

**Deconstructing the border:
Maternal language interdiction
(and it is literary representation)**
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1.

Introduction

In this essay, I will demonstrate the intervention of certain domineering discourses in the common use of particular languages; I am interested in showing the importance of their use in the way subjects living the border represent themselves: Chicanos, Mexican-Americans, Northern Mexican community (border subjects).

To do this research, first I will refer to what Jacques Derrida calls "maternal language interdiction", when he questions his own tongue (French) according to his political reality (having been born in Algeria instead of France). Secondly, I will use the same deconstructive methodology of the maternal language interdiction for the specific case of border literature, studying two representative stories of the border literature: "Mericans" by Sandra Cisneros and "Sabaditos en la noche" by Luis Humberto Crosthwaite.

The objective of this essay, besides questioning the domineering discourse, consists on re-conceptualizing the idea of the border as a space of reciprocal participation and not holistic; a place where there is an ongoing planning and development of important proposals for the re-configuration and re-signification of the collective identities inside arts, such as painting, music, literature, cinema, among others. It will be a mistake to stop analyzing these identities since they point out a postmodern reality that impacts directly in the coexistence with others. From this perspective, it is necessary to establish a proposal of the limits (whichever they are), from a proactive and positive perspective, instead of alluding to positivism, with the intention of understanding the limits like having the will to participate in the exchange of dialogue and not restraining it.

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For this essay, it is necessary to establish a difference between the terms “chicano”, “Mexican-American” and “northern Mexican subjects”, specially because there are opposite opinions when we talk about the children of Mexican immigrants that live in the United States. For this research I will assume that the term “chicano” appear approximately in the years of 1930-1940 to point out certain pejorative characteristics of the Mexican (beaner, drunkard, lazy) that gets to the US to work as a cheap work force. The term “chicano” also applies to the children of the first and second generation Mexican people that configure a political and socio-cultural movement; the chicano movement recognizing their ethnic origins, beginning in the sixties, facing a homo-hegemonic culture. The term “Mexican-American” denotes a politically correct use to refer the ethnic ascendance of the minority communities established in the United States, such as African-American, Chinese-American, Italian-American, among others. In the same way, the children of third generation immigrants start to make the term their own like Sandra Cisneros who wrote a story named “Mericans” (Woman Hollering creek and Other Stories). Regarding the previous I will talk about chicana literature (not Mexican American) and I will use “Mexican American” when I refer to the identity or the subjects. Meanwhile the northern Mexican subjects or border subjects are those subjects who inhabit the northern Mexican states, specifically the ones on the border with the US and who are accustomed to crossing from one country to the other. As they do also with the language. They act out of personal interest and from the necessities of survival with little regard to acceptance or rejection from the other. The border subjects assimilate one or more cultures and they conform a sub culture of their own to emphasis on change in their communal identity, productive process, social relations and artistic expressions.

2.

Mother tongue interdiction

In what language do we write history when there is no authorized mother tongue? In order to address this question I refer to Derridá’s experience when he mentions his own mother tongue (French), and the relation to other languages during his infancy, especially with Berber or Arabic:

The optional study of Arabic remained, of course. We knew it was allowed, which meant anything but encouraged. The authority of National Education (of “public education”) proposed it for the same reason, at the same time, and in the same form as the study of any foreign language in Algeria! As if we were being told – and that, in the end, is what we were being told: “Let’s see, Latin is required for everyone in sixth grade, of course, not to speak of French, but do you, in addition, want to learn English, or Arabic, or Spanish, or German?” It seems that Berber was never included. (Derrida: 1998, 37-38)

The same situation can be found at the US-Mexican Border, especially within the Mexican American community (or Chicanos), where Spanish is spoken at home and English outside (no other languages). Spanish is an optional language or “authorized” today even though in the fifties it was not permitted in American schools. However, this situation is different with the Northern Mexican community, where this phenomenon is non-existent, although emphasis is placed in learning English as a second language (or first language). In this sense, deconstructing the power of language allows me to analyze the “interdictions of language” which result from racism, gender, class and ethnic differences, as well as others. I have borrowed the term interdiction from Derrida: “Today on this earth of humans, certain people must yield to the homo-hegemony of dominant languages. They must learn the language of the masters, of capital and machines; they must lose their idiom in order to survive or live better.” (Derrida: 1998, 30)

As Derrida mentions: “The interdiction is not negative, it does not incite simply to loss” (31), so we must deconstruct the power of interdiction (even if this sounds tautological), in the formation of the identity of subjects who live at the border (and its repercussions on both sides, as well as the social relations that are established between communities because “when access to a language is forbidden, nothing – no gesture, no act – is forbidden. One forbids access to speech [*au dire*], that is all, a certain kind of speech. But that is precisely the fundamental interdiction, the absolute interdiction, the interdiction of diction and speech” (Derrida: 1998, 32).

Following this reasoning, I will refer to the Monolingualism of the Other or The Prosthesis of Origin (1998) because through the deconstruction of some premises it becomes plausible to carry out a similar exercise with the maternal tongue of the Mexican Americans and the Northern Mexicans (wherever they are) in order to reach some consensus about the identity of the other, that are represented in their narratives. The premises that I have selected for this analysis are:

- 1- Yes, I only have one language, yet it is not mine. (2)
- 2- We only speak one language – or rather one idiom only. We never speak only one language – or rather there is no pure idiom. (8)
- 3- We only ever speak one language – and, since it returns to the other, it exists asymmetrically, always for the other, from the other, kept by the other. Coming from the other, remaining with the other, and returning to the other. (40)

In the first case (Yes, I only have one language, yet it is not mine), Derrida explains that we can be wrong in thinking that it lacks logic, even though it may be a “performative contradiction”. It can sound that way if it is taken out of context; if we omit a particular geographical location and give no sociopolitical and historical factors for the integration-adaptation process of a community vis a vis the other. As

is the case at the southern border of the US where different and diverse subjects interact, and where a policy of acculturation imposed by the dominant culture takes place. In this case, we can ascertain that there is only one language and that it is not the mother tongue, it is not mine because the policies of the American State have inhibited the development of the traditions and native language of the communities which are part of the border population (specifically the Mexican American community). Those policies promote a homogenous and mono cultural discourse.

As for the second premise (We only speak one language – or rather one idiom only. We never speak only one language – or rather there is no pure idiom), Derrida makes no attempt to define language, idiom or dialect but rather insists that there must be certain “internal and structural features” that distinguish one from the other. As examples we can take some phenomena “that blur these boundaries, cross them, and make their historical artifice appear, also their violence, meaning the relations of force that are concentrated there and actually capitalize themselves there interminably.” (Derrida: 1998, 9)

Phenomena which are defined by external criteria (quantitative phenomena such as demographics, history, border conformation), as well as by “political- symbolic” criteria (legitimacy, authority, dominion of one language over the other), which we can observe in the southern states of the US where the dominant language is English (imposed by public policies and its commercial, technological and scientific use), while the spoken language of the majority is Spanish, which points to the fact that in border situations no one language exists and least of all in any pure form.

The phenomena I have referred to are insufficient to understand the relationship between Mexico and the US, mainly because Mexico was never colonized by the US, as was Derrida’s Algeria. But we can start with these general premises in order to research into the interdiction of the language of Mexican Americans and the Northern Mexican population.

Following Derrida’s arguments, he reaches a crucial point when dealing with the identity issue (or the subverted identity issue) when he asks: What is a Franco-Maghrebian? What does Franco-Maghrebian mean? Who is a Franco-Maghrebian? These are essential questions in order to define what has more weight in the conformation of his identity, as Derrida affirms: “To be a Franco-Maghrebian, one “like myself”, is not, not particularly, and particularly not, a surfeit or richness of identities, attributes, or names. In the first place, it would rather betray a disorder of identity [trouble d’identité].” (Derrida: 1998, 14)

The same questions can be applied to the Mexican American. These questions would seem irrelevant if we consider the concept of citizenship, as Derrida states, because “As we know, citizenship does not define a cultural, linguistic, or, in general, historical participation. It does not cover all these modes of belonging. But it is not some superficial or superstructural predicate floating on the surface of experience.” (Derrida: 1998, 14-15) If we apply the concept of Mexican American citizen, the situation changes and so does the question: The Mexican American

wants to be more Mexican or more American? Especially when one of these citizenships endangers the other, as is the case when Mexicans voluntarily adopt US citizenship.

Since 1848 the Guadalupe Hidalgo Treaty (*Tratado de Paz, Límites y Arreglo definitivo entre la República Mexicana y EEUU de América*” signed in Guadalupe, Hidalgo on the 2nd of February in 1848) set the rules for new policies between Mexico and the US after the invasion of Mexican territory in 1846, which was followed by the secession war of Texas in 1836. The Treaty also obliged the Mexican government to sell one and a half million square kilometers of national territory to the US government, territory which included Arizona, California, New Mexico, Utah, Nevada and parts of Colorado. The sale of this fertile land, rich in oil and mineral reserves, apt for cattle rising and agricultural exploitation was the price Mexico paid to end the war. The US government, on its part, agreed to respect lands owned by Mexicans and to give them citizenship. The payment was agreed to the sum of 15 million pesos. Afterwards, Texas became an independent state and the Rio Bravo became the aquatic border between the two countries. Other social, economic and political factors contributed to this like the Mexican Independence; the Mesilla Treaty signed in 1853. Nonetheless the people living in these territories were not legally recognized until 1889 when the International Commission on the Border was constituted. After 1889, the Mexicans who lived in this territory were no longer independent citizens but neo-colonized citizens under American domination.

According to this, Derrida mentions that there are a great many communities or groups of people who have to give up one citizenship in order to adapt to a new one; but research has not delved into the situation of people who do not adopt voluntarily a new citizenship but are abruptly denied the choice, as it happened with the Mexican community at the border at the end of the 19th century:

No, I am speaking of a “community” group (a “mass” assembling together tens or hundreds of thousands persons), a supposedly “ethnic” or “religious” group that finds itself one day deprived, as a group, of its citizenship by a state that, with the brutality of a unilateral decision, withdraws it without asking for their opinion, and without the said group gaining back any other citizenship. No other. (Derrida: 1998, 15)

Now what, the Northern Mexican population does not imply citizenship, nor native language or idiom either. In this sense it points to a social and cultural situation where “de-propiation” of the language is the case, and the identity issue is not based on natural rights or rights to the land. These subjects, unlike the Mexican Americans, have a specific origin and citizenship; they come from different states in Mexico and are adapted to the realities of a global world. These phenomena of de-propiation of the language allow us “to analyze the historical phenomena,

above all, the reconstitution of what these phantasms managed to motivate: “nationalist” aggressions (which are always more or less “naturalist”) or monoculturalist homo-hegemony.” (Derrida: 1998, 64)

The tip of the iceberg of the interdiction of the language at the US-Mexican border is possibly the creation of a third language, the one known as Spanglish. This third language is the result of the fusion of two cultures and its rapidly becoming institutionalized; its symbols demand philosophical, aesthetic and cultural translations. These translations entail the interchange, discarding and adopting, of cultural elements. When Spanish is exchanged for English, certain words in Spanish are kept and incorporated; a more expressive and functional language is the result. In a worst-case scenario Spanglish could point to the colonization of one language at the expense of the other, or vice-versa. This brings us to Derrida’s third premise: *“We only ever speak one language – and, since it returns to the other, it exists asymmetrically, always for the other, from the other, kept by the other. Coming from the other, remaining with the other, and returning to the other.”* (Derrida: 1998, 40) Especially when we refer to the relation between the Mexican American and Northern Mexican community.

Contrary to popular views, Spanglish is not the instrument of a passive rebellion; it’s neither a language nor a way of preserving origins. Its meanings and symbols have no specific origin and are not immutable. Spanglish, in the sense of a language of representation and action comes into view or disappears, as it is needed. However, this action needs a simply translation because it was created at the border. Not just a literal translation, but also an intersubjective translation that includes all customs, behaviors and reflections that take place there:

This intersubjective understanding implies more than merely empathic responses or conscious consensual validation via exchange of signals between independent subjects (the experience or consciousness of participating subjects is influenced and conditioned by their mutual interaction and engagement). It points to intersubjectivity as ontological loci where the interiorities of the participating subjects are not just interdependently shaped by their interaction, but a co-creative, co-dependent, interpenetrating organic mutuality. (Varela: 2010, 133)

Spanglish is more than the hibridation of two cultures, is an institutionalized symbolic system that requires philosophical, esthetic, and cultural translation. When this translation occurs, it implies a modification of one cultural element from another; it means that when language changes, it eliminates some cultural elements that aren’t necessary anymore. Furthermore, when the border subject dialogue indistinctly between Spanish and English, two languages are transformed and one language is created. In this sense, the translation implies a problem of representation that could be toned down if we trust “in the unity of the word and in the double articulation of the language”, since this “lexicon would have to classify the different items of the word ‘representation’ by their meanings and by

their functioning in a certain state of the language, while taking account of a certain richness or diversity of corpuses, codes, and contexts." (Derrida: 2007, 98)

This unit of the word permeates the artistic discourse of the Mexican-American and the border subjects, since they are allowed to replace it in a mimetic way when they pretend to simulate a culture that is no longer theirs, but that identifies them in another culture they don't belong to –because that's how society has made them believe. That unit of the word is used to highlight the most important elements of their earliest culture like oral tradition, the role of the woman as a spiritual guide, or the epic myths of their indigenous ancestors. In this sense, Derrida affirms that "Language would be a system of representatives or also of signifiers, of placeholders, substituted, for what they say, signify or represent and the equivocal diversity of representatives would not affect the unity, the identity, indeed, even the ultimate simplicity of the represented." (Derrida: 2007, 102)

In this system of representatives, how are the Mexican American and the border subjects represented and apprehended, when they grow in the suppression of the visible world from which they reproduce images and ideas that they don't make theirs, but just used them? Could it be that the Mexican-American or the border subjects place themselves as the scene, in which, as subjects, they represent themselves and become an image? If this is the case, how close is that image to the truth it represents?

3. Spanglish: double articulation of the tongue in the border literature

As I said at the beginning, the idea of doing this comparative analysis of the interdiction of the mother tongue in two stories of the border literature mainly relies on creating other study methodologies that give account of the contemporary border reality. In other words, to question, from the representation of the subjects that live in the border, the discursive conformation and the configuration of the collective identities will allow us to reveal the rich artistic discourses in the settlement of certain cultural politics that watch over the development of border communities, more than emphasizing the mechanisms of segregation, exploitation and monocultural domination that are present since the creation of the geopolitical border.

By border literature I understand it is written in/from the Border States on both sides of the Mexico-United States border, where writers use topics that are related to the migratory problems; for example the complex processes of forming an identity in which immigrants fall into, provoked by the prevalence of a domineering monocultural discourse; the uses and customs of the communities settled in the border; the dialectical uses and the linguistic variables; the expressions of denunciation referring to gender, race, and sexual preferences; violence and drug trafficking. Anyway, in the border there are numerous of stories and topics that have been tackled since the middle of the nineteenth century in novels, in plays, in poetry and even in corridos.

It is important to point out that the term border literature was used to refer to Chicano literature during the first half of the twentieth century due to the intellectual and artistic centralism of the United States. We can talk about border literature in the north of Mexico thanks to the fact that more than thirty years ago the border has had an important artistic rising, and the writers have defended their border position confronting the rest of the national literature. It is important to mark a difference between the Chicano literature and the literature from the north of Mexico, to avoid mixing all the artistic manifestations and even to keep promoting the existence and recognition of the other.

To do this comparative analysis I will use two stories of the border literature: "Mericans" from Sandra Cisneros and "Sabaditos en la noche" from Luis Humberto Crosthwaite. I chose these two stories because of two reasons: there are short stories that refer to the complex processes of identity formation of the subjects that live in the border; thanks to how writers use the mother tongue, I can do this deconstructive analysis of the interdiction of the mother tongue to exemplify its importance in the reconfiguration of collective identities, and above all, to begin the planning of a discourse involving the recognition of the other.

3.1 "Mericans" by Sandra Cisneros

"Mericans" is a story in the book Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories, that on one side works to exemplify derridian premises that I previously reviewed in relation to the interdiction of the mother tongue in Chicano literature; on the other side, the articulation of Spanglish as part of a literary style allows certain processes of identity formation in the Mexican American community, as well as being a particular way of caring out the discursive performance.

Cisneros work starts with a tacit denunciation about the quality of life, racism, poverty and the injustices that the Mexican American community suffers in the southeast of the United States, that stays unseen because of the mastery with which texts are written, almost always alternating lyric with prose, and using other figurative resources that give Cisneros work dynamism in a uninhibited, ironic, and above all melancholic style, because in all her work a Mexican reference is always present since, even though she was born in the United States, she is the daughter of Mexican spinners that gave her an education based on the traditions of their homeland. Therefore, it is no coincidence that Cisneros accurately weaves present with past, the culture of two countries and family memories by using her own style, given that she has been good at understanding the contradiction of the border she lives in.

The protagonists of the stories are usually women that, from their daily life, narrate the evocations of their past and the journey of a day by day in San Antonio, Texas; a poor city like those you can find on the other side of the border, to be more specific on the Mexican side were most people are bilingual and have built their own language: Spanglish, a reflection of their syncretism. Cisneros, just like almost

all the Chicano writers, holds on that lexical dialectics and enriches her Saxon writing with musicality and colors of Spanish.

“Mericans” is a story narrated by a Chicana girl (Michele) who is visiting Mexico and that with her two brothers attends mass with her grandmother; it is a lineal story that lasts less than a religious ceremony in the Basilica de Guadalupe. The story begins when Michele, the second of three daughters, and her brothers Junior and Keeks, are waiting for their grandmother at the entrance of the church. This is a brief story that bases its strength in the ending, where there is a simple child phrase that represents the identity of a subject that unconsciously experiments the ambivalence of believing in the southern border of the United States and being the child of Mexican immigrants.

The first derridan premise (Yes, I only have one language, yet it is not mine) can be easily identified in the relation Cisneros has with her Mexican roots. This situation becomes evident when Michele mentions her grandparents, certain places (like Basilica de Guadalupe or Zona Rosa) or proper names in Spanish. This can be seen in the following paragraph where Michele and her grandmother pray to Virgin Mary for the well being of their family; they also detail certain features of the family members:

For the grandfather who hasn't believed in anything since the first PRI elections. For my father, El Periquin, so skinny he needs his sleep. For Auntie Light-skin, who only a few hours before was breakfasting on brain and goat tacos after dancing all night in the pink zone. For Uncle Fat-face, the blackest of the black sheep – Always remember your Uncle Fat-face in your prayers. And Uncle Baby – You go for me, Mamá – God listens to you. (17)

In this fragment there are certain elements that give the story temporal-spatial-ubiquity; the first of those elements is the reference to the PRI (Institutional Revolution Party). The second is Zona Rosa a place with clubs, bars and restaurants downtown Mexico-City that became well-known since the end of the sixties (and that has revived mainly because of the influx of the gay community). Both references point to the use of proper names that represent two separate circumstances that give strength to the space where the story takes place, as well as the sociopolitical situation of the moment.

As I mentioned before, Spanish being forbidden in certain parts of the United States, specially in the mid twentieth century where the language couldn't be used in the classrooms; not having clear policies in the schools about Spanish that Mexican American and other Latino immigrants could learn, and seeing a rejection coming from the Spanish speaking community to use Spanish in public places, Spanish is only used when being at home or with family. In this sense, the use of the language goes above any other (English or Spanish) as a form of social interaction, and the other is kept (Spanish) as a way of preserving the cultural

background. As a result, the Mexican Americans end up speaking a language that evidently is not their own. This situation can be seen not only in the use of words in Spanish, but also in the psycholinguistic processes in which the protagonist falls into; such is the case in the following paragraph:

The awful grandmother says it all in Spanish, which I understand when I'm paying attention. "What?" I say, though it's neither proper nor polite. "What?" which the awful grandmother hears as "Guat?" But she only gives me a look and shoves me toward the door. (19)

In this paragraph, Cisneros makes emphasis on the existence of certain linguistic idioms and variables that are deeply rooted in Mexico; such variables make reference to a discourse of subjugation where words like "mande", instead of "qué", are used. This is the reason why Michele in a moment of rebellion asks "what", because she is certain that her grumpy grandmother will be mad at her.

That being said, now to refer for the second premise (We only speak one language – or rather one idiom only. We never speak only one language – or rather there is no pure idiom), I am going to emphasize the title of the story: "Mericans" because it could be the contraction of Mexican-American and the evolution of the Chicano term. As well as the juxtaposition of two idioms and even more of two citizenships (the Mexican and the American) that allow the constitution of the social imaginary and the identity formation process of the Mexican American subjects.

This situation can be observed at the end of the story when Michele headed out to the Basilica de Guadalupe, and observed that Junior is talking to a lady that doesn't look Mexican by the way she is dressed ("They are not from here. Ladies doesn't come to church dressed in pants") and because she speaks a "Spanish to big for her mouth". The lady offers chewing gum to Junior and asks him to take a picture of her and her husband. Junior takes the picture and asks his siblings if they want chewing gum: "Hey, Michele, Keeks. You guys want gum?" The lady surprised asks Junior: "But you speak English!" And Junior says:

"Yeah, we're Mericans".

We're Mericans, we're Mericans, and inside the awful grandmother prays.
(20)

The identity configuration process, as well as the reflection of the development that they have reached inside the American society, are implied in the way that the Chicano subject refers to himself. Every time they achieve better opportunities of development thanks to the social and political fluency. In many cases, it is admirable to see how this transnationality has allowed the Mexican American community to find an echo to their social and political demands in certain artistic

expressions; for instance, literature where Mexican American artists and writers are aware of the social commitment they have to their people, their community and their origins. In this sense, the same way of naming themselves makes plausible the fact of taking about a rich literature in intertextual contents that work as the links that join the two cultures they worship and belong to; these are Mexican culture (from the parents and grandparents) and the American (from they day by day). This situation is less evident in the Mexican writers because they don't need to establish links with any community, as it is well known that some of them are also spokesperson of the mistreatment immigrants' face. Mexican writers establish this links to criticize globalization and to write the history of their border cities.

To talk about the third premise (We only ever speak one language – and, since it returns to the other, it exists asymmetrically, always for the other, from the other, kept by the other. Coming fro the other, remaining with the other, and returning to the other), it is necessary to say that the Chicano literature embodies ideological and political discourse, as can be see in the next paragraph:

The awful grandmother knits the names of the dead and the living into one long prayer fringed with the grandchildren born in that barbaric country with its barbarian ways. (19)

“Barbaric country with barbarian ways.” In the previous sentence, the term barbarian is used in double connotation: the barbarian that conquered Mexico: a clear reference to the bearded Spanish that came to America, and that colonized the continent completely eradicating the pre-Hispanic cultures to impose the religious cult of faith and kings. Another case is the Saxon barbarians that, just like the Spanish, have colonized the continent with other methods such as ideologies, discrimination, exploitation and racism.

It is evident that the distance between the narrator and the text is simply determined by denying the barbarians a proper name; at the same time this third premise is possible since the language returns to the other, it exists asymmetrically, always for the other. This situation is more evident at the end of the story since a simple childish phrase (Michele's) says a lot about the identity of a subject that unconsciously lives the ambivalence of growing up in the United States southern border, and being the child of Mexican immigrants: “We're Mericans, we're Mericans, and inside the awful grandmother prays”.

An interesting fact that calls my attention is that Cisneros decides to recreate her stories specifically in San Antonio, Texas and Mexico City, just like other Chicano writers do. Opposite to what Chicano writers do, border writers who make more evident the constant coming and going between the two countries, only describe “este lado” or “el otro lado” of the border, never refer to Mexico City. At the same time Mexican Americans rarely refer to the northern border states of Mexico but they do mention Distrito Federal; this might be because it is the place where

culture and cult places are centralized, not only belonging to the catholic church but also to the Aztec culture.

3.2 “Sabaditos en la noche” by Luis Humberto Crosthwaite

To make reference to the three-derridian premises and the use of Spanglish in the northern Mexico literature, I will analyze the story “Sabaditos en la noche” included in the book *Estrella de la calle sexta*, by Luis Humberto Crosthwaite. “Sabaditos en la noche” is a short story that doesn’t seem to have order since, to begin with, the protagonist could be anyone, for example and American (gringo) that in the other side or the Mexican American border lost all he had, including his family, decides to move to Tijuana; or a non-citizen, an un-named or a subject without past, like any other immigrant that inhabits these border lands.

Estrella de la calle sexta, tells the life from the point of view of the biggest border in the world; that is, Tijuana where multiculturalism is present in language, traditions and nationalities. In this book, Crosthwaite alternates English (writing it as it sounds) with Spanish to create Spanich (Spanglish is the most common term). All that is Mexican mixes with the American and vice versa, provoking that the national identity ends up in symbolic phenomena, and the border stops existing as such; the limit between physical and psychic space of subjects living in the border disappears. That is why it is not strange that Villoro wrote the following:

Leer a Crosthwaite es un acto migratorio, un traslado sin visa ni pasaporte entre el fuego cruzado de sus idiomas. Miembro de la Real Academia del Spanglish, recrea el edén donde el país comienza y los hombres inventan la lengua con fervor adánico. En ese territorio, los coches se vuelven “ranflas” y la policía es la “la placa”, el espíritu habla por la raza en frecuencias moduladas, los puntos y las comas se convierten en instrumentos de percusión, las canciones adquieren valor evangélico y los mensajes foráneos son bienvenidos, con tal de que no traigan ondas extraterrestres: “que no me lancen rollos alienígenas porque no sé cómo voy a responder”, dice su personaje más confesional. (Villoro, 1999)

[Reading Crosthwaite text’s is a migratory act, a transit without visa and passport between the cross fire of two idioms. Member of the Real Academic of Spanglish, recreates the Eden where the country begins and the men invent the language with Adamic fervor. In this territory, the cars are “ranflas” and the police are “la placa”, the spirit talks by the race with modulate frequencies, the points and commas became in percussion instruments, the songs acquire an evangelical value and the foreign messages are welcome, provided that no alien waves bring: “don’t tell me alien discourses because I don’t know how to answer,” says his more confessional protagonist. (This is my own translation)]

In Crosthwaite's main work, the novella and the short story interact with each other, fracturing the border between both genres. In the same way most of his texts are ironic. In this sense, Crosthwaite as a narrator diminishes himself and pretends to be ignorant since the complete objectivity and suppression of explicit moral judgment are essential in the irony to avoid the awakening of piety or fear; these are shown to the reader through art itself.

Luis Humberto Crosthwaite is a writer that takes the reader from universe to universe without concealments; his works, reading and analysis are entertaining and fluid because they are made with such mastery to portray the northern society from an ideological point of view that comes from the Greek *eirōn*, which simulates that which is not to represent itself in front of the other, and to discern on the judgments that rise in the border by means of the irony.

Crosthwaite's texts are rich and polyhedral, which is why each reader could give a different sense to the lecture, but are always guided by the director that hides in the rhetoric figures, which we can find in all his texts. These figures give harmony, rhythm, and cadence to the words, despite the abrupt typographic interruptions, as well as the constantly genre juxtaposition.

The ironic dominion is Crosthwaite's great stylistic success, which is evident on the distance between reality and fiction, as we can observe on the story "Sabaditos en la noche", where the protagonist lives on a Tijuana street corner just watching how his life goes through, and tries to flirt with a woman named Laurita, or any other woman that gets into a bar on Avenida Revolución.

In leisure and soliloquy moments, which are equivalent to the extension of the story, the protagonist makes an account of his life, criticizes the others' lives, especially the gays that came from the "other side" of the border like him. The protagonist compares the life between one country and other, remembers his family and asks himself or asks his interlocutor, who could be any passerby or even the reader of the story, why must one language has to be spoken? Why one idiom ought to be taught? And why that idiom has to be English?

"Sabaditos en la noche", contrary to "Mericans" that refers to the complex identity process of the Mexican-American, criticized the monocultural discourse peaked by the dominion of one language over the other (English versus Spanish), that implies the dominion of one way of life over the other. In this sense, I think that the first derridian premise (Yes, I only have one language, yet it is not mine) refers to the linguistic game that Crosthwaite used to emphasize the presence of the Spanglish:

Estoy en mi tra-baaaa-jo, carnal, en la faquin escuela donde daba las faquin clases a los niños enfadoso del barrio, ganándome el pan de cada día, enseñándoles el faquin inglés porque se supone que sólo se enseña el faquin inglés país de mierda, land-of-da-faquin-fri. (41)

In this fragment, the use of Spanglish is more evident than in the case of Cisneros's story, which just used some words or proper names in Spanish. Crosthwaite transgresses the conjugation and the juxtaposition of two languages when he used certain words (in cursives) that preserve the English phonetic but not the morphologic. However, in other texts (Instrucciones para cruzar la frontera), Crosthwaite doesn't recur to the Spanglish, so it is curious that he doesn't use it as a personal writing style and prefers to explore the localism way of speaking of the northern Mexican subjects.

To talk about the second derridian premise (We only speak one language—or rather one idiom only. We never speak only one language—or rather there is no pure idiom) I will refer to a paragraph that refers to the protagonist's identity, who not only regrets his own nationality and citizenship, but even compares himself to the other; this other is the northern Mexican subject where he makes a critic of his own society, a neoliberal society where the individualism prevails over the collective:

Mi patrón, ese güey, pa que veas, a peín in the faquin as. Yo soy otra onda. Claro que soy de por aquí, cómo explicarlo, sí soy gringo y no soy gringo, ¿me entiendes? Hay más unión entre esta raza, entre los meseros y yo, que con toda la bolo de gringos-atole-en-las-venas. Éste es mi paraíso. El pasado agrio lo dejo allá en el norte, del otro lado de la frontera, como se dice. (16)

Finally, to exemplify the deconstruction of the mother tongue by the third derridian premise (We only ever speak one language—and, since it returns to the other, it exists asymmetrically, always for the other, from the other, kept by the other. Coming from the other, remaining with the other, and returning to the other) I will allude to a fragment in which the protagonist peaks the use of a third tongue to represent his own emancipation, as well as the immigrants grievance because they are not allowed to speak in their own language. A factual exclusion not a legal prohibition:

Nada de español, ¿ves?, nada que se le parezca. Por eso he decidido, damas y caballeros, que de hoy en adelante, mi lengua será el *spánich*, ¿qué te parece? El spánich abd ay guont spik enithing else. (41)

The spánich, as Crosthwaite says, is an inverse kind of emancipation that used the immigrant, which crossed de border, as well as the prohibited used of a language. A use that is factually given that not refers to a border way of life, but refers to the complex process of identity configuration of the subjects that habits the Mexican-United States border. Process that represent different meanings of the community and identity because of the constant presence of the other.

4.

Conclusion

As it can be observed, both writings conform the cultural imaginary of two adjacent communities that differs by the way each one is represented: the Chicanos are looking for their own identity, definition and representation; meanwhile border subjects transgress their own limits and distance themselves from the national centralism and emerge in other latitudes like Europe or the United States. In this sense, the Chicano literature is based on an ideological space that allowed the subjects to re-formulate their own identity based on uses and customs; on the other hand, the border literature, despite it is being part of the minority national literature because of the excessive centralism of the country, raises the urban space in a way to criticize the exponential manufacturing development (and his consequences) in the northern Mexican border. In this case, the northern Mexican writers evoke a *lost paradise* (like Chicano writers), but emphasize the subhuman conditions that immigrants cross over trying to look for the "American dream" and couldn't reach it, so they have to stay at the northern Mexican border working as waitress, laborers, even prostitutes, and other kind of unskilled jobs. To deconstruct the mother tongue interdiction in the border literature allows us to talk about collective imaginary and artistic representation, taking into account the claim of historic minorities reviled.

As I have tried to argue, research at the border brings forth a new debate on theories and paradigms. On a specific geographical setting such as the border different theories interplay. It is important to set precedence on research done so far at the US-Mexican border so we can juxtapose different assessments and disciplines in order to understand present reality as well as deconstruct the dominant discourse; we can avoid, in this manner, historical racism or the advancement of a homogeneous monocultural process at the border. In this sense it is important to rethink the concept of borders so as to speak of our limitations and from here restructure the notions that have permeated contemporary research into border (whatever these may be). From this perspective it is important to develop new models and concepts so that they can, on one side, guide future actions and policies towards the border population and, on the other, allow us an epistemological approach within and from the border and into their own process of cultural and identity conformation.

5.

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