

Spring 5-22-2016

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Tijuana: The Third Space

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty and the Honors Program
Of the University of San Diego

By
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Spanish
2016

History

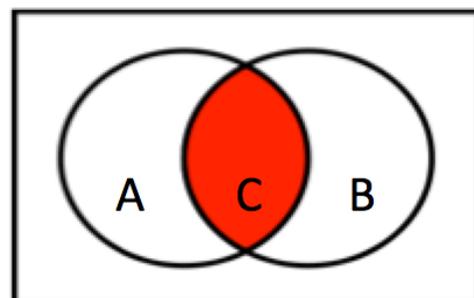
The war between the United States and Mexico, which began with the annexation of Texas by the United States in the year 1845, took place in 1846. The war began when Mexican and American troops were sent to Texas to establish physical land barriers. As the war continued Mexico began to see their losses adding up. It is then that they turned to standby General Antonio López de Santa Anna, the charismatic man who had been living in exile in Cuba. Santa Anna convinced U.S. President James K Polk that, if allowed to return to Mexico, he would end the war on terms favorable to the United States. But when he arrived, he immediately double-crossed Polk by taking control of the Mexican army and leading it into battle. For some time guerilla attacks against U.S. supply lines continued, but for all intents and purposes the war had ended. Santa Anna resigned, and the United States waited for a new government capable of negotiations to form.

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo officially ended the Mexican-American war on February 2, 1848. According to the terms of this treaty, the United States had to pay Mexico fifteen million dollars. In return, Mexico would give the United States the land that is known today as California, Nevada Utah and parts of Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Wyoming. In other words, Mexico lost more than half of its territory. Nearly one hundred thousand Mexicans who lived in these lands at this time became displaced. They were given the option of moving into Mexico under the new Mexican borders or staying where they were under the rule of the Americans. Around ninety-eight percent of the Mexicans chose to remain where they lived. According to David. G. Gutierrez in his article "Migration, Emergent Ethnicity, and the "Third Space: The Shifting Politics of Nationalism in Greater Mexico," "this first group of Mexican Americans confronted [the] widespread discrimination that greatly diminished their

ability to exercise their rights as American citizens” (Gutierrez 485-486). Gutierrez goes on to say, that the division in the United States had existed before the United States-Mexican War but that “ ‘Northern Mexicans’ relationship to the “nation” obviously became much more complicated,” particularly for this group of Mexicans (Gutierrez 485). These Mexicans in the U.S. struggled to hold onto their traditional values, cultural norms and religious beliefs, but this new physical boundary only intensify the issue. Furthermore, as Gutierrez delineates in his book, the new international boundary made Mexicans feel like “internal outcasts within the newly expanded United States” (Gutierrez 485). It was the American entrepreneurs that often found it in their best interest to cultivate alliances and partnerships with the remaining ethnic Mexican in the U.S. By entering into business and matrimonial partnerships with them, Americans gained “commercial and political advantages” (Gutierrez 486). In other words, the entrepreneurs were taking advantage of the situation they were placed in, purposefully making this group of new Mexicans feel even more displaced.

In the end, the struggle for this new ethnic group was far from ideal. When “faced with an intensifying territorial encroachment by white Americans on the one hand and by a pervasive atmosphere of racial and cultural hostility on the other, ethnic Mexicans were increasingly forced to devise defensive strategies of adaptation and survival in an intermediate, “third” social space that was located in the interstices between the dominant national and cultural systems of both the United States and Mexico” (Gutierrez 487-488).

What is a third space? In simple terms, a third space is a combination of two entities (C). Gutierrez, defined the third space as a “site where ethnic Mexicans attempted to mediate the profound sense of



displacement and other stresses raised by their daily existence as members of a radicalized and marginalized minority in a region they had long considered to be their ancestral homeland” (Gutierrez 488). These first Mexican Americans, for example, wanted to continue maintaining their traditional culture while living in the United States. In other words, it was this type of “third space” in the United States that allowed the Mexican Americans to feel comfortable in their own culture while living in another country. This mixture of cultures allowed them to feel solidarity with the rest of the people living in the U.S. at the time. This third space was also a place that allowed its inhabitants to continue to hold onto the past while everything around them was changing.

Nowadays, border towns exemplify the third space. Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico, for example, is a city that is neither fully Mexican nor fully American, but rather a combination of both cultures. This bicultural region is a perfect third space since Gutierrez says, this space is where “different cultural, linguistic, or religious heritages come into close daily contact (Gutierrez 484). Some of the areas where we can clearly see how Tijuana operates as a third space are through its maquiladoras, the prostitution available in the city, the accessibility of alcohol and the physical border itself.

Maquiladoras

In the 2006 documentary, entitled *Maquilopolis*, or “City of Factories,” directed by Vicky Funari, various personal stories are told by women who once worked in *maquiladoras*, or factories, to make a living. Most maquiladoras were first established on the Mexico-United States border in the 1970s. However, by 1994 these maquiladoras had spread to the interior parts of Mexico. A maquiladora, or *maquila*, is a manufacturing operation in Mexico that imports certain material and equipment on a duty-free and tariff-free basis for assembly, processing or

manufacturing. Once work is complete the resulting products are exported back to the country from which the raw materials originated.

The majority of maquiladora workers are women, while the main floor managers are men. Women are said to be desirable employees because they are submissive and have small, fast, working hands that are ideal for the assembly job. Unfortunately, as a consequence of working in these maquiladoras, these women are exposed to daily harsh treatment by their employer. They often undergo harassment while being exposed to harmful chemicals and being pressured to complete their work at a fast pace. They also work twelve-hour days for minimal pay and they have to follow strict rules. For example, they are not allowed to do simple things such as drink water or use the restroom during working hours. More importantly, if these women ever complained about the conditions or became sick from the toxins and subsequently have to miss several days of work, they would be let go with the understanding that they were easily replaceable. The reason why women continue to work in maquiladoras today has to do with the fact that there are few jobs available in Tijuana and they need to support their families.

(Maquilapolis) Additionally, most women have to work not only to care for their children but to also care for themselves because they have been abandoned by their partners who have crossed into the United States (Castillo).

The women in *Maquilapolis* either became sick or decided they could no longer take their employer's horrible treatment. These circumstances empowered them to learn about their rights as employees, bring change to their lives and empower other female maquiladora workers. Lourdes Lujan, one of the women in the documentary, tells of the environmental effects of the maquiladoras in Tijuana. Lourdes mentions that she has lived in the *Colonia Chilpancingo*,

Tijuana (the Chilpancingo, Tijuana neighborhood)¹, her entire life. Lourdes discusses how environmental changes did not begin to occur in her neighborhood until the maquiladoras began to be built in Tijuana. One negative consequence of the maquiladoras being in Tijuana was the pollutants maquiladoras began to give off into the environment. These pollutants started to affect the health of the residents living in these communities. Lourdes specifically mentions a river close to her home that used to be clean. She remembers how she used to bathe in the river with her friends when she was younger. Now that she has children of her own, she wishes they, too, could have the same experience playing in the river she used to have when she was younger. However, the river she once enjoyed is now a source of chemical run offs from the local maquiladoras. The river now changes colors from red to green day by day. These colors are clear indicators that this river is unsanitary for those living in the area.

When asked how she became aware of the health effects the maquiladora was having on those in her community, Lourdes mentions having seen signs around Colonia Chilpancingo advertising paid work for the San Diego Environmental Health Coalition. The San Diego Environmental Health Coalition was in search of people who were willing to do health surveys in their community to study the results of environmental pollutants on new-born children. Lourdes took on this opportunity. However, through this experience she discovered horrifying results. She learned that local children were suffering from severe birth defects. For example, some children were being born with hydrocephalus, a build-up of fluid in the cavities of the brain. Others were being born with anencephaly, that is, with an underdeveloped brain and incomplete skull. Still others were born with nail-patella syndrome and as a result, were missing or had poorly developed fingernails, toenails, and kneecaps. Lourdes also found that more and

¹ All the translations in this thesis have been done by Maribel Tovar.

more children were becoming susceptible to skin allergies at a young age.

The results of these studies drove Lourdes to want to make a change in her community. She first targeted Metales y Derivados, a lead recycling plant that operated during the 1980s and recycled thousands of car and boat batteries from the U.S. in order to extract the lead for profit (Cleanup). In 1994, the factory shut down after community reports of health problems and repeated violations of environmental laws documented by the Mexican government (*Maquilapolis*). Upon its closure, its owner José Kahn, a U.S. citizen, fled to San Diego to avoid arrest and being charged with violating environmental laws (Cleanup). In reality, Kahn left those living nearby exposed to 23,000 tons of mixed contaminated waste that included 7,000 tons of lead slag along with battery parts and heavy metals that were either illegally buried or dumped in open piles (Cleanup). When the people from the neighborhood looked to their local and state governments for funds to clean up this factory, they both refused, claiming they could not afford the cost of the clean up (*Maquilapolis*).

It was only natural that erosion would occur over time. The maquiladora building soon began to crumble and the barrels with mixed contaminants began to spew out waste. Since the contaminants were less secure, the wind and the rain would bring the contaminants into the towns. (*Maquilapolis*) For example, the people who walked on local trails, who had no intention of coming into contact with the abandoned maquiladora contaminants, unfortunately picked them up on the soles of their shoes. They would then bring the contaminants to their workplaces and to their homes.

It is unfortunate that the people living in Colonia Chilpancingo were not able to move to another location that is safer for their families. The reality of their situation is that most of them would have no where to go because they could not afford the move. Those who could

afford to move would only be able to relocate to another border town with other maquiladoras with the same environmental effects. However, on a happier note, “in 2004, the Mexican government agreed to clean up the mess [left by Kahn] with a groundbreaking environmental settlement” (Cleanup). More specifically, “in a legally binding agreement, the Mexican government [agreed it] would spend \$1.5 million to clean up the site over the next five years (Cleanup). Fortunately, the clean up was finished in December 2008, six months ahead of schedule. However, the significance of this year delay was that the agreement to clean this site up represented “the first time the Mexican government has entered a binding agreement with a community to clean up a toxic site, and ... [include] community oversight in the cleanup process” (Cleanup). Moreover, this clean up happened because of the efforts of Lourdes and her fellow community members. It happened because they chose not to settle and conform to having this abandoned factory be a permanent part of their community. Although the residents of the Chilpancingo neighborhood have won this battle with this one factory, toxins from current factories present them with more problems. Lourdes and her fellow community members want Americans and the Mexican Government to note that Tijuana should not be seen as anyone’s garbage dump.

All in all, these maquiladoras are a perfect example of the third space. American owned companies moved their company production factories into Tijuana in search of cheap labor. Not only did they find cheap labor, they also found groups of people willing to put up with their harmful treatment. Furthermore, these company owners do not take into consideration how the millions of maquiladora workers are really being affected by working and living where these maquiladoras are run. In reality, the people of Tijuana have no choice but to tolerate the environmental contaminants of the maquiladoras in hope they will survive to live another day.

However, it is not just the environmental conditions the people of Tijuana have to deal with. The cultural tensions between the people in Mexico and the U.S. is a constant issue. It can be seen how Mexicans envy what those in the U.S. have and they desire what they cannot have. At the same time those in the U.S. are constantly putting the Mexicans down for living in what they consider to be an underdeveloped third world country.

Prostitution

In his work, "Migration, Emergent Ethnicity, and the "Third Space: The Shifting Politics of Nationalism in Greater Mexico," David Gutierrez, speaks of "the expansion of industrial production in the Mexican border states, combined with the ever-present lure of possible work in the United States" as a reason that "has drawn millions of people into an expanding *zona fronteriza* (frontier zone) straddling the international border" (Gutierrez 505). Steven Bender also talks about the inhabitants of the *zona fronteriza* in his book, *Run for the Border: Vice and Virtue in U.S.-Mexico Border Crossings*. Bender mentions that "the south-of-the-border sex industry has always prompted border crossings to view sex shows and strippers, as well as to solicit prostitutes (Bender). More specifically he states that "to many who visited [Tijuana] during the 1940s, it was a city of vice where prostitution, pornographic movies, live sex demonstrations, and drug traffic were unequalled" (Bender).

In the book, *Tierra de Nadien* (No Ones' Land), Eduardo Parra, tells the story of a transgender prostitute named *Estrella* (Star) in his short story called "*Nomás no me quiten lo poquito que traigo*" ("Just Don't Take the Little I Have"). *Estrella* is a prostitute who lives in Mexico because she is trying to save up money to have a transgender operation. Her goal every night is to "*dejarlos bien contentos y después largarse muy oronda a esconder el dinero debajo del colchón*" (Parra 163) ("To leave her customers happy and then run home to hide the money

she made under her mattress”). It was worth it to her to “*aguantar un poco de maltrato*,” (“put up with some bad treatment”) such as some slaps and name calling because she would be rewarded in the end (Parra 163). Estrella felt the bad treatment left the men feeling like *machos* (Parra 163). However, one night Estrella is badly treated by some male customers who happened to be policemen. Estrella did not care so much about how she was treated. Sadly, she was more concerned about losing the money she had made that night. She says, “*Háganme lo que quieran, nomas no me quiten lo poquito que traigo*” (“Do what you want to me, but do not take what little I have”) (Parra 163). But more importantly she states, “*por un momento tiene el impulso de levantarse y responder como hombre. Sería fácil, ellos nunca lo esperarían. [...] Pero hace tanto que no peleo que acaso no sabría como hacerlo*” (“For a moment I had the impulse to get up and respond like a man. It would have been easy and they would not have expected it. But it’s been so long since I have gotten into a fight that I would’t know how to do it”) (Parra 170). Unfortunately, that night Estrella is robbed of the money she had made that evening. In the end, Estrella is not only an example of prostitution in Mexico but also of the third space itself. As a person born a man who is transitioning into a woman, Estrella is a third space within a third space. She is a combination of two genders as she struggles to find where she belongs and she is a Mexican who deals with American customers on a daily basis.

In the article, “Castillo Work and Choice,” Debra Castillo discusses how she studied prostitution in Tijuana. Specifically Castillo mentions how sex work is legal in Mexico unlike in most parts of the United States. “Sex workers come from all over the Mexican Republic, migrating to Tijuana [...] for reasons of economic necessity” (Castillo 264). Since there are not very many work opportunities for women in Tijuana, “prostitution and migrant labor are increasingly popular ways to make a living” (Castillo 265). A 2010 study called “Sex Trafficking

in a Border Community” by Sheldon Zhang deal with sex trafficking in Tijuana. Zhang “found that the vast majority of these women chose the sex industry as the best of their limited options” (Quoted in Castillo 839). As previously mentioned, women know that the working conditions in the maquiladoras are far from ideal. Knowing this, some women decide they want to be in control of themselves and be their own bosses. These women fall into prostitution. Castillo states that while these women’s lives may seem unimaginably harsh to many of us, “they know that their bodies are [...] marginal or invisible and [that] their voices go unheard” (Castillo 835). Moreover, Castillo writes that their “ethical choices [are] linked to their human need for food, shelter, and, more amorphously, a connection to fellow human beings, a sense of community” (Castillo 838). It is in their community “where they are comfortable with the culture and can speak their own language; to retain the opportunity to raise their children locally rather than entrust them to a faraway caretaker” (Castillo 840). Interestingly enough, it is not just young women who struggle to find work in Mexico, but also older women in their thirties and forties. Even if they have the training, these women are still limited professionally (Castillo 840). These limitations are they reason why many of them fall into the sex industry. As a sex worker, they see that their age does not matter as long as they “provide a satisfactory consumer experience” (Castillo 840).

Castillo goes on to mention that “prostitution in Tijuana is preferable to housework in San Diego” (Castillo 839). Additionally, “it may come as a shock to many of us, who think of ourselves as progressive and benevolent employers, to learn that women who have cleaned our houses or worked as nannies to our children would, if given the choice, prefer the work of paid sex with our men—for financial reasons; to remain in their communities, where they are comfortable with the culture and can speak their own language; to retain the opportunity to raise

their children locally rather than entrust them to a faraway caretaker” (Castillo 840). Once again, “many women focus on sex work as a viable alternative that provides them with a better income, an efficient way to pay off debts, or a nest egg” (Castillo 840).

In the end, the border makes these issues more salient because it is precisely the nature of a border to create opportunities for friction between two worlds and competing worldviews” (Castillo 838). Furthermore, according to Rachel St. John in her book *Line in the Sand: A History of the Western U.S.-Mexico Border*, “Mexican authorities had very little interest in shutting down the vice districts completely. [Instead they embraced] the regulatory approach that characterized moral reform throughout Mexico. Mexican state, territorial, and deferral officials adopted a series of measures that sought to maximize the state’s ability to profit from vice while minimizing its negative effects” (John 159). But more importantly, over the years Mexican border towns have lost some of their notorious status as bastions of illicit sexual pleasure for the reason that they began to push for their city to attract family tourism. This movement pushed brothels and prostitutes away from the most visible sector of town (Bender). All in all, we can see how prostitution in Tijuana is a perfect example of a third space. Through the continual crossover of people from other countries, primary Americans, into Tijuana to perform legal illicit acts whether for easy availability or pleasure, we continue to see the third space flourish. We see the consequences of this bicultural space not through the sex act itself, but through the mixture of racial and ethnic diversity in a place that ironically does not have one distinguishable race and culture itself.

Alcohol

Prostitution is not the only thing that has lured people into Tijuana for some time. The easy access to alcohol is also an attraction. In her book, *Line in the Sand: A History of the*

Western U.S.-Mexico Border Rachel St. John states that, “in the early twentieth century, American anti vice crusaders convinced local, state, and deferral authorities to pass laws defining alcohol, narcotics, prostitution, gambling and a number of other activities of questionable morality as “vices” and restarting access to them (John 150). In December 1917, Congress passed the 18th Amendment which prohibits the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors for beverage purposes, and on January 29, 1919 this amendment received the necessary three-fourths majority of votes for state ratification. Although the 18th Amendment did not officially take effect until January 29, 1920, prohibition essentially began in June of the year 1919. John states that, “during the 1920s Tijuana developed a substantial and diversified vice economy. [...] Between 1920 and 1924, the number of saloons in Tijuana doubled from thirty to sixty” (John 151). John also points out that vice brought a lot of money across the border. Throughout the 1920s, prostitution, gaming and alcohol made up between 9 and 48 percent of the revenue coming into the municipal government” (John 159).

Bender writes that tourism increased dramatically during the early stages of Prohibition. The number of tourists crossing the border into Mexico jumped from 14,130 visitors in July 1918 to 418,735 visitors in July 1919 (Bender 58). This increase was possible because “Tijuana benefitted from its proximity to populous Southern California and to Hollywood when the advent of talking motion pictures coincided with the Prohibition era. During the dry years, Tijuana became Hollywood’s playground, with stars flying in from Los Angeles” (Bender 58). As Ovid Demaris observes in his book *Poso del Mundo: Inside the Mexican-American Border, from Tijuana to Matamoros*, “The strong breath of prohibition blew life into many border towns. Dry Americanos descended upon the bars in droves and cash registers rang with joy from noon to noon. Señoritas danced and mariachis sang and cocks fought and bulls died and gringos guzzled”

(Quoted in Bender 57).

When prohibition ended in 1933, there was a slight decline in the amount of people crossing over into Tijuana. However, in 1984, the U.S. Congress raised the national minimum drinking age to twenty-one. Since Mexico's drinking age of eighteen was rarely enforced, Mexican towns became the easiest places to get a drink along the border (John 151). This change in U.S. federal law, "quickly spurred weekend border town blitzes by underage U.S. youth from nearby cities, particularly San Diego and Los Angeles" (Bender 55). The push for young people of a lower drinking age to go to Mexico was reinforced by the use of "barkers," that is, aggressive street marketers who would try to lure young patrons into the establishment by offering an array of low-cost drinking specials. Offers such as "All you can drink for US \$5.99," "Women drink free," and "no ID" were very common (Clapp, Roberto and James). As the article by John D. Clapp, Roberto B. Voas and James E. Lange entitled "Cross-border College Drinking" attests, "universities have always been seen to be have a major problem with binge drinking by some of its students. And this problem was greater for universities near national borders where underage students can cross into areas where the legal drinking age is younger than in the United States" (Clapp, Roberto and James).

In Clapp, Roberto and James' article they discuss a survey they conducted in 2000 with college students who attended universities within an hour drive of the Mexican border. They wanted to determine the extent of the cross-border drinking problem. Through their study they found that on average, the students "reported about 6.5 trips across the border to drink" in the course of one year. Not only were the students traveling to consume alcohol. They also indicated that while in Mexico they consumed greater amounts of alcohol than they normally would (Clapp, Roberto and James).

Over the years, “vice districts developed in every border city, but Tijuana became the exemplar of border vice. American morality legislation transformed Tijuana from a dusty customs outpost to a mess for America tourists and thrill seekers” (John 151). In reality, Mexicans began to worry about the effect of the border vice districts on their national reputation. In addition, the topic of health concerns from excessive consumption of alcohol was beginning to be brought up by reformers. In conclusion, the fact that the border districts made it possible, “for the nearby residents of the United States to step across the border and there to enjoy certain privileges and perform certain acts which are illegal in the country and state of their actual residence,” represented a challenge to the sovereignty of the U.S. state” (John 162).

Alcohol, therefore, can also be seen as an example of a third space phenomenon. As John mentions, signs advertising, “legitimate Mexican enterprises are usually in Spanish, the vice and booze signs [were always] in the English language.” Even the bilingual signage in Tijuana is an example of the third space indicating that their audience is not the Mexicans living in Tijuana but those people from America or other countries who speak English. Just as in the case of Mexican prostitution, Americans cross the border to partake in alcohol, another illicit act in Mexico since U.S. laws are different. American demand and Mexican supply all come together in the third space represented by Tijuana.

Physical Borders

When one thinks of the American/Mexican border, one usually thinks of the geographic border itself. This physical border defines the third space because even though its purpose is to separate the two countries there is still a fluidity between the two cultures. According to Gutierrez, “the ongoing demographic revolution unfolding in northern Mexico and the southwestern United States has transformed the social and cultural landscape of the bi-national

border zone in a manner that dwarfs anything that has occurred before. Replete with small businesses, thriving religious congregations, a vibrant and growing Spanish-language press, and a rapidly expanding network of Spanish language radio and television outlets, these transformed social spaces have become part of what can only be described as a parallel “Mexican” society in the United States” (Gutierrez 507). In other words, Gutierrez is speaking of the third space, that is, that mixing of cultures that has been created because of the physical border. He goes on to discuss how most people associate this change with a way to thrive monetarily and do not see the issues behind it.

Many leave Mexico to go to the United States in search of better employment they would otherwise not find in Mexico. Gutierrez asserts that, “with the Mexican economic and political crises showing few signs of abating in this generation, thousands of Mexicans will feel compelled to try their luck in the United States, just as previous generations of their friends and families did before them” (Gutierrez 507). They chose to go to the United States to live out that dream. Unfortunately, the reality of the situation is that a lot of families are torn apart when family members go to the United States and leave half of their family in Mexico. As one goes to the United States to acquire money to support those left in Mexico, migrating family members are left with the empty feeling inside of most likely never again being able to see the members of their family they work so hard to support.

In Eduardo Antonio Parra’s story “*El Escaparate de Los Sueños*” (“The Window of Dreams”), a young boy called Reyes has been left to long for his father who has moved to the United States to work. Reyes, who remains in Tijuana with his mother and siblings, continually waits and anticipates his father’s yearly visit. When his father did visit he would

“[llenar la pequeña casa familiar [con] juguetes, ropa nueva, aparatos electrónicos, [y]

adornos de porcelana [...] que despertaban la envidia de los vecinos. Su madre y hermanos se sentían por una temporada los ricos del pueblo, y Reyes no paraba de imaginar cuantas maravillas mas había en ese lugar mágico donde vivía el viejo”

He would “fill the small familiar house with toys, new clothes, electronics and porcelain decorations [...] that provoked jealousy in the neighbors. For a short period of time his mother and siblings would feel like the rich people of the town, and Reyes could not stop imagining how many more amazing things were in the magic land where his old man lived.” (Parra 180).

Reyes’ father only brought Reyes’ hopes up more when he would tell him. *“Algún día te voy a llevar, hijo, nomás déjame conseguir el permiso, para que veas que ciudad”* (“One day I will take you son, just give me time to get the visa, so you can see the city.”) (Parra 181). His father’s promise and his annual visits made Reyes happy, but there came a time when no one in the family knew the whereabouts of his father. His father had told them he was moving further up north for another job that paid more, but he still promised to come visit and continue to save up to move the whole family to the United States. Unfortunately, the reality of the situation was that Reyes, his mother and siblings waited forever for news from the father. Reyes eventually had to accept that his dad *“ahora tendría una familia de niños hermosos y felices y un Mercedes Benz comprado con su trabajo nomas para pasearla, y vivirían en una colonia llena de jardines, en una residencia de tres plantas y paredes claras”* (His dad “now most likely had a family with beautiful happy children and a Mercedes Benz he bought with his pay just to go for a drive, and his family must live in a neighborhood filled with gardens, in a house with three floors and white walls”) (Parra 185).

In the end, Reyes' story is a perfect example of the reality of those families separated by geographical and cultural differences. Reyes was fortunate enough to have seen his father once a year before he stopped visiting altogether, but most families never see their family members again once they decide to cross the border illegally, an act that emotionally scars all the members of the family. Examples like these depict how the physical border divides two countries and creates a third space that is an interplay between cultures, languages, living experiences and emotions. This third space creates a place where the people who live in Tijuana can interact with the people who live in the U.S. and possibly have access to U.S. currency and even learn English. However, and more importantly, all they can do is work and wait to see if one day they too, will have the chance to truly be a part of or live in that place loved and desired by so many, the United States.

Today

The third space can be seen all around us, even on a smaller scale or even as a non-existent physical place. The "East LA" section of Los Angeles is an example of the intercultural interplay that defines the third space. Although East LA has various Mexican restaurants and traditional Mexican markets, it is not fully Mexican for the simple fact that it is in the heart of a very popular American city. However, this social and cultural space carved out from U.S. territory allows those who associate with the Mexican culture in the United States to feel comfortable living and partaking in an environment where most of those around them are similar to them. There are several examples of the third space across the U.S. East LA is not the only one. Places such as Chinatown, Little Italy, "the hood" and "the ghetto" are also bicultural entities.

The third space can be seen through something as basic as food. For example, the burrito

is not a food item that came from Mexico. Although the ingredients in a burrito like the rice, beans and *carne asada* originate from Mexico, the burrito was created by Mexican immigrant workers in the U.S. who has no way of taking their lunch to their worksite. They decided to adapt the flour tortilla they knew by expanding it in size. They then placed their traditional foods inside of it to make it easy to take to work. The burrito, then, is in itself a third space because it combines the ingredients from one country with the culinary codes from another to form a food item that reflects the bicultural world whose product it is.

Another small-scale example of the third space has to do with the people who inhabit it. In the United States, several individuals have parents who come from another country such as Mexico, but they themselves were born in the country where they reside, such as the United States. As a result, they may feel they cannot associate comfortably with either the Mexican or the American culture. They may also make the claim that by bringing the Mexican culture into their Americanized life they can preserve a culture they would not want to lose. The third space does not necessarily have to be defined as a physical space. It is also a concept represented by these “human hybrids” themselves who are constantly struggling to identify and uphold two cultural norms.

The following poem “To live in the Borderlands means you” by Gloria Anzaldúa, speaks to what it is like to live in “the borderlands,” another name for the third space. More specifically, Anzaldúa discusses what it is like to feel torn by different cultures, to know more than one language and to now have new ways of doing things.

“To live in the Borderlands means you
are neither *hispana india negra española*

ni gabacha (a chicano term for a white woman), *eres mestiza, mulata* , half-breed
 caught in the crossfire between camps
 while carrying all five races on your back
 not knowing which side to turn to, run from;

To live in the Borderlands means knowing
 that the *india** in you, betrayed for 500 years, is no longer speaking to you, *Indian
 that mexicanas call you *rajetas* (literally “split” that is, having betrayed your word),
 that denying the Anglo inside you
 is as bad as having denied the Indian or Black;

Cuando vives en la frontera (when you live on the border)
 people walk through you, the wind steals your voice,
 you're a *burra* (donkey), *buey* (ox), scapegoat,
 forerunner of a new race,
 half and half —both woman and man, neither—
 a new gender;

To live in the Borderlands means to
 put *chile** in the borscht, *chili
 eat whole wheat tortillas,
 speak Tex-Mex with a Brooklyn accent; *immigration
 be stopped by *la migra** at the border checkpoints; services

Living in the Borderlands means you fight hard to
resist the gold elixir beckoning from the bottle,
the pull of the gun barrel,
the rope crushing the hollow of your throat;

In the Borderlands
you are the battleground
where the enemies are kin to each other;
you are at home, a stranger,
the border disputes have been settled
the volley of shots have shattered the truce
you are wounded, lost in action
dead, fighting back;

To live in the Borderlands means
the mill with the razor white teeth wants to shred off
your olive-red skin, crush out the kernel, your heart
pound you pinch you roll you out
smelling like white bread but dead;

To survive the Borderlands
you must live *sin fronteras* (without borders)
be a crossroads.”

This impactful poem by Anzaldúa is a perfect example of what it is like to live in a third space, but more importantly, what it feels like to be an inhabitant of this space on a daily basis. As the speaker of the poem relates, a person who is a product of the third space is in a constant battle with himself or herself because they have to choose whether they are “*hispana india negra española*.” By choosing one ethnicity over the others creates the feeling of being ashamed or denying their true ethnicity to fit in. Wanting to fit in should not be a conflict that requires one to run away from their reality and feel ashamed of themselves. As Anzaldúa states, people who inhabit the third space should live without borders. In other words, these “human hybrids” should embrace third spaces and see them as a new type of home where no one has to feel like a stranger.

Maquiladoras, prostitution, alcohol and the physical border are examples of areas where two cultures collide with differing results in Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico, and other border towns across the globe. However, one does not have to travel to the border regions of Tijuana to find a third space. We should be more aware of third spaces which are already all around us. Every day in the United States cultures collide and third spaces are created. We can choose to ignore it or we can embrace it. The reality for those that live in Tijuana is that they have no where to go to ignore these cultural collisions for the simple reason that they are taking place in the area they call home. As Gutierrez puts it, we need to ensure that “the continuing social, cultural, and economic integration of the United States-Mexico border region,” continues to be seen as positive and not negative because being bilingual, bicultural, biracial will continue to enrich our nation as a whole.

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