ROCZNIKI HUMANISTYCZNE
Tom LXIV, zeszyt 11 – 2016
DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.18290/rh.2016.64.11-8

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CONTESTED SPACES/STRIATED SPACES: REPRESENTATIONS OF THE BORDER IN REYNA GRANDE'S *THE DISTANCE BETWEEN US: A MEMOIR*

A b s t r a c t. The border with its multiple roles and interpretations has always played an important role in Chicana and Latina discourse in the U.S. Redefinitions and redesigns of spatial paradigms that took place in the second half of the 20th century resulted in proliferation of border imagery in literature that presented complex roles of the border. The aforementioned transformations were reflected in the shift of focus in Chicana discourse on the spatial, from location to mobility, "from land to roads" (Kaup 200). This shift in turn, led to alterative constructions of space and remappings of geographic locations that included creation of in-between spaces and rewriting of the border from a demarcation line into a contact zone. Due to the interdependence between space and identity formation, the new concepts of the border predetermine a different approach towards Latina identity formation. Contemporary Chicana literature often focuses on roads rather than dwellings (Kaup 228) and discusses the issue of identity formation construed in in-between spaces. Chicana authors often examine the experience of nomadic subjects traveling both within the U.S. and/or Mexico or crossing the border, presenting multiple reasons behind such travels, as well as different experiences and outcomes resulting from these journeys. The purpose of this article is to analyze how the redefinitions of the border are reflected in Reyna Grande's *The Distance Between Us: A Memoir* and how border crossings presented by the author contribute to the displacement of the main character and her family, triggering the notion of simultaneously belonging and unbelonging, or becoming "Othered," which results in the construction of transnational identities.

Key words: Mexican-American border; border crossings; Chicana/Latina literature; home; transnational identity; hybrid subjectivities; twin cities.

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The border, which has consistently played an important role in Latina/o discourse, has always been regarded as a striated space with contradictory roles—to divide and connect at the same time. Jesús Benito and Ana Manzanas underscore this characteristic of the border, deeming it "a 'borderish' concept or hybrid term which implies both a line of division and a line of encounter and dialogue" (3). Even though, as Alexander Diener and Joshua Hagen maintain, the 20th century witnessed the lessening "importance of international borders" (8), the U.S.-Mexico border remained a contested space where opposing interests both met and clashed. Moreover, both the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s and the U.S. foreign policy concerning Latin America brought the Mexican-American border once again to the focus of the discussion on the division of powers in the Americas. In addition, owing to the revolutionary tenets of post-prefixed theories, spatial paradigms underwent significant redefinitions in the second half of the 20th century, including the concept of the border. Consequently, new definitions of the border have begun to reflect more adequately its complex roles. Benito and Manzanas examine several terms that have appeared in the aftermath of the transformations in the discourse on space and that address the particular character of the U.S.-Mexico border.[1]

Therefore, identifying the most significant redefinitions of the concepts determining that space, they include Gloria Anzaldúa's borderlands, which according to Anzaldúa, differ from the border, due to the fact that "a border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary" (in Benito and Manzanas 3). Anzaldúa's idea resonates in Alfred Arteaga's "border zone"—"a broader zone," as Arteaga claims, which he juxtaposes with "the thin and severe borderline" (in Benito and Manzanas 3), limited in its scope in comparison to border zones, which is reflected already in the terminology deployed to define the two concepts, i.e. the "zone" in itself implies broader space than the "line." The three other authors Benito and Manzanas mention—Manuel Aguirre, Roberta Quance, and Philip Sutton—take up on this spatial interplay and propose the term "threshold" to describe "one of the ways the border transgresses itself" (3). They argue that "If a border is viewed as the line, imaginary or real, which separates these two spaces, then the threshold is the opening which permits passage from

[1] See my discussion of the aforementioned concepts in my article "La Línea vs. La Frontera —Representations of the Border and Border Crossings in Grande's *Across a Hundred Mountains*" published by Palacký University in Olomouc in 2014.

one space to the other" (in Benito and Manzanas 4). Consequently, they maintain, "liminality . . . designates the condition ascribed to those things or persons who occupy or find themselves in the vicinity of the threshold, either on a permanent basis or as a temporary phenomenon" (in Benito and Manzanas 4). Therefore, according to this postulate, Benito and Manzanas suggest that borders always "engender border zones, that is, liminal spaces which allow for mestizaje, and racial and cultural hybridization" (4), which reinforces the idea that the concept of the border cannot be limited to a demarcation line solely. This idea is also supported by another author Benito and Manzanas mention, namely Mary Louise Pratt, who puts forward the concept of contact zones, referring to the contradictory character of the space of the border as a meeting point that has a potential for a dialogue or, reversely, a clash of cultures, as it is often intertwined in the "highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism or slavery, or their aftermaths . . ." (in Benito and Manzanas 3).

Regardless of the terms used, the definitions describing the border imply both division and contiguity or, in some cases, permeability and, as Claire Fox argues, the border "is invoked as a marker of hybrid or liminal subjectivities, such as those which would be experienced by persons who negotiate among multiple cultural, linguistic, racial, or sexual systems throughout their lives" (61). Moreover, the border exists on different ontological levels and as a result of this multiplicity, "[t]here exists not a Border with capital B but unpredictable boundary encounters which show how the border repeats itself in different locations and times" (Benito and Manzanas 4). Fox notes that one of the consequences of such an approach is the fact that "[a]s a phenomenological category, the border was something that people carried within themselves, in addition to being an external factor structuring their perceptions" (63).

Those multiple roles of the border are reflected in both *literatura de la frontera*—"[l]iterature produced from the northern borderlands" (Sadowski-Smith 719) and *literatura fronteriza*, which Sadowski-Smith defines as "a more general category of writing *about* the border that also includes representations from Mexico City" (719). Reyna Grande's *The Distance Between Us: A Memoir* is an example of the combination of the two types of writing: it is written by an author of Mexican origin, currently living in the U.S. but it presents the experience of Grande and her family on and from both sides of the border. As a Latina author Grande endeavors to show in her stories some aspects of the diversity of the Latina/o American experience,

including the significance of the role of the Mexican-American border for different groups of Latinos/as. *The Distance Between Us* is in fact the second story devoted to this topic—she also describes different aspects of border crossing(s) in her first novel, *Across a Hundred Mountains*. In *The Distance Between Us* Grande rewrites the migrant's story, this time grounding it in her life experience. The purpose of this article is to analyze how the re-definitions of the border are reflected in Grande's story and how border crossings presented by the author contribute to the displacement of the main character and her family, triggering the notion of simultaneously belonging and unbelonging, or becoming "Othered" and how, as a result of that, trans-national identities are constructed.

The Distance Between Us: A Memoir tells a story of Reyna Grande and her family, moving from Southern Guerrero in Mexico to Los Angeles, the U.S. Grande and her two siblings—Mago and Carlos, are born in Iguala, Guerrero and when she is 3 years' old her father decides to migrate to the U.S. in order to be able to support his family. Two years later Grande's mother follows in his footsteps and the children are left in Mexico with their paternal grandmother, Abuela Evila. This is when the feeling of longing and unbelonging becomes an intrinsic part of Reyna's life, since the parents postpone their return to Mexico and the children are left behind, undergoing all kinds of abuses in their community. The situation does not improve much when the mother comes back to Iguala, as she has been left by the father with a newly born child and she cannot come to terms with her predicament. Moreover, as Reyna and her siblings notice, she is a completely different person from a woman who left for El Otro Lado and her "constant comings and goings" (131) will remain part of their life, aggravating the children's feeling of loss and unbelonging. Since the mother is not so much present in the life of her children but leaves them with her own mother, Abuelita Chinta, when Reyna's father finally visits Iguala with his new partner, Mila, the children beg him to take them to the U.S. After two unsuccessful crossings, they finally make it to the other side of the border and end up in Highland Park, L.A. where the new chapter of their lives unwinds. However, their life in the U.S. does not resemble the stories they have heard about El Otro Lado and it also involves numerous personal and legal struggles, which again, intensify Reyna's conviction that the border that she has crossed illegally to the north will always be part of her life and her quest for the sense of place may not necessarily end with a definite answer, but instead leave her with "multiple anchorages" (Alexander qtd. in Nair 75).

The fact that the border and border crossings are going to play an important role in the story can be inferred from the first pages of the book with Grande's dedication "to all DREAMers," the term, as Jeffrey Toobin explains, "that has come to define the group of people who were brought illegally to the United States when they were children" (33) and under the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act they could follow the path towards citizenship. The second dedication is to her deceased father—one of the border crossers himself. Then the next page features a black-and-white map of Mexico and the U.S. with two highlighted lines on it—that of the border separating two countries and the other one mapping Reyna's journey to Los Angeles. Significantly, at one place the two lines overlap. Such cartography not only indicates that in fact both sides of the border have been influencing Reyna and shaping her experiences, but also implies a complex and changing character of the border—it is often perceived as a topographical sign, a demarcation line, marking two seemingly independent nation-states, but at the same time it can connect those apparently disparate spaces.

Such a visual presentation focuses on geographical, economic and socio-political aspects of the border and suggests that, as a fixed line dividing two political entities, "the border is . . . the *locus* which defines and secures the integrity of a nation" (Benito and Manzanas 7). Moreover, as Benito and Manzanas argue, "only a closed border can presumably secure a fixed, stable and finished identity" of the nation-state (7). Benito and Manzanas compare the idea of the closed nation predetermined by the closed border to "the concept of the classical body as expressed by Bakhtin in *Rabelais and His World*" (7). According to them, "[t]he classical body/nation is an image of completeness" (7) and, as a result, the border "can be seen as a sharp line of demarcation which guards and protects an entirely finished and complete political and geographical body" (8). Nonetheless, Benito and Manzanas also observe that based on the definition proposed by Mikhail Bakhtin, the border is "also a part of the body/nation through which the world enters the body or emerges from it, or through which the body itself goes out to the world" (8), which implies permeability of the border, or, in other words, means that it also functions "as an orifice in the body/nation" (8). This assumption is of great significance, since on the basis of that, it can be concluded that even this concept of the border as the dividing line allows transgression under certain circumstances. Therefore, in reality, the countries on both sides of the border should not be defined through the aforementioned image of the "classical body/nation" (7) but they resemble Bakhtin's "grotesque body/nation" (Benito

and Manzanas 7). According to Benito and Manzanas who quote Mikhail Bakhtin's definition, "the grotesque body/nation is unfinished, outgrows itself, transgresses its own limits" (7). What is more, "[t]he grotesque body is a body in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed; it is continually built, created and builds and creates another body" (Bakhtin qtd. in Benito and Manzanas 7), which implies progress rather than stability/integrity of the body/nation and, consequently defies fixedness of its border(s). Finally, As Benito and Manzanas conclude, "[w]hereas the classical body/nation is sealed from outer influences, the grotesque [body/nation] is permeable and stresses elements common to the entire cosmos" (8). This way the border as an intrinsic part of the body/nation becomes the outlet through which those influences are transferred and exchanged, allowing, to a certain extent, for across-the-border encounters that have an impact on places and people on both sides.

This idea is reinforced by Mike Davis who talks about a particular border discussed in this analysis, namely the Mexican-American border. In his examination of this space, he emphasizes its equivocal character and underscores the fact that "La Línea, even in its present Berlin Wall-like configuration, has never been intended to stop labor from migrating *al otro lado*" (27). He argues that instead, "it functions like a dam, creating a reservoir of labor-power on the Mexican side of the border that can be tapped on demand via the secret aqueduct managed by *polleros*, *iguanas* and *coyotes* (as smugglers of workers and goods are locally known) for the farms of south Texas, the hotels of Las Vegas and the sweatshops of Los Angeles" (27). Enrique Ochoa refers to this "historical pattern of encouragement" followed by "legislative restrictions," defining this phenomenon as a "revolving door policy" (125). Analyzing the course of this interdependence, Ochoa observes that it "has often led to a precarious boom-and-bust cycle, injurious to both workers and the environment on the Mexican side of the border" (122). The dam-like function of the border, or the revolving door policy, whichever term is applied to describe the situation on the U.S.-Mexico border, results in "the paradox of US-Mexico integration" (Davis 27), which consists in the fact that "a barricaded border and a borderless economy are being constructed simultaneously" (Davis 27; see also Antoszek, "La Línea vs. La Frontera").

Those transformations of the border into a more liminal space and its multiple roles suggested by those first pages of Grande's story are reflected in the text itself. First, the concept of the border is presented as a line, dividing the two states and separating families when some members go to the

U.S. As Grande recollects, the term El Otro Lado (the other side/land) had been present in her life, even before she knew where it was located. And from the very beginning it evokes mixed feelings. On the one hand, for Reyna as a child, the United States signify one thing only—"a power that takes away parents" (5)—in her case, first the father, then their mother, contributing to Reyna's uprootedness and her permanent longing for family, home and stability.

On the other hand, when people talk about the U.S. they wax euphoric about its beauty and opportunities one can have there, like Reyna's aunt, who had crossed to the U.S. before Reyna's father decided to go there. When asked by the children what the U.S. is like, she responds:

> El Otro Lado is a beautiful place. Every street is paved with concrete. You don't see any dirt roads there. No mosquitoes sucking the blood out of you . . . There's no trash in the streets like here in Mexico. Trucks there pick up the trash every week. And you know what the best thing is? The trees there are special—they grow money. They have dollar bills for leaves. (45)

Such a presentation of the U.S. does not mean that Tía María Félix believes the image she projects—it reflects more wishful thinking so many immigrants have about the U.S., especially after they finally face difficult reality of being an undocumented immigrant in the U.S. Moreover, such an account is also supposed to console the children—they already suffer from the absence of their parents and undergo all kinds of abuses and mistreatments both at the hands of their family and at school, due to being left behind (for example, they are undernourished, beaten by their grandmother, they have to work hard, Reyna is also slapped at school for being left-handed, people in the community call them "orphans"). Thus, such a description of the U.S. is to give them hope that one day their situation will improve as well, when the parents earn those "dollars from the trees" and come back to Mexico.

However, the border crossing of the parents has irrevocable effects on the children and it takes its toll on the whole family. First of all, since Reyna's father left for the U.S. when she was 3 years' old, she barely has any recollection of him and the only reference is that of a photograph—during the years of his absence she begins to call him "the Man Behind the Glass" (28) and she can hardly remember him as her father. She realizes the same happens with memories of her mother—when Juana is gone for too

long the children cease to remember her and Mona's eldest sister, Mago, takes over the role of the mother, which in a way begins the cycle of surrogate parents Reyna is going to have in her life and aggravates her feelings of loss and longing for a whole family and home. The parents in turn want to start a new life in the U.S. but it ends in a failure and their divorce. When the mother comes back to Iguala, Reyna realizes that "The woman standing there wasn't the same woman who had left" (76). What is more, as it turns out soon, due to that experience Juana will keep leaving her children throughout life and they will always fear that the mother will be gone (134) and that their parents will never again be interested in them. Even the long-awaited meeting with the Man Behind the Glass in the flesh (143) does not revoke this omnipresent uncertainty and turns out to be a disappointment both for Reyna and her father, as they are complete strangers and they will have to learn each other from scratch.

When the father agrees to bring the children to the U.S. with him, smuggling them across the border, the feeling of displacement is intensified. As Reyna recollects, they are torn in their allegiances—not only between their parents (the mother stays behind in Mexico with their youngest sister, Betty) but they are also uncertain where their home is, especially after Reyna's question after the crossing—she asks the father how far they are from home, Iguala, and the father responds angrily that "this is [her] home now" (159). She, in turn, cannot forget her umbilical cord buried in Iguala and her connection with Guerrero and therefore, such an unequivocal reply from her father only multiplies her doubts. However young Reyna is, she also realizes that this border crossing is going to have a bearing influence on her life.

Grande reinforces the importance of the border and border crossing by devoting the last chapter of the first part of her memoir to describe this experience. She presents in a detailed way their two unsuccessful crossings, relating terrible conditions accompanying their trek and the fear she felt at that time. She also reconstructs every hour of their final, successful crossing to ponder how it is going to haunt her throughout her life in the future. This description also reflects the changing role of the border—it is no longer the impenetrable line separating the aforementioned classical body/nation(s) but part of the grotesque body/nation that becomes permeable and porous and that allows the crossers to transgress its space. In fact, as Manzanas suggests, paradoxically, the border depends on the border crossers, since "the border requires border crossers in order to perpetuate itself" (8). And as it turns out soon, it is not going to be the last border for Reyna to cross.

The second part of the memoir chronicles Reyna's life in the U.S. and from the first accounts of her life there it can be inferred that her situation does get better, but only slightly. The new home in the U.S. is far from felicitous space of the house described by Bachelard in *The Poetics of Space*: all the three children have to share one room, as they cannot afford to live in a bigger apartment; the house is located in Highland Park, a predominantly Latino neighborhood that is very diverse and does not escape the problem of gangs. Due to that and their illegal status, the father does not want them to walk freely around the neighborhood and Reyna recollects how much they missed the freedom they had in Mexico (174). Moreover, the crossings across the border have changed her father as well and, as the children learn quickly, he has turned into an abusive alcoholic. Apart from abuse at home, Reyna also is discriminated against at school—by the teachers as an ESL student and by other students who run around calling Reyna and her siblings wetbacks. Being victimized and "Othered" provokes Reyna to ask the question about her allegiances. She recollects: "I stood there in Mrs. Giuliano's [the neighbor's] backyard feeling as if I were tearing in half. *Where do I belong?* I wondered. *Do I belong here? Do I belong there? Do I belong anywhere?*" (175).

This question will go back to her and the feeling of displacement will become even more intense a few years later, when her legal status will be clarified and when she can finally go back to Mexico to visit Abuelita Chinta. Even though she has a lot of expectations related to the journey south, when arriving in Iguala she feels disappointment and disillusionment. "*Had I really lived in this place?*" (277) she asks herself and only then can she at least partially understand her father's reaction when he first returned to visit them. Moreover, she is treated differently than she used to be as a child. Now she is more than welcome by her family or former friends and yet at the same time, she is not invited to their houses again—but this time because they feel ashamed of their situation and the conditions they live in. This makes her think about her status and the role the border has played in her life. She notes:

> As I walked away from Meche's [her friend's] house, I realized there was something else I had lost the day I left my hometown. Even though my umbilical cord was buried in Iguala, I was no longer considered Mexican enough. To the people there, who had seen me grow up, I was no longer one of them. (281)

Describing that period in her life, Grande not only relates the difficult time of her life but also shows how the border and border crossings function

on different ontological levels. She illustrates the existence of the "repeating border" (Benito and Manzanas 4) mentioned above. Reyna in a sense crosses this "repeating border" several times and those passages through geographical or psychological borderlands contribute to the formulation of her nomadic identity. In addition, through the presentation of multiple crossings Grande also shows how the concept of a "third border" (Davis 70) is constructed. Davis explains this idea, arguing that borders "tend to follow . . . Latinos wherever they live and regardless of how long they have been in the United States" (70–71). As a result, Davis maintains, "the interface between affluent Anglo majorities and growing blue-collar Latino populations is regulated by what can only be typed a 'third border' . . . [which] polices daily intercourse between two citizen communities" (71). Owing to that, the border will always play an important role in the migrant's life, either in its material or symbolic aspect.

In the last chapters of the memoir Grande returns to this idea, explaining how the border has remained part of her life. On the one hand, she manages to break the cycle of oppression and poverty her family has undergone for so long. As an outcast ridiculed at school she turns to books which "give her a glimpse into the world she wished she could belong to" (241). The urge to talk about her experience and at the same time constant silencing she faces makes her immerse herself in writing. Through creativity—writing, she can finally find her home, as for her the text functions as a site of remembrance, the space that may provide a sense of belonging, especially owing to the fact that, as she admits, "In my writing, you couldn't hear my accent" (242). This way she also redefines what home is on her own terms, applying one of the tactics Monika Kaup describes talking about the architecture of ethnicity, namely "dismantling and reassembling the home" (14), which involves "[l]eaving home, the house of the fathers, to live alone and to design new women-oriented models of home, such as a house of one's own—the modernist remedy" (*Rewriting* 14). And yet, even when she becomes a U.S. citizen, she still remembers about her umbilical cord buried in Iguana and is aware of the presence of the border in her life. She concludes her memoir referring to the border once again—she writes: "I thought about the border that separates the U.S. and Mexico. I wondered if during their crossing both my father and mother had lost themselves in that no-man's land. I wondered if my real parents were still there, caught between two worlds. I imagined them trying to make their way back to us. I truly hoped that one day they would." (315)

This reflection provokes her to think about her situation as well, and she realizes that the only way to survive is to accept her “multiple anchorages” (Alexander qtd. in Nair 75) and try to learn how to belong where she is at a particular time—the idea she reinforces in interviews about her border story.

Grande’s border story not only illustrates the still urgent and pressing problem of the U.S.-Mexico border but it is also an apt reflection on the status quo of the borders in general. On the basis of the presentation of the changing image of the border in Grande’s story it can be concluded that “[a]s a space of confrontation, appropriation and translation, the site of the border defies all attempts at cultural stasis” (Benito and Manzanas 10). On the one hand, it can be perceived as Soja’s third space, or what he dubs “real-and-imagined space” or “lived space” (10–11, 317) that has a potential to trigger exchange and dialogue and as a result contribute to the development of *mestizaje* or hybridity. Nonetheless, it can also be “an imposition which keeps peoples detained and unable to communicate” (Benito and Manzanas 12) and the border crossing itself becomes the “process of recycling through which old worlds turn into new worlds” (Benito and Manzanas 12), repeating the well-known battle over power. Without unequivocally identifying her description with either of the functions of the border, Grande’s story seems to confirm Foucault’s conclusion that “[s]pace is fundamental in any form of communal life; space is fundamental in any exercise of power” (in Soja 149)—in this particular case it is the space of the U.S.-Mexico border that enters into this discussion. Therefore, *The Distance Between Us* illustrates what Diener and Hagen aptly note, namely that “a borderless world is not an imminent possibility” (4) and taking that into account one should not disregard all the border people involved in border crossings, which in the light of current political events, including the U.S. 2016 presidential election campaign as well as the ongoing discussions on immigration taking place all over Europe, seems to gain particular significance.

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REPREZENTACJE GRANICY W REYNY GRANDE *THE DISTANCE BETWEEN US: A MEMOIR*

Streszczenie

Granica wraz z różnymi jej rolami oraz interpretacjami zawsze odgrywała znaczącą rolę w dyskursie latynoskim i autorek pochodzenia meksykańskiego w Stanach Zjednoczonych. Zmiany definicji paradygmatów przestrzennych, które pojawiały się od połowy wieku XX, zaowocowały różnorodnymi przedstawieniami granicy w literaturze, która zaczęła odzwierciedlać wielorakie role, jakie ta granica odgrywała. Jednym z rezultatów tychże zmian było przeniesienie uwagi w dyskursie przestrzennym z położenia/lokalizacji na mobilność, „z ziemi/terytorium na drogi/trasy" (Kaup 200). Ta zmiana z kolei doprowadziła do powstania alternatywnych koncepcji

przestrzennych oraz przedefiniowania lokalizacji geograficznych, przyczyniając się między innymi do pojawienia się pojęcia przestrzeni istniejących pomiędzy innymi przestrzeniami (z ang. *in-between spaces*) oraz do zmiany w przedstawianiu granicy – od linii demarkacyjnej do strefy kontaktu. Biorąc pod uwagę współzależność między przestrzenią a konstruowaniem tożsamości, nowe pojęcia granicy miały wpływ na tożsamość Chicana. Współczesna literatura Chicana (autorek pochodzenia meksykańskiego w Stanach Zjednoczonych) często przedstawia drogi i trasy zamiast domów i mieszkań (Kaup 228) oraz zajmuje się kwestią budowania tożsamości w przestrzeniach pomiędzy innymi przestrzeniami (*in-between spaces*). Autorki meksykańskiego pochodzenia nierzadko analizują doświadczenia bohaterek/ów-nomadów podróżujących zarówno po Stanach Zjednoczonych i Meksyku, jak i pomiędzy tymi państwami, pokazując różnorakie przyczyny tych wypraw, oraz różne doświadczenia i rezultaty tych podróży. Celem tego artykułu jest analiza przedstawienia zmieniającego się pojęcia granicy w książce Reyny Grande, *The Distance Between Us: A Memoir*. Ponadto artykuł analizuje, w jaki sposób przekraczanie granic opisane przez autorkę przyczyniło się do poczucia wyobcowania odczuwanego przez główną bohaterkę i jej rodzinę, co z kolei wywołało u niej uczucie jednoczesnej przynależności do jakiegoś miejsca i braku takiego miejsca wraz z rosnącym odczuciem bycia „Innym", które jest charakterystyczne dla procesu powstawania tożsamości ponadnarodowej.

Streściła Ewa Antoszek

Słowa kluczowe: granica meksykańsko-amerykańska; przekraczanie granic; literatura latynoska/ Chicana w Stanach Zjednoczonych; dom; tożsamość ponadnarodowa; podmiotowość hybrydowa; miasta bliźniacze.