

Literary Representations from the Border: The American Dream, Immigration and Identity

Representaciones literarias desde la frontera: El sueño americano,
inmigración e identidad

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Abstract

This article aims to compare and contrast the concepts of subjectivity represented in literature and constructed in borders: physical and imaginary geopolitical sites that have positioned identities in the margins throughout history. The comparative analysis examines the representation of marginal identities in literary texts, specifically those written by authors belonging to hyphenated cultures such as the Cuban-American Gustavo Pérez-Firmat (1994), “Bilingual Blues,” and Mexican-American Gloria Anzaldúa’s “La encrucijada,” among others, mentioned in the bibliography. The study shows that the portrayal of subjectivity and subalternity in literary texts contends with diverse discourses of power and hefty political structures that tend to repress and to delimit character’s development and conditions as human beings living in the United States.

Keywords: literature, culture, identity, subjectivity, migration

Resumen

Este artículo procura comparar y contrastar la subjetividad representada en la literatura y construida en la frontera: locaciones geopolíticas, físicas e imaginarias que han posicionado identidades en el margen a través de la historia. El análisis comparativo examina la representación de estas identidades marginalizadas en textos literarios específicamente aquellos escritos por autores pertenecientes a culturas marginalizadas como la Cubano-Americana, con el texto de “Bilingual Blues” de Gustavo Pérez-Firmat y

“La encrucijada” de la autora Mexicana-Americana Gloria Anzaldúa, entre otros mencionados en la bibliografía. El estudio demuestra que la subjetividad y la subalternidad representadas en los textos contienden con diversos discursos de poder y estructuras políticas que tienden a reprimir y a delimitar el desarrollo de los personajes y su condición como seres humanos que viven en los Estados Unidos.

Palabras clave: literatura, cultura, identidad, subjetividad, inmigración

Introduction

In order to compare and contrast different types of subaltern subjectivities represented in literary texts, it becomes necessary to conceptualize certain terms and notions about the process of the construction of identities and its relationship to structures of power, subalternity, borders, life in the hyphen, and immigration. The definition of the term subjectivity delves within diverse disciplines such as anthropology, psychology, and philosophy, among others, and within critics, theorists and thinkers throughout history. Thus, the definition of subjectivity is a complex one but it presupposes the juxtaposition of the structures of the “I,” a structure associated with an existential self-determination, which is always in process, and to a conscious relationship with one’s self, and its interactive relationship with another external structure referred to as the “Other.” Both of these structures, at the same time, interrelate with a social environment or context. Taylor (1996) proclaims that the conception of “I” necessarily involves an implicit or explicit acknowledgement of an external logic, a recognition of the “other” and

his/her social positioning (45). The “I” is always subjected to an “Other” and to certain social structures that determine and condition their existence. Foucault (1984) affirms that it is within this frame of interaction, between “I” and “Other,” where the structures of power emerge, labeling individuals as either subjects or objects (182). The “subject” becomes an agent acting upon the “object,” and this latter is, according to Gayatri Spivak (1999), the one who falls in the designation of subordinated, marginalized populations (32). Among this populace, the colonized, the immigrants, and the members of disadvantaged classes have constituted groups that have historically strived for change to improve their existential conditions. Thus, some of these people, especially from underdeveloped countries, have seen in the legal and illegal immigration to the United States, a chance to ascend socially following the “American Dream,” a myth based on the larger mythic idea of Eden.

Once in this country, the voices of the immigrants have been represented through characters in literature and, depending on their places of origin, it is possible to compare and contrast the distinctions that have traced and

marked their subaltern subjectivities. Based on their origins, the characters provide a representation of subaltern “hyphenated cultures” (Pérez-Firmat, 1994); groups of people who have constituted communities called after the designation of two names: the first one determined by the country of birthplace and the other one referred to as “America,” meaning the United States. These terms are separated by a hyphen, a metaphorical dividing line that (de)limits the geopolitical space of existence. The hyphen is an imaginary metaphorical frontier that separates two codes (such as language), two cultures, and/or two hybrid identities, the first always belonging to the representation of the object and to the realm of “Otherness.” Characters as subalterns frequently confront oppression from the mainstream hegemonic groups; in this case, represented by the Americans or Anglos. However, the forms of oppression and marginalization convey similarities and differences among characters depending on the designation of the place of origin, the history and the motivations among the populations. As remarked by Caminero-Santangelo (2007), “the character of immigration has taken substantially different forms. Poor Mexicans seeking better economic opportunities . . . cannot be expected to share a common sensibility with the first wave of upper-middle-class exiles” (19). It is the aim of this research to trace the representation of these generally marginalized subjectivities and their existential condition as border-crossers and as part of the hyphenated cultures in the United States.

Justification

The recent phenomenon of massive immigration of Latinos to the United States, despite the strict discourse of power and politics proclaimed by the current president of this country, of stopping their entrance, has motivated me to partake in this research. The intent of this work is to explore the lifestyles of some particular people from Latin America, such as Mexicans and Cubans, who historically have migrated to this nation and to examine their existential conditions depicted in literature as a means to profess, through these representations, the limitations and/or benefits of living as subalterns and as part of hyphenated cultures. I will also discuss how, in literature, these people have or have not found possibilities to achieve their aspirations of ascending socially. An aim of this study is to make the pertinent topic of immigration more accessible and more sensible through the critical reading of literature.

Immigration has been a constant phenomenon in the American Continent. The lure to travel to the New World during the late 15th Century seduced many for a diversity of reasons. This historical process “inaugurated one the most profound cultural, political, and economic transformations in modern history . . . they [immigrants] transformed the physical, economic, and cultural landscape of the Americas (Greene, 2004) until today. In this sense, according to Greene (2004), a vast historical corpus of literature has been generated depicting the colonization area of British America which consisted of thirty British colonies until the American Revolution when they

constituted a new republican nation that is now the United States.

This depiction has given origin to a substantial corpus of literary productions that have incorporated a mythology related to explain the rationale and justification of the process of migration. Some of these myths are the Myth of Eden, the Myth of Success, and the American Dream.

The Myth of Eden and the Myth of Success

One of the main attractions to travel to America for Europeans, mostly in the middle of the 15th Century, was the fact that this continent became a mythical site compared to the biblical Garden of Eden. The newly arrived Americans and their descendants were conceived by many as the new Adams: "In this new Eden, human beings could recover their lost innocence, solve their problems, satisfy their desires, and begin life anew" (Honour, 1975). This myth outset a legendary historical collection of literary productions conveying values attached to aspects of the United States' historical and cultural heritage. To begin with, for travelers, the United States was perceived as Eden, "the promised land," a paradise full of resources that incited many to experience a new beginning. Malavasi (2015) compares this mythical vision of America to the utopic Eden as follows:

Lured by curiosity and greed, by a desire to spread Christianity, and by the hope of

demolishing ancient limits, whether geographical, intellectual, political, or spiritual, Europeans threw caution to the winds and ventured across the uncharted

oceans. From the outset, they believed that the New World to which they were going would transcend the world they were leaving behind.

The immigrants, who were mainly Europeans colonized and settled in America, were people characterized by a diversity of origins, beliefs, and life experiences. Miller et al., (1985) point out that the reasons for Europeans coming to the New World were so diverse and contrasting that to describe them in terms of national identity would be very limiting, "given the extremes imposed by various religions, different geographical areas, and contrasting lifestyles" (2).

In spite of their diverse origins and motives, a recurrent belief that characterized the aspirations of the colonists was their intent for the "pursuit of success and wealth" (Garden vs. Wilderness 2005). The Puritans, a major religious group who established in New England, were the ones who first instituted and extended the Myth of Eden framed within mythical assumptions, which were later compiled to outset the Myth of Success. The Puritans arrived in the northern part of the United States attempting to reform and "purify" the Church of England believing that God had chosen them at the time of their birth. They adhered to strict codes of morality and behavior (Miller et al., 1995) in the new land. The Puritans laid the

foundations of the Myth of Success by first endorsing an ethical print to the pursuit of wealth for they considered that the amassing of wealth was a reward that came directly from God (Garden vs. Wilderness, 2002).

With time, the settlers from this and other groups disassociated the ethical and religious concerns to the Myth of Success established at the beginning. This process was motivated by the growth in the population and the displacement of colonists towards the West and other parts of the country in their attempt to conquer the land. Westering also gave birth to legendary characters and literary stories which also founded and created the Frontier Myth. This myth contained the adventurous experiences of conquering, struggling and settling in the wilderness while traveling to the geographical frontier in the west part of the country. As stated by Miller et al., (1985), the frontier beyond symbolized the conquering of free and abundant land while traveling westwards in the new land. For some writers, the frontier also builds character among the frontiersmen. In this way, the frontier became a myth.

The idea of the frontier deeply affected the notions surrounding the Myth of Success. The process of conquering and settling in new territories incited greediness, avarice, and the search for wealth. These attitudes soon grew among the inhabitants of America and modified the basis of the Puritan "ethical print" linked to the myth. These new values moved the foundations of the idea of Eden and created a new myth later called the Myth of Success. Nachbar and Lause (1992) provide a description of this myth:

the American myth of success has been orchestrated around five basic beliefs which have served as recurring motifs: . . . American democracy allows its citizens to rise above any limitations into which they may have been born . . . hard work brings riches and physical comforts; . . . these rewards come to those who are deserving of them (virtuous) and who . . . have the drive and ambition to attain them plus . . . a modicum of good luck. (135)

With the evolution of time, the Myth of Success has been intrinsically linked to values and dreams attached to individual upward mobility and opportunities for development. Actually, Nachbar and Lause (1992) emphasize the basic materialistic value that gives raise to the American Myth of Success, "with hard work comes achievement, and with achievements come the material comforts of the American Dream and sometimes even great riches and a place in history" (135). Americans and other peoples around the world still hold the belief that if they are granted the opportunities, they will do whatever it takes to seek their dreams, achievements, and progress mostly in terms of pursuing material wealth in the United States.

The Myth of "The American Dream"

The previous assumptions give origin to the ideas surrounding the notion of the American Dream. The myth of the American Dream is circumscribed to three specific ideals related to the assumptions inscribed in the Myth of

Eden. As said by Miller et al., (1985), these ideals are a combination of a spiritual longing, a material enterprise, and the quest for freedom and equality that led to the founding of America. However, as the colonization process launches, the American Dream myth acquires other diverse definitions and connotations. Once dispossessed from the religious and ethical values, which gave origin to the Myth of Eden, and immersed into a controversial debate mainly launched by the questioning of American ideals inscribed in history and literature, the myth of the American Dream represents different ideals depending on the historical context in which it is situated. The first conceptions relate the myth to an almost innate impulse engraved in the American's frame of mind of imagining the United States as the land of bounty, opportunity, and success. Samuel (2012) states that "the Protestant work ethics and the self-improvement urges eroded and were replaced by an ethic of self-preservation, social survival, and individualism" (52). As people from the colonies migrated from the East to the West, the myth of the American Dream was encrypted in people's minds aiming to struggle in order to achieve individual socio-economic improvement and then success.

In the opinion of Miller et al., (1985), since the first immigrants arrived in the United States, the conception of the American Dream is linked to idealistic motivations and attitudes. They defined it as "an original blend of the spirit of enterprise, the longing for an ideal, the passion for liberty -all impulses that led to the founding and settling of our country" (52). In this same sense, Adams (1941) attributes the def-

inition of this myth to a more profound idealistic perception. He depicts the myth as the representation of a state of mind: "an enduring optimism given to a people who might be tempted to succumb to the travails of adversity, but who, instead, repeatedly rise from the ashes to continue to build a great nation" (quoted in Hanson & White, 2011, 3). For Adams, that economic prosperity was possible, and achieving it would ratify the American Dream whose promise of hard work (not good luck) is the path to prosperity (quoted in Hanson & White, 2011, 407).

With time, the depictions given to this myth in the colonies changed. Hanson and White (2011) affirm that in spite of major questionable attained values related to major historical events in the United States (such as the American Revolution, slavery and the Civil War, depressions, recessions, economic contractions, battles over civil rights, women's rights and gender rights), popular culture still remains giving voice to this ideal of positive almost innate wish for growth mostly in individual and materialistic terms.¹ The myth became directly linked to the achievement of "wealth," "treasures," status, and recognition. Nonetheless, although linked to personal achievement and materialistic ascendancy, as a myth, its representation in history and in the literature of the United States documents features the American tradition since colonial times. In this sense, David Mogen *et al.*, (1989) suggest that this myth provides the imaginative experience of the colonial settlers arguing that the myth merely consists of key symbols and narrative patterns forged in mythically based-art forms and, thus, it historically ar-

articulates cultural ideals, symbolically dramatizing cultural conflicts (22). In addition, they proclaim that the term “dream” suggests only “unrealized ideals” which resembles “a destructive habit of escapism . . . falsehood and illusion, commonly held misconceptions, stories perpetuating the mystique of entrenched power structures” (Mogen et al., 1989, 22). The debate they disclose questions the correspondence of values and ideals expressed in narratives with the “unity” of an American national identity. However, later, these authors acknowledge that this dream at least provides a “potentially unifying sense of identity” (Mogen et al., 1989, 23). Additionally, a corpus of historical narratives depicting the American first experiences colonizing the country, seem to articulate certain values and attitudes, mythical or real, which are adhered to a contentious sense of a national identity and subjectivity which have contributed to defining what the dream is about: the idea that through hard work and struggle, people can achieve prosperity and success.

As it evolved, the myth became more and more associated with the necessity of achieving individual materialistic progress and wealth than with the idea of shaping a life preservation impulse. Samuel (2012) affirms that the many connotations later given to this myth range from being “conservative, spiritual and secular” to being “mutable and amorphous” (5). Thus, for Samuel (2012), the myth acquires a major materialistic and capitalist substance. He points out that the myth becomes:

a dream of consumption, an ability of capitalism to deliver goods, an ideology of

individual merits that obscures collective subordinate conditions, the impetus for

personal transformation, the fantasy of a perfect life, the desire to be someone one is not, the quest of achieving something beyond reach, the conviction that we are born equal, live in perpetual progress and presumable happiness. (Samuels, 2012, 5)

Samuel (2012) links the American Dream to an ideology based on accomplishing a material “perfect life” characterized by the capitalist urges of obtaining wealth, of consuming, of obtaining goods, all of these for the purpose of showing individual merits. He (2012) criticizes the insatiable necessity to reach materialistic progress based on individualistic over collective ideals. These ideals are risky for they may discriminate against important sectors of the population who do not have access to dream in those terms within the collective imaginary. These marginalized sectors become part of the subaltern marginalized social groups, such as the immigrants from underdeveloped countries in Latin America, who do not easily visualize “individual” progress and happiness in their existential conditions nor have a notion of what a “perfect life” in the United States could be. Samuel (2012) acknowledges this when he states that the dream seems less accessible for lower classes where upward mobility and the pros-

pect of betterment and improvement are blurred. He conversely proposes “a dream of social order” (Samuels, 2012) where everyone is innately capable and recognized by others regardless of the circumstances of their birth.

Phyllis Moen and Patricia Roehling (2005) also reinforce the idea of the American Dream as a capitalistic discriminating one stating that, “The American Dream is itself a metaphor for occupational success, a metaphor that works for the winners of the educational and occupational career game. They also pinpoint that this dream does not work with equity because it “remains elusive for growing numbers of men and women across age, class, educational, racial, ethnic, and geographical divides” (Moen and Roehling, 2005, 188). Though all populations may grasp the dream, not all of them can comply it since some of the members of excluded populations, integrated by the colonized, women, blacks, and the lower working classes, have become somehow invisible in the American culture (Childers and Hentzi, 1995, 290). In this same line, White and Hanson (2016) conclude that there is not equity in opportunity of achieving the Dream as major divides by class, race/ethnicity, and gender continue on the American landscape.

Politically, the dream has been also associated with the rights established in the Constitution of the United States among Americans and other ethnic populations including those who have migrated and have become American citizens. For Greene (2004), colonial histories were constructed upon the Constitutional ideals of the pursuit of happiness, equity, and democracy and these histories were defined as

socioeconomic structures and cultural constructs to “express larger purposes of the societies they were creating” (43). In political terms, Adams quoted by Samuel (2012) maintains that the American Dream was the glue that kept the country together. Mogen’s (1989) suggestion about the potential of the dream of having a “unifying sense of identity” was used by ex-president Barack Obama in 2008 casting “himself as an exemplar of the American Dream.”² Obama’s perception of the Dream coincides with White’s and Hanson’s (2016) remarks that “most Americans retain this sense of optimism and believe in the Dream and its values of freedom and equality of opportunity” (95). Immigrants also uphold it. Up until today, the American Dream has proven resilience in spite of its political hindrances and threats. Paul Allatson (2002) states that America (the U.S.) is still,

imagined as a place of ever-expanding horizons, and as a space that links the ideal of unconstrained mobility to desires for individual self-fashioning and socioeconomic betterment. . . designated an immigrant’s paradise, figured in exclusive terms as a trans-Atlantic migrant trajectory that culminates in happy assimilation and “American” becoming. (13)

Literary productions record and endorse this imagined reality and its practical endorsement. Notwithstanding, Mogen (1989), quoting Frederic I. Carpenter, states that the Dream remains in part elusive in literature “noting that vague as it is, the Dream profoundly structures our

imaginative creations”(28). Mythical or real, the American Dream moves diverse peoples around the world and these displacements are documented in literature and other artistic works in distinctive forms.

For the purpose of this project, I will focus on the analysis of the American Dream and its effects, mythical and real, on immigrants from Latin America in history as part of subaltern populations represented in literary texts. Immigrants have played a pertinent historical role in the (re)definition and the connotations related to this myth. They have faced challenges and struggles due to their social, cultural, and economic existential conditions in their attempt to be part of the ideology surrounding the dream: one of prosperity, idealistic individual merits, progress, happiness, and the achievement of a “perfect life” (Samuel, 2012). For many Latin immigrants, the American Dream has been perceived in different ways throughout history. U.S. citizens have grouped them into populations of a “lower rank,” subaltern residents in a country where sometimes “dreams [have] become remote and unattainable” (Miller et al., 1985, 556).

Instead of following the route of a promised attainable happiness and of material success through hard work, some immigrants from specific Latin American countries have confronted a life based on discrimination and marginalization while other Latins have lived less marginal conditions. Caminero-Santangelo (2007) writes that “current and past Latin American migration to the United States is understood to be a direct function of U.S. domination” (19) in the world. This “domination” and the deprivations suffered in

the countries of origins, impulse the massive current floods of immigration currently until today. White and Hanson (2016) point out that:

neither the emotional and material costs of their journeys, the trepidations after their arrival, nor the uncertain path to citizenship seem to diminish immigrants’ optimism about the opportunities the United States often provides. On the contrary, the American Dream motivates immigrants to push for immigration reform and a legal path toward citizenship. (99)

But as the immigrants reach the country, they confront the difficult process of settling while they are distinguished as citizens (in the least of the cases) and aliens, “legal” or “illegal” (Allatson, 2002, 13). The following section examines the historical processes of immigration from Mexican-Americans and Cuban-Americans.

Immigration, the American Dream, and Literature

Since its beginnings, continuous processes of immigration have populated what the United States is now. These processes have been represented and documented in all sorts of historical and literary texts. Before the first wave of European immigrants arrived in the country in the 16th Century, ice age hunters crossed the Bering land bridge from Siberia to the land that is called Alaska today (Holt and Winston, 2008). These immigrants gradually spread towards the South part of

the continent and constituted several groups of Native Americans. Since then, the stream of immigrants has been ceaseless. Thereafter, according to Mann (1991) “over fifty million immigrants have since arrived in the United States” (68). Before 1900, nearly 19 million people entered the United States, five million arrived prior to the beginning of the Civil War in 1861 and by the 1880’s in the postwar period, a similar amount came into the country (Mann, 1991, 69). After restrictive legislations proclaimed after the Great Depression and World War II in the middle of the 20th Century, the flow of immigrants resumed and by the 1980’s, it counted ten million more (Mann, 1991, 69). The Office of International Information Programs of the State Department of the United States (2005), signals that no country in the worldwide history has had such a strong legacy of immigration for in the first fifteen years of the XX Century; more than thirteen million immigrants have arrived in this country (200). Before 1920, immigrants were a necessary resource for the expansion of the country, but afterwards, White and Hanson (2016) remark that, like their immigrant predecessors, newly-arrived Hispanics showed an over-whelming appreciation for the American Dream and its promise of future success (19). This population of immigrants has envisioned the American Dream in different ways. Their reasons for traveling varied and they mostly derived from the belief that, in this country, their existential conditions would improve. They also think that they will have better opportunities to achieve material success and, therefore, obtain sufficient means to become wealthy.

But, from all the diverse motivations and aspirations inspired by the American Dream, as viewed by White and Hanson (2016), one pinpoints as fundamental: immigrants view the United States as the only country that could materialize the dream because of everything that this land has to offer (100). The belief is that the United States would offer them possibilities of ascending socially, possibilities that are denied in their countries of origin for many diverse complex reasons.

The stories of immigrants following the American Dream have nourished literary productions throughout history. Carpenter, (as quoted by Mogen, 1989), affirms that the “various” and “vague” perceptions of the American Dream have “influenced the plotting of . . . fiction and the imagining of poetry . . . our literature has accomplished a symbolic and experimental projection of it” (28). Specifically for Latino immigrants, the mythical assumptions circumscribed to the American Dream have captured identitarian issues and motifs in literary productions coming from diverse immigrant ethnicities. For the purpose of this research, a comparatively approach will be used to identify the contrasting historical struggles faced by Latin American immigrants, specifically Cuban-Americans and Mexican-Americans, and their descendants. The contrast implies diverse aesthetic and thematic insinuations in literary texts making distinctions between the two subaltern cultures. In this sense, Caminero-Santangelo (2007) argues that in spite of the insistence of labeling all Latin Americans under the “panethnic” “umbrella terms” as “Hispanics” and “Latinos,” “ethnic groups are self-conscious

populations; they see themselves as distinct” (Scherhorn’s quoted in Caminero-Santangelo, 2007) She resumes, quoting Guillermo Gomez-Peña, “There is not such a thing as ‘Latino art’ or ‘Hispanic art’ [but] hundreds of types of Latino-American-derived art in the United States. Each is aesthetically, socially and politically specific” (Caminero-Santangelo, 2007, 7). These distinctions are evidenced in history and they have influenced the ways in which subjects belonging to these subaltern cultures face their existential conditions in the United States.

Immigration, Mexican-Americans, and Chicano/as

The westward displacement of first wave of European immigrants settling in the United States gave birth to the Frontier and the American Dream myth. Mogen (1989) states that the Frontier story has had intrinsically ambivalent value for it represents the worst as well as the best of the American heritage, its meaning depends upon how “conquering” the West is portrayed: “as triumphant, tragic, comic, lyrical or absurd” (25). The Bureau of Documentation from the Office of Programs of International Information from the State Department of the United States (2005) reaffirms Mogen’s statements of ambivalence saying that, for more than a hundred years, specialists continue discussing the significance of the frontier: for some it build a more polished culture from that of Europe, more pragmatic and dynamic, individualistic and democratic whereas for others the frontier represents one of the most bloody and

brutal process in history characterized by the war against Mexico and the genocide against the Native American tribes and nature (126). However, positive value has also been associated with the myth. Frederick Jason Turner (quoted in Mogen, 1987) claims that:

The result is that to the frontier the American intellect owes its striking characteristics. The coarseness and strength combined with acuteness and inquisitiveness; that masterful grasp of material things, . . . that restless nervous energy; the dominant individualism working for good and for evil, and withal that buoyancy and exuberance which comes with freedom—these traits of the frontier, or traits called out elsewhere because of the existence of the frontier. (40)

Certainly, as a canonical literary theme, the frontier inspires writers who deliver stories containing values linked to “self-determination, idealism, strength, and democracy” (Mogen, 1987). But its ambivalent character cannot be denied whereas other texts convey the pain, the oppression, and the violence generated by the colonization of the West.

For Mexicans in the middle of the 19th Century, their physical northern frontier was immersed in war. Cherterton (2018) explains that when a stream of immigration of settlers run into Texas from the South-Western States of America, they learned that it originally was a province from Mexico, a peopled part of the Spanish province of Mexico (115). A great part of Texas and New Mexico was settled by

“well-to-do” Mexican and American landowners who had enslaved Indians and poor Mexicans to work mostly in the valley of upper Rio Grande (Davidson, 2015, 140). Because settled colonies from Texas, New Mexico, and California were far away from the Mexican capital, and because of the presence of misunderstandings as to where the western and northern frontiers expanded and limited, in March 1836, “the two frontiers -American and Mexican- clashed and erupted into war” (Davidson, 2015, 141). Davidson (2015) relates that several conflicts triggered the war,

General Antonio López de Santa Anna brought the army of the central government north to subdue the unruly province of Texas. By this time, over forty thousand Americans lived there, ten times the number of Mexicans. Many of these newcomers grew cotton and held slaves, whereas Mexico had outlawed slavery. Most of the American Texans were Protestant and preferred their religion to the customs of Catholic Mexico. Just as Santa Anna arrived, a group of American Texans declared their independence from Mexico. (141)

At the beginning of 1836 in El Alamo, the Mexican Army led by General Santa Anna was defeated in the called Batalla de San Jacinto and Texas claimed independence to proclaim the New Republic of Texas (Bureau, 2005, 134). In 1845, almost ten years later, President James K. Polk incorporated Texas into the Union. The conflict between Mexicans and Americans for the

establishment of the border intensified since Texas proclaimed that the frontier was marked in Rio Grande and Mexicans claimed it was further north in Rio Nueces. Meanwhile, many more Americans arrived occupying the Texan lands, validating their actions with the Destiny Manifesto which granted them the right to take possession of the territories (Bureau, 2005, 134). Polk ordered General Zachary Taylor to lead the U.S. troops all the way to the Rio Grande—land that both Texas and Mexico claimed (Davidson, 2015, 145). In 1846, with the support of Californian colonists, the U.S. Army with Taylor as its leader invaded Mexico securing the victory of army in Monterrey and Buena Vista. By 1847, after the Army disembarked in Veracruz following the way to Mexico City, the Mexican force surrendered and the United States imposed the legalization of the Guadalupe Hidalgo Treaty. In this Treaty, Mexico ceded the Southwest regions of the United States and California for fifteen million dollars. At the end of the war, the United States had expanded its territory to 1, 36 million of square meters (Bureau, 2005, 134).

The Guadalupe Hidalgo Treaty had many political and historical repercussions for Mexicans inhabiting the United States territory. According to what was established in the Treaty, the annexation of the Mexican territory gave Mexican residents the opportunity to decide whether they wanted to become U.S. citizens and remain within the newly U.S. territory or retain the title of Mexican citizens.³ Though Mexicans who decided to remain in the U.S. territories could enjoy some privileges granted by citizenship, their stay was surrounded by diverse cultural,

economic, and social issues. Américo Paredes (1995) affirmed that conflict has been a way of life along the border between Mexico and the United States (19) until today. Problems of identity in the cultures of the Border “sensitized [an] area where two cultures or two political systems came face to face” (Paredes, 1995, 20). For critic and activist Gloria Anzaldúa (1999), the invasion of the Anglos in the battle and the imposition of the Treaty was a violent one: “It left 100,000 Mexican citizens on this side, annexed by conquest along with the land” (29). She (1999) describes this process in her book *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, as ‘*El destierro*’ (The Lost Land) using Violeta Parra’s lines from the poem: “Entonces corre la sangre/no sabe el indio qué hacer,/le van a quitar su tierra, la tiene que defender,/el indio se cae muerto, y el afuerino de pie”. These lines assert the bloody and violent appropriation of the indigenous Mexican territories and the discriminatory concessions established by the Treaty. The lines depict the Indian as defenseless and vulnerable under the violent attack from the Anglos to dispossess the Indian population from their land. The Indian is killed while the Anglo colonizer stands straight. Albeit Anzaldúa’s (1999) main cause of activism focuses on the recognition of feminism and on the struggles of lesbian Chicanas as the “new mestizas,” her cause also advocates for the acknowledgement and vindication of the historical diminished identitarian representations of Mexican-Americans and Chicanos and Chicanas. Her struggle also basis on the ironic, racist, and xenophobic pressures historically enforced against her people. She

condemns the separatism her culture has endured on behalf of the Anglos and struggles for the creation of “a new consciousness” for Chicanos in general and for female Chicanas assimilating the indigenous inherited past as well as the acquired and imposed new cultural practices: “At the confluence of two or more genetic streams, with chromosomes constantly “crossing over,” this mixture of races, rather than resulting in the creation of an inferior subject, provides a “hybrid progeny, a mutable one, more malleable species with a rich gene pool” (Anzaldúa, 1999, 99).

Anzaldúa (1999) bets on the creation of a new “breed” and an “alien consciousness . . . in the making” (99). This new “breed” was thought as the creation of a new “progeny,” a hybrid border culture living in the borderlands. She aims to reconstruct ideas of culture and nationhood with the establishment of new values in politics, economy, religion, society, and art by restructuring experience from the marginal border. Her fight is against the treatment of Mexican-Americans as subalterns, as oppressed discriminated objects/Others whose heritage is Mexican and whose assimilation in the United States has always been problematic. Mexican-Americans have been considered aliens despite the fact that the land that most of them inhabit was confiscated by the Anglos. *Chicanas* and *Chicanos* are seen as “inferior” objects, stereotyped by Anglos as indigenous, uneducated delinquents, and criminals. Anzaldúa (1999) compares the Mexican border with an image of a “hemorrhaging” open wound that bleeds, “where the Third World grates against the First and bleeds” (25). Her poetry and other literary cre-

ations written by many authors have conveyed the ongoing repressive, limiting, and asymmetrical life conditions of Mexican-Americans living in the United States throughout history.

One of the most popular representative early texts that depicted the oppressive Mexican border was the Mexican *corrido*, part of the Mexican balladry (Pérez-Torres, 1995). As stated by Paredes (1995), cultural, economic, and physical conflicts have characterized life along the physical frontier between Mexico and the United States sheltering a culture later called “The culture of the border” (19). Inhabitants of this site have tried to preserve certain folkloric themes and patterns. This culture developed a peculiar border civilization: the result of the union of northern Mexican *ranchero* culture with the new technological improvements of the Anglo Americans (Paredes, 1995, 20). The “*braceros*” or migrant agricultural workers, who are part of this population, began to enter the United States from Mexico at the beginning of the 20th Century and established in California and Texas. Later, they penetrated into other parts of the country. They became a permanent source of labor surrounded by racial prejudices based on linguistic and cultural differences. The *braceros* have suffered from discriminatory attitudes which tend to increase with time (Paredes, 1995, 11). However, the culture clash gave birth to a distinctive purely Mexican-American folklore depicted in the *corrido* characterized by supporting a discourse of resistance in their lyrics (Paredes, 1995, 22).

This initial genre of the *corrido* mirrors the cruel dispossession and the resistant strives that Mexicans

gave to keep their land. In this respect, Paredes (1995) explains that the *corrido* often “begins with the cruel and unjust death of the hero’s brother at the hands of Anglo Americans” (14) and the “heroic exploits of one man who fights for his own rights or those of his people” (Pérez-Torres, 1995, 132). One of the most famous *corridos*, among many, is Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzalez’s “I Am Joaquín” which not only accounts for the effortless fight to “create a Chicano consciousness” from a historical perspective but also represents a quest for the *Chicano* roots and its unity (Pérez-Torres, 1995, 69). The ballad first declares the empowerment of the Indigenous Maya, the Aztec ancestry and the empire of the Mexican people. A strong tone enhances the proudness of the speaker’s Indian origins in the part named “MY OWN PEOPLE”: “I am Cuauhtémoc,/Proud and noble/. . . .King of an empire/. . . . I am the Maya prince/. . . . I am the sword and flame of Cortés the despot/And I am the eagle and serpent of the Aztec civilization . . .” (Augenbraum & Fernández, 1997, 266). These lines relate Mexicans to their royal Indian ancestry. The speaker assumes the voice of Cuauhtémoc, an Aztec ruler and emperor, and strengthens with its presence his power and dominion within his culture, “the leader of men,” “King,” and “prince.” Since the beginning of this section in the *corrido*, the persona establishes his nobility. With the use of allusions, he acknowledges, appropriates, and repositions his ancestry and indigenous homeland in a central position to somehow reconstitute the public memoir of his culture. And the image of the sword becomes the weapon with the power to defeat “Cortés the

despot.” Actually, the *corrido* decenters the violent Spaniard colonization recalling that the Indian is the owner stating that “THE GROUND WAS MINE” with a critical breathtaking tone. The mythic allusion to the coat of arms, “the eagle and serpent” refers to the foundations and the beginnings of his civilization and to “the reclamation of history . . . a propulsion into an empowered and empowering future” (Pérez-Torres, 1995, 69).

The *corrido* inquires on the political violence Mexicans have undergone in the borders throughout history and on the need to comply with the restitution through the establishment of a public memory-enduring time. This restitution accomplishes the political and social function of representing the bloody violent facts in the songs. The objective of restitution is to represent the marks of violence and the oppression that is still registered in people’s cells (García, 2012, 13), in order to acknowledge one’s own actual subjectivity and differentiate it from the Other subaltern and the marginalized ones. It is about recalling and rejecting violence with a caring and supportive attitude. Pérez-Torres (1995) confirms the marks of violence in the poem when he states that the poem is a self-assertion in which “Joaquín” becomes an entity characterized by a history of pain, struggle, and ultimately triumph (69): “I am Joaquín/Lost in a world of confusion/Caught up in the whirl of a gringo society,/. . . Confused by rules, scorned by attitudes,/Suppressed by manipulation,” (Augenbraum & Fernández, 1997, 266). Terms as “confusion,” “manipulation,” “suppressed,” and “struggle” denote the conflictive existence at the borders which represents the

tensions of living “with one foot in this world and one foot in that” (Cisneros, 1992). This conflict later ends in destruction: “Destroyed by modern society/My fathers have lost the economic battle and won/ The struggle of survival” . . . (Augenbraum & Fernández, 1999, 266).

In the opinion of Anzaldúa (1995), the border constitutes a space of insecurity, of mental and emotional perplexity, indecisiveness, and struggle—a space of pain. The border, the imagined and physical division between Mexicans and Anglos becomes a marginalizing oppressive geopolitical site of struggle. This idea is remarked later in the *corrido* when the speaker victimizes himself because of the Anglo American invasion saying that “despite the hunger or/to exist in the grasp/of American neurosis./sterilization of the soul . . . Yes,/I have come a long way to nowhere,/ unwillingly dragged by that monstrous, technical, industrial giant called Progress/ and Anglo success . . .” After the Anglo’s occupation of the Mexican territories, the speaker “shed[s] tears of sorrow” and “sow[s] seeds of hate” (Augenbraum & Fernández, 1999, 266). The indigenous Mexican-American dehumanized subjectivity is construed against a dominant powerful Anglo Other historically marked by discrimination and marginalization.

The speaker in the *corrido* later refers to the unfortunate repercussions caused by the Treaty of Hidalgo and the tyrannical and abusive treatment that the Chicano people have suffered with irony. This tone accurately censures the Treaty and its treasonous plot that ended with their land stolen. The image of the “rape” at the end

provides a perceptual notion of the violence inflicted to dispossess the Mexicans: “I have made the Anglo rich,/ yet Equality is but a word-/Fiery tequila explosions/The smell of chile verde . . .” These images of the Mexican culinary traditions of the “tequila,” the “chile verde,” and the phenotypical features such as the “soft brown eyes,” together with the “Aztec prince,” represent the Chicano identity as claims for a historical and cultural acknowledgment, restitution, and appropriation of the Chicano subjectivity dispossessed by oppression. This is a claim for the recognition of the identitarian position they have had in the United States. It is a strong representation of, “La raza!/ Mejicano!/Español!/Latino!/Chicano! . . .” (Augenbraum & Fernández, 1999, 266). Also, the speaker refers to the Chicano idea of endurance and upsurge, documented in the poem with its intentions of preserving identity. For the speaker, the materialization of their preservation could take place presumably in the mythical Mexican land of Aztlán, “I am Aztec prince and Christian Christ/I SHALL ENDURE/I SHALL ENDURE (Augenbraum & Fernández, 1999, 266). However, Pérez-Torres (1995) minimizes the agency and change declared in “I am Joaquín” stating that it ironically leads to the very dissolution of the cultural values and ties celebrated in the poem as the locus of Chicano resistance and self-identity (77) in the United States. In spite of these arguments, still, the struggle against discrimination has been coined by the Chicano movement. Caminero-Santangelo (2007) describes this movement as one “which largely strove to construct and celebrate an ethnic identity based on *mestizaje*,

hybridity, and the recovery of an indigenous past” (1). Mexican-Americans who live in the United States continue struggling. In spite of the continuous political debate surrounding identitarian acknowledgment and discrimination, the Chicanos have demonstrated a “growing unrest among the Mexican-American population” (Mendoza, 2000). The Chicano movement with its scholarship and literacy has made the conflictive Mexican-American border culture a case of study and, thus, its cultural representation tends to be revitalized (Calderón, 2015). However, for Mexicans as well as for many other Latin populations, the American Dream continues manifesting itself among migrants attesting to the pursuit of higher standards of living and a much brighter future (White and Hanson, 2016, 100) following the original idealistic motivations and attitudes historically attributed to the dream.

Gloria Anzaldúa has also assertively conveyed the alienation and marginalization suffered by Chicanos at the marginal border. In her book, *Borderlands/La frontera* (1999), she transmits the idea of living as an alienated other Chicana in the Anglo culture problematic. Ideologically, she identifies herself with a “*mestiza*” in the border culture (Anzaldúa, 1999, 25). Using an allegorical allusion to menstruation, Anzaldúa connotes the pain and bleeding from the “*herida abierta*” to her condition of being doubly colonized as Mexican and as a Chicana woman. This reference alludes to the historical marks of violence that prevail in the Chicano’s psychic mind frames. A scar that continuously bleeds and hemorrhages is associated with disillusionment, oppression, and violence.

Moreover, Anzaldúa (1999) defines the borderland as a “vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary . . . [where] The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. *Los atravesados* live here” (25). And in spite of the fact that the land she refers to belonged to the Mexicans in the past and it was “stolen” with the Guadalupe Treaty, Anzaldúa (1999) remarks that the “gringos in the U.S. Southwest consider the inhabitants of the borderlands trash, “transgressors, aliens -whether they possess documents or not, whether they are Chicanos, Indians or Blacks” (25). These descriptions allude to the stereotypes that the Anglos have given to Chicanos as criminals, drug dealers, and outsiders. According to Anzaldúa (1999), the Chicanos are a “virus” for the Anglos. She reaffirms these ideas by warning border crossers: “do not enter, trespassers will be raped, maimed, strangled, gassed, shot” (Anzaldúa, 1999, 25) denoting the deprived, violent and oppressing life conditions expecting those who attempt to come from Mexico and from Latin America. She warns immigrants, who follow the illusion of the American Dream and try to reach the United States, to stop because what awaits them is a system of oppression that will either nullify or exclude them. Anzaldúa (1999) refers to this hegemonic system mentioning that the gringos, “locked into the fiction of white superiority, seized complete political power, stripping Indians and Mexicans of their land while their feet were still rooted in it” (29).

In addition, Gloria Anzaldúa (1999) refers to the oppression suffered as a consequence of the Treaty of Hidalgo: “Con el destierro y el exilio fuimos

desuñados, destroncados, destripados” (29) With these remarks, she claims that Mexicans not only were stolen their land but also once banished from their territories, confronting the physical and figurative pain of a violent unrooting. One can imagine the fractures, the suffering, and wounds of figuratively having your body ripped and sliced in pieces without foreseeing alignment, hope and public restitution. For the immigrants attempting to follow the American Dream, Anzaldúa (1999) warns that for many Chicanos del “*otro lado*,” (in Mexico) the choice is better to stay there and stare or move north and live; “Dicen que cada mexicano siempre sueña de la conquista del país poderoso del norte, en cada Chicano y mexicano vive el mito del tesoro territorial perdido” (32). These Mexican dreams have constituted and established a “tradition of immigration” (Anzaldúa, 1999, 33) to the point that still now Mexicans and people from other Latin American countries attempt to cross the U.S. border illegally under very precarious conditions.

Many of these immigrants following the American Dream have faced ambivalent migratory policies. Caminero-Santangelo (2016) in her book *Documenting the Undocumented* manifests that Anzaldúa’s book *Borderlands* almost coincided with the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) in the United States which granted permission to employers to hire undocumented immigrants and “amnesty” to other three million immigrants already present in the United States (2). To these concessions, Anzaldúa denounced that the immigrants were not even paid minimum wages and lacked “adequate housing or sanitary

conditions” (quoted in Caminero-Santangelo, 2016, 2). Thus, under these conditions, it seems that the “*herida abierta*” still bleeds now with abuse and exploitation, if not with death: “. . . increasingly, fiction and nonfiction written on this side of the U.S.-Mexico border detailed a litany of deaths and disappearances of those who did, in fact, try to cross” (Caminero-Santangelo, 2016, 2). The following section will examine Anzaldúa’s poem “La encrucijada,” her proposals on *Borderlands* and immigration.

Immigration and Anzaldúa’s “La encrucijada”

In the chapter “La conciencia de la mestiza,” “Towards a New Consciousness,” Anzaldúa (1999) synthesizes her proposal of the emergence of a new policy based on race. Based on the José Vasconcelos, a Mexican philosopher who envisaged “*una raza mestiza*” (99) opposite to the theory of the Aryan racial purity, Anzaldúa (1999) proposes the creation of a new Chicano lineage, a new, a richer breed of people: the union and mixtures of diverse genes “crossing over” which eventually result in “malleable” new “hybrid” successors (99). She adds the term “cross-pollination” to present a new consciousness of *mestizaje* and identity contemplating racial, ideological, cultural, and biological factors (99) among Chicanos with a rather more positive speculation. Hybridity, in this context, emerges in the form of a new hyphenated culture for Mexican-Americans that incorporates ancestry and some cultural values of the Anglo culture. Historically, though, this hyphenated culture, as

mentioned, has been undermined and even dismissed with xenophobic violence.

With the creation of a “new breed” and a “hybrid progeny,” Anzaldúa (1999) encourages Chicanos to embrace a new fight, an “inner war” (100). She contemplates this idea by calling up for tolerance making imaginary borders more flexible. Anzaldúa proposes the opening or flexibility of the figurative fixed borders that have divided Mexicans and Anglos. These opening would provide the common grounds for people to relate articulating new “constellations of social identities” (*Borderlands*, 2000, 1) giving space to the emergence of new subjectivities. Vietnamese theorist, producer, and critic Trinh T. Minh-Ha (1992) refers to borders as sites of negotiation, as spaces used to construct identities acknowledging and negotiating differences to give space to new subjectivities. Minh-Ha recalls the need of “arbitrariness” and instability (123) of borders, as a previous condition needed to promote interrelation. These notions of borders are related to Anzaldúa’s (1999) proposal of openness in concepts and ideas regarding identity and subjectivity: “The borders and walls that are supposed to keep the undesirable ideas out are entrenched habits and patterns of behavior, these habits and patterns are the enemy within. Rigidity means death. Only by remaining flexible is she [the mestiza] able to stretch the psyche horizontally and vertically (101). As viewed by Anzaldúa (1999), the creation of a new consciousness results from undergoing the course of a painful process of becoming anew under marginal conditions. With a positive tone, the poem “La encrucijada” currently illustrates

the process of crossbreeding with a mixture of images using words in English and Spanish that emphasize the difference between two distinctive referential cultural codes. These images depict the combination of identitarian features among Indians, Mexicans, and Chicanos. In terms of aesthetics, the poem assertively accounts for imagery that forges the Chicano identity along history making reference to their cultural traditions. The first line, "We are the porous rock in the stone metate/Squatting on the ground," alludes to the history of Chicanas by figuratively defining them as a "rock" on a "stone metate." The images of the "rock," the "metate," and the "molcajete" connote the hard strength of the Chicano people who have sweat (the porous rock) while struggling to keep their ancestral legacy: their indigenous roots from the Aztecs and Mayas. Actually, the images of "maíz," "agua," and "harina" grinded over the "sizziling" hot pan make a direct reference to the tortilla, a type of food that has been historically associated with the Mexican Indians: "We are the rolling pin, el maíz y agua/La masa harina. Somos el amasijo. Somos lo molido en el metate./We are the comal sizziling hot,/The hot tortilla, the hungry mouth . . ." (Anzaldúa, 1999, 104).

Notwithstanding, the imagery related to the grinding process denotes the agonic sensory experience of the pain that Chicanos have undergone in their marginal positions at the border. They have been reduced to smashes and placed and burned over the "comal" to the point that they have endured and become anew overbearing pain and suffering. In this way, with the use of irony, Anzaldúa (1999) reprehends the

fact that in spite of owning a rich culinary Indian history, the Chicanos currently constitute a group tortured by hunger. They are the "hungry mouth," depicting the poverty and shortcomings they have been put into by the Anglos. The images that identify Chicanos with popular Mexican dishes continue providing sensorial references to the tensions and struggles that characterize their existential condition while they negotiate their identity at the marginal border:

We are the grinding motion,
The mixed potion, somos el molcajete.
We are the pestle, the comino, ajo, pimienta,
We are the chile Colorado,
The green shoot that cracks the rock
We will abide. (Anzaldúa, 1999, 104)

Like in the images in the *corrido* "I am Joaquín," food imagery relates identitarian features to the Chicano's Indian roots. The speaker perceives the combination of species as a "mixed potion" in which hybridity has taken place. The use of the image "potion" also makes reference to the legacy of Chicano's Indian beliefs and practices of healing and magic and, the same time, concerns to the almost magical endurance and prevalence of their culture in history. At the end of the poem, imagery connotes the "tasty," "flavored" and diverse qualities Anzaldúa (1999) attributes to Chicanos as a "hybrid progeny." Though grinded, minced, and reduced, they embody the culinary 'ingredients' that metaphorically keep their collectivity 'savory' and together, in spite of their harsh history, they will sprout cracking "the rock" and "abide" (Anzaldúa, 1999, 104).

The American Dream for Anzaldúa becomes more a nightmare than a dream. The depiction of the Chicano subjectivity in the border is marginal and subaltern. They have been “grinded” and “smashed” painfully trying to survive and reinvent themselves in the margins. Opposite to the ideals of achieving success and the fantasy of attaining a wealthy perfect life in the bounty land of opportunities, Mexican immigrants who make it to the United States “find themselves in the midst of 150 years of racism in Chicano barrios” (Anzaldúa, 1999, 34). Though Anzaldúa acknowledges that Mexicans “have a tradition of migration, a tradition of long walks” (Anzaldúa, 1999, 33). She directly refers to the dream stating: “For many mejicanos del otro lado, the choice is to stay in Mexico and starve or move north and live. Dicen que cada mejicano siempre sueña con la conquista en los brazos de cuatro gringas rubias, la conquista del país poderoso del norte, los Estados Unidos” (32). And the dream prevails. Border crossers from Mexico and other Latin American countries dream of individual progress, economic success and stability in the bounty and prosperous land of the United States. The number of immigrants following the American Dream increases with time. These immigrants still escape from their countries of origin running away from the diverse forms of violence suffered and from socio-economic harsh conditions such as poverty, inequity, varied types of discrimination, and insecurity. The United States has responded with the intensification of efforts to stop immigrants and deport them back to their countries. But despite these actions, the American Dream grows among

Latinos which, moved by hope, believe in a new beginning and a better future. Once having described the perceptions of the American Dream for Mexican-Americans in the course of history, I will refer to the historical process of immigration and its relation to the Dream in the case of Cuban-Americans. In order to comply with the objectives of this research project and establish a comparative analysis between Cuban-Americans and Mexican-Americans as hyphenated cultures living in the United States, I will later examine their representation in literary texts. The following section explores the historical process of immigration of Cubans with the objective of later depicting its representation in Gustavo Pérez-Firmat’s (1994) poem “Bilingual Blues.”

Life in the Hyphen, Cuban-Americans and the American Dream

A completely different historical scenario chronicles the process of immigration from Cuba to the United States. Prior to the 20th Century, Cubans had already received a special treatment as refugees that, unlike the Mexicans, made their lives more substantially privileged. As proposed by theorist and writer Gustavo Pérez-Firmat (1994), when Cubans entered the United States, they did not fight or “collide” as the Mexicans did with the Anglos. On the contrary, Cubans lived in cooperation or “collusion” (Pérez-Firmat, 1994) with them. Though both Mexicans and Cubans experienced the tensions and insecurities lived in the borders, the Mexican-Americans were the ones who painfully ‘bled’ the

wounds of being considered outsiders and intruders in their once owned land. On the other hand, according to Pérez-Firmat (1994) Cuban-Americans have coalesced and somehow overcome the anxieties of displacement to the point of identifying themselves as “cubanglos” (7). This identitarian label illustrates the ventures of complying cultural exchange blurring the imaginary border that separates both cultures. As said by Pérez-Firmat (1994) the Cuban-American border culture has become a hybrid reality to the point that they are unable to determine where the “Cuban ends and the Anglo begins” (7). While Mexican-Americans underwent a struggling process of defiance and pain when inhabiting the United States, the Cuban-Americans enjoyed the cultural exchange between Anglos and Cubans.

Thus, the presence of the myth of the American Dream in literary representations is ambivalent and different for both cultures. For Mexican-Americans, the dream has resulted in the depictions of different forms of oppression, discrimination, and marginalization at the border. In this sense, Samuel (2012) states that the dream has envisioned them as Others whom the Anglos want to dismiss and make invisible. The expectations of individual and social upward mobility and the possibilities of betterment for Mexican immigrants following the dreams have been obscured by ambiguous political actions such as the IRCA (Caminero-Santangelo, 2016, 2) aforementioned. Immigrants have suffered exploitation and pain in the United States. Mexican-American immigrants live under the Anglo’s never-ending transgressions. For Cubans, the story was

different. To begin with, the motivations that encouraged Cuban migrants to leave their homelands and head to the United States are not outstandingly clear. However, some political and economic contextual reasons link the first flows of immigration to the American Dream before the Cuban Revolution in 1959. Many Cubans had already sought in America opportunities to achieve material success, and thus, to obtain enough resources to become prosperous and wealthy. Unlike the Mexicans, who were expelled from their territories once the Anglos bought their lands, Cubans reached the United States in a different context.

The Cuban migration processes go back to the early 19th Century. Kenya C. Dworkin y Méndez (2006) affirms that there were small Cuban communities in the United States at that time in cities such as New York, New Orleans, Philadelphia, and Charleston. She asserts that the settlements of the first large groups of Cubans occurred after 1868 in Key West and Tampa (Dworkin, 2006). These populations of immigrants translocated cultural and ideological Cuban traditions and created the early concepts of “Cuba libre” or “Free Cuba” before 1902 in enclaves and exiled communities in the United States. From thereon, this community continued to manifest Cuban culture (Dworkin, 2006). Portes and Robert (1985) state that Cuban immigration to the United States can be divided into five main stages; the first took place, from January 1959 to October 1962, when the dictator Fulgencio Batista and his supporters, followed by an increasing number of landowners, industrialists, and managers of expropriated U.S. enterprises,

arrived in the United States. As the Cuban communist revolution fueled the transformation of the Cuban class structure, these groups were joined by professionals and smaller merchants. These immigrants received the status of exiles from the communist government. Portes and Robert (1985) affirm that approximately 215,000 Cubans came in this period. During the political conflict between the United States and Cuba, and without possibilities of leaving the island, the number of immigrant refugees diminished. Only through the use of clandestine means or restricted flights to third countries, such as Mexico, Cubans could attempt to migrate from the island. In September 1965, however, the Cuban government permitted the departure of 5000 people through the fishing port of

Camarioca. These immigrants were mainly relatives of exiles living in the United States. Three months later, the governments of Cuba and the United States signed a "memorandum of understanding" that launched an airlift from Varadero Beach in Cuba to Miami with 340,000 new refugees belonging to the lower-middle and urban working classes. In April 1973, the Cuban government unilaterally gave an end to migration and escapes. With these policies, emigration decreased rapidly (Portes and Robert, 1985).

Historically, the main motivation to leave Cuba was the imposition of the political Communist regime before and after the Cuban Revolution when Fidel Castro took governmental control. Ileana Sorolla Fernández (2013), researcher from the Center of International Studies on Migrations, affirms that the motivations for Cuban migrations to leave the country

were generally economic, political or because of exile. But mostly all of these motivations were propelled by the Cuban socio-economic situation, violence, and political repression. Political and economic repression encouraged migration in significant proportions. In this same sense, White, J. K., and Hanson, S. L. (2016) remark that "Cuban refugees fled to the United States to escape from the systematic and arbitrary intrusions into their private lives and the massive incarcerations of dissidents once their nation turned communist" (107). The situation in Cuba was framed by what Edel Fresneda and Raúl Delgado (2013) called a "*subdesarrollo productivo socialista*," in which the relationships derived from a change in the tenure of collective and private property to one that did not provide changes that would increase productivity. Quoting several critics, Fresneda and Delgado (2013) state that:

el derrotero del desarrollo en la isla ha estado marcado por los límites y las contradicciones que derivan del *subdesarrollo productivo*, los cuales se hacen más palpables a raíz del desmantelamiento de la Unión Soviética y la consecuente reinserción de Cuba al sistema capitalista mundial. Se generan en este contexto relaciones de *intercambio desigual* (Bernstein, 1982) . . . [que limitan o anulan] . . . los niveles de productividad (Furtado, 1984). Y es precisamente esta limitante endógena la que explica la *inestabilidad* en torno a la sustentabilidad del desarrollo humano. (3)

They believed that the low levels of productive human development,

inequality, and economic instability explain the structural conditions that shaped and encouraged the flow of Cuban migration (5).

Unlike the case of Mexican-Americans, Cuban migration towards the United States was politically privileged. Ted Henken (2005) sustains that, "No other U.S. refugee resettlement program has been more generous and accommodating than the Cuban Refugee Program (CRP) set up for the "Golden exiles" and later applied to continuing waves of Cubans" (395). Cuban-American immigration was favored by the political circumstances derived from the Cold War between the United States and Russia. The United States struggled to inhibit the imposition of a communist regime in the island and this privileged the creation of policies for Cubans to migrate to the United States. Henken (2005) emphasizes these privileges sustaining that American generosity to Cubans went beyond simple humanitarianism. The United States had underlying ideological motivations and foreign policy goals during the Cold War. First was the strategic goal of overthrowing the new, Communist government. At this time, President John Kennedy could easily justify special treatment for Cubans (396) providing humanitarian assistance in order to favor the United States' interests in Cuba. Quoting Pedraza-Baily (1982), Castro Marin, and Miyar Bolio (1988), Henken (2005) explains:

Four different resettlement agencies were active in assisting the first group to find housing and jobs in Miami or elsewhere. The U.S. government also funded an extensive

bilingual education program. Job retraining services were created, a college loan program organized, and unprecedented exceptions made to residency and citizenship laws to enable Cuban success and integration, though many thought it would be a short-lived exile. (395)

In addition, Maria Cristina García (quoted by Caminero-Santangelo, 2007), documents that Cuban exiles in Florida received more assistance from governmental agencies than non-Cuban U.S. citizens (12).

Considering all these circumstances, Gustavo Pérez-Firmat (1994) believes that since Cubans established in the United States, their role has been positively notable in culture and that Cuban-Americans are contributing to the "inexorable-Latinization of the United States" (1) especially in artistic productions. After the Cuban Revolution, generations of Cuban-Americans have benefitted from the concessions provided in this country and have assimilated the Anglo culture. These generations of Cubans have been classified based on their origin and time of stay in the country. Pérez-Firmat (1994) refers to the immigrants who were born in Cuba and to the Cuban-Americans who were born in the United States from Cuban parents: "Born in Cuba but made in the U.S.A." (4). Quoting Ruben Rumbaut, Pérez-Firmat (1994) describes the types of Cuban-Americans in the following way:

Children who were born abroad but are being educated and come of age in the United

States form what may be called the “1.5” generation. These refugee routes must cope with two crisis-producing and identity-defining transitions: 1- Adolescence and the task of managing the transition from childhood to adulthood and 2- Acculturation and the task of managing the transition from one sociocultural environment to another. (4)

As seen, the Mexican-American and Cuban-American experiences on immigration and life in the borders differ greatly: the first one is a struggle of mental and emotional perplexity (Anzaldúa, 1999, 25) and pain, and the latter, one of privileged assimilation.

Notwithstanding, still both cultures have confronted the inherent anxieties of living in hybrid biconceptual realities in the border. In this respect, Pérez-Firmat (1994) explains that the border experience has been a “marginal” one for the 1.5 generation of Cuban-Americans in the sense that they delve between both, the old and the new worlds, and are fully part of neither of them. Quoting Fernando Ortiz, Pérez-Firmat (1994) refers to acculturation as a process to introduce and acquire moral, normative, and value concepts to a greater, or one may say, recipient culture. While for Ortiz (1983) this has been a denigrating imposed political act, for Pérez-Firmat (1994) acculturation becomes a means to stress the acquisition of culture and to combine what he calls acts of “tradition” and “translation” which have shaped the Cuban-American culture in the United States. Though he believes that the “1.5” generation is marginal

“to both its native and its adopted culture,” he finds this generation unique for it can “circulate within and through both, the old and new cultures, . . . [it is] tradition-bound but translation-bent” (4-5). In addition, instead of acculturation or transculturation, he proposes “biculturation” (explained later in this research) as a type of blending where subjects are in contact with both cultures (6). Using a very positive tone, Pérez-Firmat (1994) declares that biculturation implies equilibrium, “however tense and precarious between the two contributing cultures” using the metaphor of a seesaw where one culture tilts one way, then the other, another way (6).

Theorizing the Hyphen and Hyphenated Cultures

The theory of the hyphen proposes the study of subjectivities living in the borders and frontiers between a dominant and a foreign culture. A hyphenated identity implies a dual cultural identity integrated by the influence of two different ethnicities separated by a hyphen. This mark establishes the imaginary space and political determination which characterize both cultures. The hyphen defines the geopolitical space where subject/object relations happen and it also structures these types of relations. The hyphen constitutes a dividing line that delimits an imaginary and metaphorical frontier that joins or separates, depending on perspective, two codes and two cultures. On one side of the hyphen, subjects attempt to preserve an ethnic, national, or racial identity and, on the other side, they can live with, adopt,

and assimilate the other. The hyphen comes to represent spaces for negotiating and constructing identity within different hybrid cultural frames.

Heba M. Sharobeem (2015) defines the hyphen as a referent that allows the displacement of subjects between two cultures. In this process, subjects confront diverse levels of tension and many types of conflicts. Some of them assimilate and adopt a new culture, generally the dominant one, and others fail in this process while trying to establish equilibrium in the borders. Emily Hicks (1987) examines hyphenated identities situating them in the context of the frontier or border subjectivities (5). The border establishes the limits and differences among cultures considering the codes that represent each culture: the languages and bicultural realities of the border-crossers (Hicks, 1987, 3). She refers to the border as “interference, interaction or limits between cultures.” Using the case of the Mexican border, more specifically, Rafael Pérez-Torres (1995) suggests that the frontier or border becomes an imaginary linguistic symbolic bridge where Chicanos have tried to build their identity departing from the rupture and absence of what it means to live in between two cultural spaces. Similar to Anzaldúa’s metaphor of the bleeding wound, for Pérez-Torres (1995), this dividing line separates, breaks, and marginalizes. He states that: “This identity resides on bridges between Mexican and American, between Spanish and English, First World and Third World, insider (dominators) and outsider,” (others) (23).

Hyphenated identities reside within historical, political, social, economic, and cultural contexts that integrate

bicultural, hybrid, and mixed identities. Gustavo Pérez-Firmat (1994) proposes a series of metaphors to define the hyphen. He begins by describing the process of the “blending of cultures.” He mentions the terms “acculturation” in which the acquisition of culture is stressed and “transculturation” where the passage from one culture to another takes place (5). From these notions, as aforementioned, he proposes a third one which he calls “biculturation” to designate the type of blending that is specific. . . [it] designates not only a contact of cultures . . . it describes a situation where the two cultures achieve a balance that makes . . . it difficult to determine which is the dominant and which is the subordinated culture” (6). In the case of Cuban-Americans, Pérez-Firmat (1994) remarks that the hyphen provides a sense of equilibrium stating that the Cuban-American cultural experience constitutes a balancing act for “the one and a half generations”. With the comparison of the hyphen to a seesaw in which each of the two cultures tilts one way and another, he adds that “the board then comes to rest on one side [b]ut in the meantime it stays in the air, uneasily balancing one weight against the other” (6).

Contrary to the Mexican-American case, Pérez-Firmat (1994) provides Cuban-Americans a horizontal structure of power in the borders where, in spite of the tensions, both cultures find balanced positions of power. He remarks this idea by criticizing the models of hyphenated cultures that tend to be “oppositional” where “one culture, say American, vanquishes another . . . but the oppositional model, accurate as it may be in other situations, does

not do justice to the balance of power in Cuban-America” (6). He continues saying that “I like to think of Cuban-American culture as “appositional” rather than “oppositional,” for the relation between the two terms is defined more by contiguity than conflict” (6). The description of the Cuban-American hyphenated culture becomes more a space of interaction between two overlapping codes from one culture to another where differences are undermined and bonds are heightened. In his view, the relationship between the two cultures in the imaginary hyphen supposes a balanced negotiation of the bicultural codes that regulate the collective identity of each to the point that it is hard to determine which culture dominates and which one is controlled.

Pérez-Firmat (1994) also compares Cuba to a hyphen by saying that “Cuba itself looks like a hyphen on the way to becoming a question mark” (16). He adds that Cubans have always been hyphenated Americans since Cuba is a country of immigrants. Quoting Fernando Ortiz, Pérez-Firmat (1994) points out that Cuba is figuratively a land of migratory birds. The country has had a strategic location for the entrance to the Americas. Like the United States, Cuba is a country of immigrants (15). He even inscribed the hyphen a connotation of addition, Cuban+American, and not one of subtraction (16). He insists on living in “translation” within the process of linguistic and cultural displacement from “tradition” (3). He compares having two cultures with the choice of using Spanish or English in the United States, insinuating that the choice itself comes with the option that creates the conditions for distinctive cultural achievement (7). The Cu-

ban-American living experience in the hyphen has been represented in literary texts with a mixture of tones and poetic suggestions.

Several literary texts have depicted Pérez-Firmat’s (1994) enthusiastic idea of “biculturation” and “translation.” One instance is Carolina Hospital’s (2004) poem “Sorting Miami” where the speaker describes his/her perceptions of Cuban life experiences in Miami. Pérez-Firmat’s (2012) ideas of “tradition” and “translation” converge in this poem to shape the Cuban-American subjectivity in this city of the United States. The images from a street corner where tropical vegetables and fruit are sold in Miami convey an illustration of the same event in Cuba: “Tomatoes, limes, onions” . . . “Crates of papayas and avocados” (Hospital, 2004, 14) depicting in this way an example of Cuban “tradition.” But the notion of “translation” is illustrated when the vendor establishes his little business in Miami. This displacement movement insinuates the adaptation of old traditional experiences from Cuba placed now in the United States, an example of cultural exchange and of biculturation: “. . . surround this old vendor still smiling/after 11 years on the same street corner/ . . . A bronco pulls up/to buy its share of the tropics” (Hospital, 2004). The little business on the street corner is irrupted by a “bronco,” a modern American sport vehicle. The appearance of this car exemplifies “translation” for the probabilities of seeing a “bronco” in Cuba are scarce. And the reasons why this type of car could not be found in La Habana insinuate the distinction between two different economic systems: The American where there is abundance of

types of vehicles and the Cuban where the exportation of cars diminished greatly during the Revolution. Hospital (2004) ends the poem questioning how she will “. . . be able/ to step into this mirror of a city/and return home in one piece” conveying the anxieties and “emotional perplexity” (Anzaldúa, 1999, 25) of inhabiting cultural borders, being stranded between two cultures and the nostalgia that exile involves. These sentimental, emotional and mental states, though, do not refer to acts of discrimination or oppression as it is the case of Mexican-Americans.

Pérez-Firmat, (1994) the poet, also illustrates his own notions of “tradition,” “translation,” and “biculturation” in his poem “Bilingual Blues.” The title sets the tone of the poem: the “blues” which are an evolved version of the Spirituals, a type of sad music sang by African-Americans plantation workers in the deep South during slavery times. The first lines of the poem begin comparing the speaker to the Cuban dish of the “*ajiaco*”: “Soy un ajiaco de contradicciones”/I have mixed feelings about everything” (55). Also present in Anzaldúa’s poem “La encrucijada,” the contradictions defining the existential condition of the speaker firstly refer to the uneasiness of inhabiting borders, this “place of insecurity, indecisiveness, and struggle” (Anzaldúa, 1995, 25) where the cultural exchange takes place. Josianne Mamo (2014) points out that the craftsmanship involved in the creative process of writing in two languages is intricate and complicated (4). Pérez-Firmat (quoted in Montage, 2011) reaffirms that switching codes in writing becomes a “lament” and “celebration,” that “words fail him in both languages.” For him, the contradictory

feelings of holding on to Cuban traditions as “a portable piece of [one’s] homeland” Montage (2011) and the adoption of getting new ones in a new language are reflected in this linguistic process. He compares this process to adopting “a new soul” and he further admits that no person can live with two souls (4). In this sense, Rolando Pérez (2008) states that for Pérez-Firmat in “Bilingual Blues” code-switching from Spanish to English becomes destructive, an ambivalence involving social deterioration that will never disappear. The representation of language barriers denotes a curse but also a blessing implying that there is no bilingualism without pain because the relation of language is not always symmetrical (Pérez, 2008).

While code-switching becomes a burden in Anzaldúa’s and Pérez-Firmat’s poems, the connotation of the contradictions and struggles suffered at the borders is not the same. The image of the “*ajiaco*” and the contradictions in “Bilingual Blues” remark the idea of hybridity and blending clearly attached to the process of switching language codes. In Anzaldúa’s “La encrucijada” the struggle is against the oppression lived by Chicanos. The “*ajiaco*” in “Bilingual Blues” is a dish that combines many ingredients. It includes a diversity of vegetables, tubers, and different types of meats that are seasoned and cooked together. In the process of cooking, all of these ingredients harmonically overlap to make a traditional exotic Cuban meal. The cooking of the “*ajiaco*” metaphorically constitutes the making of a “collusion” of identitarian characteristics between Cubans and Americans. “Collusion” is a term that the speaker uses

to describe the experience of Cubans who have lived in the United States. He affirms that: "Over the last decades, the United States, Cuba and America have been on a collusion course. The best products of this collaboration display an intricate equilibrium between the claims of each culture" (Pérez-Firmat, 1994, 6). Cubans and Americans in this context conspire, collaborate, and complot among themselves in harmony. The opposite happens in the case of the depiction of Mexican-Americans in "La encrucijada" where the ingredients (figuratively the Chicanos and their indigenous origins) used in the "amasijo": "el maíz y agua/ La masa harina" are smashed in the "metate" to become a "tortilla" on the "comal sizzling hot," suggesting that in this process of cooking the ingredients are "destripados" to raise anew. The cooking of the tortilla involves grounding and burning procedures; these actions denote texture imagery symbolically connoting pain only to result in more pain: "the hungry mouth." These images represent the Chicanos being "maimed" and "strangled" colliding with the Anglos. But the poem also suggests that they will preserve against all odds based on the strength of their indigenous roots "designed for preservation under a variety of conditions": "we are the chile Colorado/the green shoot that cracks the rocks/we will abide" (Anzaldúa, 1999, 103).

In "Bilingual Blues" (Pérez-Firmat, 1994), the persona reaffirms the anxieties of code-switching comparing them with the image of being "un puré de impurezas." In this case, Pérez-Firmat (1994) refers to the "blessing burden" (2011) of speaking two languages and not being able to root to

one of them completely. He makes reference to hybridity: his Cuban roots and traditions are now entangled and "translated" in America. The persona recognizes the reality of the creation of a new hybrid identity: a "puré de impurezas" represents more the misunderstandings caused by language barriers to the uncertainties and impossibilities to communicate right in both languages, "[the] conflicting, contradictory relationship -one which cannot end in the eradication of either language," (Pérez-Torres, 2019) rather than to the suffering for the assimilation in a new culture, which is the case of Mexican-Americans. Furthermore, the emotional state of the "vexed, hexed, complexed/ hyphenated, oxygenated" speaker, who is "illegally alienated/psycho soy, cantando voy," mirrors the intense conflict of language and identity in his mind frame related to the same linguistic barriers when writing. Yet, alien and "vexed," the speaker freely breaths and sings celebrating assimilation within the complexity of his existential linguistic condition in the border. "La encrucijada," on the other hand, minds more on the "alien conscious in the making" of a new "progeny," the "new breed" than on language problems. The "making" refers to the process of becoming from the oppressive margins: "lavando y remojando el maíz en agua de cal, depojando el pellejo. Moliendo, mixteando, amasando, hacienda tortillas de masa" (Anzaldúa, 1999, 103). Becoming anew in "La encrucijada" requires a painful enduring transformation struggling against the violence and discrimination the Chicanos have confronted historically. Their aim is to "survive the crossroads . . . but if the center holds,

we've made some kind of evolutionary step forward. Nuestra alma el trabajo . . . a 'morphogenesis,' an inevitable unfolding" (Anzaldúa, 1995, 103).

In "Bilingual Blues," the blending among cultures and the establishment of equilibrium is accomplished mixing and connecting linguistic and referential cultural codes. Though the poem depicts linguistic and idiomatic barriers in expression between English and Spanish, the speaker tries to achieve equilibrium and meaning using terms in English and their seemingly phonetic referents in Spanish. The speaker says: "You say tomato, I say tu madre" and though no semantic correlations between the "tomato" and "tu madre" exist, the beginning phonetic sounds in "tomato" and "tu" recall what Rolando Pérez (2008) names "equilingüismo," the asymmetrical relationship of language. However, this similarity in sound fails to connect the meaning of both expressions: "tomato" does not relate with the cursing phrase "tu madre" and its connotations. This exemplifies the fact that misunderstandings when using language will always happen and that the mixture of "impurezas" will always be present. In addition, Pérez-Firmat declared in an interview that he can only curse in Spanish suggesting that some linguistic referents are linked to specific languages in specific bilingual contexts (Montage, 2011). A similar case is seen in the phrases: "You say potato, I say Pototo" when fusing terms and their phonetic sounds and their referents in English and Spanish. "Potato," the vegetable in English, and "pototo" in Spanish have no semantic connections. "Pototo" depicts the Cuban television character portrayed by Leopoldo Fernández

in the Cuban show *Pototo y Flamenco* during 1940 and 1960 (Torres, 2019). These two lines of the poems not only exemplify the process of "tradition," "translation," and "transculturation" in which the speaker, based on phonetic sounds, tries to make meaningful connections passing from one culture to another. In the poem, these examples of code-switching resemble more the collision of languages than the "collusion" in "blending" and assimilation in culture.

In fact, the reference in "Bilingual Blues" to the "hole," "un hueco," metaphorically represents the speaker's linguistic gaps and barriers present when writing and speaking in English and Spanish. The hole or "hueco" refers to what Pérez-Firmat associates with "Spanglish": "an impossible dream of wholeness, one personality—one person in Spanish and one person in English" (Montage, 2011). Thus, this impossibility of wholeness illustrates the divided soul and identity of a bilingual writer part of hyphenated cultures: "uncertain neither tethered to the United States or Cuba" (Torres 2019). But with the lines saying that if "the thing," "la cosa," "goes into the hueco/consider yourself in casa/consider yourself part of the family," the speaker suggests, using strong sexual connotations, the construction of a new alternate hybrid identity: the "Cubanglos." Tradition, translation, and transculturation represented in these lines integrate the Cuban culture to the "family" of Anglos in the United States. In this poem, the hyphen, the line that ruptures, breaks, and separates is directly connected to language barriers. This hyphen becomes less a subtracting sign and more one of addition in terms of cultural affiliation

and assimilation. In this sense, Torres (2019) mentions that the line “consider yourself in casa” is an intertextual referent to a musical movie adaptation of Charles Dickens’ novel *Oliver Twist* in which the outsider is invited to be part of the family within a new facet of orphanhood, an orphan who has two languages, a mother tongue and an alternate one (56). The “thing” into the “hueco” construes a “family” “home,” a new space to create identity.

The speaker assumes his new Cuban-American identity as a “singing psycho,” a singing subject deranged between expressing himself in English or Spanish. The speaker illustrates this derangement describing the loony mental ability of Cubans to interact with others even if they are incapable of understanding: “Name your tema/ I’ll hedge;/name your cerca;/I’ll straddle it/like a Cubano.” The ending of the poem proposes a figurative comparison of Cuba with a Rubik cube “que nunca nadie acoplará”/ (cha-cha-cha).” The speaker suggests with the image of the cube that life in the hyphen for Cuban-Americans will always be a puzzle impossible to define and decipher: Cuban-Americans will live “being divided between two families, two cultures, and two languages” (Montage, 2011). Emphasizing linguistic barriers and the anxieties caused by cultural exchange in the borders, Pérez-Firmat enhances the tensions experienced by hyphenated cultures. He asserts that “life in the hyphen may be always a prerogative” (1994, 4). But he seems to celebrate this existential condition at the end of his poem “Bilingual Blues.” The title introduces the sorrow of singing the blues in exile (as African Americans did in the past) but he ends the

poem with an allusion to a Cuban type of festive sensual dance in the 1950’s, the “cha-cha-cha.” This dance, very popular in Cuban celebrations, seems to define the bicultural Cuban-American subject dwelling in borderlands.

Conclusion

The American Dream for hyphenated cultures has been historically different regarding Mexican-Americans and Cuban-Americans. The accountings examined in literary texts and history have proven this great divergence. Mexican-Americans have been dispossessed, marginalized, and oppressed as subjects in the United States whereas the Cuban-Americans’ struggles have been delimited to linguistic and cultural anxieties. Pérez-Firmat (1994) says that “whatever the American Adam may think, the Cuban-American Adam knows that history is his (or hers) to assume, not shed” (14). Assimilation for Mexican-Americans and the biculturalization in Cuban-Americans have opposite political undertones. The spaces of negotiation in the borders have been stripped for the first and granted for the latter. For Mexicans, the border is the “hemorrhaging wound” that “bleeds;” for Cubans, the nostalgic taste of the “ajiaco.” In spite of all the struggles, the American Dream remains. In this sense, White and Hanson (2016) affirm that the motivations towards the American Dream evolved and changed. These motivations, from their view, account for the ideal of the Dream. First, the immigrants believe that they will do better than their parents in materialistic ways, that they will have the freedom of choice in living their lives

and receive rewards for hard work (23). Second, immigrants envision that they will enjoy a peaceful lifestyle “away from the perils of personal persecutions and the arbitrary rule of praetorian regimes” (White and Hanson, 2016, 100). Contemporary theorists recommend the elimination of the hyphen. They have made suggestions such as the placement of the original cultural code in the first place as an adjective for the second one. Others claim that identities must be compatible with one another, that hybridity must enrich rather than weaken ethnic diverse nations. Thus, specifically in the United States, with the prevalence of the American Dream, more alive than ever before for Latins, the hyphen will remain and will probably expand. If this is not the case, the hyphen will then be redefined. Marta Caminero-Santangelo (2005) states that in the United States the prevalence to name border subjects is the use of an umbrella term for all Latin Americans and/or Hispanics, terms which exclude differences within cultures and this practice becomes more discriminatory. In the following research paper, I will refer to the representation of the American Dream in other literary texts which represent more recent processes of massive immigration, especially from other Latin American countries.

Notes

1. They illustrate the previous affirmations quoting the testimony of playwright Moss Hart: “It was . . . that nameless little boy— for any of its millions— to have a decent chance to scale the walls and achieve what they wished. Wealth, rank, or an imposing name counted for nothing. The only credential the city asked was the boldness to dream. For those who did, it unlocked its gates and its treasures, not caring who they were or where they came from” (quoted in Hanson and White, 2016, 436). «
2. Obama manifested that it is that promise that’s always set this country apart, that through hard work and sacrifice each of us can pursue our individual dreams, but still come together as one American family, to ensure that the next generation can pursue their dreams, as well . . . for 232 years, at each moment when that promise was in jeopardy, ordinary men and women, students and soldiers, farmers and teachers, nurses, and janitors found the courage to keep it alive. «
3. Mexicans now established in territories previously belonging to Mexico, and which remain for the future within the limits of the United States, as defined by the present treaty, shall be free to continue where they now reside, or to remove at any time to the Mexican Republic . . . Those who shall prefer to remain in the said territories may either retain the title and rights of Mexican citizens, or acquire those of citizens of the United States (Immigration, 2019). «

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