

Humberto Félix Berumen

they found him in Tijuana
around Chihuahua and Ciudad Juárez
looking for El Gallo Negro
the one who killed his father.)

The corrido as a discursive genre has another important element that is easily demonstrated; it possesses a certain power that could only be called performative, because there is no other way to describe the effect its distribution has produced. In its own way, the corrido, like literature or film, dramatizes, constructs, feeds, and confirms the image that is held about the border and the cities mixed up in the international drug trade. And Tijuana takes first place.

Note

- 1 Rosalba Campa, "La ciudad en el discurso literario" [The city in literary discourse], *SYC*, no. 5 (Buenos Aires, May 1994): 5-39.

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→ THREE

Tijuanologies

An Urban Essay

There are more cantinas in Tijuana than buildings.—*The Nation* (1888)

On the other side of the dry river bed, liminal, held in common by the two countries, a dusty road is visible, and, after a short distance, leads to a small, dilapidated wooden ranch house, designated on the maps by the name, Tijuana.—JOSÉ VASCONCELOS, "Visiones californianas" (Californian Visions, 1919)

Tijuana is a *play box*. At least in its storefronts, which, because of their mystery, could easily be entirely something else. . . . The thing is that in Tijuana you only see a street, a street at nighttime where a cabaret is next to a bar, the bar beside a fake curio shop, the shop next to another cabaret, then a bar, then a hotel, and later another cabaret and another bar. . . . It's just like that for an entire kilometer, difficult to traverse without losing your stomach.

—FERNANDO JORDÁN, *El otro México* (The Other Mexico, 1950)

I like the movement of modern cities like New York . . . but in San Diego, the density is just not there; which is part of the attraction we feel for Tijuana, crossing the border, where the old sensation of a city is still very much alive. There's a density to the streets and the people that I really appreciate.

—JEROME ROTHENBERG, *The Riverside Interviews* (1984)

From the beginning of this century until fifteen years ago, Tijuana was known for a casino (abolished during the Cárdenas government), cabarets, dance halls, and liquor stores where North Americans came to elude their country's prohibitions on sex, gambling, and alcohol. The recent installation of factories, modern hotels, cultural centers, and access to wide-ranging international information has made it into a modern, contradictory, cosmopolitan city with a strong definition of itself.—NÉSTOR GARCÍA CANCLINI, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (1989)

Tijuana and San Diego are not in the same historical time zone. Tijuana is poised at the beginning of the industrial age, a Dickensian city with palm trees. San Diego is a postindustrial city of high impact plastic and desperate dieting. And palm trees. San Diego faces west, looking resolutely out to sea. Tijuana gazes north toward the future. San Diego is the future—secular, soulless. San Diego is the past, guarding its quality of life. Tijuana is the future. . . . Taken together as one, Tijuana and San Diego form the most fascinating new

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city in the world, a city of world-class irony.—RICHARD RODRÍGUEZ, *Days of Obligation: An Argument with My Mexican Father* (1993)

Tijuana is in the middle of an artistic flowering that has drawn attention from television executives and museum curators from New York to Tokyo. Artists of all stripes are re-examining the hybrid culture of Tijuana that exists between the glitz of San Diego and the factory life Diego Rivera could have painted.—“The World’s New Cultural Meccas,” *Newsweek* (2002)

At Customs: Would You Like to Know What It’s Like to Live on the Border? (Tijuana Is the United States of Mexico: Yeah, Right)

They say there’s an aphrodisiac called the “Spanish fly” and one or two drops will send someone into a state of uncontrollable, sexual frenzy. No one I know has seen a Spanish fly, except for one friend of a friend (oh, right, I forgot to mention that every rumor’s source is the friend of a friend of a friend . . .). But he told me you could purchase the Spanish fly in Tijuana. You can purchase anything in Tijuana. That, by the way, is another rumor.—LEWIS BALTZ in *Urban Rumors*, a project curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist (Switzerland)

Tijuana kills. If so many writers have drafted a few paragraphs or a few sentences about the city, it is because more than a city, Tijuana is a religion or an execrable mythology. Tijuana is a maddening woman, a woman who can’t be forgotten, even by insulting her or lying about her, a passionate and terrible woman, a city that consumes and destroys herself.

In my lifetime, I have not felt a love as profound as the confusing passion that I feel for Tijuana, an obsession that does not preclude criticism and which more accurately provokes sudden repudiation. Tijuana elicits a crazy love, a narcotic love. Tijuana is addictive.

No Mexican city has provoked as much morbid interest as Mexico City or Tijuana. Mexico City because of its frightening size, the weight of its ancient pyramids; Tijuana because of its sinister youth, because of the black shadows of its streets, and above all, because of the fear it inspires in us, what it truly represents in regard to our whole culture. A city representing the entire future of the globalized world, but without any prospects. Like any city that is alive even in its deepest depths, Tijuana is an assassin.

Richard Rodríguez has explained it wisely: “Tijuana is an industrial park in the suburbs of Minneapolis. Tijuana is a neighborhood of Tokyo. Tijuana is a sweatshop in Taiwan” (*Days of Obligation: An Argument with My Mexican Father*, 1992). Tijuana is not a city. Tijuana is a symptom of contemporary

urbanity. Tijuana is a posturban condition, in which the battles of attraction and resistance have been made almost impossible. Tijuana is a magnet that bleeds.

For this same reason, the city belongs to the scattered archives of international literature, since living on the border is not only living among unbelievable statistics, and, at the same time, among irrefutable images in the street, but also existing on the border means putting up with pseudoproblems and imitations.

To live here is to return to the greatest myth of all myths, to be required to profess—before certain visitors, certain neighbors, certain experts—a second-rate esotericism.

Write something about Tijuana and you will be quoted. Write something about that city and you will soon be addicted to her self-deception. To her thirst to continually fall to new lows. Tijuana is an empty city. None of us can deny that.

That is the reason for her taste in drugs, partying, murder, and, at the same time, the anonymous life of the maquila. Tijuana is a narco. Tijuana is a prostitute. Tijuana is hope.

To talk about the border is to convert oneself into a corner mystagogue. The border is this and this and this; the border according to so-and-so is that, but not that. The discourse about the border has gone mad.

Gringos, Mexicans, Spanish, it doesn’t matter who it is, Tijuana is a whore about whom you can say whatever you want. Anything can be proven about her. In terms of ideology, Tijuana is a nightmare.

To live here is to be a character, because on the border, there are no inhabitants, just archetypes. The border has no life: it has metaphysics—thou shalt hear her bullshit.

Presenting, the Coyote,
Presenting, the Tourist,
Presenting, the Whore,
Presenting, the Hybrid,
Presenting, the Migrant.

Each person becomes histrionic, or, better stated, an online nickname. To talk about the Border is to use capital letters. To be up to date with journalism, bibliographies, the latest theories. Oh, and to always know the latest neologism. Typical of the academic gang. Which criminal was recently honored.

Debate Bilateralism, Division, Postmodernism, the Borderline.

Living here is not knowing if, all of a sudden, the people at the next table will start using high metaphysical jargon or typical border slang in their

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conversation: you hear them talking about the Border, about crossing over to the Other Side, you hear them describing the three steps of mysticism: "Walk Long Way," "Sleep under the Stars," "Discover the Point of It All"; you hear them talking about the Return of the Prodigal Son, about the Woman Waiting on the Other Side, you hear them talking about the Leap, and after a romantic fling being sent back by the Migra.

On the Border, we are all, albeit against our will, mystagogues.

To live on the Border is to reside in the middle of an unexpected atheology. An embezzled ontology. The suspicion that all this will soon be either less or more than a city, the laboratory of what is to come. Everything in this place is dragged along in terms of phenomenology or mysticism.

A Triple X mysticism, by the way.

From Tia Juana's Ranch to Television Town: Hell as Seen from the Inside

Immediately, cantinas and vice-ridden establishments proliferated all along the Mexican border, including in Tijuana. The city's celebrated cantina, "La Ballena," opened in this period; its bar, 560 feet long, was proudly advertised as the largest in the world. —DAVID PIÑERA, *Historia de Tijuana* (History of Tijuana, 1985)

Tijuana is situated at the extreme left of Mexico and Latin America. The last stop for the Spanish language and the northernmost Latin American city, and the southernmost city where English is deconstructed, as some others would add. It's a city located in an arid region, not favorable for natural development, a factor that has not prevented it from becoming the city with the most maquiladoras in the country. Perhaps in the world. The worst thing about Tijuana though is that she is destined to be substituted in the imaginary by other Tijuanas, even worse cities. It's not an accident that the red-light districts, redolent of social collapse, whether in Central America or in the mind, are called Little Tijuanas.

Of course, her aliases include maquilopolis or maquilalandia. Tijuana has many nicknames. One for each of her characteristics. "Taking away any one of her aspects would make the city less Tijuana. More than a city, Tijuana has become a concept," writes Luis Humberto Crosthwaite. Tijuana is already several cities and, in fact, is a city that is splitting in two. The old Tijuana, the one that is the object of all the legends, and the Tijuana behind the red mountain, the Tijuana of the demographic boom, the most recent invasions, that area that at the end of the twentieth century had almost a million inhabitants

and had begun to be called New Tijuana. But we will talk about that Tijuana on another occasion. In this book, we are speaking of a symbolic Tijuana, of the Tijuana from the discourse of the turn of the century. Of a dying city, shedding its snakeskin.

"TJ" belongs to the Baja California peninsula, the most isolated corner of the Mexican Republic. A portion of the population has always thought that the peninsula should separate off from Mexico. Others are almost sure that the maps are lying and that the peninsula is, in fact, already an island.

When the San Andreas fault separates the tectonic plates, that dream will be realized.

To the north, Tijuana borders San Diego, California, and to the west is the Pacific Ocean and its freezing waters, which don't attract many tourists, seeing as it is polluted by raw sewage and waste from numerous transnational companies located in the area. Tijuana is a combination of extreme situations. Perhaps it is the most reliable proof that we could survive the apocalypse.

The name probably means "dry land" in the Yumana language (*yantijuan*) or is derived from another indigenous linguistic family, one of the languages of the nomadic groups who lived in the region before the arrival of the Spanish missionaries. In this sense, Tijuana means wasteland, *paramo*, or desert. Having a name like this, being mocked in this way is another coincidence in a fucked-up life. We live in a city whose name means Wasteland.

Nevertheless, it's odd that the name is commonly explained by the existence of a powerful female landowner named Juana. La Tía Juana. Aunt Juana. As if we wanted to make ourselves believe that we lived in a woman, or came from the maternal, and not from this modern disorder, from this merciless city. It has been established that the founding of the city dates back to 1889, but that is no more than a retrospective date. By that year, the city was already known in the United States as a city with more cantinas than houses.

The cover-up of the real etymology of Tijuana might seem like an apparently insignificant fact, but it actually suggests one of the key points of border culture: we prefer to erase all of the indigenous symbols from the sign, Tijuana, and for that reason the idiotic legend was invented that the name came from a mythical rancherwoman named Tía Juana, a theory that has now been completely discarded by Tijuanaologists. Complete *ranchero* ridiculousness.

And unlike other parts of Mexico, the *mestizaje* of the original inhabitants does not seem to have been systematic. Practically all of the indigenous groups of the region (*killiwas*, *cucapás*, *pai pai*, *cahuilla*, and *akuala*) are in the process of disappearing and live in far-flung communities, very similar to the way that native Americans live in the United States. Tijuana, as a city, is not interested

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at all in its indigenous past. In that sense, Tijuana is more a Californian city than a Mexican city. Tijuana is the capital of Wanna Be California.

At one time, Mexico had 170 languages. When Tijuana was founded, it had 100. In 2000, the nation only had 62 left, which makes it the nation with the second-largest number of languages, behind only India. The languages native to the border are disappearing, and in a few years, there is no doubt that none of them will exist, since part of the project of "Tijuana" as a political fantasy is the continuation of an imperceptible genocide, a kind of genocide lite. Tijuana is a city that believes it has no roots, a city with the roots pulled out. Perhaps this is the reason why the new Zapatistas made the decision to name their plan to unite civil society La Realidad-Tijuana. Nevertheless, this new Zapatismo has little reverberation in Tijuana. Tijuana is sick of it.

In regard to the lack of racial mixing between the indigenous people of the region and the immigrants, the relationship that was established with the native inhabitants is definitely inspired more by the North American model than by what occurred between the Spaniards and the Mesoamerican native peoples. Indigenous people are invisible in the contemporary border society. In fact, one of the glorious myths of local racism boasts that one of the genealogical highlights of Baja California is that *mestizaje* never existed. The Spanish priests who came here to convert the natives to Christianity were brutal. There was more than one rebellion against them. But as with all brutality, the Conquista won out.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the economic boom in California inspired the initial development of urban life in Tijuana. The construction of houses began around Calle Olvera, which afterward came to be known as Avenida Revolución, famous worldwide for its cheap and no-holds-barred nightlife. A horizontal moment to cheap tourism. People always say the city looks like a typical Old West town. There is not very much historical documentation from that period. The only certainty is that the town looked toward San Diego and turned away from the rest of Mexico. Tijuana was born a motherless city, an orphaned beggar girl, her own pimp.

A few deceptive city maps and, above all, tourist postcards tell us the history of Tijuana. When historians propose researching the city, the majority of the documents they find are trash, fantasies, as if it were impossible to write a history of this city, and only literature were possible.

Or even worse, Tijuana Bibles. Those adult-oriented, household publications that were the precursors to *Playboy* or *Hustler*. Perverted cartoons from the beginning of the twentieth century that adopted the name of Tijuana in order to be even more obscene.

The 1900 census counted 242 residents in Tijuana. In the period since the naval base opened in San Diego in 1898, there must have been times when there were more tourists than *tijuanenses*. In that era, people could cross the border with no documents. The border was porous in both directions.

During this first decade, Tijuana established itself, slowly, as a city of vice. There was gambling and racing. In 1908, a federal administration was even created to oversee these activities on the border. But it had to be disbanded because of American insistence; they said that such measures by the Mexican government would make it possible for the border region to fill up with people of doubtful reputation. This was completely false, seeing that the region was already full of these beautiful people. Since the turn of this century, Tijuana has gradually fallen under the control of the Mafia. In 2004, the Mafia took over the Palacio Municipal (Tijuana's city hall). When Jorge Hank took power, a man accused of murdering the journalist Héctor "El Gato" Félix and embroiled in all kinds of rumored illicit activities, it represented the return of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) to the mayor's office. This "red tide" as it was called (owing to the color that was used in all of their propaganda) made it known that Tijuana had arrived at a crucial moment in which it would show its bloodiest side and show just how infatuated with death it was. Tijuana wrote its own sentence at the polls. It declared itself proudly corrupt.

And so, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the gangsters of organized crime literally came to power. By that time, the Tijuana Cartel had for two decades not only controlled drug trafficking but also was the most powerful criminal organization in Latin America, with more power than even the Colombian cartels. At the beginning of the twentieth century, this state of affairs had already been set into motion with the first gambling *top cats* and the growth of business in prostitution and alcohol.

Paradoxically, as Tijuana elected its worst, people began to call for protecting its Good Image in a way previously unknown. The *leyenda negra* that officially took power in 2004 had, nevertheless, been born more than a century before.

The first event of the region's official history took place in 1911 when the celebrated Mexican revolutionaries Ricardo and Enrique Flores Magón focused their struggle on the region—parallel to Madero's uprising in the south of the country. For a while, they were able to establish and run an independent anarchist commune in Mexico with the help of an errant band of foreign *filibusteros*. In this way, they realized the long-held plans for Baja Californian autonomy and *tijuanense* culture. According to the Plan of the Liberal Party, the only ones who were excluded from that heterotopia were the Chinese.

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The Flores Magón brothers, who had been imprisoned in the United States for violating the laws of neutrality, were released at the end of 1910. Just after returning to freedom, they decided to take up arms. One of the first measures taken by their forces (by the way, commanded by Anglos) was to reopen the cantinas and gambling parlors in order to increase their funding.

Despite this, a few months later, the anarchist forces were overthrown, due to their partial disorganization. Even today, the Flores Magón brothers are accused of selling out their country; there is even a monument in Tijuana dedicated to the forces of the dictator Porfirio Díaz, who “defended” the nation. This is one of the first outrageous border stories that unjustly linked the region with “foreignness” and *malinchismo* and a supposed innate desire in the region to be culturally annexed by the United States.

The city’s economic reality, by necessity linked to the state of California, would add fuel to the fire. In the same year, 1911, bars and horse race gambling were prohibited in California and in 1920 the Volstead Act went into effect, making the production and sale of alcohol illegal in the entire country.

The so-called *Ley Seca* or Dry Law gave a fabulous boost to the development of nightlife in Tijuana. Already by 1916, the Agua Caliente Racetrack had opened and, throughout the decade, it maintained its central role in the illegal activities and nightlife that had begun during the nineteenth century.

Thanks to the *Ley Seca*, the city was accused of wanting to become part of the United States and betraying the nation during the Magonist revolution. Because of this, Tijuana became the metropolis of perdition; everyone and everything was seen as Americanized: from the employees to the tourists, from the street signs to the hotels.

During the 1920s, the panorama that established the archetype of Tijuana as the city of vice par excellence is unmistakable: dozens of cantinas ready to sate the thirst of the refugees of the *Ley Seca*, caravans of automobiles crossing the border each day to lose themselves in the complicity of the night, recreation centers that allow the investment of free time (gambling parlors) or favor gregarious attitudes among their clientele (brothels), internationally famous casinos frequented by professional card sharks, movie stars, or wanna-be stars . . . and their counterparts: drug trafficking, a raucous night life, Russian roulette, greyhound and horse races. (Humberto Félix Berumen, “Tijuana In: La parábola del mal o la creación de un mito” [Tijuana In: The Parable of Evil or the Creation of a Myth], 1998).

In the gangster period of the 1920s, the so-called *leyenda negra* de Tijuana, or Tijuana’s black legend, was born. This legend (now in its Windows XP version) continues to determine the perception of the Mexican border within the United States. (TJ: The scene of all those murders.) In regard to this legend, one of the definitions of Tijuana actually has been as a stomping ground for the famous. During the 1920s, Tijuana was the place for the Hollywood after party. Unable to let it all hang loose and drink ridiculous quantities on American soil (the Dry Law ruled the land and sent the alcoholics other places), they organized their binges, parties, and all-nighters in the former ranch of Tía Juana, who, even if she never existed, no one ever doubted had made an amazing party hostess.

Thanks to the contact with Hollywood and the Volstead Act, Tijuana made itself into a cultural photo op for the international who’s who list. They were all here—Buster Keaton and Al Capone, Charlie Chaplin and Clark Gable, the Marx Brothers and the Flores Magón brothers, Bing Crosby and Rita Hayworth, formerly known as Margarita Cansino. Hayworth came out at the famous casino to open *La Tarde Mexicana* leading around a burro by a rope—the same hot burro that later in the erotic imagination of the tourists fucks dark-skinned, sexy Mexican women in bestiality-ridden cantinas, to which local taxi drivers are more than happy to drive you.

Tijuana was dog-loving, cheap, and “Mexican.” Tijuana had been created by force, like a virgin who, on the day after being raped, has to take over the position of madam. Tijuana already was an irredeemable city. A city that grew to satisfy *machismo*, Tijuana was a lost city, an addict.

Russian roulette in a mini-neo-Old West, doctored drinks, Americans buying off the local sheriffs, all this was the basis for the *leyenda negra* stereotype that (temporarily) ended when “Tata” Lázaro Cárdenas, the Mexican president most symbolic of nationalism, outlawed gambling in 1935. Afterward, the Casino de Agua Caliente was actually converted into the only federal high school in the country! The local chronicles tell the story of Tijuana’s ancestral greatness, about its gangsters, dog racing, light aircraft, and stardom (the Casino de Agua Caliente is our Quaternary period with ghosts and everything). Americans controlled all of these businesses, just as they continue to dominate contemporary nightlife in Tijuana.

But the fame continued unabated thanks to the Second World War. With the war, the great Tijuana nightlife was reborn, after a brief lapse: the city filled up with marines coming from San Diego. Before they headed out to the Orient to kill Japanese, they slurped tequila and Mexican women in Tijuana. Since then, the writers who come to the city continue to see the marines (even

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though they don't come as much) as a natural symbol for the "most vice-ridden city on the planet."

In the modern-day Plaza Santa Cecilia, a small downtown plaza, merchants sell their plaster sculptures and other little, useless items next to gay bars and old-time cantinas where the bohemian intellectuals get together to argue about who among them is the hottest diva. Up until a short time ago, there was an embarrassing walk of fame in that plaza that was trying to imitate Hollywood's in the worst *ranchero* kind of way. Perhaps the most notable hands in the cement were those of José José, the Mexican singer known for his romantic pain and alcoholism, which was in the process of becoming cocaine addiction. That walk of fame, by the way, was destroyed when McDonald's arrived in 2001 and installed a clock tower in this traditional Mexican plaza, an arch that looks just like the arch of this transnational company. Today, the local joke is that the city is symbolized today by an allusion to the Arc de Triomphe of Ronald McDonald. The Cuban poet José Kozer, on a visit to the city, very accurately called it McTijuana.

An artificial city with postmodern architecture, commercial anarchitecture, and chaotic self-construction.

This raucous city uses folkloric anecdotes to generate continual updates to its mythology of decadence and strange notoriety. For example, the urban legend about the quintessential 1970s guitar-playing rocker, Carlos Santana, who left Tijuana and went straight to Woodstock, or the fact that Tijuana is currently the largest trash dump for used tires in the whole world. The city of perpetual recycling. Tijuana Re: Re.

Tijuana is the best example of a hub in the civilized world—a city made for passing through and visiting. Because of this, the postcard is our most representative artistic genre. (The photographs prove that I'm not lying.) There are cities one travels to in order to get to know them. Those cities are like Paris, London, Lima, or Seattle. There are cities that people go to not to get to know them (in fact, there is nothing worth seeing), but rather to say that they have been. (The cities modern Tourism invented.) *I was here, he and she were also here, everybody at one time or another has been here, anyway. . . . I was here* is the mental graffiti we all resort to at one time or another in order to confirm that we can all have our fifteen minutes of fame. In the future, we will all have fifteen days in Tijuana that will make us famous! Come and get your picture taken.

On the other hand, this explains the constant visits by intellectuals from other places that come to Tijuana looking for intense emotions (a typically North American behavior, which is not that different from any teenager). They persist with this tradition of coming in and leaving their mark on

Tijuana. All of us, at one time or another, have wanted to spend some time in Tijuana, to let everyone know that *I was here* and as proof, here are some catchphrases, some fantastical descriptions, the insanity of fearless people, chronicles of the urban barbarity. Tijuana has become a rite of passage.

What is Tijuana's appeal? Being here allows you to enter a select elite of personalities who have visited and written about this place. It also gives you the chance to live alongside the city's dehumanized masses immigrating and heading north. What an amusing combination: the *happy few* and the *lumpenmigrants*. Who could resist such a magical formula? For just this reason, Krusty the Clown, Fernando Jordán, Charles Bukowski, Cabrera Infante, Manu Chao, Alejo Carpentier, Raymond Chandler, Manuel Puig, Henry Miller, Juan Goytisolo, Jay Leno, José Revueltas, and Javier Cercas have all had something to say about Tijuana. Perhaps due to this proliferation of discourses, at the end of the century (1997), the municipal government of Tijuana thought it intelligent (*sic*) to register the name "Tijuana" in order to prevent the discourse about the city from expanding without any controls, continually linked to drug dealing or illegality in general. Isn't it unusual that the name of the city be registered as a brand name? Of course, the proposal failed and was itself illegal. But it says a lot about how Tijuana speculation has proliferated, from TV to the academic world.

Why have so many people said so much about Tijuana? I think it is because Tijuana has become a symbol representing their fears and subconscious desires. Tijuana plays an important role in the making of the official national discourse. The middle class and their supporters like to hear about, write about, and visit Tijuana because they see in her the opportunity to convert Reality into a Show. Tijuana is the city of shows. (The mecca of *la Neta*—the truth, the real deal.) The most overhyped striptease shows in the world take place here, even though the adult industry is much more developed in the central part of the country than in Tijuana. (When a depraved tijuana goes to Mexico City, he feels underdeveloped.) But prostitution in Mexico City doesn't surprise anyone because the industry there is made up of sex workers. While here on the other hand, the stars are the *beautiful ladies, come down sir, we have a nice show for you*. A large part of Tijuana's appeal is her language. That language of hybridity, remix, and the end of all symbols, that impurity in which the other is assimilated into the cheapest kind of cliché.

Her constant sabotage of all meaning. Her linguistic perversion.

Everything that is boring elsewhere is spectacular in Tijuana. That is the secret agreement. The same occurs with the migrants. The migrants are the favorite show for the entire central part of the republic, who don't remember

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that up until three days ago, those migrants were their monotonous, fucked-over neighbors. What's amazing about Reality being a Show is that it is more comfortable. If we are not in the world, but instead in a show, then we aren't responsible, we are spectators (*iqué chingón!*). You have no reason to feel guilty (oh, man, what a relief to hear that). Just sit down, watch, and have fun. Watching a news report about Tijuana is better than watching *Big Brother*. Tijuana is not a metropolis; instead, it's a reality city. And in that hyperreality, we can all be actors or web cams. So let's buy the plane ticket.

As far as I can tell, we are all in agreement that Tijuana is a show the spectator watches with a remote control, in which existence becomes the live broadcast from the scene of the crime. At the very least, we tijuanses should be paid a salary (as actors, extras, cameramen, or makeup artists, whatever each person's particular part is). They should subsidize us or give us grants to keep putting on this show whose purpose is to provide nighttime entertainment and a tragicomic report to the Great People of Mexico and to the West, a report on things of which they are already perfectly aware. Or, if it's possible and a producer is listening to me right now, then we should all agree that Tijuana should stop being a city and become an interactive telenovela. (I propose that this historic soap opera be called *Ustedes los pobres*.) Besides, Tijuana already has a profound relationship with Television: seven out of ten televisions in the world were made in Tijuana. (This has been another episode in our series *Numbers to Surprise, Amuse, and Confuse Your Homies* brought to you by the company *Statistics to Tell People Even Though They Seem Unbelievable*.) (Exploit the Data!)

However one looks at it, Tijuana is Television Town. So, then, let's all Tijuanaize ourselves as soon as possible. Welcome to globalization. Globcult TJ Style!!!

Oh Border, You Know You Like It! Neocostumbrismo in the Chronicle of the City That Says Yes

Monday, November 9 (1:30 pm)

I ran across several interesting facts about Mexico.

If it doesn't make sense it isn't logical.

Why Mexican diplomats all drive in Mercedes Benzes.

If it isn't logical it may still be funny.

The President of Mexico gets a commission.

It makes sense.

DAVID ANTIN, "The November Exercises," in *Talking* (1972)

Coming to Tijuana on an intellectual tour assumes the old concept that walking in the streets can provide us with a special gnosis. In this sense, visiting Tijuana to write about Tijuana is a nostalgia that makes sense. (Once upon a time we were decadent and wore Nike sneakers.) The sin of naïveté is believing that tourism (the lowest category of perception), given certain circumstances, could be elevated to Husserlian phenomenology. And in Tijuana, everyone seems to agree that those circumstances exist. Just observe, intellectual or tourist, because the eidetic is on full display. Simply watch a Mixtec woman selling flowers, at the English-Friendly store window, look at the plaster statues. The essence of these things is but skin deep. We are all Humboldt at the corner of Avenida Revolución and Calle Primera. Strolling around Tijuana, Mexican intellectuals behave the same as Japanese videotourists. They want to get to the heart of things, but they end up getting the same things as everyone else.

The city is a miraculous topic. Even clichés can become fancy turns of phrase when you're talking about Tijuana. The border is a topic that encourages sensationalist and oversimplistic statements. (For yellow journalism, everything that glitters is gold.) When it comes time to describe Tijuana, the adjectives used by fashion columnists or California movies seem to be the most applicable descriptors. We are a "multicolored, multifaceted, postmodern" metropolis. We are "hybridity," a "collage," a "prism," an "Aleph," et cetera.

My suspicion is that all of these chaotic words are used as a stylistic strategy so as not to reflect too deeply. If Tijuana is a "prism," it obviously does not necessitate a detailed analysis; rather quaint phrases and portraits of local color will suffice. A series of random and exotic observations that prove that this is a multicolored set. The brilliance of my puns is simply astonishing!

The author's of chronicles, energized by the copiousness of postmodernism, "live" Tijuana like a theme park that must be seen in one day, a road movie in an unpared country. Or they experience it through a never-ending stream of cable channels, remote control in hand, zapping zapping zapping in pursuit of Netaphysics, the metaphysics of la Neta, the real deal, street truth. They contemplate the city, moving through it like a desperate teenage party, watching video clips that in the end present only "curiosities," arbitrary visions, hallucinogenic, decontextualized, of a reality that they had already decided to experience in fragments, never as a slow or total experience, but rather as just a flow of images. "From the greyhound races to the lobster tacos, the Tijuana bazaar exceeds all inventory" (Villoro). The car window and a lightning-quick visit to a cantina, relishing the speed. Too much is not enough, and too fast is just too little.

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Another reason for the national fascination with the border (from the press to literature) is because this seems to be the last opportunity to believe in the picturesque, in noetic tourism. That's why her Cultural Peculiarity is exaggerated, her Pataphysical nature. We know globalization erases all difference, and with its disappearance, the wonderful genre of the chronicle is at risk of vanishing. The Border is the last Reason to write Profiles, Vignettes, Phraseology, and the Last Chance to grab the attention of the disbelieving. The Border is used (faked) as the last opportunity for perception to be carnivalesque (Oh, Saint Walter Benjamin! Let me be the last flâneur!) and for prose to once again get permission to be costumbrista. Didn't I tell you, carnal, that my paintings of local color are all old-fashioned now?

Making Tijuana into an exceptional city is evidence of our hypocrisy or of our myopia. It's not exceptional because the border is a universal condition. It's been years since the border condition stopped being a geographic reality. The media and mass consumption make cities in the interior, which are far from another country, equally or more like a border town than those actually next to a foreign country. New York is more of a border town than San Diego. Acapulco is more of a border town than Tecate. Tijuana isn't the biggest border crossing in the world, the Internet is. To say that Tijuana is the border of borders is no more than an outdated, pre-electronic asseveration.

Tijuana is relevant because it combines conditions present in other cities. Tijuana isn't strange. It's the mirror of our various present realities and immediate futures.

So if someone thinks that something Completely Strange is happening in Tijuana, this doesn't mean that we are an exotic city; instead, it means that the observer doesn't understand the least about what's happening in the country as a whole. The tendency is to judge life in Tijuana as something foreign or to isolate its cultural phenomena from the rest of the country. If previous observers of border cultures looked at it merely in passing, from the outside, in order to criticize it from a perspective of Marxist nationalism or Christian morality, today they look at it through their windshield, not to openly disparage it (serious criticism, in the Baroque Age, is not in fashion anymore), but to proclaim its extreme otherness, its singularity placed in *epoché*. This decontextualization is especially at play in the approach to the subject of migration. On my drive by, I feel like my car gives me a heightened awareness. From my car, I can take the world apart and rearrange it; I can put the woman from two blocks ago on top of that table of used clothes; I can put that balcony into the next policeman's arms.

The massive migration to the United States (logically) is not something that is happening just to Tijuana, but rather is happening across the breadth of the country. Every day, there are 2,000 Mexicans trying to cross, not 2,000 tijuanaenses. In Tijuana, the vast majority of the people do not put any attention on what is happening near the border fence. Not even 5 percent of the population would be able to answer the question: How many people have died trying to cross the border since the gringos launched Operation Gate Keeper? (Hundreds have died . . . as I write this at the beginning of the twenty-first century.) This separation tijuanaenses have from their immediate reality is the same type of separation that makes someone from outside of Tijuana surprised to see so many guys in hats sleeping in the street, poking through some hole in the fence, waiting for the Migra to move away, so they can all jump up and run en masse. They are surprised, as if this "show" were something local and anomalous and not the reality for the entire country. Only someone who lives on another planet could find this phenomenon strange, seeing as how it is the same across the country, a phenomenon that does not begin or end in Tijuana. (In fact, all the phenomena of transculturation taking place in Tijuana are happening to a larger degree in the rest of the republic.) The government and semimorbid intellectuals would like for immigration to be a border phenomenon, preferably tijuanaense, to free themselves from their responsibility or to be astonished by this diaspora of Others.

The phenomenon of illegal border crossing is not something that is only happening to Tijuana, but rather throughout the entire country; nonetheless, it is easier to present the images and stories of illegal crossing as one more phenomenon in the problematic, most-visited city in the world than to contextualize it as it should be. But to contextualize this phenomenon would mean to stop attributing it to the *leyenda negra* of Tijuana in order to locate it as an effect of the national crisis. This, of course, is of no benefit to the government or to its voluntary and involuntary information lackeys.

The poor, confused writers who come to visit the city in order to write about the latest fashionable topic really do think they have to buy a plane ticket on Aeroméxico or Delta to see migration. (In fact, now, thanks to the many Web sites they don't even have to make the lightning visit to "Margaritaville.") What stupidity—it could have only cost them the price of a Metro ticket. It would've been enough for them to go to the airport or the Central Bus Station in Mexico City or to Barcelona's dirty corners. Of course, consciously or unconsciously, they classify this "situation" as one of the distinctive features of the city and period. No one says anything and, besides, this extraordinary

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decontextualization sells magazines. You know, *Welcome to Tijuana, Tequila, Sexo y Marihuana*. Oh, and, of course, anything else you can think of, right?

City Fiction

From my first visit to Amparo Dávila, la Verdadera, I remember more than anything the invasion of eyes. I had left the coast two hours early, because, even though I wasn't going directly to the Ciudad del Sur, I knew how slow and, sometimes, how stiflingly hot it was to enter the city. I had to deal with the incredibly slow traffic at the checkpoints; I had to show identification cards and do my best to smile: I had to show that I was a sensible and productive individual and not another desperate man looking for cheap medicine and easy women. —CRISTINA RIVERA GARZA, *La cresta de Ilión* (Ilión's Crest, 2002)

The most interesting documentary about Tijuana is *Frontier Life* (2002) by Hans Fjellestad: illegal car races reusing American automotive parts; water recycling on the border and the origin of the electronic fusion music, Nortec. In the documentary, the city is portrayed as a paradise of cultural mixture, from migrants to technologies. The documentary opens with a quote from the multidisciplinary artist Torolab: "Tijuana has more to do with science fiction novels than with Mexican history books." The idea summarizes and improves upon the fantastic philosophy of the most daring TijuanoLOGY: Tijuana as an ahistorical entity, an imaginary city.

The person who has crafted this vision best, the idea of Tijuana as a volatile urban conglomeration slave to the present or the gravity-less future, is Guillermo Fadanelli. I place an extensive quote here because his text is one of the best literary portraits that have been written about the city.

In no other place have I felt the strength that a territory inspires in its residents as much as in Tijuana. The city has been called to belong to everyone and one senses a strange pride in the city, perhaps because it is one gigantic hotel with no doors. The fact that it was never imagined as a real city, but rather as part of a strategy, not as an end but rather as means, stripping away that aura of "lasting forever" that the majority of cities have. There is a sensation that at any moment, everyone will leave and emigrate to the middle of the desert or to another border. Even the Zona del Río, which is supposed to be the seat of modernity, has the look of a set design, an ephemeral set-up, a location where endless movies and simulacra will be shot, but where nothing will actually happen, because all the people are

actors, not by vocation or by choice but by contagion, because they know they are in the midst of a territory lacking both history and future, a territory in which everything is movement, continual flux. A fake, invented city, Tijuana is a city in which everything real is wiped out by an excess of performance. Everything is there, at hand, at whatever price and whatever hour: one only has to stroll the streets of the Zona Norte at night to realize that pleasure is an endemic disease: La Estrella, El Chicago Club, La Balena are some of the clubs that make up that ruthless geography in which everything seems to be at the point of collapse, the climax of an ahistorical decadence: the anatomy of a junkie. On the other hand, the rivers of humanity that cross the border every day have ended up passing on the migrant's inherent impatience to the entire city, an impatience that is contagious and infects every step. Tijuana is like a mirage, only there for the person who desires to see her and is able to visit her. For the majority of people, though, she is transparent, she doesn't exist: our gaze, from this side of the border, passes right through her and is fixed on California, the Promised Land, the glamorous paradise of dollars. The Californian gaze is stalled in Tijuana, constructing a false, funhouse image of Mexico; for us, Mexicans, Tijuana is transparent, for them she is a myth: two different ways to deny reality, to avoid her actual existence. Even the steel fence, the Line that cuts along the border, seems to be an artifact more appropriate for science fiction than as a tool to divide nations. The spotlights lighting up the border, the helicopters spiraling across the desert in search of Mexican deserters, fleeing from their land and its precarious economy, the inherent tension of a line that unites such different, divided lands, all of this form a set from a typical Nintendo hunting game, unmistakable and violent, cynical and spectacular: the border seems to be more like a series of images from virtual reality, than a racial or economic conflict. One has to be there to see it. (Guillermo Fadanelli, <http://www.fadanelli.blogspot.com>, 2003)

This conception of the city seems tempting, poetic. But, unfortunately, Tijuana has a history too. Another fantasy projected onto this metropolis is the imaginative construction of a place with no past and possibly no future. Tijuana is the myth of a nonexistent city, yet people still live there despite that fact. Tijuana: Utopia. No-place. A city that is pure space with no temporal existence. Instant Tijuana.

The border has become a favorite topic of discussion in Mexico and the United States because of strategic reasons stemming both from globalization

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and the historical relationship of the two countries, but, above all, because of an internal, national process of change. Tijuana was used as a laboratory example for so-called Hybridization only after a long national process.

Tijuana was born at the end of the nineteenth century when a conglomeration of binational interests acquired its external image; at the beginning of the twentieth century when it was used as a hotspot for alcohol-soaked, nighttime entertainment for American tourists. Since then, despite the fact that the city has become much more complex than an All-Night Party Zone for gringos, the image has stuck. In the past few decades, several factors coalesced to reify this pseudo-definition of the city as *maldita-malinchista*, cursed and Malinchista, in the imaginary, namely: drug trafficking, constant passage of migrants headed to the United States, prostitution, organized crime, poverty, familial disintegration, the social marginalization of the majority of the population, and the arrival of the maquiladoras. This definition was believed not only by those viewing the city from outsider positions, but also in the minds of its own residents. It is as if the city were one big crime tabloid, inhabited by two million people, all potential criminals or victims. All of them recently arrived, all of them utterly predictable.

The world needs immoral cities in order to be able to feel more virtuous and less chaotic. And Tijuana, just like other cities (Hollywood, Paris, Havana, Medellín, New York, Delhi, etc.), has been chosen as a container for everything that the other cities/cultures deny being. Tijuana, specifically, is the media scapegoat for Mexicans and some foreigners.

Is Tijuana more "gringoized" than Mexico City? No. But the geographic location of Tijuana makes it a perfect target. This is my position in regard to the discourse about Tijuana: the national and foreign Tijuanoological discourse would like to define this city as the model of "gringoization" and urban collapse. This exaggeration allows them to avoid acknowledging their own situation, and so they can attribute the deterioration to the Others, the tijuanoenses, those Strange Ex-Mexicans, those Border Barbarians, those Semi-Citizens. The Neo-Chichimecas who want to found Tecnotitlan.

We are the Malinche of an untruthful national discourse. According to this discourse, our immorality or other metaphysical reasons account for border identity. Here We've Decided to Speak Spanglish! Here We've Decided to Become a City of Whores! These lies purport that tijuanoenses have become wildly eccentric and thus solely responsible for their Physical, Linguistic, and Political Immorality. They are the only ones to blame, no one else: take photos of them before they disappear into the nightclubs!

All of this is a disrespectful myth, taken almost directly from the "Tijuana Bibles," those porno manifestos that used the city's name to appeal to the American libido. They never realized the Tijuana Bibles were not made in Tijuana, but in the United States itself. Tijuana assures us that the whore is someone else's mother, not our own, like in Ray Loriga's novel or in almost all of the quotes about this speculative city: itself a mirror.

It is true that the proximity of the United States has defined a large portion of the northern border's economy, society, and politics, but the decisive factor for the culture of the city has not been its closeness, but instead the decisions that the Mexican state has made. Tijuana is not a product of the United States, but of Mexico.

Despite this, the Mexican state does not want to assume responsibility for the border's poverty, its colonias with no public services or guaranteed education, its pollution, its social disintegration (which makes possible phenomena like the hundreds of women murdered in Ciudad Juárez, that other mythical border city, or the thousands of people who have died crossing illegally into the United States), its enslavement by the mass media, and its lax approach to national identity.

What Tijuana has become: a collapsing city. Not so much because of its closeness to the United States; rather as a consequence of the decision by the Mexican state to take advantage of its proximity to ally itself with corporations and the American government for material gain. And so, to erase its political responsibility, the state promotes the image and the discourse that Tijuana is a city that has become a disaster due to its immorality, its personal alliance with the Gringos or as an unpreventable or natural effect of globalization. The Mexican government's corruption allows the Americans and the Japanese to exploit the half-dead populations of Tijuana. Tijuana is, more than anything else, a logical consequence of the erroneous course taken by the national project in the twentieth century.

In the last few years, interest in the border has skyrocketed, but it has principally been defined from the perspective of its cultural relationship with the United States, of its post-Mexican denationalization. This perspective ignores the fact of the city as a direct consequence of Mexican corruption, not of an ahistorical hybridization per se.

Tijuana was not invented by the Chicanos, the Gringos or by Us, the Hybrids. Tijuana was created by the seventy-year-long "perfect dictatorship" (Vargas Llosa dixit) of the Institutional Revolutionary Party and by the arrival in 2002 of the right-wing National Action Party. Tijuana is the evidence of the

internal decadence of the Mexican, beginning in Mexico City and ending at the border. But since they do not want this to be at the center of the debate, the idea is popularized that the border is only one topic and that topic is going out of style already. Let's move on to another.

Coda or Eleventh Commandment:
Thou Shalt Not Tell the Truth about Your City

Tijuana is a synonym of mediocrity. It has given nothing of any worth to the world. Not artists, not renowned intellectuals, nothing, in reality, nothing of any importance. The tijuanaenses, like good Mexicans, are very proud of foolish things, like the invention of the Caesar salad or the copyright for a feminine drink baptized the "Margarita." Both are restaurant specialties that sell very well with foreigners and Mexican visitors, but they are still just stupidities of which only losers could be proud. A salad or a drink . . . it would be better if Tijuana never existed at all.

Does it exist?—ESTHER GASCA, "Apuntes de una fugitiva" (Notes of a Fugitive Woman, 1998)

The truth is always insipid and colorless. Misery is what all human beings have in common. Because of this misery, we will never miss an opportunity to make ourselves seem like we are extraordinary individuals living in exceptional locales at an amazing moment in history. This is what happens with tijuanaenses who, far from the development of the national capital and incapable of accessing our American neighbors' progress, take advantage of the opportunity to exaggerate the supposed extraordinary condition of our border culture. We perform for a national and international public who are either gullible, our unconditional fans, or receiving some kind of personal gain for publicizing the strangeness of the Other.

Prostitutes, merchants, children, workers, housewives, smugglers, drivers, writers, we all act in such a way as to make them believe that we are another race of people entirely. A central part of the tijuanaense identity is this: to know how to sell yourself, to know how to cultivate a bad image as a commercial advantage. And, at the same time, to claim that the good image should be recovered. In one way or another, Tijuana denies that Tijuana is true.

If a tourist guide—some of them Americans, by the way—promotes the idea that Tijuana is dangerous and dark, it's because he needs that discourse to sell his services. The same thing happens with its literati, academics, artists; all of them have a good number of charlatans in their ranks. The defi-

ciencies of the infrastructure in Tijuana are made up for by the Neobaroquism of the discourse. Post/Pop beats Third World.

Convinced by our performance for them and by our testimonials, the visitors or exegetes then write all those novels, articles, film scripts, commentaries, and lectures that they take back to their countries. In their work, they make a record of the city's good or bad, extraordinary condition. Everyone believed our dog and pony show. Or they didn't believe it, but they used it. In the end, when fiction has become believable, the truth is unbelievable.

People from Mexico City and gringos want desperately for us to prove to them that we are exotic. So what do we do? We prove it to them! Who in their right mind would refuse to be an exceptional being, linked to drug trafficking, to the legend of a New Babylon, to a Hell stuck between two worlds or, as they're saying nowadays, the *mero mero* laboratory of postmodernity? Tell me who would deny such outstanding titles just for living in a city that is the subject of such damning myths? Who wouldn't fall for this mythomania when the prize is fame, or at least a tip? All of you want fantastic stories and sociological news, well, okay, I'll make them up for you, of course, my pleasure. How many do you want? The discourse of Tijuanaology is much too attentive to its leadership, to its insane dialogue with the other. Tijuanaology wasn't developed for autognosis, but rather as a discourse-for-the-other. All of us are no more than tour guides.

To tell them the truth, to tell them that we are like everyone else, to tell them that you are us, and we are you, to tell them that Tijuana looks like the mixtures of culture that you find wherever you live, that Tijuana is the sum of its projections, that Tijuana is whatever and nothing, would be cruel. How could we disappoint them? The tijuanaenses and the Tijuanaologists are like those tribes that make things up and lie to the anthropologists that ask them about their sex lives or their Lévi-Straussism.

It's been a long time since the natives have had the opportunity to exaggerate about their lives or to daydream, so they decide to say everything that comes into their heads, speaking their lies straight into the interviewer's tape recorders or notebooks. Sociologists, anthropologists, and journalists are always willing to believe anything they are told, forgetting that informants or tourist guides are less trustworthy than auto salesmen. We tijuanaenses pretend to be unusual specimens and we show the city's seven peculiarities to these "dupes"—those individuals who act like they believe other people's fantasies in order to comply with their social function. That's what the public demands, and you have to give them what they want.

Children want us to scare them when they ask us to tell them a story. So, one makes up a scary story. Is there anything possibly more human than

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lying to gullible people? Lying is a way to take pity on them and a minor entertainment for ourselves.

"Tijuana" is nothing more than a philosopheme. An entelechy that doesn't exist at all, except for a plethora of quotes and a pile of articles. Someone at some time started to investigate Tijuana to try to find her essence, and his successor swallowed the tale that such an entity even existed. In this way, several intertextual generations take up the task of arguing over the essence of a supposedly mythical city named Tijuana, which in reality is nothing more than an imaginary border. I have done it myself, I accept that. I myself do not believe in the existence of Tijuana, and, despite that, I enter into the discussion. What else could I do on a cloudy Saturday?

Tijuana doesn't exist. It's just an Internet site.

To be frank, I argue that Tijuana is such a cliché that in order to escape the monotony of life, sometimes someone (either me, you, or someone else) has to take on the miserable task of "the vindication of the frivolous image of the city" (denying the leyenda negra and its gray aftereffects). But then, the next day, the same person fervently dedicates himself or herself to spreading the concept of "the vicious and nocturnal nature of this mysterious city." If she or he didn't do it, who would?

The Tijuanaologists face a situation similar to the one faced by a provincial philosopher, who, in order to get a little attention, wrote a book against God. When he saw that no one cared about his thesis, he decided to stir up some controversy by writing a theological treatise to refute his own book (attributing it to someone else). Tijuana is an Onetti character who wants to convince everyone else that he is a Borges character.

This is the way Tijuanaology works. It's our last way to make ourselves and the rest of the world think we're interesting. The city is all too normal, but what can we do? Confessing that would be boring and people need to entertain themselves somehow. Let the party carry on. We'll buy the beers and the myths. ¡Salud! Never confess what you know: you are Tijuana. And Tijuana is a lie.

Recommendations for Crossing Successfully into the USA (from the Simplest Way to the Most Complicated)

Try to cross legally.

Pick a time of day with little traffic.

Before crossing, have a reason to tell the agent, a good reason, a true one, or at least a believable one.

Drive a good car that looks classy or that says: I'm middle class.

Drive a good car without provoking suspicions about where you got it from.

If you are dark-skinned, drive a car that corresponds to your status.

Cross by bike in the special line.

Take a magazine when you cross on foot.

Take two magazines when you cross on foot.

Pick the line that is moving the fastest.

Don't bring fruits or vegetables.

Don't bring metals.

Don't tell jokes about terrorism.

Don't say "ojalá."

(Ojalá sounds Muslim.)

Don't take a lot of luggage or stuff.

Dress well.

Don't sweat excessively.

Don't have nervous tics.

Cross by yourself so you don't have to wait for anyone left behind.

Bring receipts that prove that you are investors.

Be an elegant Mexican politician and bring special identification recognized by the United States.

Be a refined, attractive woman—with white skin to appeal to Anglo tastes or dark skin to appeal to their global fantasies.

Be an elderly person in a wheelchair.

Don't be too dark-skinned or short.

Try to guess which agents are racists or which ones are in a bad mood at that moment.

Talk as little as possible.

Don't be drunk.

Don't have a criminal record.

Don't have any scent in your car or clothing that upsets the trained dogs.

Don't wear a turban or insignias that are hostile to the United States.

Don't look like a Mexican drug dealer.

Don't look like a drug dealer.

Don't look Mexican.

Don't write about, draw, photograph, or film what is happening at the checkpoint or during the trip across.

Don't look the Immigration agents in the eyes while you're in line.

Don't hesitate as you answer their questions when it's your turn.

Don't reveal that you are going to work or study without the appropriate permit.

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- Don't be rude when you answer.
- Don't have guns on you.
- Don't have drugs on you.
- Don't cross with an obviously false passport.
- Don't cross through the desert by yourself or through the mountains during rainstorms.
- Don't drive through really fast in an armored car trying to avoid the gunfire.
- Don't threaten the agents with a bomb in your hand.
- Don't enter in a light aircraft without authorization to cross into the airspace of the United States.
- Be married to an American.
- Be an American on your way home.

Kathryn Kopinak

FOUR

Globalization in Tijuana Maquiladoras

Using Historical Antecedents and Migration to Test Globalization Models

Mexico's economy is undergoing a stunning transformation. Five years after the launch of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), it is fast becoming an industrial power. Free trade with the U.S. and Canada is turning the country from a mere assembler of cheap, low-quality goods into a reliable exporter of sophisticated products. . . . "This is a completely different economy than Mexico had a decade ago" says sociologist Federico Reyes Heróles. . . . NAFTA "has given Mexicans a new vision of the world" says Clemente Ruiz Duran. —SMITH AND MALKIN, *Business Week* (1998: 50)

The "policy of isolation," . . . which ceased when the Congress passed the Colonization law of 1883, was the most dangerous policy to Mexico. To exclude immigration or tolerate it only under intolerable conditions, forced foreigners to cast covetous eyes on the Mexican domain. It alone gave rise to constant schemes of annexation and revolutionary separation. To forbid or make difficult and insecure the entry of capital and labor from without, necessarily united capital, labor, and enterprise in hostility to Mexico, and led to schemes against the integrity of her territory. To welcome capital and labor and make both secure makes these her friends and allies, and unites them in a common interest with her. —NORDHOFF, *Peninsular California* (1888: 99)

Mexican maquiladora industrialization, which began along the northern border in the 1960s and grew quickly in the interior in the 1990s, is often thought to be part of globalization. The latter is understood as the transregional connection of social, political, and economic activities, making decisions taken in one place relevant for people elsewhere. Several theoretical ideas recently put forward by hyperglobalists, transformationalists, and skeptics about global flows and their limits are used in this chapter to assess the extent to which maquiladora industrialization in Tijuana can be considered globalization, the kind of globalization it might represent, and/or to what extent it may be part of a more regionally based economic form (Held et al., 1999: 3–27).