

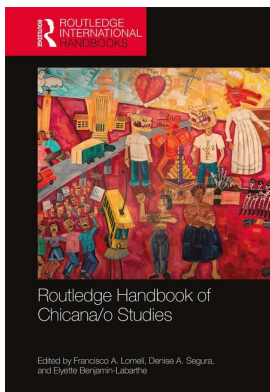
This article was downloaded by: 10.2.97.136

On: 22 Sep 2023

Access details: *subscription number*

Publisher: *Routledge*

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London SW1P 1WG, UK



Routledge Handbook of Chicana/o Studies

Francisco A. Lomelí, Denise A. Segura, Elyette Benjamin-Labarthe

Transnationalism Chicana/o style

Publication details

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315726366-26>

Karin Ikas

Published online on: 03 Aug 2018

How to cite :- Karin Ikas. 03 Aug 2018, *Transnationalism Chicana/o style from: Routledge Handbook of Chicana/o Studies* Routledge

Accessed on: 22 Sep 2023

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315726366-26>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR DOCUMENT

Full terms and conditions of use: <https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/legal-notices/terms>

This Document PDF may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproductions, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The publisher shall not be liable for an loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

Transnationalism Chicana/o style

Karin Ikas

Introduction

Definitions of transnationalism generally focus on exchanges, connections, relationships, and practices across borders that transcend the national space as the principal reference point for activities and identities. In a sociological context, transnationalism is also referred to as a process in which cultural and physical flows move across national borders (Kearney 1995, pp. 547–565). Randolph Bourne first used the term in a hyphenated version in his entry ‘Trans-National America’ for the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1916. In their significant contributions to the field, Linda Basch, Nina Glick-Schiller, and Christina Szanton-Blanc (1992) perceive transnationalism as “a process by which migrants, through their daily activities create social fields that cross national boundaries” (p. 22). More broadly, Steve Vertovec defines it as the “multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of the nation-states” (1999, p. 447). In recent years, a large international and interdisciplinary scholarship has provided further insights on transnationalism as theory, concept, and experience. For some notable studies and collections see Vertovec (2009), Pease, Fluck, and Rowe (2011), Hebel (2012), and Kaltmeier (2013). An important forum for the contemporary debate on transnationalism is *The Journal of Transnational American Studies*. Lately, Nina Morgan, in her introduction to a recent special issue of the journal entitled *A Community of Thought: Connecting with Transnationalism* (2016) viewed “recent global events such as the European Union referendum or ‘Brexit’” as further proof “that transnational issues are at the forefront of today’s political dynamics” (p. 1).

The same, of course, applies to literature, fine arts, and (multi)media and their relevant studies. The opening of the latest and altogether 24th James Bond movie *Spectre* and the range of related international events and activities in it offer an interesting example of transnationalism in these respects. As *Spectre* opens, we encounter spy 007, played by Daniel Craig, in a breathtaking dramatic sequence located in Mexico City. Dressed in a skeleton-painted suit, James Bond starts his newest mission against the backdrop of a spectacular parade of the walking dead that leads into the Zócalo where soon after an explosion, a dramatic chase, and helicopter fight scene takes place. In this scene, Sam Mendes, an English film director with Trinidadian roots, introduces us to the post-imperial British in *Bond and Beyond* global popular culture (Müller 2015; Chapman 1999; Bennett & Wollacott 1987). His version includes one aspect of the multifaceted

celebrations of *El Día de los Muertos*, which goes back to pre-Columbian Indigenous traditions and hybrid Mexican–Hispanic Catholic beliefs, and is one of Mexico’s most important holidays.

Beyond its quality as a thrilling cultural spectacular for the typical pre-credit scene of a Bond film in an increasingly globalized world, the Day of the Dead parade in *Spectre* designates 2015 as “the Year of Mexico in the United Kingdom” and the “United Kingdom in Mexico” (British Embassy Mexico City 2013). In fact, a cross-cultural focus on the *Día de los Muertos* was part of a multi-disciplinary and multi-media program to celebrate and enhance the cultural, educational, and business exchange between both countries. For that reason, Mexico hosted a James Bond movie for the first time with the *Spectre* premiere for the Americas in Mexico City on the actual *Día de los Muertos* on 2 November 2015. At the same time, in England, a Day of the Dead festival took place at the British Museum in London where the showcased gigantic skeleton props from the aforementioned parade made an attractive, though commodified, altar exhibit.

Mexican artist Betsabé Romero’s conceptual Day of the Dead altar stuck out as a unique political commentary. Dedicated to migrants worldwide, though explicitly to Mexican migrants who die while crossing the Mexican American border, it gave the *Día de los Muertos* a most topical sociopolitical and transnational character. At the same time, it serves as a reminder that in a contemporary American context the *Día de los Muertos*/Day of the Dead is by no means just an assimilated and commodified – though originally hybrid – death ritual. It is also not a Mexican version of the American Halloween, as James Bond film director Sam Mendes incorrectly describes it in a 2015 interview in the magazine *Deadline Hollywood* (see Fleming 2015).

He overlooks that Halloween originated 2,000 years ago in Celtic Ireland and was brought to North America in the 19th century by Irish immigrants. The Day of the Dead, which is the largest Latina/o celebration in the United States today, is for all intents and purposes an integral part of the various Latina/o populations’ transnational experiences with religious as well as artistic manifestations. Regina M. Marchi has been arguing this point in her prize-winning book *Day of the Dead in the USA* (2009) as part of the series “Latinidad: Transnational Cultures in the United States.” She points out:

The evolution of this ritual observance in the United States, with links to a network of related celebrations in Mexico and other parts of Latin America, provides important lessons for those interested in the study of communication . . . politics.

(Marchi 2009, p. X)

From all indications, the *Día de los Muertos* has become an increasingly American and inter-American phenomenon as well as a transnational one. It is triggered by an ever-growing Latina/o and Spanish-speaking population in the United States and worldwide where they are now in diasporic trends like never before. Nevertheless, it is particularly true in the United States where a critical mass has accumulated in recent years, to the point that the numbers of Latinas/os in the United States are exceeded only by Mexico among all Spanish-speaking countries.

The population figures speak for themselves. According to the newest survey findings and projections of the U.S. Census Bureau (Stepler & Bronn 2016; Colby & Ortman 2015), of the over 318.7 million people who resided in the United States in 2014, more than 17.3% reported Latin American or Hispanic heritage (a significant growth vis-à-vis their 6.5% of the total U.S. population in 1980). This makes people of Hispanic origin, also called Latinas/os, the largest ethnic/race minority in the United States, with 35% foreign born or immigrants. What is more, Latina/o populations are growing and their proportion of the United States is expected to reach approximately 28.6% by 2060 (Colby & Ortman 2015, p. 9). Some Latinas/

os are steadily integrating culturally and economically, others – mostly newly arrived legal and undocumented immigrants from Mexico, Latin America, and South America who for a number of reasons, both economic and cultural, stay primarily in their *barrios* or Spanish-speaking Latina/o neighborhoods – are not. This rising tide of residents of Latinas/os in general and Mexican Americans or Chicanas/os in particular challenges established power structures in the United States and exposes mostly Anglo American self-images as ideologies. Newly elected President Donald Trump's plans to build "a great, great wall on the Southern border [. . .] and have Mexico pay for that wall" and to deport 11 million immigrants living illegally in the United States (Preston, Rappeport & Richtel 2016; Chávez 2017) are recent examples of the extent to which demographic latinization threatens dominant discourses of Anglo American identity.

Anti-Latina/o discourse reveals the fear of Anglo-America's neo-conservative elite of losing power and control that became apparent since around 2005. That was when Samuel Huntington released his highly criticized and much debated *Who Are We? America's Great Debate?* (2005) in which he expresses fears for the future of Anglo-Saxon democracy if Latinas/os emancipate from the traditional nationalist pedagogy to the national signification process. Two years later, Victor David Hanson (2007) worried specifically about the rise of a primarily Spanish-language "Mexifornia" (Hanson 2007), which, he felt, would infect America with Latin America's dysfunctional social, political, and cultural patterns.

The aforementioned immigration patterns and demographics tie the United States closer to Mexico and the entire southern part of the hemisphere (the Americas). As a result, politicians and intellectuals have put more emphasis on inter-American relations, specifically the North-South continuities between the United States and the rest of Latin America. This can also be seen in American Studies (e.g., Gruesz 2002, Saldívar 1997 and 2012, Mautner-Wasserman 1994). There, the turn towards Hemispheric American Studies (Levander & Levine 2007, Belnap & Fernández 1998) also comes with a waning interest in the Old World-New World axes, or the Atlantic paradigm, which had dominated American Studies, especially in Europe.

The inter-American and hemispheric context is important for Latinas/os (Kirschner 2012) because they have come of age in their American environment while adapting on their own terms: influencing, inflecting, or shaping their social surroundings with their own customs, foods, rituals, music, arts, literature, and work ethics. While it is true that they are becoming a significant cluster of consumers with buying power and political influence, they are becoming a contributing force instead of merely passive observers, actors instead of receptors, protagonists instead of spectators. A significant number of Latinas/os have moved away from the border and the Southwest borderlands over recent years and settled in various other parts of the United States, such as Colorado, New York, Illinois, New Jersey, Washington, D.C., and Idaho. They actively participate in the hubs of economic momentum, social life, culture and academia. All over the country, they have left their marks on the intellectual, cultural, economic and political life of America. They have already helped to shape and enrich its identity in the past. They will continue to do so in the here and now and in the future, whereby a broader transnational lens will be a guiding force.

"Latinotopia" (Ikas & Lomelí 2013) has proved to be a useful theoretical concept here with practical, real-life implications; it is a paradigm designed to establish what they are capable of creating and generating. The term connotes numerous conceptualizations. Some might be negative (dystopia), or positive (utopia), and yet they are anything but indifferent. This suggests opening new ground, configuring new alternatives, conquering new spaces, creating a new ethos, and accepting that Latinas/os are not all recent immigrants, as the media generally want us to perceive

them. This is exactly what Latinas/os are doing by challenging boundaries and outdated labels. Therefore “Latinotopia” captures the processes of a sociocultural metamorphosis taking place in the United States as something both real and imagined, both internal and external.

“Latinotopia” not only puts to a test but also further develops and goes beyond the core of the third-space theory, as proposed by Homi K. Bhabha (1994), and repeatedly used to capture the Mexico–U.S. borderlands. Considering that Latinotopia is an assemblage of becoming rather than just being and that it moves away from acknowledging or accepting hierarchical structures, perhaps the figure of a “rhizome,” as developed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* (2004) can best be used:

Unlike a tree and its roots, the rhizome connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature; it brings into play very different regimes of signs, and even nonsign states. The rhizome is reducible to neither the One or the multiple. It is not the One that becomes Two or even directly three, four, five etc. [. . .] It is comprised not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion. It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (milieu) from which it grows and which it overflows. [. . .] The rhizome pertains to a map that must be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entranceways and exits and its own lines of flight.

(Deleuze & Guattari 2004, p. 223)

This figure “is always in the middle between things, inter-being, intermezzo and signifies the joint interaction of two different species to form a multiplicity while rejecting hierarchies” (Deleuze & Guattari 2004, p. 27). As such, the rhizome is relevant to a discussion of shifting relations and configurations in emergent glocalized spaces with non-hierarchical systems and envisioned through new validated cultural experiences such as Latinotopia. In fact, the recent phases of globalization with new forms and waves of migration and cosmopolitan practices beyond the nation–state further enhance the need for “Latinotopia” and thus for visionary international understandings of American identity, thus re-situating the United States within an inter-American and hemispheric space that includes Canada but within a transnational perspective.

My focus is on the transnational in relation to Latinotopia but with an emphasis on Chicanas/os. For one thing, they are by far the largest Hispanic origin population group in the United States today, accounting for about 64% of all Latinas/os and 12% of the overall U.S. population. With Mexico being adjacent to the United States and Mexican immigration levels being persistently high, the border and the borderlands are not just a part of history, memory and the imagination for Chicanas/os, but also practically at their doorsteps as physical realities where the regional/national interact with the inter-American/global. To this distinguishing feature of Chicana/o experience are added a legacy of colonial history, imperialism, and other forms of continuous U.S. domination that have repercussions for the Chicana/o community up until the present time, while still facing marginalization based upon race, gender, or sexual orientation (see R. Gutiérrez in this *Handbook*).

Chicanas/os are also unique in that they believe to have a historical claim to the American territory in the Southwest bordering Mexico, obtained through a war of invasion, known as the Mexican–American War (1846–1848). This made them foreigners in their own land, exiles who never left home. Consequently, the Chicana/o perspective is often marked by the ambition to legitimize their position from within the nation. Nina Glick Schiller captures the

dominant Chicana/o conception of the border precisely in her essay “The situation of transnational studies”:

While borders may be cultural constructions, they are constructions that are backed by force of law, economic and political power, and regulating and regularizing institutions. What they come to mean and how they are experienced, crossed or imagined are products of particular histories, times, and places.

(Schiller 1997, p. 159)

In 2011, Marisa K. López rightly held that more and more Chicanas/os “act beyond the limits of (cultural) nationalistic representations and more in terms of an American hemispheric imaginary” (p. 1). From today’s perspective, it can be said that Chicanas/os and their scholarly, artistic and cultural products are ever-more concerned with and involved in transnational phenomena that refer to global issues in hemispheric and international contexts. If we understand the transnational experience, among others, as crossing over a geographic border and as being crossed over by multiple borders (economic, national) and transnational subjectivity “as a process, one that must negotiate a number of borderlands” as Kevin Concannon, Francisco A. Lomelí & Marc Prieue (2009, p. 7) suggest, Chicanos/as’ experiences are very rewarding. Yet, the transnational and transcultural spaces that emerge for Chicanas/os do not necessarily do away with boundaries and differences but re-allocate and re-negotiate them, relativizing some and reinforcing others for specific purposes. This entry wishes to bring new insights to bear on the conceptualization of the border and the borderlands, which have dominated the scholarly debate and the various modes of individual and collective identity-construction for Chicanas/os. To do so, they will be considered in relation to the interplay of the two recent phenomena outlined thus far, transnationalism and “Latinotopia,” with a particular focus on reconciliation.

Reconciliation – a millennium challenge

Since the U.N. General Assembly declared “human reconciliation as the Millennium challenge” in 2006 and designated “2011–2020 the Global Decade of Reconciliation” in 2009, reconciliation has become a hot international topic (see also Daase 2010) within the Third Millennium. A growing international and interdisciplinary scholarship discusses reconciliation as a transnational concept that relates to specific and exceptional situations and implies a need of *Facing Up the Past* in *The Age of Apology* (Gibney, Hassmann & Coicaud 2008). Moreover, for Damien Short (2001, p. 77), a recognition of past wrongs and a sociopolitical apology debate is a concomitant phenomenon of a reconciliation process.

As an increasingly popular global subject matter, reconciliation notably offers to transcend conflicts and borders as well as such historical and geographical sites. It exerts a significant influence on the shaping of contemporary identities and the well-being of a community in an ever-more “multi-layered as well as multi-sited Global Village of transnational connections or what the French call *mondialisation*” (Lomelí & Ikas 2000, p. XI). With regard to the United States, Barack Obama made it his first official act as president to proclaim 20 January 2009, the day of his inauguration, a “National Day of Renewal and Reconciliation” (White House Government 2009). Reconciliation thus is a key concept when discussing the United States in general and Latinotopia in particular while exploring the contemporary and historical situation of Chicanas/os. Historically speaking, one may even claim that reconciliation, or rather its failure, sowed the seeds of origin for the Chicana/o community. When discussing how to pacify the borderlands,

its conflicts and dualities, reconciliation exerts a significant influence on shaping contemporary identities and well-being of a community and region. Its importance is heightened as an in-between space – in the sense of a glocal (see Robertson 1995), geo-political, and transcultural as well as aesthetic space – not only in the Americas but also internationally. At what point can Latinotopia be considered a viable discursive transnational site for reconciliation in the Third Millennium, especially for Chicanas/os? This question shall be examined in the following section by integrating sociopolitical, historical, and literary works in an interdisciplinary manner.

Reconciling the U.S.-Mexico borderlands

Chicana/o reconciliation is a complex and challenging facet of (trans-)national and inter-ethnic reconciliation in the United States, as José David Saldívar's reveals:

A near intercultural world unto itself, the U.S.-Mexico border is dominated by two foreign powers, in Washington, D.C., and Mexico City. The U.S.-Mexico border changes pesos into dollars, humans into undocumented workers, *cholos/as* (Chicano youth culture) into punks, people between cultures into people without culture.

(Saldívar 1997, p. 8)

As this passage shows, the protagonists who make up these borderlands suffer from various uneven power hierarchies. Moreover, they have more than one physical, ethnic, and cultural background, thus facing the challenge of how to abolish these power hierarchies when hybridity is the order of the day. This hybridity qualifies Chicanas/os to become “Agents of Reconciliation in Relations between Black and White America” in the following way:

Every person and racial group has a unique destiny. We Latino-Americans must discern what our purpose is in this nation. As we undertake that discernment process on both an individual and corporate level, we undoubtedly will decide to pursue numerous activities that will impact all spheres of American life. Although I do not believe we have only one purpose, I believe that Latinos and Latinas are destined to serve the critical role of agents of reconciliation and healing in American race relations, particularly between black and white Americans.

(Hernández 1999, p. 99)

While Hernández argues from a contemporary perspective to request his fellow “Latino-Americans” to take up the mantle of racial healing and reconciliation, the historical perspective must not be forgotten either. It is fundamental not to lose sight of the fact that the Chicana/o situation can be traced back to a chapter in American imperial history that has generally been silenced. Chicano historian Mario T. García notes: “[T]here is no question but that in studies of Mexicans in the United States the most neglected field is history” (García 1970, p. 34). “Indeed,” as David J. Weber adds, “historians have been criticized more for what they have not said than for what they have said” (Weber 1973, p. 2).

In recent years, Chicana/o scholars have contributed to lifting the veil of silence while challenging the homogeneity of U.S. nationalism, history, and culture. Thus, they strive to launch a remapping of American Cultural Studies where the border and the borderlands matter, as in “Nuestra América's Borders” by José David Saldívar (2009, p. 26), who fittingly names this glocalized site of American crossroads. It also involves a reassessment of the historical accounts

that have repeatedly represented the Chicana/o experience in a distorted, even wrong, way in American historiography. A telling example is David Saville Muzzey's 1911 schoolbook *American History*, which had been in use until the late 1940s, and contains the following historical account of the Mexican-American War with its rather shallow and superficial utilization of the term reconciliation:

We have tried every effort at reconciliation. But now, after reiterated menaces, Mexico has passed the boundary of the United States [the Río Grande], has invaded our territory and shed American blood upon the American soil. She has proclaimed that hostilities have commenced, and that the two nations are at war. As war exists, and, notwithstanding all our efforts to avoid it, exists by the act of Mexico herself, we are called upon by every consideration of duty and patriotism to vindicate with decision the honor, the rights, and the interests of our country.

(Muzzey 1911)

The reality was much more complex than what Muzzey argues because one has to consider both sides. Jesús Velasco-Márquez's article "A Mexican Viewpoint on the War with the United States" (1997, pp. 49–57) contains many illuminating and useful texts in trying to achieve a more balanced and thoughtful perspective. Alberto María Carreño's 1962 study *México y los Estados Unidos de América* is especially useful for reprinting Mexican President Mariano Paredes' illuminating enactment of the Congressional decree on 6 July 1846:

Article 1. The government, in the natural defense of the nation, will repel the aggression initiated and sustained by the United States of America against the Republic of Mexico, having invaded and committed hostilities in a number of the departments making up Mexican territory.

Article 3. The government will communicate to friendly nations and to the entire republic the justifiable causes which obliged it to defend its rights, left with no other choice but to repel force with force, in response to the violent aggression committed by the United States.

(Carreño 1962, p. 107)

A careful analysis reveals that Mexico, strictly speaking, did not declare war on the United States, but rather, emphasized merely its steely determination to defend Mexico's territorial integrity and repel the U.S. invasion. Revealing in this regard is another historical document that documents the thoughts and comments of Nicholas Philip Trist, the American diplomat assigned by the U.S. government to negotiate with Mexican authorities in order to reach a treaty of "peace, boundaries and borders" with Mexico. In a letter to his wife Virginia Randolph Triest from 8 July 1864, he recollects the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo as follows:

Just as they were about to sign the treaty [. . .] one of the Mexicans, Don Bernardo Couto, remarked to him, "This must be a proud moment for you; no less proud for you than it is humiliating for us." To this Mr. Trist replied, "We are making peace, let that be our only thought." But, said he to us in relating it, "Could those Mexicans have seen into my heart at that moment, they would have known that my feeling of shame as an American was far stronger than theirs could be as Mexicans. For though it would not have done for me to

say so there, that was a thing for every right minded American to be ashamed of, and I was ashamed of it, most cordially and intensely ashamed of it.”

(see *V R Trist to Tockerman, Nicolas P. Trist Papers, Box 10*)

Jesús Velasco-Márquez’s conclusion reads as follows: “The armed conflict between Mexico and the United States from 1846 to 1848 was the product of deliberate aggression and should therefore be referred to as ‘The U.S. War Against Mexico’” (Velasco-Márquez 1997, p. 56). For a long time in the past, historians in Mexico also used the phrase ‘The U.S. invasion’ for that event while U.S. historians referred to it as ‘The Mexican War’ before the term ‘Mexican-American War’ was introduced as a more balanced expression, in both countries. Today, however, there is a widespread consensus among scholars about what was really the intention of the United States: not reconciliation but war to acquire new territory. In other words, the outbreak of the Mexican-American War (1846–1848) was not that surprising nor was the resultant Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. With the subsequent U.S. annexation of this territory, the Southwest borderlands and the Mexican American people were born as *foreigners in their native land*, as David J. Weber (1973, p. 280) points out in his seminal historical anthology. It did not only make them foreigners and outsiders in their homeland, but victims even though they were considered the “newly American and originally Mexican” residents of that territory (Ibid, p. 280). They experienced a wide range of violence and human rights abuses in the post-war years when a lack of justice and the failure of the law to protect them had been a notorious order of the day. In his editor’s introduction to the thought-provoking chapter “The Rights of Citizens” of his book of Chicana/o history, David J. Weber writes:

Although the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo promised that Mexicans who stayed in the Southwest would receive “all the rights of citizens of the United States,” it seems clear in retrospect that this promise was not fulfilled. At best, Mexican Americans became second-class citizens. At worst, they became victims of overt racial and ethnic prejudices.

(Weber 1973, p. 143)

To this day, the political and social process of sustainably dealing with this infamous past and the crimes committed still awaits realization. Despite former President Obama’s pledge to support reconciliation in the United States, there has been no indication that Chicanas/os can expect past human rights violations in the political and public arena to be redressed for past injustices. As things currently stand and given his policy to build walls between the two nations, it is unlikely that current President Trump will do so either.

Contemporary border(land)s and Latinotopia

For many Chicanas/os, then, the border is still a sore point, as Chicana critic and writer-activist Gloria Anzaldúa metaphorically calls it in her influential semi-autobiographical work *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*:

The U.S.-Mexico border *es una herida abierta* (an open wound) where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the life-blood of two worlds merging to form a third country – a border culture. Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined

place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants.

(Anzaldúa 1987, p. 3)

Authors who are more contemporary take quite a different view. For Sebastian Thies and Josef Raab (2009, p. 14), for instance, the Mexican American “borderlands, their rites of passage and tales of transgression, constitute a potent foundational myth of transnational or inter-American identities.” José David Saldívar (1997, p. 3), in turn, perceives the border between the United States and Mexico as a paradigm for a “*Transfrontera* contact zone.” For him this means a “social space of subaltern encounters, the Janus-faced border line in which peoples geopolitically forced to separate themselves now negotiate with one another and manufacture new relations, hybrid cultures, and multiple-voiced aesthetics” (Saldívar 1997, pp. 13–14).

In her poem “Now and Then, America,” published in *Borders* (1986), Chicana writer Pat Mora expressed: “Risk my difference, my surprises. Grant me a little life, America” (Mora 1986, p. 33).¹ Today, this slogan is elaborated upon by the alternative demand formulated by Mora in her essay collection *Nepantla* as “an understanding and appreciation of cultural differences” (1993, p. 19) and that she rightly deems “as essential a skill as technological competence” (*Ibid.*, p. 19). Equally, Mora calls for an enhanced participation of Latinas and Chicanas within all suitable collective actions as well as spatial and geographical redefinitions needed to re-think the parameters of American Studies and Chicano Studies and their sometimes nationalist, racist, misogynist, and gender-biased representations. Writing proves to be such a strategy, especially for women of color feminists and Chicana writers, including Alicia Gaspar de Alba, Sandra Cisneros, Cherríe Moraga, María Helen Ponce, Denise Chávez, the Latina Theatre Lab, Helena María Viramontes, and Ana Castillo.

Whereas Pat Mora applies the náhuatl concept of *nepantla* as simply “land in the middle” in terms of a writer’s responsibility for negotiating the middle land’s terrains, Anzaldúa views it more profoundly. Hers is a heterogeneous concept for the ambiguous, tentative, ever-changing place we all inhabit in this fluid world, space, and culture of (multiple) borderland(s). For Anzaldúa (1987, p. 103), a new myth emerges from these alternative borderlands, which is “a new story to explain the world and our participation in it, a new value system with images and symbols that connect us to each other and to the planet.”

In sum, this is what could be called Latinotopia and consequently described as a discursive space emerging from a diverse assortment of texts that keep global flows in mind and that may result in geographical remappings while challenging established power structures in the United States to develop a transnational perspective. From there fundamental topics like memory, space, gender categories, and sexual relations in American and Chicano/a society, culture, and relevant works of art are recreated and reimagined. This involves the homogeneity of U.S. nationalism and culture that try to sketch out transnationally the outlines of a new reconciled way of being. Moreover, Latinotopia is a space of negotiated transgression through cultural and aesthetic works as an alternative. The focus is thus no longer simply on expressing bicultural Chicana/o experiences in the United States and the borderlands. It is rather on transnational networks and global flows that are integrated by the Chicana/o, American, Mexican, and Latina/o realities and territories, yet exceed the American and Mexican national contexts.

Some by-now classic Chicana/o writers had already applied a more cosmopolitan perspective that shows traces of Latinotopia in that they used their creative imagination also for more ‘Chicana/o’ untypical transnational and truly global encounters. In her novel *Face* (1985), Cecile Pineda, for example, transfers the Mexican myth of Malinche to the Brazilian jungle, whereas

she moves transcontinentally from New York to Europe in her fictional memoir “Touching Henry” (2000) to reconstruct the Jewish memory of the holocaust. The eminent Texas-born Américo Paredes, in turn, who had spent a year in Japan and returned home with his part-Japanese, part-Uruguayan wife, has recently been rediscovered by Ramón Saldivar (2006, p. 10) as “a precursor to the new American cultural studies” for his *Transnational Imaginary*. In fact, from early on this eminent Texas-born folklorist, borderland writer, musician, and one of the founders of modern Chicana/o Studies in the 1960s/1970s, had tried to negotiate the contradictions between the national and the transnational in the increasingly globalized Américas. For Saldivar (2006, p. 10), Américo Paredes stands out in his “persistent rearticulations of the triangulated cultural and political relationships between North and South America and their various and unexpected points of convergence in cold war Asia.”

Other writers like Tomás Rivera, Rudolfo A. Anaya, Arturo Islas, Cherríe Moraga, Lorna Dee Cervantes, Alicia Gaspar de Alba, Sandra Cisneros, and Ana Castillo similarly understand their works as ways to contribute to the relevant reconstruction of memory, space, gender, sexual, cultural, and socioeconomic relations in America as well as transculturally in and beyond the relevant borderlands. A prolific contemporary example is Chicago-native Sandra Cisneros, whom President Obama awarded the 2016 National Medal of Arts “for enriching the American narrative” and for “having deepened our understanding of American identity” (The White House, 22 September 2016, online). In her second novel *Caramelo* (2002), she uses a caramel-colored striped *rebozo* (traditional Mexican shawl) as a central metaphor for an intricately interwoven family saga and transnational memory network. This unfolds as the young Chicana protagonist Celeya travels back and forth across the borderlands to render her and her grandmother Soledad’s challenging stories of (im)migration and to reconcile them in the course of a transnational recasting of space and history in an imaginary land that might be comparable to a Latinotopia. That way, Cisneros also participates in the healing of what Anzaldúa has sketched as the open wound. In that sense, the borderlands progressively provide their inhabitants with *la facultad*; that is, in Homi K. Bhabha’s words, “the capacity to see in surface phenomena the meaning of deeper realities, to see the deep structure below the surface” (1994, p. 60).

Lorna Dee Cervantes goes back in time to offer another illuminating example in her award-winning collection *Emplumada* (1981). In “Poema para los Californios Muertos,” she triggers a free association between symbol, images, language, site, memory, and first occupants:

These older towns die/ into stretches of freeway./ The high scaffolding cuts a clean cesar-
ean/ across belly valleys and fertile dust./ What a bastard child, this city/ lost in the soft/
llorando de las madres [the crying of mothers]/ Californios moan like husbands of the
raped,/ husbands de la tierra, [of earth]/ tierra la madre [the mother earth].

(1981)²

The process of commemoration extends from a preliminary investigation via a critique of modern white middle class’s ignorance of the ethnic past. In the discursive field between estrangement and increasing recognition, Cervantes posits the contemporary hybrid inhabitants of the borderlands whom she urges to work on improving the relationships between former victims and former perpetrators to overcome alienation and bring healing to the land. As Ramón Saldivar accurately posits in the concluding chapter of *Chicana Narrative: The Dialectics of Difference*:

to write is preeminently a political act seeking to fulfill the potentialities of contemporary life. It is also, ultimately, an attempt to recall the originary [*sic*] myths of life on the borders

of power in order to fashion triumphantly a new, heterogeneous American consciousness, within the dialectics of difference.

(Saldívar 1990, p. 218)

An intriguing contemporary example of the power of writing that expresses individual and collective experiences and positions in a borderland landscape integrated by *transfrontera* crimes, global flows, NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement), and the continuous interchanges between Mexico and the United States is Alicia Gaspar de Alba's mystery novel *Desert Blood: The Juarez Murders* (2005). The disturbing thriller is based on the 17-year epidemic violence against poor young Mexican women working in special manufacturing operations (*maquiladoras*) in the border region between Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, and El Paso, Texas, with more than 4,000 murders since 1993. In Irene Mata's analysis, De Alba has her heroine, a lesbian professor from Los Angeles, California, "Ivon Villa [who] employs a transnational feminist analysis of global networks of oppression [. . .] to create alternative paradigms for challenging the social inequality of globalization processes" (Mata 2010, p. 15). Through Ivon Villa, De Alba deciphers patriarchy, transcultural gender oppression, corruption, and a conspiracy of silence surrounding the crimes as part of an international crisis to be tackled that represent transnational challenges for reconciling the borderlands in the present and future.

Conclusion

Overall, it might be fitting to call Chicanas/os not merely Americans but rather the very Americans of the Third Millennium who share a transnational and transcultural vision. They do not simply integrate but aim at reshaping the very matrix story of the United States and the borderlands in an intercultural and transnational way. In this way, Latinotopia is a significant part of a transnationalism Chicana/o Style because it emerges rhizomatically as neither restricted to the borderlands nor as a mere theoretical construct, but as a lived practice of transnational formations and imagined alternative stories and networks, and is thus also a new model for greater diversity and, ultimately, reconciliation.

Notes

- 1 The author gratefully acknowledges permission to cite excerpts by Pat Mora (1986), in "Now and Then America," from *Borders* published by Arte Público Press, 1986.
- 2 The author gratefully acknowledges permission from the University of Pittsburgh Press to cite excerpts from Lorna Dee Cervantes, 1981, "Emplumada".

References

- Anzaldúa, G. 1987, *Borderlands /la frontera: the new mestiza*, Spinsters/Aunt Lute, San Francisco.
- Basch, L., Glick-Schiller, N. & Szanton-Blanc, C. 1992, *Towards a transnational perspective on migration: race, class, ethnicity, and nationalism reconsidered*, New York Academy of Sciences, New York.
- Belnap, J. & Fernández, R. (eds.) 1998, *José Martí's "Our America": from national to hemispheric cultural studies*, Duke University Press, Durham.
- Bennett, T. & Wollacott, J. 1987, *Bond and beyond: the political career of a popular hero*, Methuen, New York.
- Bhabha, H.K. 2004 [1994], *The location of culture*, Routledge, London/New York.
- British Embassy Mexico City 2013, '2015: the year of Mexico in the UK and the UK in Mexico'. Accessed February 23, 2016. www.gov.uk/government/world-location-news/2015-the-year-of-mexico-in-the-uk-and-the-uk-in-mexico.

- Carreño, A. M. 1962, *México y los Estados Unidos de América*, Editorial Jus, Mexico City.
- Cervantes, L.D. 1981, *Emplumada*, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh.
- Chapman, J. 1999 and 2007, *License to thrill: a cultural history of the James Bond films*, LB & Tauris, London.
- Chávez, L. 2017, 'Immigration, Latinas/os and the Media', in F.A. Lomeli, D.A. Segura & E. Benjamin-Labarthe (eds.) *The handbook of Chicana/o studies*, Routledge, New York & London.
- Cisneros, S. 2002, *Caramelo*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York.
- Colby, S.L. & Ortman, J.M. 2015, 'Projections of the size and composition of the U.S. population: 2014 to 2060', United States Census Bureau. Accessed July 23, 2016. www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2015/demo/p25-1143.pdf.
- Concannon, K., Lomeli, F.A. & Priewe, M. 2009, *Imagined transnationalism: U.S. Latino/a literature, culture, and identity*, Palgrave-Macmillan, New York.
- Daase, C. 2010, 'Addressing painful memories: apologies as a new practice in international relations', in A. Assmann & S. Conrad (eds.) *Memory in a global age: discourses, practices and trajectories*, Palgrave Macmillan, Houndsmills.
- Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. 2004, *A thousand plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi, Continuum, London/New York.
- Fleming, M. Jr. 2015, 'His exit Interview? Sam Mendes' *Spectre*' on his role in the dramatic transformation of James Bond', *Deadline Hollywood*. Accessed November 15, 2015. www.yahoo.com/tv/exit-interview-spectre-sam-mendes-194339786.html.
- García, M.T. 1970, 'Reviewing Manuel Servín's *Mexican American*', *El Grito*, vol. 3, no. 4, p. 34.
- Gaspar de Alba, A. 2005, *Desert blood: the Juárez murders*, Arte Público Press, Houston.
- Gibney, M., Howard-Hassmann, R.E. & Coicaud, J.M. (eds.) 2008, *The age of apology: facing up to the past*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.
- Glick Schiller, N. 1997, 'The situation of transnational studies', *Identities*, vol. 4, pp. 155–166.
- Gruesz, K.S. 2002, *Ambassadors of culture: the transamerican origins of Latino writing*, Princeton University Press, Princeton/Oxford.
- Hanson, V.D. 2007, 'Mexifornia: five years later', *City journal*. Accessed May 15, 2016. www.city-journal.org/html17_1_mexifornia.html.
- Hebel, Udo J. 2012, *Transnational American studies*, Winter, Heidelberg.
- Hernández, M.V. 1999, 'Bridging Gibraltar: Latinos as agents of reconciliation in relations between Black and White America', *La Raza Law Journal*, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 99–112.
- Huntington, S.P. 2005, *Who are we? The challenges to America's national identity*, Free Press, New York.
- Ikkas, K. & Lomeli, F.A. (eds.) 2013, *Latinotopia- USA: international perspectives on the transforming USA in the 21st century/Latinotopia- USA: Perspectives internationales sur les États-Unis en mutation au XXIe siècle*, special issue of *La revue LISA/LISA e-journal*, vol. XI, no. 2, Caen, France. <http://lisa.revues.org/533>.
- Kaltmeier, O. (ed.) 2013, *Transnational Americas: envisioning inter-American area studies in Globalization Processes*, WVT, Trier.
- Kearney, M. 1995, 'The local and the global: the anthropology of globalization and transnationalism', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol. 24, pp. 547–565.
- Kirschner, L.A. (ed.) 2012, *Expanding Latinidad: an inter-American perspective*, Bilingual Press/Editorial Bilingüe, Tempe, AZ.
- Levander, C.F. and Levine, R.S. 2007, *Hemispheric American studies*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick.
- Lomeli, F.A. & Ikkas, K. 2000, 'The transnational perspective on U.S. Latino literatures and cultures at the turn of the millennium', in *U.S. Latino literatures and cultures: transnational perspectives*, C Winter, Heidelberg, pp. XI–XXI.
- Marchi, R.M. 2009, *Day of the dead in the USA: the migration and transformation of a cultural phenomenon*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick.
- Mata, I. 2010, 'Writing on the walls: deciphering violence and industrialization in Alicia Gaspar de Alba's *Desert Blood*', *MELUS: Multi-ethnic Literature of the U.S.*, vol 35, no. 3, pp. 15–40.
- Mautner-Wasserman, R. 1994, *Exotic nations: literature and cultural identity in the United States and Brazil, 1830–1930*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca.
- Mora, P. 1986, *Borders*, Arte Público Press, Houston.
- Mora, P. 1993, *Nepantla: essays from the land in the middle*, University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque.

- Morgan, N. (ed.) 2016, 'A community of thought: connecting with transnational American studies', *The journal of transnational American studies*, vol. 7, no.1. Accessed August 14, 2016. <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/5740x64n#page-1>.
- Müller, T. 2015, 'The bonds of empire: (post-)imperial negotiations in the 007 film series', in B. Buchenau & V. Richter (eds.) *Post-empire imaginaries? Anglophone Literature, History, and the Demise of Empires*, Brill-Rodopi, Leiden, pp. 305–326.
- Muzzey, D.S. 1911, 'The Mexican war', in *American history*, Ginn Company, Boston, available as e-text at the Virtual Museum of the City of San Francisco. Accessed May 12, 2016, www.sfmuseum.org/hist6/muzzey.html.
- Pease, D.E., Fluck, W. & Rowe, J.C. 2011, *Re-framing the transnational turn in American studies*, Dartmouth University Press, Hanover, NH.
- Pineda, C. 2000, 'Touching Henry – a short story', in F.A. Lomeli & K. Ikas (eds.) *U.S. Latino literatures and cultures: transnational perspectives*, C. Winter, Heidelberg, pp. 277–281.
- Pineda, C. 2016 [1985], *Face*, Wings Press, San Antonio, TX.
- Preston, J., Rappeport, A. & Richtel, M. 2016, 'What would it take for Donald Trump to deport 11 million and build a wall?' *New York Times*, May 19. Accessed July 15, 2016. www.nytimes.com/2016/05/20/us/politics/donald-trump-immigration.html?_r=0.
- Robertson, R. 1995, 'Glocalization: the time-space and homogeneity-heterogeneity', in M. Featherstone, S. Lash & R. Robertson (eds.) *Global modernities*, Sage, London, pp. 25–44.
- Saldívar, J.D. 1997, *Border matters: remapping American cultural studies*, University of California Press, Oakland.
- Saldívar, J.D. 2009, 'Nuestra América's borders: American cultural studies' in J.A. Radway, K.K. Gaines, K. Shank & P. von Eschen (eds.) *American studies: an anthology*, Wiley-Blackwell, Malden/Oxford.
- Saldívar, J.D. 2012, *Trans-Americanity: subaltern modernities, global coloniality, and the cultures of greater Mexico*, Duke UP, Durham.
- Saldívar, R. 1990, *Chicano narrative: the dialectics of difference*, U of Wisconsin Press, Madison.
- Saldívar, R. 2006, *The borderlands of culture: Américo Paredes and the transnational imaginary*, Duke University Press, Durham and London.
- Short, D. 2001, 'The question of an apology: reconciliation and civility', *Journal of Human Rights*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 77–90.
- Stepler, R. & Bronn, A. 2016, 'Statistical portrait of Hispanics in the United States', Pew Research Center. Accessed July 20, 2016. www.pewhispanic.org/2016/04/19/statistical-portrait-of-hispanics-in-the-united-states-key-charts/.
- Thies, S. & Raab, J. 2009, 'E pluribus unum? interdisciplinary perspectives on national and transnational identities in the Americas' in *E pluribus unum? interdisciplinary perspectives on national and transnational identities in the Americas/identidades nacionales y transnacionales en las Américas*, Bilingual Press/LIT, Münster/Tempe, pp. 1–23.
- Trist, V.R. to Tockerman, July 8, 1864, *Nicholas P. Trist papers*, Library of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.
- Velasco-Márquez, J. 1997, 'A Mexican viewpoint on the war with the United States', *Voices of Mexico*, no. 41 (October–December), pp. 49–57.
- Vertovec, S. 1999, 'Conceiving and Researching Transnationalism', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 22, no. 2, pp. 447–463.
- Vertovec, S. 2009, *Transnationalism*, Routledge, London/New York.
- Weber, D.J. (ed.) 1973, *Foreigners in their native land: historical roots of the Mexican Americans*, University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque.
- White House Government 2009, 'Inauguration 2009–President Barack Obama issues proclamation: a national day of renewal and reconciliation', January 20, 2009. Accessed July 22, 2016. www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/01/20/obamas-first-act-day-of-n_159455.html.
- The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 2016, 'Remarks by the president at the presentation of the 2015 national medals of the arts and humanities', September 22. Accessed October 15, 2016, www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/09/22/remarks-president-presentation-2015-national-medals-art

Part V

Chicana/o identities and political expressions

Introduction

Interrogating questions on identity, culture, and politics are central to Chicana/o Studies. One frequently asked question concerns the definitions and boundaries of Chicana/o, Mexican American, Mexican, and Latina/o identities as labels and identifiers. What has become increasingly apparent is that these identities are flexible and contextual vis-à-vis relations of power, inequality, exclusion, and sometimes generation. Initially, the term “Chicano” was used to disrupt exclusionary social, political, and cultural mechanisms within the United States. Increasingly Chicanas vocalized eloquent and hard-hitting critiques of male privilege within their own communities as well as patriarchal capitalism accountable for their historical disenfranchisement. A dialectics of identities developed: sometimes as an interpretation, other times as something evasive or as an ongoing progression. Within Chicana literature as well as within critiques of Chicano cultural nationalism, we encounter new ways of articulating both oppression and liberation in relation to the multiple layers of selfhood. Chicana feminisms have fundamentally transformed how we think about Chicana/o identities across a range of disciplines, places, and arenas. Sociological research on colorism analyzes institutional racism entrenched in American society that affects the Chicana/o community, in that even though one may identify as Chicana/o, skin color hierarchies often inscribe lighter-skinned members of communities of color with consistent advantages over their darker-skinned counterparts. Scholars have found rethinking “culture,” “colorism,” “boundaries,” “sexualities,” and “empowerment” to be vital in understanding the formation of Chicana/o identities within a broader sense of contemporary constructions. Across this *Handbook* others argue that identities are inseparable from conquest, mass migrations, popular traditions, and globalization that are redrawing nation-state boundaries while developing new loyalties, generating new citizenship claims, and transforming individual and collective identities within an evolving cultural context. Essays in this section explore the relationship between Chicana/o identities and power hierarchies at the same time they critically engage cultural representation, sexualities, and politics as tools of agency. They also explore the multiple processes by which identities are socially constructed within the context of U.S. racially gendered projects, as well as resistance to assimilation to the dominant heteronormative culture.

