It’s that we are all free.)

Juana: Todos libre. (All free.)

Gilberto: Free from what?

Margarita: *Everything*. (My emphasis)

Margarita: Well of, well here we can do what we want. We are totally free.⁶⁸

As she said this, she looked around here. I imagine she was looking for the authorities. At another space and time, Jose told me:

We are free because we have no rules. No one tells us what to do”⁶⁹

Such understandings of freedom were common in the group. At the monobiche, during an interview where he was struggling to wash windows, Toni told me, they named it “Barrio Libre,” because “we are free. They lived “anywhere . . . and we would do anything we want.” Or, as Roman and others would often say, “Barrio Libre es donde nadie te maneje.” (*Barrio Libre* is where no one can control you.)⁷⁰

Such sentiments garner greater political potency when it is contextualized within the young people’s sense of collectivity. The young people frequently

⁶⁸ “Margarita” and “Juana [pseud.], communication with author, Nogales, Sonora, May 1998.

⁶⁹ “Jose” [pseud.], communication with author, Nogales, Sonora, October 1995.

⁷⁰ “Toni” [pseud.], communication with author, Nogales, Sonora, October 1995; “Roman” [pseud.], communication with author, Nogales, Sonora, July 1997.

invoked “Somos Barrio Libre,” “Somos libre,” or “Libre Total.” To invoke “libre” in the singular as the young people did refers to a collective subject in Spanish. If they had said, “somos libres,” it would have referred to an individuated understanding of freedom. Nonetheless, at other moments, they invoke “somos libres,” or the idea of multiple, and thereby, individual modal subjects.⁷¹ Yet, such inconsistencies point to their complex subjectivities.

The term ‘barrio’ carries with it a similar connotation. It refers to a neighborhood, but it also refers to a spatialized collective identity. This marks a sharp contrast to the individuated, autonomous subject privileged in neoliberalism, which has been critiqued as an ideological construct of modern capitalism as far back as Karl Marx (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000; Foucault 1991; Gordon 1991). In other word, some of the young people understand themselves as oppositional to, “de todo” or everything, at a moment when power is dispersed everywhere.

Moreover, rarely did I catch a sense of irony in the young people’s discursive renditions of their transnational subjectivity.⁷² Despite their at times severe marginality, and sometimes whole negation by ambos Nogales, their

⁷¹ I should note that Charles Hales suggests that neoliberalism privileges collective racialized subjects as one of its governmental strategies in the context of Guatemala (Hale 2004) [compare: Beverly, 2003 #769]. This may indeed be in the case as far as formal government recognition, yet in terms of everyday life of the young people, I see it as privileging the autonomous subject, which was critiqued long ago (Marx 1977).

⁷² I am alluding to Americo Paredes critique of William Madsen and other anthropologists of south Texas, who failed to account for Mexicanos verbal speech art (Paredes 1993).

assertion of total freedom particularly at a historical juncture were the Zapatista in southern Mexico and other marginal communities throughout Mexico where proclaiming their freedom brings a further political charge. Yet, I do not wish to minimize the young people's particular struggle for freedom, nor the excessive form it sometimes takes. In previous chapters, I have emphasized the partiality of power-laden processes on their subject formation. Neoliberal governmentality may be dispersed among a variety of processes and institutions. Yet, it is not so tightly meshed or organized that it prohibits resistant practices, troubling as they sometimes may be among this marginal population.

At three o'clock in the afternoon, the odor of sizzling meat and hot tortillas from the restaurant in Nogales, Arizona makes me salivate, on this day in 1998. I am at a taco stand, next to the tunnel in Nogales, Arizona. At a nearby table, two screaming children ruin their harried parent's meal of drippy *carnitas* (meat), refried beans, and pungent, grilled, onions. At another table, four young mustachioed Mexicanos---or are they Chicanos---wash the dust away from their parched throats with perspiring cans of Budweiser. "Salud!" (To your health) they proclaim, each time more loudly than the last. A portly blond couple sweats sunscreen, dressed in sombreros, aqua *guaveras*, and Nikes, having just returned from Mexico. They speak slow English and raise their voices to the Spanish-speaking help. Their canvas bag, with the word 'Guadalajara' stitched on it, weaves their understanding of Mexico. It bulges full of Oaxcan carved animal

figurines and bottles of Jalisco's best tequila. After three rounds of tequila, they inhale the toxins from their Marlboro cigarettes and, then, puff smoke into the air.

In front and below of me, a gray drainage ditch ends in a dark tunnel. A United States Border Patrol vehicle drives up. The goateed driver evaluates the scene. The table of Mexicans lowers their voices. They continue sipping beer. The waiter flinches. The blond couple downs their tequila shots. Then, they order a fourth round.

A patrol helicopter hovers. A police car cruises down the street. The driver waves to the Border Patrol agent. I feel them scrutinize me; I try to feign indifference. I spoon salsa on to the plate of tacos in front of me. I pull my backpack close. Inside is my passport. My stomach tightens.

Soon the authorities leave. Three youth stand just inside the tunnel. I look to my left and my right, then behind me. The authorities have indeed departed. The family continues eating its meal, while the men at the table enjoy their beer. They return to the loud banter. Other than occasional glances, and a few smirks, those at first two tables seem to ignore the youth. Undocumented subjects frequent here. The blond couple snaps a photograph of the border, beyond the youth. They move to their sport utility vehicle. I scale down the ditch as quick as I can and walk toward the tunnel. Again, I inspect my surroundings.

Roman, Margarita, and Chuey stand in the tunnel. While sewers as the bottom of the state have repeatedly served as a recurrent metaphor for the dubious

operations of the state (Stallybrass and White 1986), here, at the US-Mexico border at this moment in history, they are the largely unsurveilled, almost invisible, terrain, beyond the reach of the social order. Indeed, in the early and mid-1990s both the Mexican and United States governments disagreed over which had the authority to patrol them. This disagreement provided the young people some temporary refuge. The sporadic nature of border policing, its calculated, and at times, irrational nature of the transnational population management technologies, provided these severely marginalized young people “space” to survive in and to subvert the US-Mexico border order. They exploited such gaps in the governmentality at the border and their critical, if problematic, subject formation of Barrio Libre.

Moreover, state officials feared the tunnels and, again, the young people, cognizant of this knowledge, turned it to their advantage. Officer Pankoke of the United States Border Patrol, who guided me through the Nogales Border Patrol station in an earlier chapter, recounted to me that he would never go into the tunnel without a “haz suit,” a reference to his time in the military and to special clothes people in the service wear when dealing with toxic waste. Pankoke further explained to me how by late 1998 a government policy prohibited Border Patrol from entering the sewer. In addition, before this policy, when agents did enter the tunnel, they often returned ill. One time, Pankoke, entered the dark labyrinth

wearing new boots. When he exited, their soles had melted.⁷³ The young people knew of the Border Patrol's reluctance to the enter.

Behind them are other youth that I do not know. Each of them takes a turn, clasping my hand. The gold paint on Roman's fingers glitters. Gold and silver stain the gray cement walls of the ditch. I walk on the cement ground littered with spray paint bottles. This is their home: a filthy sleeping bag, once white shirts and blue jeans growing brown, boxes and wrappers from fast food establishments close by, and, of course, more spray paint cans, some tattered, bent and rusted, others with their price tags still on them.

Roman and another youth who I do not recognize sit in a corner. Roman holds a Coca-Cola can to his nose. He inhales. Deeply. The other youth, I think they call him Loco, holds a blue handkerchief, stained with gold paint, to his nose and mouth, and inhales. I try to not stare. The same medium which they conduct an act of violence against the self, their ritualized huffing of spray paint, becomes one of the mediums in which they claim their freedom.

Roman: Gilberto, What's up?

Loco: What the. . . Who the hell is that?

Roman: Relax bro,' he's a friend.

Loco: Tell him he better go, or I'll jump him.

Roman: No, he's my friend.

⁷³ Pankoke, interview.

As we talk, the two young men and I keep looking up toward the street for the specters of the authorities.

Roman: Don't be afraid Gilberto.

Margarita: Look Gilberto is here.

She beams.

Like the neophyte ethnographer I am, I begin too quickly.

Gilberto: What do you do when you are down here?

Roman: We are free. We are the Free 'Hood).

Victor (interrupting): Somos Libre. We are free.

At another time and space in Nogales, Sonora, when I asked Jaime why he inhaled paint, he replied: "because I like it." I had expected a response along the lines that the inhalation of spray paint anesthetized pain, not words that evoked its pleasure.⁷⁴

Aside from huffing spray paint, another of Barrio Libre's problematic practices was mugging. Indeed, a videotape of this practice filmed in 1995 by the Nogales Police Department prompted the formation of Mi Nuevo Hogar. It shows about fifteen young men at the mouth of an international sewer system in a drainage ditch. One of them is talking to the police who are filming them. Many sit in the drainage ditch or the orifice of Mexico. They chat among themselves.

⁷⁴ "Jaime" [pseud.], communication with author, Nogales, Sonora, December 1998.

Nano, the "dwarf," stands off to a side speaking to the officer who is shooting the video. Nano is a young man whose father left his farm in southern Mexico. The officer asks this progeny of displacement what is going on, and tells Nano, who eleven or twelve years old, to relax. Out of the tunnel a group of Mexican immigrants. The young people of Barrio Libre dart off and descend on the newcomers.

A Day in Barrio Libre

Gilbert: What was a normal day to you in the Barrio Libre down there?

Roman: What do you mean normal... without chasing nor anything? Beta or the Border Patrol were always chasing us. . .

Gilbert: In the morning..

Roman: In the morning, when we would get up... if it was winter... we would do exercise so that we would be warm.

Gilbert: Like what?

Roman: We would do push ups... or things like that...

Gilbert: How was breakfast?

Roman: If we had money we would buy tacos... if not from the trash.

Gilbert: Really... and in the after noon... What did you do in the afternoon?

Roman: If we had money, we would go to our houses... Or, we would buy paint or we would play baseball.

Gilbert: In the tunnel?

Roman: Outside the tunnel... where the Church's is...in Nogales, Arizona

Gilbert: I want to know more... how would you feel when you would do paint?

Roman: I don't know... I would know what to tell you... You would have to do it your self. With paint is just when you're smelling it... the moment you stop smelling it, after five minutes, you feel nothing.

Underground Heroes

On this day in 1998, in between one of his forays into the traffic snaking back about two miles from the US-Mexico border, Guero sticks his squeegee into the back pocket of his worn jeans, and finally decides it is time to talk to me. I have waited for about two hours. He studies my video camera and tape recorder and then politely asks me if I want to record him singing a corrido from his hometown, an agricultural town in Sonora. I fumble with the camera and tape recorder and finally turn them on.

The skinny, fourteen-year-old inhales deeply, and projects. I am surprised at its beauty. He sings (in Spanish):

I live most of my life in the mountains, all season

I know I'm destined to go through life, planting the "bad herb"

But it feels nice when you receive the money

Planting beans, and corn, I never saved a cent

From dawn till dawn I was always working

Those people from the mountain, don't understand and will never understand.

The police can almost kill them, and they still plant the same thing

They don't even let a season go without planting marijuana....

He glances at the video camera and giggles. He tells me that he had forgotten the rest. He then tells me he needs to get back to work, and dives into the sea of slow moving traffic.

On another day, Roman likewise offers to sing a corrido. He performs "el Corrido de Jesus Malverde."

I'm going to sing a song

Of a true story

Of a generous bandit that robbed wherever he wanted to

Jesus Malverde was a man who helped the poor

That is why they defended him when the law sought him

Helping the poor was always his devotion

Because of this, we remember him with great emotion.

His friend was the guilty one, he betrayed him and sold him,

To earn twenty reales that the government paid.

El Bandido Generoso (the Generous Bandit), El Angel de los Pobres (the Angel of the Poor), or El Narcosanton (the Big Drug saint), Jesus Malverde, of whom Roman sung, is a folk saint of northwestern Mexico. He is the patron saint of the poor, the oppressed, and narco-traffickers (Wald 2001: 60-61). Many of young people of Barrio are his followers.

Listen to my 1998 conversation with Margarita and Rebecca. They have just entered Nogales, Arizona from the subterranean world of Barrio Libre.

Gilberto: Who is San Malverde?

Margarita: He is the saint that cares for---

Rebecca: He is the saint that cares for the drug user

Margarita: No. He robbed for the poor.

Gilberto: Do you pray to him?

Margarita: Yes. Sometimes. I carry him with me.

She shows me a pendant with a representation of Malverde.

Rebecca: I [also pray to him] do every now and then.

Gilberto: What do you pray for?

Rebecca: I won't tell you.

She laughs. Roman had long ago told me that he had prayed that his children would not lead the same life that he was living.

Gilbert: Do you know his story?

Margarita: Well he was very poor and he robbed for his family, and for those who did not have much, he robbed from the rich. He

is the saint of thieves . . .and they killed him. In addition, because he was so loved they made him a saint.

Malverde, what Hobsbawm would describe as a social bandit (Hobsbawm 1965), according to legend was executed in 1909 by an “evil governor” and left hanging from a tree as a warning to his followers. One day a mule driver took pity on the desecrated corpse body and arranged it. He asked it for aid in finding some lost mules. The mules were found, and from that time on, people brought stones to lie on the generous bandits grave and received miraculous rewards in return (Wald 2001: 62).

I now turn to an excerpt from another ethnographic interview. Miguel had just returned from Sinaloa. He was excited. He had an opportunity to visit Malverde’s chapel.

Miguel: Ah, yes, then there was this basket. And, they would leave money and drugs.

In these examples, I see “depth,” here at the “bottom” of Mexican-US border society.⁷⁵ I do not conceive of such practices as an investment in “traditional

⁷⁵ Drawing from the implications of contemporary art, architecture, film and literature, in the United States, Marxist literary critic Frederic Jameson maintains that postmodernism constitutes the cultural logic of late capitalism. In a significant passage, Jameson draws on the architecture of the Bonaventure hotel in Los Angeles to argue that the postmodern is a definitional site of a world conceived of largely of surface images, where there is a particular waning of affect and the decentered and fragmented human subject is rendered incapable of conceiving of agency, purpose, or mission (Jameson 1997). José Limón (1994) has drawn from this theoretical trajectory in his ethnography of south Texas Mexicans. Limón criticizes Jameson for his aesthetic sensibility concerning postmodernism; if postmodernism began in the 1960s, surely by now it has reach the artistry of everyday life or the realm of everyday experience. Limón links such processes to the urbanization of south Texas, where he sees depthless Mexicanos, young people’s limited schooling, code switching, the erosion of the belief system as families become displaced.

Mexican culture.” Such characterizations understate the politics of place making and assume a uniform temporal domain unfolding across the world. Instead, I understand the young people’s participating in this practices as an investment in an alternative temporal and social world lived in relation to, and to some degree in opposition to, the dominant forces of neoliberal Mexican society (Chakrabarty 2000; Gupta 1997; Gupta 1995) (Fabian 1983). The young people are engaged actively in the celebration, at least for some of them, of a Robin Hood figure. Of course, the clear contradiction is that the young people in their mugging practices are not necessarily robbing the wealthy. This inconsistency, however, shows that their subjectivity shifts, and that can it be contradictory.

Other examples of cultural depth are worthy of mention. Two other young men who incarnated Barrio Libre, like many other people of Nogales, Sonora, participated in a pilgrimage to Magdalena for the fiesta of San Francisco. Its fifty-five miles from Nogales, Sonora to Magdalena and he and his brother walked it. They tell me that they would do it “every year.”

Also, when I left Mi Nuevo Hogar to pursue graduate study, several of the young people had crafted *corrido* to detail their exploits, “el corrido de Barrio Libre.” Upon my return in 1998, when the intensification of policing of subaltern Mexicans had effectively incarcerated Barrio Libre within Mexico, disciplining

Nonetheless, Limón counters Jameson argument by pointing to a Chicano market, not far from said Bonaventure. “Down there,” Limón locates, “depth *and* affect, laughter, parody, feeling, authentic style, agency and resistance” (Limón 1994: 106-108).

them to dominant geography, Guero and the other remaining *plebes* had forgotten it. Nonetheless, that they would sing corridos, and would represent themselves in one, is telling. Historically, corridos tell a narrative of resistance, particularly in the southwestern United States. This would suggest that they perceive Barrio Libre heroically.

The Incarnation of a Transnational, Free ‘hood

In the early 1990s, the young people of Barrio Libre, discursively and at times actually commandeered a transnational, floating, hood that extended from Nogales, Sonora, to an ethnically Mexican neighborhood of the southwestern United States. Throughout the early 1990s, many of the young people of Barrio Libre in this group would actively flow through the tunnel into Nogales, Arizona, rather than being incarcerated in the dominant geography. There, they would stowaway on trains, or sometimes walk the sixty mile journey to an ethnically Mexican neighborhood of Tucson, Arizona, also called *Barrio Libre*, about sixty miles from the border. The *Barrio Libre* of south Tucson is roughly a square mile in size. South Tucson is a predominately Mexican community, adjacent to, yet independent of, the municipality of Tucson, Arizona. Historically, Tucson’s *Barrio Libre* refers to a neighborhood with porous boundaries that expanded and contracted in accordance to the needs of the larger Tucson community for a Mexican working force (Velez-Ibañez, 1996: 67). In addition, Guadalupe Castillo, MA, a community activist and one of the founding members of Derechos Humanos/the Arizona Border Rights Project, explained in an ethnographic interview that the area’s name also comes from the one time absence of state

repression---as the community was in formation, the Tucson police department would not patrol it.⁷⁶

In the Barrio Libre of Tucson, the young people from the Nogales Barrio Libre often joined up with other subaltern Mexican American youth. According to Roman, they would hang out with them, party, and live. One helped one of my informants find a job. They also introduced several the young people of Barrio Libre of Nogales, Sonora to a community organization that provided meals to the area's homeless meals in South Tucson. Another young man, through this transnational network of Barrio Libre, met up with a mother who worked in the service sector. In return for childcare, he was allowed to stay at the house. In addition, Margarita developed a close friendship with a young woman from a Tucson community organization. She would sometimes stay with her on her visits to Tucson. This active etching for themselves of a place, discursively, symbolically, and in practice reveals that space is both simultaneously a shaping force and a social product (Soja 1989: 7). It also reveals how those the processes of deterritorialization, which I mapped out earlier, also provide social caesuras that demystify dominant modes of geographical imagination, revealing their fragility. The young people's social imaginary registered an entirely different scale of space, that of the opaque global dimension of dematerialized capital,

⁷⁶ Guadalupe Castillo, MA, and founding member of Derechos Humanos/The Arizona Borders Rights Project, communication with author, Tucson, Arizona, July 1999.

facilitated by the Mexican state's embrace of neoliberalism, and formalized under the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Another gap that the young person exploited was the social categories of race. They exploited the hard-won legacy of the Chicano Civil Rights Movement by claiming US citizenship. When they were in Tucson, they would attempt to "blend" in with the local Mexican population. They would exploit their phenotypic similarity with US citizens of Mexican descent.

Listen to Teporon boast of this practice

Teporon: I had just gotten off the train in Tucson Arizona. A green chile (Border Patrol Agent) stopped me and asked, hey you a Mexican. And I said, "Who me? I'm not Mexican. I'm American. And the vato, said "You're American?"

Laughing to me as he continues the story, he says.

Yeah, man, I'm American. And I kept walking. And the pendejo, he believed me. I couldn't believe it.

The prerogatives of performing the racialized US citizenship of Chicano rendered them to some extent invisible to the intensified regimes of immigration policing.

Roman explains.

Roman: If I dress right, and wear baggy, clothes, the chiles think I'm Chicano.

Indeed forms of symbolic currency for the young people were signs of their transnationality. That is, they took great pride in symbols of their defiance the US regulation of movement at this historical moment of people again where

the movement was people in this region was increasingly regulated and channeled. These were clothes that he and others of Barrio Libre picked up in the Tucson sector of Barrio Libre.

Indeed, *cholo* dress was a key marker of belonging to the free hood, particularly for the young men. Much of the tension between the young people and the organization that I used to work for revolved around their attire. Particularly in the 1990s, at moments when the haunting formation of border militarization receded, it signified their active forging of the subaltern, transnational, geography of Barrio Libre. Those clothes most prized were those most obviously signifying either participation or identification with a transnational circuit with Chicanos in the US. Very baggy pants and t-shirts proclaiming Chicano style, Chicano Power, Brown Pride, and the like, were privileged.

Victor, like most of the young people in young people, dressed in this style, baggy pants, sometimes a hair net, tennis shoes, and t-shirts or baseball caps saying “my crazy life,” “mi vida loca,” or “Chicano power,” or a representation of *la Virgen de Guadalupe*, or a marijuana leaf, all in this context transnational icons. These were clothes, which he and others of *Barrio Libre* had shoplifted in one of his many journeys to Wal-Mart in south Tucson.

At the same time, the young people adopted some of the prerogatives of U.S. citizenship. Throughout my time with them, they affirmed a categorical

distinction between themselves and the *chuntaros*, or those immigrants largely from southern Mexico who are deterritorialized by the crisis. As Margarita explained to me, the *chuntaros* are those crossing the boundary, illegally. This assertion marks an ellipsis in the social imaginary of Barrio Libre. For the young people of Barrio Libre, too, undermine the border. Yet, their geographic component of the Barrio Libre social imaginary, its transnational geography, seems to nullify their subjection to the regimes of criminalization in their minds. That is, their subjectivity of Barrio Libre does not render them *chuntaros*, although some have peasant backgrounds, because they incarnate a transnational 'hood. It distances them from the abject positionality of the Mexico's economic crisis, the *campesino* of typically indigenous descent.

Yet, as the following excerpt suggests, invoking "American" or that is claiming U.S. citizenship by the later part of the 1990s was increasingly unsuccessful. Again, the late 1990s are a turning point as immigration became more strictly regulated, and consequently the border came more difficult to cross. Roman narrates an encounter after slipping under the border through the sewer tunnel.

Roman: The Border Patrol was on hill and then they started yelling... we started walking and he says, "Hey, you American citizens?" and then I said, "Oh yeah, I'm American citizen." He said Let me see your papers. Well, I said I don't have my papers, man. I'm American. I'm an American citizen. I told him, Hey, wait up ... wait for me over there, on the bridge. I told him. "I'll see you over there so I can show you my ID" ... and the dude says,

Ok, come with me over there. So, we had to turn ourselves in “voluntarily.”

Laughing, he continues:

Roman: They told us to “Get down motherfucker”...

Bolillo: Back down motherfucker!

Moreover, it is noteworthy the regime of transnational policing occasionally lead to the deportation of US citizens of Mexican descent. During my research, I met two Chicanos who had been deported accidentally. Notably they returned to the United States through the underground terrain of Barrio Libre. That is, they *chose* to return to the sewer system. They also shared the social imaginary of Barrio Libre and, it seemed, sought out the momentary invisibility of undermining the border.

From 1994 through 1996, the young people would move and back forth under the border, defying both the Mexico’s and United States’ regulation of movement and identity, while incarnating their transnational, often submerged, subaltern, space, Barrio Libre (The Free Hood). As the following excerpt suggest, such transnational movement inflected their territorialized imaginary of Barrio Libre.

Juana: Its a ‘barrio’ that goes through all the cities, floating like that, and over that way)

Margarita: Through Tucson, Phoenix, here in Nogales, Arizona, over there in Nogales, Sonora. It’s Barrio Libre *wherever* you want to be. Oh no? Right? And there are members in many places.

Juana: And there are moros in many places

Gilbert: Where

Margarita: There are those from Tucson . . . Phoenix
Phoenix. Where else?

Juana: Chicago, El Paso, all the way to Los Angeles

Gilbert: And all of them are part of *Barrio Libre*?)

Margarita: Yes.⁷⁷

At another time and space, Guero likewise stated.

Guero: Barrio Libre is in Los Angeles and Chicago, and a few
other parts.⁷⁸

As did Franco.

Franco: Barrio Libre is well, wherever, I am.⁷⁹

Nevertheless, such transnational interconnections had a tremendous cost as is evident in the following ethnographic montage. We just had lunch: spaghetti, corn tortillas, bottled salsa, and Coca Cola on this day in 1997. Several of the young men and I play about a half hour of *futbolito* or foosball. Class ended only a few hours ago. I have spent the morning struggling to teach some of the young people to read. We are using the manuals from the Instituto Nacional de Educación para Adultos, or the National Institute for Adult Education, a national literacy program for adults. The texts range in level from basic literacy to secondary schooling. Again, the teacher has missed work. Her husband had

⁷⁷ “Margarita,” and “Juana” [pseud.], communication with author, Nogales, Arizona, July 1998.

⁷⁸ “Guero,” [pseud.], communication with author, Nogales, Sonora, June 1998.

⁷⁹ “Franco,” [pseud.], communication with author, Nogales, Sonora, August 1998.

recently his job as an electrician, another casualty of *la crisis*. She also was frustrated with the young people. Trying to teach the young people of Barrio Libre is challenging. On most days, several of the young people are in stupor, from spray paint or other drugs. Others are exhausted from their night in the tunnel, where they labored in their position as toll collectors, demanding money from immigrants attempting to undermine the border. Some were still high during the class. Attendance is very irregular. Victor, a young man in his early teens with shoulder length curly hair, exits the building and begins a by now familiar chorus. He proclaims: “Soy libre. Soy libre, cabron. Voy a Barrio Libre.” He has recently been diagnosed with hepatitis and despite his yellowing skin, he continues to enter the transnational sewer system, ergo, *Barrio Libre*. His brother, “Rubio,” for his light skins and freckles, has again disappeared. He often took off for weeks *to Barrio Libre*. Many in the organization feared he was ill.

“Gilberto,” who refuses to call me *tocayo*, confronts me, as he does often. He pounds my fist in that part of the handshake that is normally a gentle bump.

“Negro,” a short youth shortly follows. He had quit his job at the nearby market. The store’s owner had told this young man to quit dressing like a *cholo*, a term for rebellious urban young people of Mexican descent.

A moment later, Margarita exits the building. “Cero,” another of the youth, brushes up against her. He starts to grind his groin into her thigh. Exhibiting the complex, polysemy, significance of Barrio Libre depending on the

particular subject-position of the respective young person, she pushes the young man away, and exclaims, “I’m libre, *cabron!*” Many of the young people laugh.

Meanwhile Victor and “Bolio”, a young man who use to sell sandwiches but who lost his job when the establishment went under during *la crisis*, have started play-fighting, pantomiming their experiences with the Tucson police department, a city some sixty miles to the north. Always the loudest and most animated of the youth, Bolillo forms his fingers into the form of pistol. He shouts at Victor in English:

“You there on your knees, mother fucker! On your knees!”

Victor falls to his knees.

In broken English, Bolillo continues: “Hands behind your back”

He then proceeds to “handcuff” Victor.

Victor protests: “Soy libre, cabron.”

Bolillo starts an expletive-filled diatribe. He pretends to strike Victor with the pistol. Later, I ask Victor and Bolillo about this performance. They tell me that they were performing their memories of being in the Barrio Libre of Tucson Arizona.

The young people of Barrio Libre at times would revel in their defiance of state authority. As Juanito, another teenager of Barrio Libre noted, “we like to anger the Border Patrol and also those of Grupo Beta,” referring to the Mexican police force charged with preserving the social order of the border. This effect, as

does all of those of border militarization, call into question Foucault's dismissal of sovereign power, and, in particular, his suggestion that it is a primarily repressive institution. The young people's subjectivity is sparked by their transgression of the US-Mexico border at a moment where population flows are regulated. That is, transgression garners them intensities of omnipotence (Aretxaga 1995).

Barrio Encarcelado

By 2001, several of the young people and I shared an ongoing joke about Barrio Encarcelado or Barrio Torcido, (The "Incarcerated Barrio") due to the large number who had been arrested, or had gone missing, and to their enclosure within the dominant geographic imagination. Moreover, those that did manage to cross the border, which was now done through other means, had to stay for longer periods of time. As the border became increasingly difficult to cross, many began staying in Barrio Libre of Tucson longer and longer often staying in other immigrant or Chicano households in Tucson. Moreover, many ended up in prison. By 1999, Geromino, one of the veterans of Barrio Libre, had reportedly been sentenced to many years in prison for his repeated violations of the border. Willi refused to return to ambos Nogales, preferring to stay in the Barrio Libre of Tucson Arizona rather than returning to Nogales and trying to go back again.

The young people were deterritorialized from Barrio Libre yet territorialized as Mexican subjects. Eventually, the Border Patrol began full time surveillance of the tunnel. Moreover, Ron Saunders and George Lopez, both senior officers in the US Border Patrol had explained to me that the tunnels had become the provenance for major criminal smuggling organizations. The young people, aside from state policing, are thus further displaced from what was one the central places of their chaotic, transnational, and sporadic geography. The tunnel kids had been transformed: some into homeless adults, some into working class adults, and many, many, others have disappeared. It seems likely they are somewhere in either the US or Mexico penitentiary system, where having multiple pseudonyms is a matter of survival. At the same time, in terms of their subjectivity, their geographic imagination gradually lost its dynamism. The young people's sensations of autonomy seem tied to their transnational, subterranean, movements. In the later part of 1998, as the Border Patrol's Operation Safeguard campaign consolidated, their geographic imagination shifted. Their invocation of their freedom and of the free 'hood diminished.

I excerpt the following from an interview in late 1998 to exemplify this transformation discursively. At this point, the tunnels were increasingly surveilled, and to cross the border rendered one, especially as the young people became young adults subject to punitive measures.

Listen to Margarita:

Gilbert: Where is Barrio Libre located?

Margarita: Here in Tucson, in Nogales, Arizona, and Nogales, Sonora.

Gilbert: Before you said that it was bigger...

Margarita: I don't know. But, I think its also in Phoenix.⁸⁰

Before, she had claimed it existed in El Paso, Chicago, and Los Angeles. As the young people were rooted into place, or as the intensified border regulations young diminished their transnational flows, it became a barrio rooted at the border.

⁸⁰ "Margarita," [pseud.], interview.

BAD SUBJECTS AND THE “CONTAMINATING” BORDER CROSSERS

the subaltern has proven us wrong---we do not know her.
(Latin American Subaltern Studies 1995: 146)

Again, I am, therefore I travel, and vice versa.
Guillermo Gomez-Peña (2000)

In this concluding chapter to my manuscript, I explore some of the vexing practices of the young people of Barrio Libre, which as I rendered ethnographically in previous chapters, they often pronounced as forms of freedom. I hold that the subject formation of Barrio Libre requires scholars, particularly border theorists and those dealing with severely marginalized subjects, to re-imagine agency and to represent it in its at times confounding complexities. Barrio Libre, the young people’s repository of images, values, discourses, modes of thinking and feeling, and imagining, as well as their practices, represents the young people’s collective crafting of a material and symbolic subaltern space in a context of sporadic transnational policing and as well as an indeterminate, frequently de-materialized, neoliberal power at the US-Mexico border.⁸¹

The young people’s confounding agency also provides me an opportunity to critically engage with what has come to be called border theory or Chicano border studies (Michaelsen, 1998; Michaelsen, 1997; Michaelsen and Johnson

⁸¹ The analytical category of dignity refers to the “struggle against subordination” (Holloway 1998: 183-184; as cited in Callahan 2003: 70).

1997; Sadowski-Smith; Aldama, 2002; Aldama 2003). I refer to a species of cultural theory associated with the likes of José David Saldívar (1997), Renato Rosaldo (1989), Guillermo Gomez-Peña (1996), Néstor García Canclini (1995), and inaugurated by Gloria Anzaldúa (1987). I maintain that the engagements, entanglements, negotiations, and resistances of the young people of Barrio Libre with the processes of neoliberal subjectification at the contemporary US-Mexico border resonate with some of the central tenets of border theory.⁸² Yet, the young people's confounding agency also point to its failures. Border theory insufficiently grapples with political and economic power at the border as well as the daily lives of borderlanders. While initially a Chicana critique of Chicano cultural nationalist chauvinism, border theory has transformed into an academic imagining of agency garnered in transnational movement that in the current moment, and in its failing to consult ethnographic sources, erases the potentially deforming power of neoliberalism at the border in its privileging of liminality, figurative borders, and hybrid spatial productions. That is, border theory erases the source of the social production of hybridity at the border, Mexico's neoliberal turn, and the concomitant regime of sporadic violence it has produced at the contemporary US-Mexico border. On another front, border theory problematically

⁸² Hybridity is term associated with colonial discourse analysis, particularly the work of Homi K. Bhabha. It stresses the interdependence of colonizer-colonized relations and the mutual constitution of their subjectivities. Bhabha suggests that all cultural enunciations emerge in a space that he calls the "Third Space of enunciation" [Bhabha, 1994 #31: 118].

conflates the subaltern experiences of Mexican American and indigenous Mexican subject positions, ignoring the prerogatives of US citizenship relative to these very processes.

My discussion of border theory and my ethnographic research also afford me the opportunity to grapple with other frameworks that seek to explore agency of severely marginalized groups such as the young people of Barrio Libre. As I will suggest, such scholarship inevitably confronts the legacy of the culture of poverty and its derivatives (Lewis, 1963; Lewis, 1966; Diego Vigil, 1988; Bourgois, 1995; Leacock, 1970; Gordon 1997). Critical scholars have fashioned a variety of textual and theoretical strategies to grapple with such subject matter. Interventions in such debates share a certain level of determinism, or a suggestion that such vexing subjects to varying degrees reproduce dominant social and cultural logics, a presumption of a unified, largely victimized, subject, and a desire to conform to certain preconceived orthodoxies regarding redemptive political practice. It is my contention that such formulations understate the subjective dimensions of politically problematic practices in denying marginalized subjects an at times, shifting and internally contradictory, subjectivity. “Bad” or “contaminating” practices are either elided or explained away. In contrast, I maintain that the vexing practices of the young people of Barrio Libre represent both a struggle to survive within a hierarchical, sometimes oppressive, social system and, for some of the young people, constitute particular,

everyday forms of resistance (Scott, 1985; Scott, 1990; Scott, 1992), a problematic opting out of transnationalist capitalist life ways, that shows the coextension between normative power and deep structural inequities. Thus, drawing from my ethnographic research on actual border subjects and scholarship from other parts of the globe, I suggest that the young people of Barrio Libre “contaminate” notions of agency and resistance found in border theory and they likewise “contaminate” a tendency among some scholars to either idealize or erase confounding quotidian forms of subaltern agency and resistance.

Border Theory

Despite a diverse array of political agendas in the 1960s and 1970s, the appropriation of an array symbols and forms from the Mexican Revolution and elite indigenous history of Mexico mobilized the diverse constituency of the Mexican American community throughout the United States. Yet, it constructed an extremely integrated sense of cultural identity that included particular unstated gender and sexual hierarchies (Darder, 199; Rosaldo, 1994; Saldívar-Hull, 2000; Davalos, 1998; Moraga, 2000; Klor de Alva, 1998: 71). As part of the postmodern turn, many Chicana/o and Latina/o scholars, and others, gained newfound intellectual power in their decenterings and critiques of the singular, monolithic, imaginings of Chicano and related subject formations, embedded with social hierarchies, by drawing on the critical vernacular of border theory.

In *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987), a text which inaugurates border theory, creative writer Gloria Anzaldúa privileges her experience as a queer-identified, Tejana, Chicana, and a person of color, or in a word her subalternity, to deconstruct Chicano cultural nationalism. She writes a transnationalist, Chicana inspired feminism emerging from her experience in the interstices of these multiple intersecting oppositional, political, discourses. Thus, against the mytho-poetic figures like an Aztec warrior prince or twentieth century border warriors of Chicano cultural nationalism, Anzaldúa's invokes *Coatlicueh*, an indigenous goddess, as the foundational figure for a New Mestiza Culture. In so doing, she inaugurates a new, feminist-inspired, anti-essentialist, cultural homeland. New mestiza culture also works "below" other powerful discourses----*mestizaje* and *indigenismo*---the Mexican state's uncritical narratives of Indo-Hispano fusion that understated its participation in simultaneous domination of the country's indigenous peoples. While some analysts understand her as constructing a *mestizaje* from below (Hale, 2002), others see her as erasing hierarchies between Mexican Americans and subaltern, often indigenous, Mexican subjects (Córdoba, 1995-96 #590: 151, 154; Saldaña-Portillo, 2003 #691: 279). Anzaldúa forces readers to confront the politics of reception in her use of a variety of languages (Visweswaran, 1994: 133). She textually performs intersectionality, poetically rendering the often conflicting subject effects of heteronormative, US nativism, and Mexican, and Chicano

nationalism (Denzin 1997). In the interstices of these discourses, Anzaldúa forges the foundational figure of *la nueva mestiza*. Several scholars have suggested that Anzaldúa writes ethnography of the border (Alvarez, 1995; Lavie, 1996; Rosaldo, 1989; Visweswaran, 1994), and indeed her autobiographical montages and textualized renditions of intersectionality, are reflective of an ethnographic pulse characteristic of other historically marginalized groups, dissuaded from pursuing careers in the social sciences and related disciplines. On the other hand, José Limón maintains that she empties the border of its political significance (Limón, 1998).

Yet, border theory, I suggest, quickly transforms. Written shortly after Anzaldúa's *Borderlands*, Emily Hicks' *Border Writing: The Multidimensional Text* (1991) marks a conceptual shift in border theory. Hicks writes that that she will appropriate the "*alterity that comes from displacement and suffering [of immigrants and borderlanders]*" (my emphasis). Moreover, she characterizes reterritorialization, or the finding of place, as a "reactionary, imperialist, impulse" (Hicks, 1991; as cited in Martinez, 2002).

Similar theoretical premises can be gleaned in the work of José David Saldívar (Saldívar, 1997). Drawing on a wide variety of social theory, including Paul Gilroy (1993), Deleuze and Guattari (1996), as well as Timothy Dunn's *Social Science of Border Militarization* (1996), Saldívar privileges liminality, figurative borders, and hybrid spatial production. For example, he suggests that

the border has become the new poststructural geographical trope that is populated by hybrid border-crossers, liminal figures, and migratory subjects as characterized in the new borderlands subject, *la nueva Mestiza* (Saldívar, 1997 #38: 55). Pace Saldívar, immigrants live in constant fear of deportation and racialized police violence in the United States in his notion of the panoptic barrioscape. As is evident in the work of Saldívar and Hicks, and indicative of latter manifestations of border theory, the political intervention of border theory is a valorization fluidity or cultural flows be it between spaces, nation-states, or subject positions.

In *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis* (1989), Renato Rosaldo incorporates border theory into anthropology. At first, I want to note, however, that Rosaldo's influential text stages my research in his suggestion that borders are not analytically empty zones, but sites of creative cultural practice. Rosaldo echoes Anzaldúa's critique of Chicano ethno-nationalism in his critique of the discipline's structural functionalist residues, or its search for autonomously developed, deep, coherent, patterns of a uniformly shared culture that are unaffected by hierarchical divisions and quotidian practices. Nevertheless, in the current juncture of neoliberal governmentality along the actual US-Mexico border, his metaphorization of the border, or his elevation of it to a theoretical device for which to explore discourses of multiculturalism, proves ideologically

problematic and ethnographically untenable.⁸³ It erases the mundane oppressions, the everyday hierarchies for borderlanders (Sanchez, 1998), and profound history of resistances along the particular sites of the international boundary.

Néstor García Canclini offers a Latin Americanist analysis of border theory. Originally published in 1989 under the title of *Culturas híbridas: Estrategias para entrar y salir de la modernidad*, research for the text occurred before the savage disruption of the peasantry and indigenous peoples in Mexico due to the neoliberal economic policies and the concurrent intensification of border militarization. As the title to his text suggest, García Canclini privileges hybridity and, significantly, the consumption of hybrid cultural forms. In his analysis, such practices denote the disruption of the binary between the traditional and the modern, which has pervaded Latin American Studies. Problematically, however, he fails to closely examine the social production of hybridity in the particular, conflictual, histories of US-Mexico relations. Indeed, the processes of deterritorialization seemingly fascinate him. They configure the production of a hybrid aesthetic, evidenced in Tijuana and Latin American pop culture in the United States. He writes:

multidimensional migration are the other factor that relativizes the binary and polar paradigm in the analysis of intercultural relations . . . Are the two million South Americans who, according to most conservative statistics, left Argentina, Chile, Brazil, and Uruguay

⁸³ Another ethnographer of the US-Mexico border, Josiah Heyman, is similarly troubled with the metaphorization of the border (Heyman 1994) Heyman, 1991; Heyman, 1994; Heyman, 1995; Heyman, 1998; Heyman, 1999; Heyman, 1999).

in the seventies because of ideological persecution and economic suffering? (sic.) (García Canclini, 1995 #680: 230).

In its rush to decenter, hegemonic, monologic cultural practices of the nation-state and similar dynamics in chauvinistic manifestations of Chicano cultural nationalism, border theory, paradoxically, “keeps the border immigrant moving” (Martinez, 2002: 58). Notably, in many ways, this tension between mobility and fixity replicates neoliberal discourses of globalization that are designed to promote minimal state intervention (Sadowski-Pankoke, 2002b: 3), and which, as I argued in Chapter one and two of this manuscript, deterritorialized and subalternized a large segment of Mexico’s popular sectors and rendered them subject of transnational policing. In other words, border theory understates economic displacement largely responsible for these fluid, mobile conditions. Neoliberal capitalism does not operate through a simple repression of movement. It operates through a double movement: it must first disrupt cultures and institutions, which interfere with it. Then, it engineers an encounter between the labor power of the deterritorialized worker and the deterritorialized wealth of capital (Young, 1995: 169). This is to say, to return to earlier theme, the effectivity of the subjective experience of neoliberal power at the US-Mexico border is that the state and neoliberal forms of accumulation take decidedly spectral or invisible forms, evidenced in the dematerialization of capital relations, and the concomitant mystification of production, where its processes are pushed

out of sight, in relations of flexible accumulation (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000; Harvey 1989: 159), whose subjects, when displaced, then face a sporadic regime of violence in crossing the US-Mexico divide.

Border theorists have transmuted Anzaldúa's creative cultural production of *Borderlands/La Frontera: la nueva Mestiza* from a fluid subject formation, open to the socially different, or a multiethnic, transgender, politics of community, to a fixation with flows at the historical moment where neoliberal processes have formalized mass social displacements. Thus, it valorizes the nomadic, migratory subject, the subject of multiple loyalties, the bearer of money, goods, information, images, and the movements of ideas across the border, as an agent of subaltern transformative politics. Border criticism thus imagines literal or symbolic forms of trans-border movement as oppositional to state-based nationalist ideologies and oppressive nation-state structures. Border spaces, practices, and subjects, variants of border theory suggest, defy a central aspect of state power----to define, to discipline, to control, and to regulate populations (Sadowski-Pankoke, 2002a; Sadowski-Pankoke, 2002b).

Transnational practices and communities, even for the severely marginal young people of Barrio Libre, constitute a site where the deterritorialized struggle in their everyday lives to markedly transform their world. Yet, in the context of the neoliberal governmentality of the US-Mexico border, agency, as in the case of the young people's of Barrio Libre, may take confounding forms. The young

people's agency as well as the uprooting of several millions of Mexicans due to the nation's neoliberal economic policies thus suggest the need for caution in the sometimes celebratory renditions of immigrant agency as in border theory.

Indeed, the young people's problematic practices, their inhalation of spray paint and their active participation in the production of border violence, as ethnographic subjects of the Arizona-Sonora border "contaminate" border theory. At first glance, their subterranean, transnational movement, the young people incarnate the nomadic, migratory subject position privileged in border theory. Yet, in their terms, the young people's categorical distinction between themselves as members of Barrio Libre and other immigrants, which they exploit in an idiom of freedom, in this respect, proves instructive. *The subject position of the abject migrant, the one imagined as transformative in border theory, is not only resisted, but becomes the subject of their violence.*

At the same time, the young people take part in the hybrid spatial productions; they imagine and, for a while, practiced being part of a transnational 'hood, moving from Nogales, Sonora, under the border, to the Barrio Libre of Tucson, Arizona. The adoption of the name *Barrio Libre* in tandem with their subaltern, subterranean trans-border movements, and their alliances with marginal Chicanos resonates with some of the tenets of border theory. Yet, as both the need to live and travel in this terrain in the darkness of the sewer and their ingestion of drugs and spray paint suggest, to do so took a tremendous toll. Nevertheless, the

expansive, dynamic, imaginative, geography of Barrio Libre also gestures to a central problem with border theory. The young people seek refuge, a safe place free of the impingements of social violences, of which I suggest the immaterial processes of deterritorialization is central. The young people do not seek the freedom of continuous movement. As can be seen in the youth's attempt to find freedom in a transnational sewer system, the young people seek to occupy a place, any place, no matter how fleetingly. In this regard, consider that in the early to mid-nineties, whenever I asked the youth where they were going, inevitably, they would reply: "Voy a *Barrio Libre*" (I am going to the Free Hood.). Indeed, for much of early 1990s, until Operation Safeguard consolidated in the region, wherever they were going, be it, Nogales, Sonora, the tunnels, or Tucson, they were going to what they imagined as *Barrio Libre*. *They always, it seemed, were in their place*. Wherever they were going be it to the streets to work the informal economy washing automobile windshields with rags for a few cents, selling small packets of gum, shining shoes, or just be "libre," "hanging out" or "partying," they were *in Barrio Libre*.

As evidenced in their day-to-day spatial imaginations, the amorphous geography of *Barrio Libre*, its creative, spatial production, marked their relative autonomy to the state, while simultaneously enunciating a quest for place.⁸⁴ Such dynamics are also in other transnational ethnographies. Studies on Mexican

⁸⁴ Martinez writes that border theory "keeps the immigrant moving" (Martinez, 2002 #588: 60).

immigration, for example, have taken a turn away from studies on assimilation to immigrant agency and their struggle in making transnational space into place (Chavez 1991; Chavez 1994; Chavez 1997; Cockcroft 1986; Galarza 1964). Michael Kearney conceptualizes “transnational ethnicity,” and Roger Rouse has written of the hyperspatial practices of Oaxaca’s Mixtecos (Kearney 1991; Rouse 1991). Relatedly, Carlos Velez-Ibanez’s theorizes a decidedly northward “cultural bumping” of northern Mexican culture on Southern Arizona Chicano culture (Velez-Ibañez 1996). A similar phenomenon is evident in other regions of the world. Arjun Appadurai posits a 'global production of locality' where transnational flows of people, goods, and knowledge become imaginative resources for creating communities and 'virtual neighborhoods' (Appadurai 1996). Aihwa Ong has emphasizes the agential quality of transnational interconnectivity [Ong, 1999 #733]. Yet, rather than emphasizing the freedom of continuous movement, which underpins much of border theory, and which is must be emphasized validates the larger processes of neoliberal deterritorialization, immigrants, and the young people, seek to make ‘place’ for themselves. When the contemporary border is reckoned with not as metaphor for postcolonial or postmodern identity construction, subaltern subjects historical and social particularities necessitate a radical re-visioning of border theory.

Here I should note that the recent scholarly interest in the dramatic, horrific, aspects of border violence, namely the unsolved murders and

disappearances of over 300 young women in Ciudad Juarez, have started to make their way into academic work (Gaspar de Alba, 2003). Such work largely understates the particular historical set of economic, political and cultural arrangements under twentieth-century capitalism that is embedded in social institutions and social relations through a nexus of historically produced, race, gender, and class inequalities at the US-Mexico border, and objectified in the daily forms of structural and actual violence experienced by the young people of *Barrio Libre* and other subaltern border subjects.⁸⁵ Moreover, the discourses and practices of the two young women of Barrio Libre, Juana and Margarita, cut against the feminist inspired emancipatory narratives of border theory.

This point returns the works of Pablo Vila (2000; 2003). We are largely in agreement that border theory fails to account for the reinforcement of the border, or the effects of border militarization. Yet, we diverge over the political dimension of border theory. Vila's recent work and his ethnography elide the feminist intervention that inspired border theory. Without border theory's embrace of the migrant subject to intervene in the chauvinism of Chicano nationalism, the subject formation of Barrio Libre, and its vexing gender dimensions would be taken for granted. Moreover, Vila's accentuation of the tensions and contradictions between Mexicans and Mexican Americans is devoid of a discussion of racialization processes embedded in daily experiences of the

⁸⁵ I am drawing from Green's definition of structural violence (Green, 1999 #420: 84).

intensification of policing at the border, which certainly contributes to border Mexican's alienation from Mexico, and his work is absent any notion of the profound historical and ongoing transnational political movements (Vila 2000; Vila 2003).

Thus, as border theory becomes exported into southern Mexico (Hernandez Castillo, 2001), I am calling for a decentered, post-NAFTA border theory from the critically incarnated border, or a recognition that life as lived is indelibly produces theory (Gramsci 1992). It would include a more lucid understanding of culture in the as everyday life, as well as an engagement with the border's social movements against border theory's largely literary genealogy. Furthermore, it would re-ground the border against its rendering as a metaphor for Chicano/a identity and seriously reckon with the production and critical engagement with subaltern Mexican border subjects in the context of racialization, and the structural and actual violences of the US-Mexico border.

Bad Subjects and Victimology

Inevitably, cultural writing about social marginality, poverty, and problematic practices among abject Mexicans calls forth Oscar Lewis and his oft-criticized notion of the culture of poverty (Lewis 1963). For Lewis, utter poverty produced certain "cultural" patterns of self-destructive behavior like alcoholism and violent behavior. Lewis likewise intimated that social and psychological

characteristics prevented upward mobility of his research subjects, the impoverished Sanchez family of Mexico City (Lewis 1963). Moreover, he suggested that future generations of the poor would remain impoverished due to the deep patterns of this culture (Lewis 1963: xxiv-xxvi). Indeed, culture, in this conceptualization, refers to a form of self-reproducing---not socially produced---disenfranchisement (Valentine 1968). The theoretical premises of culture of poverty share much with the then predominant school of anthropology, or structural functionalism that cultures----or in the case of culture of poverty----subcultures---are autonomous, and self-organizing.

Many hold Lewis responsible for initiating a resurgence of Social Darwinism in the academy, propelling neoliberal and neo-conservative scholarship. It is in the policy arena, however, where Lewis' ideas proved extremely volatile. Derivatives of the culture of poverty became central to the debate concerning the status of Black and other urban poor during the 1960's (see: Moynihan 1965). By the mid 1980's, a number of policy makers, scholars, and the media had revitalized "Culture of Poverty" theories. They also legitimated the federal government's War on Poverty in the 1960s (Gutman 2002: 29).

Critical scholars have developed an array of innovative theoretical and textual interventions to engage the themes of poverty and social marginality. One example of this strain of thought that is of particular relevance to my research is the hegemonic ideology and racialized subjects framework. Its premises are that

dominant ideologies such as individualism, hedonism, materialism, consumerism, and legitimized violence have “penetrated” the culture of racialized subalterns.⁸⁶ Variants of this theoretical strain can be found in the work of Felipe Bourgois whose ethnography on crack dealers in a barrio in New York, he maintains, represents the dominant cultural logic at work among his research subjects. He holds that New York crack dealers reproduce much of the dominant values of corporate America. In a similar fashion, Comaroff and Comaroff, suggest that in contemporary neoliberal society, young people of color, who are denied full wage citizenship, grow frustrated and “take to the streets,”

often the only place where, in an era of privatization, a lumpen public can be seen and heard. The profile of these populations reflects also the feminization of post-Fordist labor, which further disrupts gender relations and domestic reproduction among working people, creating a concomitant 'crisis of masculinity': a crisis as audible in U.S. gangsta rap as in South African gang rape,” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000).

Edmund T. Gordon has critiqued the determinism embedded in these frameworks. They are, he holds, scholarly reproductions of hegemonic commonsense (Gordon 1997). Nonetheless, such critiques have produced a reluctance among scholars to grapple with the complexities of social marginality and social power, ceding such scholarship to a narrow, normative, commonsensical perspectives (see: Wilson, 1996).

⁸⁶ I am drawing from (Gordon 1997), particularly his explication and critique of what he calls the hegemonic ideology and black masculinity thesis as a misguided theoretical and political strategy of anti-racist scholarship.

Some of the Chicano intelligentsia have adopted the framework of social war to grapple with politically ‘problematic’ behavior, seizing on the work of Antonio’s complex notions of class struggle (Gramsci, 1992), and the anti-colonialist fury of Franz Fanon (Fanon, 1963). Limón and Callahan (2003), whose ideas inform much of my own, hold that the historical marginalization of Mexicans in the United States as a conquered population generates acts of questionable political character, social banditry early in the twentieth and later more mundane, sometimes self-inflicted acts of war, frequently manifested in male-dominant culture practices and cultural imaginaries, suffused by relations of dominance (Limón 1994: 15-16; see: Ramonet 2002). Relying on Foucault’s notion of racism and war, which I reviewed in chapter 2, Callahan identifies non-episodic conflict, and quotidian forms of conflict, as well as social and structural violence, as constitutive of social war in a productive intervention surrounding the discursive legacy of defining this and related phenomena (Callahan 2003: xiii-xiv). Callahan continues that one means of “claiming victory in the social war that dominates the US-Mexico Borderlands is the capacity to define conflict” (2003: 12). Chela Sandoval, meanwhile, finds the literary productions of Cherrie Moraga (2000) and Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) as testaments to social war (Sandoval, 2000).

Nevertheless, with the exception of Sandoval (2000), the social war framework fails to account for intersectionality. Subaltern agents, it is assumed, largely inhabit predetermined, oppositional, subject positions in the social war

framework. I maintain that the Manichean premises of social war frameworks disallow sufficient grappling with subjectivity, that complex suturing of consciousness, political identifications, feelings, designs, plans, intentions, affects, pleasures, and fantasies. In the current moment, as my research suggests, subjects are multiply positioned in relations of power and subordination, disrupting the resistance-accommodation binary. The spectral qualities of neoliberal power within a legacy of conquest and colonization contaminate scholarly imaginings of morally oppositional subject positions. The aforementioned reluctance to grapple with severe social marginality on the subject's terms, rather than as part of a preordained political narrative, thus may reproduce normative social power, a power complicit with structural inequities. The process of neoliberal subjectification, pervasive as they are, contaminates stable notions of domination and resistance, agents and structures. In the current moment of neoliberalism, where power infuses social relations from a variety of institutions, structures, and subject positions, subaltern subjects, are unequally marginalized and in shifting coordinates of power. Moreover, they are not necessarily engaged in redemptive political practice. A more nuanced understanding of agency must take into account the compelling, contradictory, and pernicious nature of dominant ideologies (Rosaldo 1989: 73) as well as the historically and politically shifting vectors of subjectivity, power, and difference. Furthermore, the social war framework has residues of Marxian influenced

notions of false consciousness.⁸⁷ Moreover, in the case of my research project, however, projecting the young people of Barrio Libre solely in terms of social war would romanticize their active participation in relations of violence.⁸⁸ As I have represented, the young people take the freedom to mug, and to consume drugs as some of these liberties.

I should also note that not all subjectivities of the young people are formed in the same way, some exercise a radically conditioned “choice” to incarnate Barrio Libre, consciously suturing themselves to this subject formation.⁸⁹ Yet, it does seem that many, following my argument in earlier chapter, are disciplined toward it, and through their particular experiences and designs, assume it as a complex array of images, discourses, and values, which provides them space and avenues for survival, and at times pleasures, in a increasingly transnational world that largely negates them.

⁸⁷ This latter point is informed by Ranajit Guha’s critique of Hobsbawm for his suggestion that peasants are immature political actors (Guha 1988b; Guha 1999; compare Hobsbawm 1965)

⁸⁸ I am drawing on George Marcus’ critique of Paul Willis’ Learning to Labour (Marcus and Fischer 1986) (Willis 1977) (Limón 1994:9) and on (Kapur 2002).

⁸⁹ The ideas of Stuart Hall provide an avenue to reconcile power’s productivity and its repressivity with respect to subjectification. In his writings and interviews, Hall suggests the arbitrary, historically contingent, nature of identity formations, or processes of identification, through his notion of conjectural articulation (Grossberg 1996; Hall 1986; Hall 1996). Hall defines identity to refer to the meeting point, the point of *suture*, between on the one hand the discourses and practices which attempt to ‘interpellate’, speak to us or hail us into place as social subject of particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be ‘spoken’ (Hall 1996: 5-6).

Hall’s theorization of identity formation suggests a degree of conscious positioning, what I have called choice, for some in the young people’s actualization as Barrio Libre, their subject formation, which resonates with at least some of the young people’s desires to be in Barrio Libre.

Interpretive debates in other southern regions perhaps provide an avenue in which to explore this impasse. I turn to scholarship on another disturbing practice, which offers ideas useful for my discussion. Lati Mani maintains that the practice of sati or widow burning in colonial India became an alibi for the colonial civilizing mission as well as a significant juncture for indigenous autocritique. Nonetheless, the women who burned were neither the subject nor the object of the debates upon its prohibition (Mani, 1998 #755: 2).⁹⁰ Mani holds that

within the discourse on *sati*, women are represented in two mutually exclusive ways: as heroines able to withstand the raging blaze of the funeral pyre or else as pathetic victims coerced against their will into the flames . . . These poles preclude the possibility of a female subjectivity that is shifting, contradictory, or inconsistent. This reductive and binary view of agency is unable to capture the dynamic and complex relation of women to social and familial expectations. In particular, the constrained notion of agency that underwrites the representation of women as victims discursively positions women as objects to be saved---never as subjects who act, even if within overdetermined and restricted conditions (1998: 162).

A similar process unfolds with an analysis of ‘bad’ practices. Socially unacceptable practices are reduced in most analyses seeking to explain away ‘contaminating’ practices by arguing they are derivative of social power or

⁹⁰ This point resonates with much of the contemporary debates regarding terrorism. The debate on terrorism tends to revolve around two poles, the cultural and the political. As Mamdani writes, “*Culture talk* seeks the explanation for the deed in the culture of the doer. In contrast, *political talk* tends to explain the deed as a response to issues, to a political context of unaddressed grievances . . . both share a common predisposition: for both, political terror is an *inevitable response*, either in the grip of a premodern culture or in the face of terrible oppression. Neither point of view thinks of political terror as also an *act of choice*” (2004:1).

evidence of their victimization.⁹¹ In this respect, Ratna Kapur has analyzed the idea of the victim subject. She refers to how in the liberal Western imagination, Third World females have been positioned almost exclusively as a victim. They are typically portrayed as victims of “their culture.” Such notions reinforce stereotyped and racist representations of said culture and privilege the culture of the West.⁹² Moreover, the focus on the victim subject relies on the depiction

⁹¹ Another relevant debate for this manuscript is the debates regarding feminism and multiculturalism [Okin, 1999 #772]. Okin held that concludes that although Western cultures still practices sex discrimination, and notes that all of the "world's cultures have distinctly patriarchal pasts," she maintains that some, mostly Western, liberal cultures have departed far further from these pasts than others. Leti Volp argues that opposing multiculturalism and feminism in a discourse of "feminism verses multiculturalism" premised on a serious of logical (and representational) flaws. Aside from those which she enumerates such as the notion that Third world and immigrants communities are commonsensically imagined as sites of aberrant violence and that representations of minority and Third world women are conflated, Culture is invoked to explain forms of violence against Third World or immigrant women while culture is not similarly invoked to explain forms of violence that affect mainstream Western women. Moreover, by positioning "other" women as perennial victims, it denies their potential to be understood as emancipatory subjects and diverts one gaze from the sexism indigenous to the United States and conceals structural forces that shape cultural practices like global inequalities, the privileging of gender difference over other forms of oppression, and a focus on cultural violence or subordination makes it difficult to see forces beyond culture, the issues affecting immigrant/third world women that receive most attention are those that appear most identifiable relative to women of the West [Volpp, 2001 #737].

⁹² Melissa Wright's publication on the Juarez tragedy helps capture the multiple manifestations of this phenomena with respect to the border. She draws on Uma Narayan's influential notion of "death by culture" (Narayan 1997). Wright explores certain dominant discourses regarding the tragic victims of serial murders in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. One example is a narrative of excessive female sexuality, a dual life narrative, where women lead "double lives" where by night she reveals her "inner prostitute" (457). Another narrative "casting" Ciudad Juarez as a site "cultural values [that] have been contaminated by greedy and liberal forces emanating from the United States." Wright argues that "the logic internal to this narrative explains that exposure to the Unites States has eroded traditional Mexican values to such a degree that young women are offering themselves, through their impudent behavior, to their murderers" (457), rendering the problem a cultural one found in the girls themselves, where evidence of 13 old girls out at night point not to economic need but to cultural problems. Death by culture narrative frequently invoked by maquiladoras spokespersons: "The maquila narrative depicts the murdered women as cultural victims of machismo combined with Third World feminine sexual drives and rural migrant naiveté" gains credence with not just "city's" but border's long-standing reputation as cultural wasteland.

women in the Third World as perpetually marginalized and underprivileged. Finally, the victim subject and the focus on violence invite state remedies and responses that have little to do with promoting women's rights. Thus, a related concern is that the victim subject position has invited protectionist, and conservative, responses from the state. Moreover, in minimizing the agency of Third World women, scholars negate their multiple subjectivities (Kapur 2002). Indeed, many of these same premises inform much of Western feminism's cultural chauvinism, where immigrant and Third World cultures are cast as sites of "aberrant violence" (Volpp 2001), and by implication, women are its victims.

I suggest that my interventions somewhat resonate with Kapur's ideas. The young people of Barrio Libre active participation in muggings of other Mexicans disrupts notions of victimhood. That is, they victimize other subaltern sectors. It leads to the uncomfortable question: what are the implications for scholars invested in subaltern subjects, such as border theorists, when the subaltern is not necessarily a "good" subject? The anthropology of Lila Abu-Lughod has offered an intervention in this respect from within the debates of subaltern studies. Although not directly addressing politically problematic practices, she draws on Foucault's first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, specifically his assertion that "where there is power, there is resistance." She suggests that Foucault uses such hyperbole to underscore power's productivity (Abu-Lughod, 1990: 95-96). Therefore, she suggests conceptualizing resistance as

a diagnostic for power relations. I now show how this discussion plays out on the ground.

“Choosing” Barrio Libre

It is late in 1998. As I leave Mi Nuevo Hogar, I run into Roman.

“Record this.” he commands.

“I want to talk. Be sure to put this in your book,” he seethes.

I have not seen Roman for months. He explains to me that he had gone to Guadalajara to find his family. In Guadalajara, his brother had a connection, and he was able to find work as a security guard. Yet, he had missed girlfriend and their children, who he had left in Nogales. Upon his return, he and his girlfriend, Margarita, had sought to go to Barrio Libre norte. They were caught. She was brought to the border and released under what is called voluntary departure. Roman, on the other hand, had lied about his age. Reflective of his and other’s cunning dealings with power, for the strategic survival skills, Roman claimed to be sixteen, and, thus was incarcerated the juvenile authority for several months. Had he told them his real age, he would have been incarcerated for up to a year.

Apparently, the IDENT system, which Officer Pankoke had spoken so highly about in Chapter two, and was designed to provide border authorities the subject’s arrest history and detail the number of times the subject has been apprehended by the INS, where he or she was caught and by whom and whether it

was for an immigration or criminal offense, was not full proof. He claimed to be sixteen, and, thus was incarcerated the juvenile authority for several months. Had he told them his real age, he may have been incarcerated far longer.

Roman was held in a juvenile authority run by the for profit institution of the Correction Corporation of America. As in Mexico, the United States is now a neoliberal government. It too, has privatized formerly public entities, and, at this current moment in Roman's history, it is evidenced by his experience in the US penal system. Not even the politically pessimistic Foucault could dream up the contemporary scenario of a for profit institution, in the business of producing docile bodies, with a genealogical tie to population management in the form of immigration controls. Such corporations began in the 1980s with a Reagan era sponsored experiment in Houston and Laredo, Texas, to house INS detainees. As of 1999, the Correction Corporation of America, the same corporation that had been charged with incarcerating Roman, controlled some five percent of all US prison beds (Parenti 1999a: 218).

Yet, while Foucault would maintain that discipline produces docility, this is hardly the effect in this scenario. Roman's body has the scars of transnational neoliberal governance. It is evidenced in his powerful hunched shoulders, and tight jaw, the soon to be tattoo of "la vida es una sueno" that he had drawn in excruciating detail to be put on his taut right arm and "Libre." It also has marked him, psychically, as argued in Chapter one, helping shape his neoliberal inflected

transnational imagination, his and the other's of Barrio Libre equation of free movement with liberation as well as occasional acts of violence and substance abuse, in the context of the unnerving transnational governmentality of the border. It is also evident in his speech: our whole conversation this day was in English. Although Roman had spoken it before, spending time in the US penitentiary system had provided him a space and time to improve it. It is now far better than my pocho Spanish. It provides him another tool to pass as a Chicano when he crosses the border again.

I ask Roman to tell me how he was caught. He explains.

Roman: In Arizona, I was waiting for the [expletive] train. We had just crossed the border, through the desert, and they saw us I guess.

Why didn't you go through the tunnel?

The tunnel is too hot.

Ron Saunders and George Lopez, both senior officers in the US Border Patrol and both are former military only days before, had told me how the tunnels had become a site for major criminal smuggling organizations. The young people, aside from state policing, are thus further displaced from what was one the central places of their chaotic, transnational, and sporadic geography. The tunnel kids have been transformed: some into homeless adults, some into working class adults, and many, many, others have disappeared. It seems likely they are

somewhere in either the US or Mexico penitentiary system, where having multiple pseudonyms is a matter of survival.

I ask Roman, where he is staying. He replies

Roman: In the street... I don't wanna go back to Guadalajara.... I don't wanna go back . . .I want to be here...in Barrio Libre. I want to maintain contact with my dad. I want to find a job, raise my daughters, marry Margarita. But I'm going to need more papers... like high school paper... but I only did primary... (Elementary school). In Guadalajara I got that job because my brother works in the "judicial." I want to be with my barrio, Barrio Libre.

What is of particular significance for this discussion is Roman's desire to not return home. He desires to stay in the Barrio despite what many would see as a better option. Roman's home in Guadalajara, at least as he describes it, is not the impoverished site of conventional narratives about "street youth" of the bourgeois imagination. He was not forced onto the streets to avoid painful realities of deprivation. That is to say, in some way, he "chooses" or consciously incarnates Barrio Libre.⁹³

Another young man, it seems, made a similar choice. He appeared to come from a reasonably stable family. Indeed, when he first started spending time with the young people of Barrio Libre, his mother came by Mi Nuevo Hogar and expressed her frustration. As Tortas tells me, he found the young people's freedom exciting. "I wanted to be free. I wanted to be in Tucson, in Barrio Libre."

⁹³ I am drawing from Kamran Ali's observation that agency is premised on notion of an individuated subject and that the very notion of choice is itself socially constructed (Ali 2002). Moreover, Lati Manna has shown how in the context of postcolonial India women at some level exercised choice in their decision to commit suicide . . .they were not forced (1998).

As this point, I wish to re-introduce the hermanos Gonzalez. Rubio and Gabriel, the older two, seemed to have, “chosen” to incarnate Barrio Libre, at some level, thus exercising agency. Rubio, it turns out, despite being part of Barrio Libre, and thus literally undermining the border through the subterranean terrain of the barrio, had at one point in his life a “green card.” It was confiscated by the Tucson Police Department. Yet, he enjoyed crossing the border “illegally,” and, by implication, he enjoyed defying population management techniques.

I was in Barrio Libre (in Tucson). Being Libre. I was caught shoplifting at Walmart. The police officers tore up my papers and deported me.”

“Why don’t you get another one?”

Rubio shrugs his shoulders to this question. Throughout my time working with the young people, he never sought to get a green card. Defying state regulation, it seems, or “being libre,” it seems, brought with it a certain charge. This analysis is also informed by Rubio’s younger brother, Gabriel. He told me that he

liked to anger the authorities, those from Beta and the migra. I like to be in the tunnel and frustrate them.

As Gabriel’s commentary suggests, although many of the young people frequently experienced violence and intimidation in the regime of transnational governance, their collective defiance and incarnation of an alternative spatialized imaginary invested in freedom was of significance to them. Of course, this point

must be countenanced with the stark reminders of the day-to-day struggle of the young people in a field of sporadic state violence. Recall Margarita's acquaintance of the officers of Grupo Beta, who had put a gun to her head. As I argued in Chapter two, I find a relationship between the day-to-day subject effects of policing and oppression that the young people and their neoliberal informed, multiple, notions of freedom and their anti-hyper-visibility practices require reiteration.

Some of the young women of Barrio Libre similarly "choose" this subject formation. Yet, their experiences as marginal young women on the border lead them to incarnate Barrio Libre differentially. As with the case where menses of women prisoners became symbolic weaponry in a prison revolt in Northern Ireland (Aretxaga, 2000), the specificity of the young women's body becomes a potent terrain in political and symbolic struggle. Under the current management of lives and populations at the neoliberal US-Mexico border, immigrant women have reported a relatively high incidence of sexual abuse at the hands of the border authorities according to advocacy groups who have examined human rights abuses at the border (Falcón 2001; Luibhéid 2002). Such accounts, moreover, are like undercounted, given the unrepresentability of the crime, as immigrant women, fearing retribution are unlikely to report such crimes. Moreover, the appalling situation in Ciudad Juarez, where hundreds of young, brown, underprivileged young women, have gone missing or been murdered over the past

dozen years, speaks to the state's blind-eye, its disinvestments from social responsibility (Gaspar de Alba 2003; Wright 1999). In a related vein, much of the more critical scholarship on border militarization has underscored its gender consequences. As the journey has become more difficult, women are less likely to undergo it (Brownell 2001; Chavez 1997; Luibhéid 2002; Wilson 2000).

In this regard, it would be easy to construct a narrative about the young people of Barrio Libre, particularly the young women, as victimized subjects. Yet, my emphasis on transnational governmentality and Mexico's neoliberal globalizing economy disrupts imaginings that the young people are victimized by a singularly national Mexican or United States culture. Instead, I represent them as subjects of a sporadic form of transnational policing, with roots in the specific history of the US-Mexico borderland's history of conquest and colonization, which articulates with immaterial and material qualities of transnational neoliberal power, and their confounding grapplings with this power. Moreover, I have highlighted gaps in the transnational governmentality like in the social category of race and the 'place' of the tunnels that the young people have strategically exploited.

Another "contaminating" practice of their agency is the young people's huffing of spray paint. It seems to have brought them a degree of pleasure. Often when I would ask them why about this practice, their response was to "be free."

The following excerpt from a conversation Roman illustrates this point. It points to the critical subjectivity of the young people of Barrio Libre.

Gilbert: But. . .do you need it everyday?

Roman: I don't know... I've never done that..

Gilbert: But do you need it daily...?

Roman: No

The demands of the body do not override their critical capacities.

Gilberto: Why do you inhale paint?

Roman: To be free. We're *Barrio Libre*.

Gilberto: I don't understand. Explain it to me.

Roman: Ay, Gilberto, always asking questions. We inhale paint because we want to, to make us free. It's the craziness that we use.⁹⁴

In Roman's comment, I read, perhaps too sympathetically, a degree of critical distance. Huffing spray paint, it seems, may have provided them the resources to imagine their alternative social imaginary, where they were "free" of the impingements of neoliberal governmentality. Notably, the demands of the body did not override their subjectivity. That is, the vast majority refused to characterize themselves as addicts. They did not abuse it daily and went through periods of abstinence. Instead, as Roman comment suggests, "huffing" spray paint

⁹⁴ "Roman" [pseud.], communication with author, Nogales, Sonora, December 1998.

was the “craziness” that they use. They equated freedom in some moments with a state of madness.

Moreover, the practices of these young women disrupt their status as victims. In their participation in the practices of literally undermining the border, they represent the even the most marginal “Third World Woman’s” freedom to choose to move, and thus literally undermine the cultural assumptions of Third World women, as bounded in oppressive homes and cultural spaces (Kapur 2002). Such assumptions are “developed in relation to the vision of Western women as secular, liberated, and in total control of their lives” (Volpp 2001). Moreover, in again to some degree choosing Barrio Libre, the young people implement agency. Indeed, I briefly return to my ethnographic interview with Margarita. Following her initial incarnation of Barrio Libre and subsequent incarnation of the space of Barrio Libre in its transnational dimension that is, she to the Barrio Libre of Tucson, Arizona. Upon her return to Nogales, Sonora, she told me:

But I crossed again . . .through the tunnel.

Gilbert: Why?

Margarita: I don’t know... I didn’t want to go home...I don’t know... I preferred the streets... but I don’t know... I would get bored in my house...I wanted to go to Barrio Libre.

A complex agency, garnered through practices deemed illegal and other socially unacceptable practices as well as her particular experiences as a young Mexican

women in the houses, negate the dominant liberal representation of Third World women as the passive victims of an oppressive Third-World society (sic.).

The young woman's incarnation of Barrio Libre partially draws on their particular gender experiences in the household. Margarita drops in and out of her home. As she tells me, she is seeking freedom from some of her womanly responsibilities. Juana sees herself in similar position. They are on the streets to be free, to be out of the house. Notably, however, the incarceration of the free 'hood' seemed to play out differently among the young women. As Operation Safeguard incarcerated the young people in Nogales, Sonora, stymieing their transnational spatial practices and imaginings, the young woman took on somewhat more normative subject positions. It is also important to note that this period corresponded to when Margarita became a mother for the second time. In her interviews, as in those with Roman the father of the child, Margarita underscored how she wished her children would not lead a life similar to her own. Indeed, during her pregnancy, she gradually pulled away from Barrio Libre. In 1998, she was working at a night shift maquiladora, and going to trade school to become a hairdresser. She was always exhausted. The last I heard about her, which was in 2001, she had married and moved to Guaymas with a young man. Juana also took assumed a slightly more normative gendered subject position. The last time I saw Juana in 2001, she was working part time as a stripper.

My project suggests that scholars have narrowly imagined subaltern agency. They have largely concretized it as a site of victimhood from which a morally charged, progressive politics unfolds. The ability of the young people of Barrio Libre to markedly, if only transiently, change the world, or their agency, and to challenge social oppressions do not necessarily take heroic forms. They do not fulfill a predetermined orthodox narrative of progressive political practice.

Perhaps a more productive strategy in exploring issues of social marginality is to explore subjects struggles to transforms the world in all its rich, and, at times, confounding modalities. That is, to represent agency in all its at times troubling complexity. A cursory glance at social histories reveals that the same can be said for other historical actors (Guha 1999; Hobsbawm 1965).⁹⁵

Although Stuart Hall et. al and Paul Gilroy long ago argued the political salience of mugging as form of social protest (Gilroy 1991; Hall, et al. 1978), their's were subjects who at least as they were represented mugged subjects of the dominant group. In contrast, the young people's confounding, internally contradictory, agency of Barrio Libre renders them, academically at least, 'bad subjects.' I refer to Louis Althusser in his seminal work "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes toward an Investigation) "The 'bad subjects' . . . on occasion provoke the interventions of one of the detachments of the (repressive)

⁹⁵ This is not to suggest that Guha and Hobsbawm share the same theoretical outlook. Indeed Guha critiques Hobsbawm for his suggestion that peasants are immature political actors (Guha 1988b; Guha 1999; Hobsbawm 1965).

State apparatus. But a vast majority of the (good) subjects work all right 'all by themselves,' i.e., by ideology." Cathy Cohen (2004) , in the arenas of black feminist analysis and queer theory, also informs my understanding of bad subjects. She tells of how the often unorthodox, and non-normative practices including everyday contests over dress, space, pleasure and autonomy, are sometimes viewed in the academy as beyond political redemption.

Several other social theorists, in this respect, have noted the correspondence between morality, ethics, and the economic relations of society. Antonio Gramsci long ago noted the ethical moral leadership of the hegemonic bloc, or the alliance of class fractions, which spearhead a hegemonic social formation. For Gramsci, the state adapts "the civilization and the morality of the broadest masses to the necessities of the continuous development of the economic apparatus of production" (Hall 1988). Arturo Escobar suggests that development discourse, of which neoliberalism marks the latest manifestation, associates poverty with qualities such as mobility, vagrancy, independence, promiscuity, ignorance, the refusal of social duties and work. Notably, the management of poverty called for interventions in health, hygiene, education, morality, and employment (Escobar 1995: 23). An alternative interpretation would be to adopt a

functionalist position, and subsequently de-emphasize conflict, and see these practice as adaptive “steam valve” behavior.⁹⁶

Cathy Cohen (2004) holds that the repetition of “deviant” acts may lay the groundwork for oppositional politics while providing a valuable corrective to intellectual productions. Barrio Libre’s refusal to submit to a world that largely negates them shows that even those way down on the social hierarchy exercise agency, make space, assume terrain, painful though it sometimes is. The young people’s ‘deviant’ choice, which by no means are choices in the liberal sense of the word, tell us something about agency and subjectification. Their agency helps reveal how normativity encodes structural inequalities (Cohen 2004). It can unmask the relationship among truth and power, hegemony and morality----how the world is forged to discursively serve power, and how in these terms are contested, resisted, and negotiated, by even the most marginalized of communities.

Reading Barrio Libre as simply Machiavellian justification for problematic practices cannot account for the complex hold it held on the young people. Writing about the agency of these young people, their disorganized resistances, complex negotiations, ambivalences, and seduction with the amorphous, clandestine, and at times fatal power of neoliberalism in conjunction with intensification of border policing, reveals the complexities of writing about

⁹⁶ The social war framework is a theory that refuses such functionalism. See Limón (1994) esp. pp. 123-141.

agency over an extended period of time. The agency of Barrio Libre, that is, shows the complexity of power and resistance for marginal subjects---the vexing entanglements with of subjects with power---the partial production of bad subjects.

In contrast to the aforementioned young people of Barrio Libre, who, in some respect, “chose” or consciously positioned themselves as subjects of Barrio Libre, I turn to the youngest brother of the hermanos Gonzalez, “Lazaro.” He, by contrast, “chose” to never incarnate Barrio Libre. He relied upon Mi Nuevo Hogar for regular meals and though he often spent time with members of Barrio Libre in the community organization. Yet, he did not accompany them to the rest of the terrain of Barrio Libre, nor did he share their repository of values, images, discourses, and imaginings.

I asked him “why don’t you go to Barrio Libre?”

Lazaro: Well, I don’t know. Because it’s a mess. My brother’s lives are messes. They’re sick. I think. And the drugs.

Gilberto: you have never crossed under the border? Or have you mugged chuntaros?”

Lazaro: No never. I just work. I cross the border and go help people clean their houses or pull weeds in the garden. I work for Ms. Montoya. She tells me that she is going to pay for my school.

Gilberto: “But what do you think about being part of Barrio Libre?”

Lazaro: It never really got my attention. I did not want to *be bad*. Get sick. (my emphasis)

Gilberto: Have you had any trouble with the police or the Border Patrol?

Lazaro: Well, I've been lucky there. I'm not out on the streets that much, and one time Grupo Beta chased me but I was able to hide. Other than that. No. The guys at the border are [expletive]. But, no. Not like my brothers . . .

In my estimation, the above conversation again reinforces that the young people exercised agency, a degree of choice. They opted out, perhaps trying to refuse capitalist life ways only to find its logics intervening. Although I do not wish to totalize, I do wish to underscore that some chose to be bad. They contaminate notions of victimhood and the subaltern as necessarily romantic subject.

To make meaning of the young people of Barrio Libre, rather than dismiss them as bearers of false consciousness, immature political actors, unconscious potential revolutionaries, or agents of primitive rebellion, I have dug deep, deep, down, below political institutions, and organized social movements, below normative political discourse and normative political spaces, into the daily lives, struggles, discourses, imaginations, cultures, and communities that together comprise these young people and the complex historical context. That is, I disrupt traditional notions of politics to show even way, way, down, in the sometimes subterranean world of Barrio Libre, complex, often painful, negotiations, entanglements, and resistances occur within the power relations of the US-Mexico border, which can take unconventional, non-normative, inarticulate forms.

Indeed, the young people's practices of substance abuse, hiding and inhabiting the transnational sewer, and indeed their violence, serve as a powerful communicative technology for the everyday experience of living as a subaltern subject of transnational governmentality at the border, and for subjects whose very existence is often negated both in ambos Nogales and, as lumpen-figures, in the academy. Thus, when "Juana" and "Margarita," "Roman," "Bolillo," "Moco," "Beto," "Guero," and the others who incarnate Barrio Libre, invoke freedom, theirs is not necessarily a freedom of movement, pace border theory, but a freedom from structural violence of the neoliberal economy and, the manifest violence of the home, homelessness, and transnational governance. New deployments of border theory as well as other writing on severely marginal populations must consider the relationship between the everyday intensification of policing at the border and the deeply rooted and historically based structural violence of inequality.⁹⁷

It is in such contaminated grapplings with subaltern agency that the normative power behind structural inequities becomes clear. Kathleen Stewart has called for contaminated critique (Stewart 1991). Yet, her suggestion as with most of the experimental writings in anthropology was to imbed anthropologist deeper into the ethnography. My suggestion is that we also explore the complex, and contradictory, or "contaminated" agencies of subaltern subjects.

⁹⁷ Linda Green's ethnography of the intersection of structural and political violence in Guatemala, where such relations are far denser, has proved influential in my thinking (Green, 1999 #420).

**AFTERWORD:
POST-SEPTEMBER 11TH BORDER COCKFIGHT**

September 16, 2001

El *deciseis* Mexicanos call it. The sixteenth of September celebrates Mexican independence from colonial Spain. In honor of this holiday, I am at what Roman calls his “penthouse,” two cinder block shacks with sheet metal roofs and holes for windows and doors perched on a hill in a *colonia* (neighborhood) of Nogales, Sonora, Mexico. Since 1995, Roman has been one of my primary informants, and a close friend, who, along with many of our mutual friends, I increasingly see as family.

Beto turns the dial of the circa 1970s television. All are devoted to news of the September 11 tragedy. Franco cooks a Doritos, tuna, and hamburger casserole, which he learned to make while imprisoned in Arizona for his repeated attempts at unauthorized entry to the United States.

Roman’s provocative transnational experiences, his frequent incarcerations in the US, his life at the border and in several U.S. cities, as well as television, movies, and music supplement his childhood English, which is better than my Spanish. He learned it when he went to school in the United States before his father’s naturalization status was revoked because he was alleged to have sold cocaine, a charge that Roman denies. Roman gestures at the television images of Ground Zero. Despite being thousands of miles away from the border and

separated by the jagged edges of the post-NAFTA border, New York is a center of our conversation.

“They know who has done it. Right?”

“They say,” I reply.

Osama Bin Laden materializes on the screen.

“He looks like the devil,” says Beto, whose nickname is Chamuco, a term for the devil.

Roman: “That fucker . . . He’s a mother fucker.”

“Why?” I interrupt.

“I’ll kick his man . . . That fucker killed fifty of my *paisanos* . . . fifty Mexicans . . . They worked in the two towers.”

I struggle to formulate an argument. I begin explaining about the U.S.’s support of Israel, about its unquenchable thirst for oil, about US imperialism, about how with the collapse of the USSR there is no country to check US influence. I move to immigration, and the militarization of the US-Mexico border. Out of the corner of my eye, I see New York firefighters digging frantically in the collapsed buildings. In the ash gray remains of the structures, I believe that I can make out a limp hand here, a dismembered leg there. And the dust . . . human dust cake passersby.

Roman intervenes:

They worked in cleaning. Janitors. That what I heard. I’ll go to war. Hell, I’ll go to war and kick Bin Laden’s ass. I’ll kill the fucker.”

Flaco jumps into the conversation.

“He killed *ilegales*.”

He refers to undocumented workers living in New York, an emerging center for Mexican immigration.

Consider that less than five years ago, these same young men preyed upon the undocumented. For much of the 1990s, these then youth extorted money and valuables from immigrants in the moisture and filth of an international sewer system. The youth demanded payment from immigrants attempting to subvert US-Mexico border controls through their ‘hood, *Barrio Libre* (the Free ‘Hood), an amorphous, anarchic space that stretched from the bowels of the border to Tucson, El Paso, Los Angeles, and Chicago. In their repeated movements through the sewer, back and forth between Mexico and the United States, that is, back and forth through their ‘hood, the youth’s found freedom, expressing it in a charged idiom of *Barrio Libre*: “Somos Libre” (We’re Free).

Yet, over a span of a few years, everyday life at the border transformed. On the eve of North American Free Trade Agreement, which minimized the border for commercial flows, the US military improved the wall severing between Nogales, Arizona and Nogales, Sonora, Mexico, using metal from mobile runways from the first Persian Gulf War, artifacts of a previous war. Similarly, in Operation Hold-the-Line Border Patrol agents embodied the international boundary, making a human wall for a twenty-mile stretch in the El Paso area.

Under Operation Gatekeeper, one-time gaping holes in the San Diego-Tijuana border region were repaired and intense militarized forms of surveillance were implemented. As the El Paso and San Diego corridors grew jagged, siphoning immigrants to Arizona, Operation Safeguard commenced. A Mexican police force, *Grupo Beta*, began patrolling the Mexican side of the border. And, the U.S. military's anti-narcotic efforts at the border, including training the Border Patrol and local authorities in military techniques, frequently overlapped into the Border Patrol's anti-immigration activities. Recently, sensors and an alarm system, which commands people in Spanish to return to Mexico, were installed in the tunnels. Roberto Martinez, an immigrant rights activists, attributes the deaths of approximately 2,000 immigrants to the proliferation of border controls over the past ten years.

Intense forms of surveillance sculpt everyday life at the border. Immigrant-hunting ranchers in Arizona and Texas, the Border Patrol, the Mexican authorities, and *Barrio Libre*, practice violence as a natural part of border defense. On a recent television news show, a U.S. government official, based in Tucson said that he receives *at least* one criminal complaint against Border Patrol per day. It seems that the immigration authorities and their counterparts in Mexico mimic the tactics of *Barrio Libre*, mirroring those very tactics which have been deemed reprehensible, having become "gangs" in their own right, fighting for control of territory, and deploying extra-legal tactics. Of course, a notable difference is that

the authorities have legal authorization sanctifying their actions and their territorial claims.

I return to my post-September 11th conversation with the youth.

Roman: “Look at the people. Look at them.”

The gravity of the pain---men and women crying, people praying, firefighters clawing through the rubble, momentarily silence us.

Suddenly, Roman recalls one of his numerous incarcerations in the Nogales, Arizona youth penitentiary. It was during Operation Desert Storm. “A guard over there (he points north) told me that I could fight for the US. They would give me papers, and pay me. And I would have all the women I wanted . . .

I shudder thinking of the implications, betraying my insider cool.

The booty of war can also be found here at the post-NAFTA border. As bodies are increasingly contained in Mexico, the thumping pulse of border discotechs echoes through the streets of Nogales, Juarez, Tijuana, and other Mexican border communities. Over the past eight years, I have noted in Nogales, Sonora the increasing number of strip clubs. Young people, having coming to the border from the interior of Mexico, hoping to make it in the United States find their efforts thwarted. Meanwhile, the twin plants, augmented by NAFTA, what some have referred to as a sort of safety net for frustrated immigrants, do not pay enough nor do they offer enough work.

September 21, 2001

I walk through a colonia of Nogales, Sonora with two of the young men. A police car cruises toward us. The two men, frequently subject to police harassment, tense.

“What are you doing?” the officers demand of the youth.

Suddenly, the officers scrutinize me. Reaching for his holster, the one in the passenger seat says “He’ Arab” [see: \Volpp, 2002 #568].

I blurt out:

I’m a US citizen.

After explaining most of my research, and showing my passport, they leave us. Now more than ever, my deep color, shaved head, and goatee provoke suspicion *south* of the border.

Reflecting on this scene, Roman comments
Had you not had your passport . . .they would have taken you to
jail and beaten you so hard you would have wished you were dead
. . .”

September 25, 2001

I sit, facing north, on a wall outside of Roman’s penthouse. About two miles away, on the other side of the border, I see the familiar green and white trucks of the United States Border Patrol on a hill. The odds are now over 40% that the agents inside the vehicle are Hispanic. About mile to my west sits a surveillance tower, which I know has a video camera atop it that has that probably

filmed me numerous times since 1994. Today as I crossed into Nogales Sonora, I passed three Arizona National Guardsmen, and three border patrol agents, aside from the several US customs agents and Nogales police officers.

Roman's wife, Ofelia, washes his, hers and their two infants clothing, alternating between the two pails, one of clean and one of dirty water with a little soap. Roman dusts the dirt patio, clearing debris. Felix, Roman's and Ofelia's five year old, plays with a torn Mickey Mouse coloring book, which has already been colored.

It has been a little over a week since the nonprofit that provided minimal services to the youth, which I once directed and that served as a base for my research has shut down. Roman for the past year had been an employee. He remarks that his place is the new *Mi Nuevo Hogar* (My New House) what I used as a pseudonym in this manuscript for the now defunct organization.

Roman tells me that he went to look for job this week. But, like ever year, he says that the "fabricas," what Mexicans in Nogales call *maquiladoras*, do not hire in December. Moreover, under the North American Free Trade Agreement and other neoliberal arrangements more and more maquiladoras are turning up farther south in Mexico. I comment that the United States seems to be in a recession, since the September 11th tragedy, and that I been told that several fabricas were closing in the area.

I turn hearing a mechanical roar, and glance down from my perch. Two Mexican military jeeps and a truck full of soldiers drive by. Roman tells me to take a photograph. I resist, recalling an incident from years ago when I took a photo of Mexican police arresting several *potential* immigrants attempting to climb over the wall separating Nogales, Sonora from Nogales, Arizona, which was constructed by the US military in the late nineties using recycled Vietnam metal, artifacts of previous wars, despite the Mexican constitution's guarantee of free movement. I was threatened, questioned, and then released with a stern warning not to photograph the activities of the authorities. Since then, I rarely do.

The soldiers in the jeep look our way, are they staring at the young men, or me? I slowly dismount from the fence and walk out of view, and I hope.

Are you afraid? asks Flaco.

He laughs and, recounts my recent experience with the Mexican police forces, which has become a frequent topic of conversation among the young men of Barrio Libre. Again, Flaco tells me "you should shave your beard."

The military convoy departs. I return to my perch.

To my right are about five small pens, constructed of chicken wire and two by fours. Inside are roosters and chickens. Another uncaged rooster has his leg tied to a box. From a chair, which he has pulled from inside the first of the two shacks, and where his youngest child, a 3-month little girl sleeps, Roman watches me watch the birds.

Roman goes to the pen. He parts open the cage, and unveils the rooster.

Roman explains: “He’s my newest one. He’s my best one. Look at his claws. They’re big.” And then, I note that they are quite long.

Holding by its talons, he strokes the bird along its back. Ever now and then, Roman coos at it.

Over this past week, Roman has been educating me about the art of cockfighting. As he continues stroking the bird, he underscores that the gallos must be raised to be strong. This one will not be ready to fight for over a month, during which Roman will feed him and give him vitamins. As I write this essay, I realize how he finances this hobby.

I return to Roman

“I got him yesterday.”

Ever the anthropologist, I ask “How much?” I make a mental note that Roman is talking to me only in English. This is a first.

I made trade.

Every now and then Roman’s English, though it is better than my *pocho* Spanish, betrays him.

For what?

I recall that in my visit a few days prior, after Mi Nuevo Hogar closed, Roman said he could find employment in the maquiladoras, paying about \$50 a week, not much considering the cost of living in Mexican border town,

approaches that of US cities. He then said that he could that in ten minutes, selling coke, marijuana, or crack. As we talk, Roman's hand softly cups the bird's spine.

Roman smirks. He pauses, then says,

I made some business.

I nod.

“Look,” Roman says, “weigh him. How much does he weigh?”

He hands the cock to me. Having never held a rooster before, I hold the bird awkwardly, causing Chamuco to laugh: “Ay, que Gilberto.”

I estimate that the bird weighs a little over a pound.

Roman orders Chamuco to hold the bird. Roman watches over Chamuco, a nickname meaning the devil, because, according to others in Barrio Libre, he is not mentally well. “He's crazy,” Bolillo had told me either this week. Chamuco strokes the bird as Roman did. Roman goes to another pen. Reaching into it pulls out another cock. It does appear larger. Roman grabs its talons. He strokes the bird slowly, cooing at it. Breathing heavily, the cock's breast expands, contracts, expands, contracts, expands . . .

Roman hands me the cock. Trying to be cool, I grab its talons. But the bird bites me, and I bleed. Blood oozes from my wrist. Roman comments: “You must learn to handle the *gallos* better.”

The larger cock weighs over two pounds. I make a mental note that Roman like most in Barrio Libre measures through the English system. Roman, Chamuco, and Bolillo laugh. Roman grabs the bird.

Meanwhile, Roman's son has grown agitated and tries to catch the other gallo tied to the door. Roman yells at his son and sends him inside, while caressing the cock in his hand.

Glancing behind Roman, I still see the two Border Patrol vehicles, on the hill. I can make out a figure who emerges from one the vehicles. He stands erect. Below them, just to the west is the Nogales, Sonora cemetery. I wonder if he can see us.

“Has visto una *pelea de gallos?*,” Roman asks me if I had seen a cockfight.⁹⁸ I shake my head, no. Having been educated by Roman that a good

⁹⁸ In “Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight,” from his influential *The Interpretation of Cultures* (Geertz 1973), anthropologist Clifford Geertz argues for a semiotics of culture in anthropology. It is premised on an understanding of culture as an exercise in interpretation: a text to be read like literature, listened to like music, appreciated like art, and which represent the other's daily informal knowledges. Moreover, according to Geertz, passions and conflicts animate social facts, and imbue everyday discourses and gestures with social meaning garnered from the conceptual structures of the world of other live. Thus, for Geertz the semiotic analysis of culture becomes a second, third, or fourth hand reading of the other's readings of their world. Moreover, in this essay, Geertz's mistakes the sex of the fowl: cockfights are with roosters not chickens. For William Roseberry (Roseberry 1991), Geertz's fails to critically engage the historically specific social forces at work deep in the layers of Balinese culture, and which articulate through the Balinese cockfight. Geertz's emphasis on the conceptual structures of Balinese culture fails to account for internal differentiation. Such a concern for Roseberry underscores the connection among culture, power, and domination. In this light, and of particular significance for this essay, Roseberry critiques Geertz for minimizing the political economic dimension in his semiotic analysis of the Balinese cockfight. Moreover, Roseberry charges Geertz with understating the materiality of cultural creation. Roseberry writes culture is “socially constituted and socially constituting.” The postulation of culture as text, as in semiotic analysis, understates agents' active engagements, ambivalences, entanglements, and negotiations with domains of power. As Roseberry suggests, to interpret culture as an art form or an ensemble of texts removes it from the

bird can run up to fifty dollars, I tell him there is no need to hurt his birds on my account.

With a flick of a wrist, Roman dismisses my concern.

Roman and Chamuco each grab their respective birds by the tail. They begin to joust, using the birds as living plumed swords. The birds squawk. Roman thrusts. Chamuco parries. Chamuco thrusts. Roman parries. Seemingly mimicking the young men's movements, as the birds are put closer together, their crowns expand, and they, too, lunge in a sporadic, frenzied, dance. Other roosters in the other pens crow, contributing to the clamor.

Roman and Chamuco tire. They put the birds on the ground.

Chamuco commands his bird: "Chingalo."

The birds lunge at each. Each tries to jump on the other. Talons ready, they swipe at one another, squawking. Though the smaller bird jumps higher, the larger bird, the one Roman was stroking, when does land on the other, does more damage. Transfixed, we watch the carnal violence of beast against beast. Two state police officers cruise by on motorcycles. After about three minutes, Roman and Chamuco grab the birds. Roman then orders Chamuco to put away his bird. Roman then jousts the other bird that is tied to the door with the larger bird. Again, the larger dominates. Roman, Chamuco, Flaco, and I erupt in fits of laughter.

process of its formation and the politics of culture. Yet, Roseberry conceptualization also has limitations. Political economic logics do intervene in cockfights. Yet, so do other forms of power.

Ofelia passes us as she continues to care for the children, ignoring us. Meanwhile, a young girl from the neighborhood, I believe, approaches. She watches the cockfight---or is she watching us?

“El grande,” Roman says, “pega bien.” (The big one fights well.) Yet, it also has a sexual connotation. The big one “does it” well. The cock breaks into song. Roman gently rubs it.

I see the border patrol surveillance tower looming in the distance. It does seem a mile or so farther westward than last year.

Roman then lets his cock chase a chicken around behind his penthouse. “Yes, it does,” comments Flaco. We erupt in laughter.

This moment marked the last time I saw “Roman.” When I went to look for him at the penthouse, he and his family had moved. I heard that he now drives a delivery truck.

I also heard that “Margarita” was married and living in a city in Sonora.

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