INTRODUCTION

Tracking Borders

> For many musicians around the world, "the popular" has become a dangerous crossroads, an intersection between the undeniable saturation of commercial culture in every area of human endeavor and the emergence of a new public sphere that uses the circuits of commodity production and circulation to envision and activate new social relations.
>
> George Lipsitz, *Dangerous Crossroads* (1994)

Let us begin by considering the effects of shifting critical paradigms in American studies away from linear narratives of immigration, assimilation, and nationhood. Is it possible today to imagine new cultural affiliations and negotiations in American studies more dialogically, in terms of multifaceted migrations across borders? How do musicians, writers, and painters communicate their "dangerous crossroads" to us? How do undocumented and documented migrants in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands secure spaces of survival and self-respect in light of the government's doctrine of low-intensity conflict and in regions undergoing what social theorists call "deindustrialization"—the decline of traditional manufacturing? What kinds of cultural formations are thematized by artists who sing about regions such as El Valle de Silicon in northern California, where workers now produce computer chips instead of fruits and vegetables?

In the early 1970s Los Tigres del Norte, together with their musical director, Enrique Franco (fig. 1), migrated from northern Mexico to San Jose, California. Los Tigres del Norte have had a significant historical importance for *norteño* music in California (both Alta and Baja), for in 1988 they became one of the first undocumented bands to receive a Grammy Award for best regional Mexican-American recording, for their album *Gracias—América sin fronteras* (Thanks—America without Borders). Los Tigres del Norte's use of "the circuits of commodity production and circulation," as the cultural critic George Lipsitz suggests (1995,

Figure 1. Enrique Franco, leader of Los Tigres del Norte. Photo by Craig Lee. Courtesy of *San Francisco Examiner*.

12), allows us to examine one recent historical instance in which the musical traditions of the U.S.-Mexico border acquired what Pierre Bourdieu calls "symbolic capital" (1977, 171). Los Tigres del Norte's border music is simultaneously national and transnational in that it affects everyday life in the local (Silicon Valley) region and thematizes the limits of the national perspective in American studies.

In the story of Los Tigres del Norte's discrepant crossings, we can discover the shifting pattern of un/documented circulations, resistances, and negotiations. More important, the border migrations of Los Tigres del Norte provide us with a fascinating example of the problems that attended the passage of rural *norteño* musical forms to the mass-mediated culture industries of the overdeveloped Silicon Valley region. Originally from Mocorito, in the northern state of Sinaloa, Los Tigres del Norte migrated first to the border city of Mexicali, before they were hired by a local musical promoter in San Jose. Since the early 1970s they have lived and recorded their *conjunto* music in this capital of Silicon Valley. It was not until 1975, however, that their commercially successful "crossover" came, when they recorded the *corrido* (border ballad) "Contrabando y Traición" (Contraband and Betrayal). Los Tigres del Norte have recorded more than twenty-four records and scores of musical anthologies and have even starred in and produced border movies and music videos based on *corridos* such as their international hit "Jaula de Oro" (The Gilded Cage).

I emphasize the band's undocumented migration north from Mexico because, although Los Tigres are well known in Mexico, Cuba, Latin America, and what Chicanos/as call *el otro México* (the other Mexico)—areas of the American West, Southwest, and Midwest—they are virtually unknown to cultural studies workers in our own backyard, Silicon Valley. As the political scientist Jesús Martínez writes, "The musical style and subject matters of the songs recorded by the group are alien to the values and lifestyles of the rest of the population," reflecting the "sharply segregated society" (1993a, 9).

It goes without saying, Martínez continues, that the real stars of Silicon Valley are the high-tech scientists, engineers, late capital managers, and multinational entrepreneurs such as David Packard, William Hewlett, Steve Jobs, and Stephen Wozniak. Their fandoms are celebrated by the two hundred thousand Silicon Valley professionals who work at Apple, Hewlett-Packard, and IBM, among other companies (9). At the low-tech end of the occupational spectrum are the scores of documented

and undocumented workers who listen to, dance to, and eagerly consume the music of Los Tigres del Norte. For the same circuits of late capitalism that brought low-wage jobs to California also carried the band's *conjunto* sound to Silicon Valley and beyond. "By posing the world as it is against the world as the socially subordinated would like it to be," the border music of Los Tigres del Norte supplies what the postcolonial cultural critic Paul Gilroy says ethno-racial music in general provides—"a great deal of courage to go on living in the present" (1993, 36).

In 1985 Los Tigres del Norte recorded the best-selling *corrido* "Jaula de Oro," a shattering portrait of an undocumented Mexican father and his family. The interlingual, accordion-driven ballad surges with lived feelings.

> Aquí estoy establecido en los Estados
> Unidos. Diez años pasaron ya en que
> cruzé de mojado. Papeles no me he
> arreglado. Sigo siendo ilegal.
>
> Here I am established in the United States.
> It's been ten years since
> I crossed as a wetback. I never
> applied for papers. I'm still illegal.

And it focuses, like most *corridos,* on events of "particular relevance" to the *conjunto* and *(techno) banda* communities.[1]

> Tengo mi esposa y mis hijos que me
> los traje muy chicos, y se han olvidado
> ya de mi México querido, del nunca me
> olvido, y no puedo regresar.
>
> ¿De qué me sirve el dinero si yo
> soy como prisionero dentro de esta gran
> nación? Cuando me acuerdo hasta lloro
> aunque la jaula sea de oro, no deja de
> ser prisión.
>
> "¿Escúchame hijo, te gustaría que regresáramos
> a vivir en México?" "What you
> talkin' about, Dad? I don't wanna go back
> to Mexico. No way, Dad."
>
> Mis hijos no hablan conmigo. Otra
> idioma han aprendido y olvidado el
> español. Piensan como americanos.

Niegan que son mexicanos aunque
tengan mi color.

De mi trabajo a mi casa. Yo no sé lo que
me pasa aunque soy hombre de hogar.
Casi no salgo a la calle pues tengo miedo
que me hallen y me pueden deportar.

I have my wife and children whom I
brought at a very young age. They no
longer remember my beloved Mexico,
which I never forget and to which I can
never return.

What good is money if I am
like a prisoner in this great
nation? When I think about it, I
cry. Even if the cage is made of gold, it
doesn't make it less a prison.

(*Spoken*) "Listen, son, would you like to
return to live in Mexico?" "What you
talkin' about, Dad? I don't wanna go
back to Mexico. No way, Dad."

My children don't speak to me. They
have learned another language and
forgotten Spanish. They think like
Americans. They deny that they are
Mexican even though they have my
skin color.

From my job to my home. I don't know
what is happening to me. I'm a homebody.
I almost never go out to the street.
I'm afraid I'll be found and deported.[2]

These lyrics dramatize, as the anthropologist Leo Chávez suggests, how the undocumented status of the worker and his family in the United States "places limits on their incorporation into society" (1992, 158). I hope they can serve as preamble for this book, a way of beginning to explore the materially hybrid and often recalcitrant quality of literary and (mass) cultural forms in the extended U.S.-Mexican borderlands: hybrid because Los Tigres del Norte used Tex-Mex accordion music and Spanish and English lyrics for their ballad; recalcitrant because their hybrid verses deconstruct what the cultural theorist David Lloyd, in a different context, has called "the monologic desire of cultural nation-

alism" (1994, 54). "Jaula de Oro" stands as a corrective to the xenophobic, nationalist, and racist "backlash" in the United States against the estimated four million undocumented workers, more than half residing in California.[3] To the undocumented troubadour-subject, the *jaula de oro* is simultaneously the golden state of California and what used to be called the American dream. Looking at his family's incorporation into U.S. society ("they no longer remember my beloved Mexico" and "my children don't speak to me [in Spanish]"), the Mexican father feels tensions everywhere in California, imprisoning him in both his private and his public spheres. The street, his job, and even his home places severe constraints on his movements. Everywhere, "this great nation" feels like a prison. A nightmarish culture of surveillance, a profound sense of fear and anxiety, pervades the undocumented worker's everyday life.

This feeling in postmodern California of a proliferation of "new repressions in space and movements"—as the urban historian Mike Davis finds in *City of Quartz*—is doubly felt by the undocumented Mexican worker and his family. By the 1990s, Davis asserts, an obsession "with the architectural placing of social boundaries ha[d] become a zeitgeist of urban restructuring, a master narrative in the emerging built environment" of our major cosmopolitan cities. While Los Tigres del Norte invoke this panopticon barrioscape in "Jaula de Oro," the wild vertiginous fear the undocumented worker expresses ("I don't know what is happening to me. . . . I almost never go out to the street. I'm afraid I'll be found and deported.") is clearly something more than a response to the jolts of postmodern culture, for his anxiety speaks to the continuing desire of the United States for "pure" national and cultural spaces and for what Davis apocalyptically calls "a hoary but still viable . . . plan for a law and order armageddon" (1990, 223).

The idea that undocumented workers and their children pose a problem (or a set of problems) is part and parcel of what Bill Hing, a Stanford University law professor, sees as "the worst anti-immigrant hysteria in U.S. history" (Chung and Le 1993, A15), surely an exaggeration, for the ethno-racial history of California and the United States has been characterized by what the multicultural historian Ronald Takaki calls rampant anti-immigrant "antagonisms" (1993, 7). Anti-immigrant racism today, however, assumes new forms and is articulated by postliberal and neoconservative politicians alike. In crisis-bound California, for instance, anti-immigrant scapegoating (largely directed against undocumented

Mexicans, Central Americans, and Asians) endures and is re-created by draconian proposals to stop what Governor Pete Wilson describes (in classic colonialist discourse terms) as "the flood of illegal immigration" (Kershner 1993, 1). Thus Democratic senator Dianne Feinstein calls for a dollar toll for crossing the borders with both Mexico and Canada, and Wilson urges Congress to pass a constitutional amendment to deny legal citizenship to children born in the United States to undocumented workers.[4]

Along with Los Tigres del Norte in "Jaula de Oro," I propose a different historical and (mass) cultural vision of what the Asian-American feminist cultural critic Shelley Sunn Wong calls the "American *Bildung*" (1994, 128). We do not see the golden nation-state as being invaded by so-called illegal aliens, corrupting and polluting pure cultural spaces beyond the borderlands. Nor do we accept the premise of those sociologists who stress the "pathological" side of the U.S.-Mexico border-crossing experience. Rather, our projects make space for an alternative narrative of what can now be called the ethno-racialized cultures of displacement—a recognition hinted at by the undocumented Mexican worker's vernacular assertion that he is irrevocably established in the United States: "It's been ten years since I crossed as a wetback."

Reading against the grain of the undocumented Mexican worker's deep and unreconstructed nostalgia for his *madre patria* (mother country)—he laments that his children "no longer remember" his "beloved Mexico that [he can] never forget"—we are able to wonder how fully cognizant Los Tigres del Norte were in creating a mass cultural form that by its very hybridized form and content constantly transgresses the North's monology of cultural nationalism. "Jaula de Oro," in my view, is recalcitrant to the material and aesthetic politics of cultural nationalism. A significant challenge to nationalist monology occurs in the *corrido* when the son answers the question put to him in Spanish by the father, "¿Escúchame hijo, te gustaría que regresáramos a vivir en Mexico?" (Listen, son, would you like to return to live in Mexico?) by responding in English, "What you talkin' about, Dad? I don't wanna go back to Mexico. No way, Dad." While the monolingual father despairs, the son's response in English materially hybridizes the *corrido*'s cultural critique of anti-immigrant feelings and literalizes the negative *way* of life in Silicon Valley. Moreover, it points to Los Tigres del Norte's own material hybrid formation in heteroglossic California, providing a renewed mass cultural ground for an alternative critique

of the narrative of the nation. Hybridity, in this U.S. immigrant context, as the cultural critic Lisa Lowe theorizes in *Immigrant Acts,* "is not a natural or static category; it is a socially constructed . . . position, assumed for political reasons" (1996, 82).

Border Matters examines the nature of this new materially hybrid and cultural critique in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, for there has not been any systematic investigation of the intercultural music produced by mass cultural intellectuals such as Los Tigres del Norte, Los Illegals, El Vez, (Kid) Frost, and Tish Hinojosa, or of the consequences of the cultural studies movement for U.S.-Mexico borderland theory, "culture studies," and literary production.

First carved out in the midst of U.S. imperialism by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848) and the Gadsden Purchase (1853), the U.S.-Mexico borderlands have earned a reputation as a "third country," because our southern border is not simply Anglocentric on one side and Mexican on the other.[5] Although this "site," where the Third World implodes into the First, is a strip of land two thousand miles long and no more than twenty miles wide, some believe the U.S.-Mexico border extends all the way to Seattle. To "survive the borderlands"—as the feminist Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) suggests in her border-defying writings—is to become a dangerous "crossroads." 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.[6]

In response to these challenges and deterritorializations, *Border Matters* reconceives literary and cultural practices. What changes, for example, when American culture and literature are understood in terms of "migration" and not only immigration? "On which side of the border," asks the Mexican performance artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña, "is the avant-garde?" (1987, 1). "When will Gov. Pete Wilson, Senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein and many other political pols in the state [of California] who rant about the immigration problem learn to dance the *quebradita?*" asks the U.S. Latino public intellectual Rubén Martínez (1994, 12). I explore these kinds of questions about modernity, postmodernity, and postcoloniality by bringing cultural studies in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands into dialogue with U.S. and British cultural studies. My aim is to encourage comparative intercultural research

and theoretical work that moves us beyond the fragmentary knowledges juxtaposed by specialists in so-called interdisciplinary studies. I agree with the Latin American cultural theorist Néstor García Canclini that we need a transdisciplinary model more sensitive "to the opening of each discipline with the other" (1995, 204).

Part I of *Border Matters* focuses on the yet unwritten literary and cultural history of Chicano/a and Latin American social cultural "theorists" and postmodernist intellectuals such as Renato Rosaldo, Vicki Ruiz, George J. Sánchez, and Néstor García Canclini (chapter 1). It also examines the politics of modernist border culture in Américo Paredes's anti-imperialist literary productions *George Washington Gómez* (1990) and *Between Two Worlds* (1991) (chapter 2), the construction of borderland subjectivities in the poetry of José Montoya, Bernice Zamora, and Alberto Ríos (chapter 3), and the spatial postmodern contradictions in Arturo Islas's *Migrant Souls* (1990) and Carmen Lomas Garza's *Cuadros de familia/Family Pictures* of 1990 (chapter 4).

Part II begins with a discussion of the southern California texts of Helena María Viramontes, John Rechy, Los Illegals, and (Kid) Frost, among others (chapter 5). Stretching from the shanty *colonias* (districts) of Tijuana and San Diego to the surf and turf of Santa Barbara, this extended urban *frontera* is inhabited by a heterogeneous non-Anglo-American majority, tipping the ethnic scale away from what Mike Davis calls "WASP hegemony" toward "polyethnic diversity" (1990, 7). My view is that Viramontes's "The Cariboo Cafe" (1985), Rechy's *The Miraculous Day of Amalia Gómez* (1991), Los Illegals' "El Lay" (1983), and (Kid) Frost's *East Side Story* (1992) are more perceptive than writings by many theorists of urban postmodernism in representing the "urban hardening" of everyday life. Thus, countering the general postmodern art-culture system represented in mainline postmodernist studies, I suggest alternative border cultures, histories, and contexts. Culture is by nature heterogeneous and necessarily works through a realm of borders.

Here it seems appropriate to survey briefly the multiple institutional routes of the cultural studies movement in Britain and the United States with an eye toward establishing its "beginnings" and elucidating some of its current debates. For example, what do some of these cultural critics mean by the term *cultural studies?* According to Stuart Hall, one of the founding directors at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in Birmingham, England, cultural studies "was conceived

as an intellectual intervention. It aimed to define and occupy a space" (1980, 16). Hall suggests that "the field in which this intervention was made had been initially charted in the 1950s. This earlier founding moment is but specified in terms of the originating texts, the 'original curriculum' of the field—Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy,* Raymond Williams's *Culture and Society* and *The Long Revolution,* E. P. Thompson's critique of the latter and the example of related questions, worked in a more theoretical mode, in *The Making of the English Working Class*" (16).[7] For Hall, there are at least two ways of defining and understanding culture: (1) anthropologically, "as *cultural practices,*" and (2) more historically, "questioning anthropological meaning and interrogating it universally by means of the concepts of social formation, cultural power, domination and regulation, resistance and struggle" (27). As Richard Johnson (who succeeded Hall as CCCS's director in 1979) emphasizes in "What Is Cultural Studies Anyway?": "culture is neither autonomous nor an eternally determined field, but a site of social differences and struggles" (1987, 39).

British cultural studies, thus broadly defined, draws out and articulates the complex mediations and struggles between what Raymond Williams has called "culture" and "society." Moreover, throughout his career as a New Left theorist and an ethnic Welsh borderlands novelist, Williams analyzed the diverse historical "cluster of significations" given the word *culture.* As he writes in *Keywords,* it "is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language" (1976 [1983 rev.], 87). Its history contains both elitist (Matthew Arnold and F. R. Leavis) formulations of culture associating it with the so-called superiority of Western traditions and more democratic connotations encompassing all symbolic activities in our everyday lives.

Fundamentally, "the idea of culture," Williams argues, "is a general reaction to a general and major change in the condition of our common life. Its basic element is its efforts at total qualitative assessment" (1958, 259). Williams completes his inquiry into the diverse significations associated with the word *culture* by concluding that it is crucial for students of cultural studies to combine cultural anthropology's reference to culture as "material production" with history's and literature's reference to culture as a "signifying or symbolic system" (1976 [1986 rev.], 91). Williams's summary definition of culture can help us to situate the broad transdisciplinary range of issues and meanings associated with cultural studies in Britain and the United States, for culture,

he theorizes, represents "a whole way of [hegemonic] life [in struggle], material, intellectual, and spiritual" (16).

Following in this long British cultural studies tradition, the Americanists Cary Nelson, Paula Treichler, and Lawrence Grossberg argue that cultural studies—at present experiencing an "internationalist boom"—is "an interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and sometimes counterdisciplinary field that operates in the tension between its tendencies to embrace both a broad, anthropological and a more narrowly humanistic conception of culture." Cultural studies in Britain and the United States, they contend, is "committed to the study of the entire range of a society's art, beliefs, institutions, and communicative practices" (1992, 4).

This international success and proliferation of cultural studies, however, also brings what James Clifford calls "obvious dangers," particularly, he emphasizes, "of lost intellectual focus and political edge." While cultural studies emerged in Britain with Williams's and Hall's New Left interventions within and outside the academy, and though the cultural studies project was initially connected with adult education movements, the question becomes, has cultural studies in its travels from Birmingham to the United States "turn[ed] into" what Clifford calls "just another discipline (or transdiscipline)?" (1991, 1). Has cultural studies, in other words, become institutionalized in U.S. academies at the cost of its political edge?

Let me be briefly autobiographical to situate what I am about to say about the local history of the Center for Cultural Studies at the University of California at Santa Cruz. When I served on the center's steering committee, we attempted to link specific borders and diasporas—the U.S.-Mexican and the black Atlantic—as paradigms of intercultural crossing and mixing. Although those who founded the center at Santa Cruz in spring 1988 were not consciously thinking about the Birmingham CCCS when they began, they proposed, in the words of James Clifford, the founding director, "a center which would be visibly different from the many humanities centers around the country," for cultural studies "suggested a serious engagement with the social sciences and political arts" (1). Fortunately, the Center for Cultural Studies encouraged not only a Birmingham-like engagement with subcultural theory, feminism, and hegemony and its resistance but also a "homegrown" orientation for these interventions.

Over the past eight years, the Center for Cultural Studies has put

together an ensemble of research clusters, workshops, publications, and visiting scholars including, among others, the British postcolonialists Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy, and Isaac Julien; the Indian "subaltern studies" historians and novelists Ranajit Guha and Amitav Ghosh; and the Caribbean/Latin American cultural critics Edward Kamu Brathwaite and Néstor García Canclini. Under Clifford's directorship, the center focused on "comparative, transnational topics and problems" (1991, 1). More recently, the center has concentrated on what Clifford calls comparative treatments of intercultural "crossing as both traversing and mixing" (1992a, 1) and on encouraging collaborative work with the University of California Humanities Research Institute at Irvine on projects such as the "Minority Discourse" initiatives convened by Abdul JanMohamed, Valerie Smith, and Norma Alarcón.

All of these countertraditions have helped to catalyze the multiple trajectories in *Border Matters*. More specifically, Gilroy's *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (1991) and *The Black Atlantic* (1993) have enabled me to argue that the culture of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, like the black Atlantic diaspora culture, cannot be reduced to any nationally based "tradition."[8] As we will see in Viramontes's "The Cariboo Cafe" and Rechy's *The Miraculous Day of Amalia Gómez,* a South/North political culture of the Américas questions national, nationalistic, and what Gilroy calls "absolutist" paradigms of culture.

Thus envisaged, cultural studies—from 1960s Birmingham to 1990s Santa Cruz—is a tradition conjured, syncretized, and customized. As Grossberg suggests, cultural studies is an "alchemy"; its methodology is one of "bricolage"; and its "choice of practice . . . is pragmatic, strategic, and self-reflective" (Nelson, Treichler, and Grossberg 1992, 2). These traditions have led me to ask different questions: How do we tell other spatial stories? How do we tell other histories that are placed in local frames of awareness, on the one hand, and situated globally, geopolitically, on the other? The autoethnographic borderland "texts" by Luis Alberto Urrea, Rubén Martínez, and Richard Rodriguez (as well as by the writers and intellectuals discussed in Part I) may suggest different strategies for those interested in the positive practices associated with the international cultural studies movement, for *Border Matters* strives for a new comparative area of intercultural studies.

Chapter 6 continues to interrogate the productiveness and the limits of local and hemispheric mappings. Contradictory versions of transfrontier border culture appear in Urrea's *Across the Wire* (1993), a

dizzying mix of travel writing, evangelism, and autoethnography; Martínez's *The Other Side* (1992), part *crónica* (chronicle) of youth culture and part travel narrative between Los Angeles, Mexico City, San Salvador, and Havana; and Rodriguez's *Days of Obligation* (1992), an argument against, as he says in the book's subtitle, his Mexican father's cultural and political values. Their autoethnographic writings are in many ways aligned with the deterritorializing gestures of borderland social science theorists such as Rosaldo, Sánchez, García Canclini, and Ruiz, who see in their postmodern ethnographies and in feminist theories of *la frontera* a representative liminal site for the postmodern condition.

If the book's first six chapters announce the postcontemporary coming of age of the U.S.-Mexico border as a paradigm of crossing, circulation, material mixing, and resistance, chapter 7, "Remapping American Cultural Studies," delves into an extended discussion of U.S.-Mexico border writing within the context of nineteenth-century U.S. cultures of imperialism. It provides another comparative focus by studying the uneven modernist writings of two chroniclers of Gilded Age Americanism, John Gregory Bourke and María Amparo Ruiz de Burton. Bourke, a soldier-anthropologist, in 1894 produced one of the first ethnographic studies of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, an essay symptomatically entitled "The American Congo." If the force field of American border studies was hegemonically conceived by Bourke on the swirling countercurrents of the Rio Grande in South Texas in the American age of empire, Chicano/a cultural studies has had to contest Bourke's crude and violent mappings and representations of empire. Against Bourke's cultures of U.S. imperialism, I pose Ruiz de Burton's *The Squatter and the Don* (1885), a historical romance about Alta California and the American 1848.

In my attempt to suggest a historical and intercultural approach to U.S.-Mexico border writing and cultural studies, I use some terms and concepts that require additional defining. "*Transfrontera* contact zone" refers to the two-thousand-mile-long border between the United States and Mexico and to other geopolitical border zones, such as Raymond Williams's border zone between Wales and England. This zone is the 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 mul-

tiple-voiced aesthetics. I borrow the term *contact zone* from Mary Louise Pratt's colonial discourse coinage, which owes much to sociolinguistics and improvised languages that develop among speakers of different native languages and in which the term is "synonymous with colonial frontier" (1992, 6). "*Transfrontera* contact zone" is an attempt to invoke the heterotopic forms of everyday life whose trajectories cross over and interact.

Another phrase that recurs throughout this work is "U.S.-Mexico border writing," by which I mean the writer's strategies of representation whereby *frontera* subjects such as Américo Paredes, John Rechy, and Helena Viramontes produce a theory of culture as resistance and struggle, not coherence and consensus. U.S.-Mexico border writing is a continuous encounter between two or more reference codes and tropes. As Guillermo Gómez-Peña suggests, "To understand [border writing] means to manage the greatest number of codes possible. For the non-border dweller, the 'here' (of the border) is a double 'there' (there is the 'there' of Tijuana and the 'there' of San Diego)" (1987, 2). Often, as with Paredes's literary writings, Los Tigres del Norte's *corridos,* or Gómez-Peña's performance videos, U.S.-Mexico border writing is bilingual and dialogic. My aim, however, is not to codify. Rather, I have sought to use U.S.-Mexico border writing as much to construct a non-Eurocentric perspective about cultural studies as to unify a rhetoric or stylistics of the border.

By examining the contact zones of the U.S.-Mexico border, the spaces where the nation either ends or begins, we can begin to problematize the notion that the nation is "naturally" there: these are spaces within which patronymic relationships take place. *Border Matters* challenges this stable, naturalized, and hegemonic status of the national by looking at the assumed equivalence we make between the national and the cultural. As I suggested earlier, the *conjunto* music of Los Tigres del Norte offers one important avenue for interrogating current national and international relationships, for cultural struggle in *corridos* such as "Jaula de Oro" is also a transnational struggle enacted between *patrimonios* (nations) as well as within nation-states. Their model of cultural studies, it bears emphasizing, queries the uneven power relations between national entities.