

LOS MACHOS TAMBIEN LLORAN:
TELEVISA AND THE POSTNATIONAL MAN

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Scholars writing about constructs and practices of gender, family and sexuality have concurred that male adultery and polygamy have a long history in Mexico, as elsewhere in the world. Contributors to the volume Presencia y transparencia: La mujer en la historia de México give us a picture of the evolution of the so-called "casa chica" over five centuries. Analyzing the fragmentary but nonetheless enlightening texts left by the Mexicas, María de Jesús Rodríguez finds that among Aztec nobility, marriage was used primarily to form political alliances, but that female concubines could be chosen across class lines. While monogamy was more standard for the lower classes, men, especially warriors, were still permitted to take lovers and consort with prostitutes. Female chastity, on the other hand, was enforced by both religious fear and severe secular penalties, including death (28).

Polygamy, like human sacrifice, was abhorrent to the Europeans who arrived bearing Catholic ideology along with their other weapons of domination. Yet the church's imposition of monogamy during the colonial period, argues Pilar Gonzalbo, meant little more in practice than the economic abandonment of many women; polygamous relationships continued to exist, but their deinstitutionalization freed men from responsibility (44). In New Spain, as Françoise Carner points out, adultery was considered an "essentially feminine sin," threatening to the social order when committed by women, but rarely condemned in men (98-99). This view did not change with Independence. In their study of campesina women and violence at the turn of the century, Soledad González and Pilar Iracheta found that the law was easier on women in regard to capital crimes, but harsher in cases of adultery, sexual offenses and abandonment (120). In the home, women were often beaten for adultery, but also for denouncing their husbands' infidelity, and betrayed wives were more likely to confront their rivals than the husband himself, implying the essential innocence, or invulnerability, of the male perpetrator (132).

Although the double standard may not be so pronounced today, recent ethnographic studies, such as those Ruth Behar and Sarah Levine conducted among poor women in San Luis Potosí and Morelos, attest to the persistence of polygamous relations in contemporary society. Levine writes of newly married couples in the Cuernavaca community of Los Robles that "both take the wife's fidelity as a given," whereas "even teenage husbands bragged about extramarital affairs, real or imagined" (87). At the other end of the social

spectrum, presidential mistress-turned-senator Irma Serrano wrote in her 1978 autobiography about the double standard from the point of view of "la otra": "Con este tipo de amantes, no tiene una le privilegio de ir al cine o al teatro colgada de su brazo. Si acaso te acompañan a ver la television a ratitos, si bien te va....Para estos funcionarios somos un objeto, una bacinica" (139). If Serrano's account is representative, sexual infidelity was as natural a part of political office in post-Revolutionary administrations as it was in Aztec times.

While this situation is in no way unique to Mexico, it does cause one to wonder: how, if the institution known as the "casa chica" or "segundo frente" is so widespread as to be banal, did it come to be the defining plot dilemma of one of the top telenovelas of the 1990s? Why did millions of viewers on both sides of the US/Mexico border in 1994 tune in to watch protagonist Juan Daniel/Johnny agonize night after night over the impossible decision between his wife and his girlfriend on the hit Televisa show Dos mujeres, un camino?

My presentation today is not so much an answer to that question as a meditation on the mass culture representation of male identity in the era of the North American Free Trade Agreement, using Dos mujeres as a case study. I will argue that Juan Daniel's inability to successfully keep up his "segundo frente" is just one of the crises of masculinity figured in Dos mujeres, and that those crises, along with the show's geographical placement in Mexico City and Tijuana, drug traffic subplot, and alteration of conventional soap opera salvational mechanisms, make it more symptomatic of its time than many similar programs--make it, in fact, the NAFTA novela par excellence. The breakdown of machista values, such that male infidelity is a dilemma that results in tragedy rather than simply being concealed or forgiven, is exacerbated by the show's casting of New York Puerto Rican actor Erik Estrada in the lead role; for as I will argue, the border-crossing Estrada, even more than his hapless truck driver character on the show, is the ideal anti-hero of what Néstor García Canclini calls the "postnational" era.

I. ¿Qué de raro tiene?: Machismo and Postnacionalismo

In a 1993 essay entitled "¿Habr  cine latinoamericano en el a o 2000?: La cultura visual en la  poca de postnacionalismo," Garc a Canclini writes that during the first half of this century, radio and cinema in Mexico served a unifying function, conflating disparate social groups and geographic regions into a nationally- defined totality. In the turbulent 1960s, the mass media, including advertising and television, continued to uphold the government's economic/ideological project of modernization and industrial development. In the 1990s, however, the

transnationalization of economies has radically transformed the conditions of cultural production. García Canclini thus asks,

¿Qué puede quedar de las identidades nacionales en un tiempo de globalización e interculturalidad, de coproducciones multinacionales y Cadenas de las Américas, de acuerdos de libre comercio e integraciones regionales, donde los mensajes, los artistas y los capitales atraviesan constantemente las fronteras? [...] ¿Pueden ser aún el arte y las comunicaciones masivas escenarios de la identidad nacional? (28)

His own response would appear to be negative; for the privatization of communications (which has only intensified in the four years since the publication of his article) has favored the domination of U.S.-produced and controlled programming, and more generally has tended to displace old issues of national identity in the process of reducing everything to the purely mercantile (30). As promising exceptions to this rule, he cites the films La tarea, La mujer de Benjamín, and El bulto (32), yet one is left wondering what sorts of questions emerge, however inadvertently, in the transparently commercial forms of production that García Canclini dismisses. For just as the commercialization of fiestas and handicrafts that he brilliantly analyzed in his study Transforming Modernity are not simply registered as decline or absence but also constitute significant practical modifications of the lives and welfare of indigenous communities, so too might the much-abhorred Televisa provide a window, however opaque and distorted in execution, on changes taking place in Mexican society today.

Let us return to the issue of machismo, a case in point. As scholars such as Charles Ramírez Berg, Jean Franco, and Ilene O'Malley have made clear, machismo is not synonymous with patriarchy, but rather represents a complex of cultural codes, a particular construct of masculinity that is intimately linked with the auto-definition, or historia patria, of the Mexican state, particularly since the Revolution. O'Malley argues that the figure of the mythic macho hero became a site in which the contradictions of the Revolution could be symbolically resolved and its failures glossed over. Franco points out the consequences of this symbolic construct for women:

[T]he Revolution with its promise of social transformation encouraged a Messianic spirit that transformed mere human beings into supermen and constituted a discourse that associated virility with social transformation in a way that marginalized women at the very moment when they were, supposedly, liberated. (102)

While the macho "superman" was an ambivalent and contradictory figure in novels of the Revolution (e.g. Los de abajo, Vámonos con Pancho Villa), he became the unqualified hero of the Mexican cinema.¹ Discussing the comedias rancheras and provincial melodramas of the 1930s through 1970s, Ramírez Berg writes about how "the charro hero, the macho ethos, and national ideals came together to produce a male image that came to stand for the nation's [image]...Macho is Mexico incarnate" (99-100). Machismo, as expressed in the cinema, oscillates between the poles of hero and outlaw; at times it may signify honor and pride, but just as often it places masculinity and brute power above conventional distinctions of right and wrong. Ramírez Berg cites a scene from the 1975 film El rey, in which an outsider asks a villager why the Robin Hood-like outlaw played by Antonio Aguilar is held in such respect; the villager replies, "The people know that he robs. Like a woman feels when her man beats her, she admires him for how well he hits her." Ramírez Berg goes on to speculate, "no doubt the PRI, the ruling party, traces its mythological origins to Aguilar's charro hero" (102).

In the 1970s and 1980s, however, the sociopolitical foundations of machismo began to fall apart, due to both the changing role of women in national society and to the crippling economic crises that followed the post-Revolutionary "miracle" era, which weakened the notion of a unified state and thus the identity of the macho as exemplary Mexican. As the cherished goals and principles of the Revolution, however incompletely addressed in previous decades, finally collapsed under the weight of an obscene foreign and domestic debt, so too did the patriarchal hero, mythic creation of the Revolution, begin to seem antiquated and unequipped to face the new situation. Although the technocrats that emerged to guide Mexico in finding its place in the new world order can be seen as benefiting from the same patriarchal privilege that produced and protected their predecessors, the link between gender/sexuality and political power is no longer glorified, and the machista attitude has come to signify not virility but intransigence and self-destruction.

This does not mean, of course, that current mass culture is more progressive than in the past. A casual glance at any telenovela or other program or commercial artifact will show that contemporary fare is far from feminist, and in fact adheres to antique moral notions about sexuality which categorize women as either virgins or whores, even as it simultaneously profits from the exploitation of "liberated" female bodies as sexual objects--objects of the gaze and of consumption. While telenovelas and other entertainment aimed at women continue to encourage passive Cinderella fantasies, popular music tends towards fatalism,

¹Anne Doremos pointed out the ideological differences between literary and film texts in her paper "Articulations of the Revolutionary in Mexican Literature and Film, 1929-1935," presented at Cine-Lit III, Feb 19-21, 1997, Portland, Oregon.

reifying romantic love even as it insists, much like the boleros of the 1930s and 1940s, on the inevitability of female betrayal. Quintessential macho icon Vicente Fernández, whom Ramírez Berg characterizes as progressive in his early film roles in the 1970s, but who increasingly fell back on traditional patriarchal representations of masculinity in the 1980s, lashed out in defense of this romantic masochism in a 1992 recording, growling "¿Qué de raro tiene/que estoy sufriendo/por una mujer?"

Yet within this conservative scenario, interesting fissures have begun to develop. In the June 1994 issue of the Televisa fan publication TVyNovelas, actor Ariel López Padilla was photographed wearing a classic charro costume in the market in Coyoacán, where the magazine's interviewer, Lilian Cendón Torres, met him to discuss national traditions and customs. Reflecting on the values embodied in his then-current telenovela Clarisa, this would-be Octavio Paz of the 1990s commented, "El machismo es una manifestación de poder, y esto es así porque quien lleva las riendas es el hombre; ya que es él quien va al campo, maneja caballos, hace viajes muy largos; es criatura fuerte dentro de una tierra salvaje en la que la vida es defendida a punta de balazos" (91). In his own opinion, however, "el machismo está en crisis. Pienso que ahora lo va a sostener la mujer, ya no el hombre porque ahora los valores son muy frágiles."

Fonovisa recording artists the Banda Machos would seem to agree with López Padilla; the popular band, whose album Los machos también lloran was released while Dos mujeres was on television in both the U.S. and Mexico and was advertised on the show, performs traditional masculinity with an excessiveness that turns it inside out. In a 1994 interview with the Los Angeles newspaper La Opinión, the Machos, discussing the name of their band, disavowed any commitment to machismo as such: "No somos crueles con las mujeres," they explained. Instead, they said, being from Jalisco, they named themselves after a line in the song "Cocula" in which Jorge Negrete sang about "los machos de Jalisco." "Macho" thus evokes regional pride and a desire to align themselves with an older cultural icon, and becomes a self-reflexive gesture of entrance into popular culture, rather than a mark of gendered identification (Cortés 3E). More playful still is the Banda Mochos, whose advertisement on Univisión contrasted them to the Machos, and who flirt with homosexual signification in a manner reminiscent of 1970s disco icons the Village People, yet within the neotraditional context of the banda music scene.

These examples suggest that even within the conservative universe of Televisa and its many subdivisions, in which sexism is alive and well, machismo in its conventional form has ceased to be a serious option for male identity and has become, at best, an object of camp inversion. In part, this is certainly due to feminism's influence on pop culture, as indicated by the ascendance of figures like Gloria Trevi, Fonovisa recording artist and advocate of single mothers, prostitutes and other

unconventional women, who in 1995 made the unlikely leap from nude calendars and magazine spreads to the cover of *Fem*, in whose pages she reiterated her only half-playful presidential ambitions (Hernández Carballido 14). But the hypothesis I would like to explore is that the collapse of machismo is not only due to changes in women's status and behavior, but also to the conditions of transnationalization described by García Canclini.

In *Dos mujeres, un camino*, women are hardly represented in a manner one would consider feminist, yet the absolute failure of any man on the show to achieve any of his goals or desires seems to point to a condition of futility and impossibility that is related to the dissolution of "the nation" (in quotes) as a space of identification and subjective cohesion. If in the past national identity and patriarchy were intimately linked in post-Revolutionary ideology (relegating women to subservient or symbolic roles on both micro- and macro levels), what *Dos mujeres* exposes is the fracturing of that relation, resulting in a near-apocalyptic negation of male subjectivity and power.

II. Dios, ¿qué hago?: The Impossibility of Redemption

For those of you not familiar with the show, a brief introduction is in order. The show's main plot line, of course, can be inferred from its title, credit sequence, and both the Bronco and Laura León versions of its theme song, also titled "Dos mujeres, un camino." Erik Estrada's forty-something truck driver character is in love with two women: Ana María (Laura León), his wife and the mother of his children, tall, blonde, and at once sexy and maternal, to whom he is known as Juan Daniel; and Tania (Bibi Gaytán), a much younger brunette who knows him as Johnny. Ana María is a former cabaret singer with a shadowy past, while 20-year-old Tania is an up-and-coming model and pop singer. These implausible careers are congruent with Televisa's penchant for self-promotional intertextuality; both actresses released records that year, and León's version of the theme song can be heard on the show in transitions to commercial breaks, although the version recorded by Bronco, a popular band whose members also appear in the novela, predominates.

In contrast to other melodramas which place wives and lovers into moral binary oppositions, here both women are depicted sympathetically. Tania's parents' restaurant is coded as a second site of family values, balancing the modest home maintained by Ana María. Both of these locations, and the relationships that link them to Juan Daniel, seem more wholesome than those shown in the show's many subplots. For example, Tania's best friend Graciela (Itati Cantoral), is engaged early in the show to Ricardo (Rodrigo Vidal), the son of crime boss Ismael Montegarza (Enrique Rocha). Seemingly headed for a life of ill-gotten luxury on the Montegarza rancho in Tijuana, she instead leaves Ricardo at the altar; he gets revenge by raping and impregnating her, and

later obsessively attempts to gain control of the child, into which plot he ensnares Graciela's greedy, social-climbing mother. Meanwhile, the young police agents Angel (Jorge Salinas) and Raymundo (Sergio Sendel), bearing little resemblance to Tijuana's notoriously corrupt and torture-mongering police force except in their disregard for standard procedure, work at exposing the drug operation linked to Ismael almost as energetically as they pursue their impossible crushes on Graciela and Tania, whose affection for them is sisterly and platonic.

As the various subplots become interwoven, a thousand dramatic events ensue. Unlike more traditional novelas, Dos mujeres was often as fast-paced as an action movie, with entire dramas unfolding in the space of a week. The cops-and-narcotraficantes storyline made it resemble the kind of border movies produced wholesale in recent years, mostly for Spanish-speaking migrant audiences in the U.S. Yet throughout this whirlwind, the comparatively trivial question of Juan Daniel/Johnny's duplicitous affair is somehow endlessly deferred. Although Tania and Ana María are friends, they not only do not meet each other's male companion, but are kept from figuring out the truth by the simple device of his two names. Perhaps less plausible still, month after month, viewers watched nearly identical shots of Estrada in close-up, often seated in the cab of his truck, his facial expression indicating a painful migraine as his thoughts were revealed in voice-over. His banal indecision was elevated to the status of an almost religious dilemma; as José Guadalupe Esparza of Bronco sang in his theme song for the show, "Dios, ¿qué hago/si las quiero con todo el alma?"

Yet the overinflated status of this central problematic is deconstructed on screen by the introduction of a third woman: Alejandra Montegarza, daughter of Ismael and sister of Ricardo, played by Luz María Jerez. Alejandra, an old acquaintance of Juan Daniel's family, is obsessively in love with him and will stop at nothing to disrupt his marriage. She kidnaps his son, using Ismael's employee Leobardo as an accomplice. But when the plan fails, she goes mad, ending up in an asylum. Shots of Alejandra screaming and hallucinating in her padded cell are thereafter relentlessly intercut with scenes from the more "sane" romances between Juan Daniel and his wife and girlfriend. The juxtaposition works to ridicule the melodramatic excess of the main romances and to suggest, subtly but unmistakably, that mainstream heterosexual desire is not after all the sacred quest privileged by soap opera narrative, but simply a delusion, a form of madness.

Alejandra's self-defeating passion is similar in its futility to that of Raymundo for Tania, Ricardo for Graciela, Leobardo the hired hand for Alejandra, Lupe the precinct secretary for Raymundo, and so on and so on; even don Ismael, the stern patriarch and fearsome patrón, loses his sexy girlfriend Lorena when his own demons get the better of him, causing his

family and empire to crumble and condemning him to a tortured solitude. In fact, Juan Daniel's two loves offer nearly the only reciprocated affections on the program, an irony which only underscores the singularity of the show's finale. In the end, Juan Daniel is not only not able to choose, but the violent death of his girlfriend Tania does not, as in so many other dramas of infidelity, simplify the choice for him. Instead, he loses both women--a consequence not only of his indecision but also of the innumerable shadowy complications that, by the final episode, have rendered any hope for domestic harmony completely impossible.

This final episode, though too full of twists and turns to fully describe here, bears some comment. First, the death of Tania marked the culmination of the show's violent elimination of its female characters. Although all but Alejandra were objects rather than agents of manipulative or misplaced passions, it was the show's women who paid the price for the men's failings. Lorena's death, for instance, concretized the limits of Ismael's power and the destructiveness of his ambition; the power of love, which allows him to reconcile with Ricardo and hopefully to start a new life abroad, is only revealed to him via its loss. Graciela's rape is also shown as a consequence of Ricardo's emotional backwardness, presumably due to the loss of his mother and brother and subsequent alienation from his cold, distant father. Although Graciela must live with the scars forever, Ricardo is allowed to repent and to beg not Graciela's but Angel's forgiveness.² In these scenarios, the show seemed to be fighting to maintain an obviously fragile and untenable notion of patriarchal domination whose very fragility led inexorably to the violent eradication of female characters in order to pave the way for male redemption. This redemption, however, was tentative and partial at best, particularly in the case of Juan Daniel after the fatal stabbing of Tania by Ismael's oldest son, Bernardo, known in the underworld as "Medusa."

Although unlikely based on the plot alone, Tania's death had been foretold in the fan press for extratextual reasons: actress Gaytán was not only pregnant, but was engaged to actor Eduardo Capetillo, who made his jealousy well known and who reportedly expected his future wife to quit working after their wedding. The same issue of TVyNovelas that discussed the show's ending also announced their June wedding date and the fact that Gaytán would

²It is also worth noting that after an episode in which Graciela met with a back alley abortionist--a terrifying visit that ended in her deciding to keep the baby--TVyNovelas felt obliged to run an article by Itati Cantoral in which she asserted that in her character's situation, she would never seek an abortion. Rodrigo Vidal, on the other hand, was never typecast as bad or criminal outside the show, nor were any other "villians" made to answer for their fictional actions; which indicates that the show's moral universe did not suffice to contain grey areas such as abortion.

remain in seclusion during her pregnancy in order to maintain her sexy image. Later, the couple would be married on television in a "traditional"-style wedding purposefully evocative of that of Jorge Negrete and María Félix in 1952, which was also televised.³ Perhaps, then, the patriarchal drama left oddly unresolved on the show was completed off-screen, with Televisa's skillful orchestration blurring the line between television and real life.

Also interesting was the rumor that the producer of Dos mujeres, Emilio Larrosa, had intended to release two different endings: one for broadcast in Mexico, the other for the United States (Barquera Moreno 24). While I do not know which of these two, if either, became the one that was eventually broadcast in both countries, the idea of the different endings seems more a gimmick than a serious consideration of cultural differences among audiences, since novelas had long been crossing the border without difficulty. Although the Spanish language network SIN had long been dismantled due to laws against foreign ownership of broadcast media, its domestically-owned heir Univisión continued to function more or less as Televisa's U.S. outlet. Unlike the dominant pattern in which cheap U.S. programming competes in Latin America with national product in a way that is rightfully seen as debilitating, Mexican and other Latin American producers have utilized the expansion of cable television in the U.S. as a means of reaching Latin American immigrants, a native-born Spanish speaking audience, and even a small number of English-speaking fans attracted for various reasons to the Spanish networks' programming. In 1994, Televisa was beginning to toy with the idea of bilingual novelas, while Latino celebrities like Tex-Mex singer Selena, Brazilian television personality Xuxa and Cuban-American talk show host Cristina Saralegui were attempting, with varying degrees of success, to cross over into the English-speaking mainstream.⁴ The rumor regarding Dos mujeres's two endings, if ultimately unfounded, emphasizes the importance of the United States market for the Mexican media giant.

At any rate, neither of the two possible endings published in TVyNovelas made it to the screen. In the one favored by the magazine's writer, Juan Daniel and Ana María were to reconcile and live happily ever after, while in the version provided by the producers, Tania was to die in a car accident and Ana María, unable to come to terms with her husband's betrayal, was to kill herself. The ending that was in fact televised is considerably more feminist, in that 1) Tania dies from a knife thrust intended

³An ad for the event published in La Opinión consisted of an "invitation" to the Univisión broadcast of the wedding issued to readers by the sponsoring corporation, MCI.

⁴In late 1994, Saralegui hosted an English language special on CBS entitled Cristina Presents: Latin Lovers of the '90s, featuring interviews with Erik Estrada, Plácido Domingo, Lorenzo Lamas, and Ricky Martin.

for her rival, whose life she saves, and 2) Ana María simply takes the children and leaves to start her life over elsewhere.

What is not reconciled, however, is the crisis to which I have already alluded, which leaves nearly all the characters, good and evil alike, either dead or dangling in a limbo of despair and defeat. Although Angel and Graciela's wedding is a gesture in the direction of a more conventional reconciliation (i.e. the salvational mechanism typical of telenovela finales), even that event is burlesqued by the appearance of Graciela's mother, brought down by her own ambition and now a rag-clad street beggar. Like that of Alejandra's insanity, the spectacle of Amalia's clownish degradation undercuts the illusion of romance embodied by the young couple's otherwise harmonious union. Romance, though attractive, no longer convinces.

III. Fin del camino: The Truck Driver as Atravesado

In the last frame of the episode, the title "fin del camino" is superimposed over a long shot of Juan Daniel's truck, rolling once more down the highway. This image, following as it does the final scene where Juan Daniel comes home to find himself abandoned, could not be more appropriate an expression of the character's fate. For, one could argue, it his status as a truck driver that if not literally, then certainly metaphorically predetermines his failure to achieve his desires and to resolve his conflicts into a semblance of stability and harmony. A truck driver, nomadic and transient by definition, is at odds with scenarios of domesticity; away from his family for long periods of time, the opportunities for transgression, that is, for passage through different worlds and/or assumption of different identities, is great. Like all nomads, the truck driver is not able to control the landscape in which he must live and work; he is controlled by it, and within its boundaries, invents ingenious mechanisms for physical and psychic survival. That his desire is divided in half is hardly surprising, for his life overall is fragmented and unstable.

Furthermore, although based in the nation's capital, Juan Daniel operates across a much larger expanse of national territory, encompassing both the urban center and its northern borderlands. The two locales in which most of the show takes place, Mexico City and Tijuana, are twin hubs on that cultural superhighway whose routes are patrolled by Televisa and the government-controlled media but also increasingly traversed by roqueros, cholos, banda musicians, punks, and postmodern "outlaws" like performance artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña, writer Rubén Martínez and musician Sergio Arau. Its paths of economic and cultural exchange dating back to pre-Columbian times have been described brilliantly by Tijuana writer Federico Campbell in his short story "Insurgentes Big Sur":

[Y]ou'd turn your gaze from one side to another, from Los Angeles to the DF and vice versa, like in a Ping-Pong game. You couldn't decide very easily which of the two poles most attracted you; it wasn't ever very clear to you if the innovations in speech and dress came from Tepito or from the East Side. (162)

In recent years, the internationalization of capital has contributed to even greater cultural fluidity: the commercial "Mexican" music industry, for example, is based in Los Angeles, and music, films, television, dance and clothing styles flow easily in both directions across the border. The constant exchange of cultural style and innovation that Campbell describes, however, is contradicted by the border's function as exclusionary apparatus, which has lately increased to the point of transforming the borderlands into a war zone. Recent U.S. administrations' commitments to curbing illegal immigration have encouraged the militarization of border regions; the National Guard, Marines and Army have been called in to reinforce the Border Patrol and the DEA, whose "War on Drugs" provides additional grounds for suspicion and harassment of migrants. In fact, the Reagan-era Defense Authorization Act of 1982 overturned a century-old ban on military involvement in domestic law enforcement; since then, restrictions have further broken down, and the military has increasingly been used to control cross-border traffic of goods and people (Palafox 2).

The early 1990s debates over NAFTA clearly brought out the impossible, contradictory nature of border politics: on the one hand, the border was to open up, enabling the free flow of capital and goods; on the other, restrictions on human movement were to be tightened, with the trade agreement itself being touted as a remedy for the "immigration problem" by virtue of its supposed contribution to national economic development. While arguments against NAFTA often played on stereotypical perceptions of U.S. workers' xenophobic anxieties, the trade agreement's own logic implied reinforcement of social and economic divisions underneath a surface freedom of competition whose actual effects would be cultural homogenization and--for those who could not compete--eradication.

In late 1995, the anxieties about border crossing that the passage of NAFTA was supposed to smooth over erupted once again specifically in regard to the trucking industry. Although free passage of commercial cargo trucks within limited zones across the two nations' borders had been negotiated since 1992 and written into the agreement that was passed in 1993, the clause was not to be implemented until December of 1995--at which time opposition originating on both sides of the border caused it to be postponed. Mexican shipping company owners and drivers, who had seen the devastation of the industry in the economic crisis of the previous year, sought time to prepare themselves for increased competition from the far-better equipped U.S.

companies. On the other side, the Teamsters union as well as government officials protested that the imminent invasion of Mexican cargo trucks meant nothing less than, in the words of Texas Attorney General Dan Morales, a "time bomb" waiting to go off. According to their opponents, Mexican drivers worked long hours in unsafe vehicles, were inexperienced and unregulated, and were likely to pose a threat to both other drivers and the environment as a whole. Reviving the familiar specter of an alien invasion from the south, the Teamsters even suggested that the highway patrol did not have sufficient resources to cope with Mexican drivers who did not respect the law.

An article in Time magazine drew on stereotypical images of Mexican incompetence and rasquachismo, describing trucks with bald tires and fraudulent insurance papers, and replicating the scare tactics of Texas officials who warned that Washington "will only get it when a truck hits a school bus." However, author Howard Chua-Eoan implied that Mexican drivers played an unpleasant but necessary role in the cross-border economy, since U.S. trucking companies, "afraid of theft and corruption, are reluctant to send their trucks into Mexico." A La Jornada editorial responded philosophically, suggesting that the controversy revealed the difficulties of free commerce between countries with such different socio-economic structures. The pathetic situation of the 150,000 Mexican drivers themselves became clear in the Mexican press: forced to work twice as many hours for far lower wages, they also bore the burden of transporting hazardous materials such as jet fuel, pesticides and corrosive chemicals in vehicles they could not afford to fully maintain, and feared the bankruptcy that competition from larger, newer, and more numerous U.S. vehicles would undoubtedly bring.

These differing perspectives replicated the original debate over NAFTA, bringing its contradictions into even sharper relief. What was at stake was the literal mobility of both people and goods in one package, such that for one to cross the other must also be accepted. Such mobility was essential in order to accomplish the goals of free trade, yet was threatening because it brought not only desired goods but undesirable side effects, the results of long-term economic inequality, across the previously clear line of demarcation. To borrow a phrase from Noam Chomsky, the Third World was coming home, incarnated in the person of the truck driver: the nomadic crosser of borders whose mobility, and therefore perceived lack of accountability, poses a threat, whether to domestic harmony in his personal life or to national programs of development and self-regulation.

While Claire Fox rightly cautions academics against playing fast and loose with the notion of "borderlands" at the expense of historical and cartographic specificity, it seems clear that in the debacle surrounding international trucking, the neoliberal ideal of limitless economic expansion crashes headlong into deeply rooted xenophobia and prejudice; or more precisely, the

political and economic need to restrict the movement of labor confronts the reality that goods cannot transport themselves. How are dos países to arrive at un solo camino? And when they do, what are its conditions, and who will be its architects?

IV. Ni de aquí, ni de allá: Erik Estrada's Melancholy

In mid-1994, Juan Daniel's truck, captured in the last frame of Dos mujeres, un camino, was thus headed for more than the Nowhere mapped out for him by the loss of both of his loves; it was also headed for the uncertainties of a new economic order determined by the Free Trade Agreement and soon to be devastated by the peso devaluation and subsequent economic crisis. Yet if Juan Daniel is a transient, elusive and therefore problematic figure in a world circumscribed by borders and ideologically committed to the construct of fixed identity and single, exclusive choices or caminos, so much more so is the actor by whom he is portrayed.

Born in New York of Puerto Rican parents, Erik Estrada began acting in the theater, but saw little hope of finding work in the film industry, given historic barriers against Latinos (Lackmann 17). But small parts in films, notably Airport in 1975, led to a co-starring role on the NBC television series CHiPs as the grinning, motorcycle-riding Officer Francis Poncherello. Although often playing the typical role of the Latino buffoon alongside his more serious Anglo partner Jon, "Ponch" became a leading icon and sex symbol of the 1970s. Yet by the early 1990s, Estrada was a has-been, reduced to acting in low budget exploitation films with titles like Caged Fury (1989) and Do or Die (1991) and Playboy centerfolds as co-stars. Like many Latinos in Hollywood, his demonstrated popularity did not guarantee him better roles or even a steady career.

The circumstances of Estrada's move to Mexican television are not entirely clear to me; however, in a revealing interview with Chabeli Iglesias broadcast on Univisión in February 1994, the actor spoke extremely positively of his experience with Televisa, explaining that Mexican production crews were not as rushed and treated their actors like human beings--an implicit indictment of the U.S. approach to production. With Dos mujeres, Estrada seemed to regain the status he had once enjoyed in connection with CHiPs, appearing in magazines and on talk shows, notably on Cristina, to the delight of members of studio audience who expressed their lasting allegiance to "Poncherello." Yet the switch to Televisa could not have been easy, given Estrada's acknowledged problems with the Spanish language. Reportedly, his lines were fed to him on the set via headphones; whether or not this is true, Juan Daniel overall spoke very little, and as I have mentioned, many of his most emotional statements were delivered in voice-over.

The sex appeal of his character would, in fact, seem to derive from his 1970s star persona, which the show's credit sequence and commercial break transition clips invoked. In these, Estrada wears a white shirt and black leather vest and rides a motorcycle. As he approaches the camera, he flashes his trademark huge grin--a facial expression rarely glimpsed on the show, but ubiquitous in posters and other memorabilia from the CHiPs era. It is perhaps due to the persistent marketability of this grin, as opposed to his generally forgettable film and television roles, that on the Chabeli show Estrada spoke of the posters with more pride than he showed toward any of his other work. In that same interview, in which the TV audience accompanied actor and host to Estrada's childhood home in East Harlem, Estrada strongly advised Latino youth to learn Spanish, expressing regret over not learning his parents' native language until he was an adult. For the interview itself he vacillated between Spanish and English (the classic tongue of the borderlands) and came across as a man neither "de aquí ni de allá"--a man marginalized by ethnic prejudice in the place of his birth, but not fully at home in his host country either.

Estrada's almost melancholic relation to language was further emphasized by his role in Juana la cubana, in which he played opposite action heroine Rosa Gloria Chagoyán in the title role. Directed by Chagoyán's husband Rolando Fernández, Juana was originally scripted in 1990 as a possible co-production between Cinematográfica Fernández and Paramount (Coria 42); it was finally produced by Fernández alone and released in 1994, becoming a huge box-office success. In this cartoonish and politically incoherent film, Estrada plays a Cuban colonel charged with protecting a corrupt regime whose nefarious experiments in biological warfare (supervised by an Iraqi scientist) threaten not only Cuba, but the world. Juana, a showgirl, dances for Estrada and his colleagues in a swank nightclub at night, even as she secretly leads students and campesinos in a CIA-aided guerrilla rebellion. The beginning of the film shows how, as a captain, Estrada's character Peraza was responsible for the death of Juana's father--the event that brought about her involvement in the guerrilla movement and her metamorphosis into "Comandante Z." This history charges their relationship with a hostility that is both personal and political.

What is interesting about Juana la cubana is that although Estrada received top billing, his actual role is relatively minimal. Most of film, when not focused on the rebels or on Juana's lavish nightclub numbers, shows the banter between the two CIA agents: Mac, a monolingual white racist, and his partner Tony who makes fun of him in double-entendre Spanish heavily censored for broadcast. Estrada only exchanges a few words with his colleague Colonel Montero and with Juana--and this scant dialogue is clearly dubbed. When he talks he is often filmed from

the back, or speaks from off-screen while his auditor is shown in the frame. Although the initial murder of Juana's father establishes his villainy, Peraza is even less developed than the other characters (whose lack of psychological subtlety is typical of the action genre); broad clichés and appeals to viewer expectations seem to take the place of dialogue and acting.

Like Dos mujeres, Juana la cubana manifested a clear split between the sexy, confident persona that viewers were presumably supposed to associate with Estrada and by extension his roles, and the dullness and ineffectiveness of his actual character. Advertising for the film insisted on Estrada's viability as a sex symbol, highlighting a sexually charged scene in the film in which Peraza, having discovered Juana's true identity as rebel leader, prepares to have sex with her in her dressing room before killing her. Close shots of her body and their taut faces as Estrada undresses the already-scantly clad Chagoyán with his gun were shown repeatedly in commercials, yet in the actual film, this scene ends by affirming not his masculine power, but rather his impotence, his rapist desire thwarted by the heroine's successful resistance. For Juana, while seeming to surrender, is in fact deploying the advice given her by her mentor, the club owner played by Irma Serrano, who had warned her early on that with the enemy, one can surrender "la illusion, pero nunca el corazón." Pretending to guide Peraza's hand along her body, Juana instead turns his gun away and causes him to shoot himself, fittingly, in the crotch. Found by his soldiers, Peraza dies denouncing Montero's and Juana's treachery.

According to the logic of the film, it is the moral righteousness of Chagoyán's resistance movement and her compelling sexuality that defeats Estrada, who represents both corrupt, totalitarian authority and domineering, lecherous machismo. Serrano's character tells Juana early in the film that "la única manera de dominar a los hombres es enloquecerlos"--paving the way for Juana's use of striptease as a guerrilla tactic, and once again making a connection between proper gender relations and madness. But one could also weave an intertextual argument in which Peraza's sexual frustration (i.e. inability to possess Juana) and the ultimate failure of his desires are the inevitable outcome of Estrada's dubbed voice. For like the machos described by Ramírez Berg, whose patriarchal authority becomes hideously meaningless and abstract when the state on which it depends begins to crumble, Estrada is a man with no ground to stand on, a man between countries, languages, contexts, a man with no community. His wielding of state and masculine power as a colonel in Juana la cubana seems as doomed and hopeless as his appeal to the imaginary authority of authentic love in Dos mujeres, for in no way is he the master of his destiny.

V. Qué difícil, mi destino: NAFTA and The Post-Citizen

Although this alienated condition is rendered especially visible and poignant by Estrada's particular career, it is not specific to him alone. One could, in fact, assert that such solitude is the epistemological condition, first of the borderlands, but increasingly of Mexico in the NAFTA era. Observers of the border have long pointed to its role in developing a dual or multiple identity, which Gómez-Peña calls a kaleidoscopic consciousness (21). Chicana writer Gloria Anzaldúa elaborates:

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. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. Los atravesados live here: the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the half-breed, the half dead; in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the "normal."
(3)

The culture of the borderlands is produced by divisions and (just as importantly) by the commodification of divisions. The border is presumably maintained for reasons of governmental management, but is crossed to take advantage of economic inequality, which for some means cheap goods (although potentially fraught with danger and the contagion of an alien culture) and for others higher wages in el otro lado (although at a potentially even higher price). The latter group, of course, feeds the cheap labor supply of which, as social scientists like Saskia Sassen, Richard Rouse and Michael Kearney have pointed out, the nominally closed border is the guarantor par excellence. In other words, just as the confessional in Michel Foucault's well-known interpretation depends on and in fact ensures the committing of sins, the border is an exclusionary mechanism that nevertheless must be crossed, legally and illegally, in order to have meaning.

A better sense of how the border functions productively, rather than repressively, can be gained by looking at the case of maquiladora production, an economic system blatantly founded on inequality between the two nations. As this system developed over the last several decades, Mexican cities like Tijuana and Ciudad Juárez supplied the cheap labor and lax regulation conducive to explosive industrial development, and were umbilically linked to the other side, where both products and profits returned. NAFTA, although heralded as a new era of cooperation or alternatively condemned as a monstrous threat to U.S. labor, really only affirmed the maquiladora relationship and laid the groundwork for its expansion.

Perhaps NAFTA's most dramatic aspect was not its economic impact, since multinational capital had been having its way with Mexico and the world for quite some time, but rather the death blow it dealt to the most cherished notion of the post-Revolutionary Mexican state--that is, the notion of national sovereignty. When the Mexican government signed the agreement in spite of its requests for worker protections having been ignored, it effectively gave up the posture it had maintained, at least rhetorically, towards the United States for many decades, and attempted to disguise its complicity in what might be called a "kinder, gentler" colonialism behind the mask of "modernization."

In terms of consciousness, this forfeiting of the ideological coherence of the Mexican nation, or mexicanidad, would seem to inevitably produce the kind of alienation and fragmentation already associated with the borderlands. Sociologist Javier Estinou Madrid wrote in his 1993 book La comunicación y la cultura nacionales en los tiempos de libre comercio that the commercialization of communications media

ha corrido y anulado con gran rapidez nuestra frontera ideológica de país, que es el principal dique mental que nos sirve para sobrevivir como nación....[D]e ahí que hoy hayamos adquirido otra forma de ver al ser humano, al mundo, al universo y a la vida, que no son las bases culturales que nuestra sociedad requiere para avanzar y crecer con armonía (21).

The same year, Gómez-Peña and Coco Fusco, in program notes for their performance piece "New World (B)order," summarized the situation using Roger Bartra's term "desmodernidad": "State of being without a mother [a play on the word "desmadre"] or living in permanent chaos."

More recently, Luis González Souza wrote in La Jornada:

Por grotesco que parezca, esa parece ser la discusión de fondo de nuestros días: ¿queremos que México siga siendo una nación, sí contrahecha, pero nación nuestra al fin y al cabo? O por el contrario, ¿queremos de plano convertir a México en un tianguis, más bien extranjero y dinamitado por todos lados, donde rija nada más que la ley del mercado?

Critiquing the current administration's economic policy, González Souza warns that the neoliberal project only replaces the corrupt and inefficient mismanagement currently associated with public enterprises with the even more frightening prospect of an economy controlled by private and mostly foreign corporations: "una rectoría en verdad canibalesca." Once again we return to García Canclini's dilemma: can such a thing as national culture exist in the era of transnationalization? To which the composer of "Dos mujeres, un camino," singing from the point of view of

postnational atravesado Juan Daniel, can be imagined to reply: "Que difícil, mi destino..."

For Televisa, the dilemma of national identity would appear to be a non-question; itself an early product of privatization, the "Mexico" it depicts is, in terms of news coverage, a sterile, heavily censored terrain, and in terms of its entertainment programming, a consumerist fantasy. That the main ideological goal of a show like Dos mujeres is the multiplication of consumption is clear from its final episode, which not only stages Tania's funeral as a music video for Bronco's "Cumbia Triste," but also includes a sequence in which the bereaved family views what the mother passionately describes as all that remains of their daughter--a video of Tania as aspiring model posing to music, which is sent to the family by a producer at Televisa! The slippage between the diegetic world (in which characters just happen to be entertainers and happen to be friends with the members of Bronco) and the world of Televisa's entertainment empire illustrates how the program, like many Televisa shows, endlessly substitutes intertextual references for narrative resolutions and thus promotes itself, that is, the continuity of consumption past the show's final episode, as the only possible resolution.

Yet it is important to understand that this mise-en-abyme is, in a sense, national culture in the postnational age. Televisa's Mexico is not simply the absence of reality for which it is often criticized, but in fact a present ideological vision of the nation. Its indigenous population, whose real-life counterparts are engaged in serious revolt in Chiapas and elsewhere, is nearly non-existent, perhaps disappeared (in the sense of the term used to describe the fate of political victims in recent Latin American history); its protagonists are blonde, blue-eyed, and miraculously untouched by the political upheavals and economic crises of their country--although the writers of the absurdist telenovela Agujetas de color de rosa did offer a potent allegory of Latin American political economy, in an episode in which gold that a sorcerer had magically conjured for some of the protagonists reverts just as abruptly into bananas.

Signifiers of the nation are indeed present among Televisa's consumerist ideological products; televised events such as El Grito speak to Mexican patriotism, as do traditionalist spectacles such as the wedding of Bibi Gaytán and Eduardo Capetillo. "Si algo le queda al nacionalismo," writes Carlos Monsiváis in an essay describing a Julio César Chávez fight as "un acto de la Nación," "es su condición pop" (24). Yet given the network's reluctance to address current events and problems, and equally importantly, the Mexican media's complex technological and ideological dependence on the United States (manifest, for example, in the overwhelming quantity of US-made films in Televisa's video rental outlets as well as on Mexican screens) these are essentially empty signifiers, like soccer chants

shouted in willful disregard of the fact that the game is over and the home team has lost.

Mexicanidad is further reduced to an advertising slogan on Univisión, where banda music, soccer games, and the products of multinational corporations are all presented as being the special prerogatives of the Mexican or Latino population. These appeals to patriotism, or what Harmony Wu refers to as "latinidad," play on spectators' very real need for community in a context shaped by racism and exclusion, yet on the production end are motivated more by the economic potential of growing demographics than by any authentic discourse of shared values and culture. In the nation-as-marketplace, writes González Souza, there are no longer citizens, only customers; this is true on both sides of the border, where social guarantees traditionally provided by the government (such as health, education etc.) are even now being replaced by a rhetoric of transaction and market value. Mexicanidad, in short, is less an expression of a cultural identity than, first, the "emotional residue of an unnatural boundary," and consequently, an attempt to sell an image of national identity to post-citizens, who are not only often forced to earn their livelihoods in another country, but who even at home are effectively disenfranchised.

In response, critics of the neoliberal project and its perceived selling of the nation to foreign investors tend to return to the state as the only avenue by which national culture can be protected. In the film industry, for example, directors continue to expect the state to function as an alternative to Televisa-style commercialism. Paradoxically, even those filmmakers whose work most incisively exposes the corruption and violence of state regimes and the absurd contradictions of the present situation have continued to agitate for increased state support for film production, for protectionist legislation, and other measures which make the government the patron of artistic expression and communication.

Although that position is understandable given the reality of having to compete with Hollywood under conditions as disadvantaged as those faced by the truck drivers mentioned earlier, dependence on the government is not only potentially politically dangerous, but also has historically not been proven to lead to the development of a sustainable industry. From its peak of state involvement under Luis Echeverría to the current climate of privatization and private sector cooperation, the fortunes of the film industry have risen and sank from sexenio to sexenio, in accordance with the interest and commitment of each president. At present, the dramatic effects of the peso devaluation and of NAFTA, resulting in the production of a mere handful of feature films in 1996, would seem to suggest the need for another model of cultural development.

While media producers understandably look for immediate solutions to their economic difficulties, some intellectuals have

begun to develop more nuanced approaches to national culture, emphasizing that the choice between the dysfunctional state and the cannibalism of corporate rule is a false choice. For González Souza, democratic reconstruction of the state is a necessary step: "Si realmente queremos seguir siendo una nación, ¿no es más justo y sensato sanear, democratizar al Estado?" Estinou Madrid, somewhat less radically, speaks of "contrapesos planificadores que no sean burocráticos, estatistas, paternalistas o populistas; pero que efectivamente vinculen los principales requerimientos de desarrollo material y espiritual de la población con la dinámica de producción cultural" (218), while García Canclini argues that the role of the state in culture and education needs to be reevaluated:

No se trata de reindicir en la idealización del Estado como sede de un nacionalismo telúrico, ni como administrador eficiente, ni como agente de donaciones populistas. Se trata de repensar al Estado como lugar del interés público, como árbitro o garante de que las necesidades colectivas de información, recreación e innovación no sean subordinadas siempre a la rentabilidad comercial. (30)

Opening new spaces for the expression of the nation's true diversity and heterogeneity, he concludes, can bring about the necessary "iconología electrónica que corresponda a la redefinición de la identidad" (33).

In agreement with these recommendations is EZLN spokesperson Subcomandante Marcos, who argued in a 1997 document entitled "Seven Questions for Whom it May Concern" that for the government to recognize difference, in this case the difference of Mexico's indigenous peoples, would be "to do justice and make possible the defense of the Nation from liquidation in a commercial sale." I quote Marcos in order to emphasize that the debate over national identity and integrity is not merely academic. While at the time of writing the Zedillo regime is using destabilizing tactics to promulgate the appearance of stability in Chiapas, professors and revolutionaries alike warn that the state must give up its monolithic rigidity and open itself up to the voices of what Jesús Martín Barbero calls "new subjects" if the nation, as sovereign entity and as scenario for the staging of collective identity, is to survive.

VI. Conclusion: Los machos también lloran

What then, of our original subjects: the macho caught between two women, the women, in the words of the Laura León song, "compartiendo el mismo hombre, el mismo amor"? An item published in the California newspaper El Andar in October 1995 suggested that the era of the "casa chica" was coming to an end-- not because of feminist objections to the double standard, but

rather for economic reasons. "De banqueros a panaderos," wrote Claudia Meléndez, "la realidad es que ya no les es posible mantener a sus 'queridas'. Con una inflación del 50 por ciento y una tasa de interés del 70 por ciento en las tarjetas de crédito, resulta que es más fácil mandarlas a volar que tratar de mantenerlas" (7).

More significant than Mexican men's ability to maintain their lovers, however, is their ability to support themselves and their families--an ability that is increasingly tenuous in the 1990s. Rising statistics of bankruptcy and unemployment parallel the institutionalization of cyclical migration to the U.S., as well as rural-to-urban migration within the country, as a necessary means of collective and individual survival. As the social and economic position of the average man becomes more and more precarious, it appears that contemporary representations of machismo are less reflections of patriarchal domination than nostalgic evocations of an imagined past in which identity was more simple and fixed within clear boundaries. This search for imagined stability is evoked in the representations of failed machos portrayed by Erik Estrada in 1994, which was also the year of the assassinations of Donaldo Colosio and José Francisco Ruiz Massieu, stark evidence of the patria(rchy)'s inability or unwillingness to protect even its own. Perhaps its clearest manifestation is in the song whose title I have borrowed for this presentation: the Banda Machos' "Los machos también lloran."

In that song, the loneliness of the migrant is reconfigured in terms of masculinity. "Estoy lejos y solo en la vida," sings the protagonist, lamenting his fate. A narrating voice tells us that, mired in his solitude, he cries and cries, but reassures us, "aunque llore, ¡no se lo quita lo macho, compas!" and concludes, "los hombres, por machos que sean, tienen sentimientos y saben llorar." Here the ontological status of the macho is no longer that of hero, rebel, or bearer of a sacred covenant between himself and the state. The fact that he has feelings and is able to cry does not redeem him, nor does the fact that he remains a macho restore any of the dignity and security he has lost by leaving his home and family.

Machismo in "Los machos también lloran" is an empty value, signifying nothing; and one is left to respond, not with the programmatic logic of an Estino Madrid, the against-the-odds idealism of a Subcomandante Marcos, or the inventiveness of an Anzaldúa or Gómez-Peña, but rather with the bemused sadness of Monsiváis, listening to the boasts of drunks at a Monterrey cantina: "¿Qué no se dan cuenta que el capitalismo salvaje no los toma en cuenta? ¿Qué no lo entienden que ya no cupieron?" (231). Machismo, deterritorialized, seeks an impossible recovery, not knowing that it has been eclipsed: "A un sistema lo renuevan y reactivan las conductas de quienes no lo creen amenazado y lo protegen con su ingenuidad." Although mass culture reflects the deterritorialization experienced by Mexican men and women in the

age of NAFTA, its complicit role in that process prevents it from showing a solution. We are thus forced to conclude with one last slogan: the revolution--that is, the battle for the soul of the nation, whatever shape or form it may take--will not be televised.

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