

## Abstract

Title: Homelands in Exile:  
Three Contemporary Latin American Jewish  
Women Embody the Written Word

Laura Suzanne Weingarten,  
Doctor of Philosophy, 2004

Dissertation  
directed by: Dr. Saúl Sosnowski,  
Director of Global Programs

Margo Glantz, Nora Glickman, and Ruth Behar are three contemporary Latin American Jewish women writers who have succeeded in creating a literary homeland in the absence of a satisfactory geographic one. They have created an imaginary realm where their cultural, religious and ethnic diversity has flourished. Glantz, Glickman, and Behar have redefined Diaspora/diaspora, escaped a seemingly fated cultural and geographic exile, and established unique identities through the act of writing.

Homelands in Exile: Three Contemporary  
Latin American Jewish Women Writers  
Create a Literary Homeland

By

Laura Suzanne Weingarten

2004

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate  
School of the University of Maryland, College  
Park in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy.

2004

Advisory Committee:

Dr. Saúl Sosnowski, Chair  
Dr. Sandra Cypess-Messinger  
Dr. Regina Igel  
Dr. Phyllis Peres  
Dr. Marsha Rozenblit

© Copyright by  
Laura Suzanne Weingarten  
2004

**Table of Contents**

Introduction.....	1
A Theoretical Framework.....	20
Chapter 1: Margo Glantz:	
An Identity Conceived in the Word .....	49
Chapter 2: Nora Glickman:	
Theatrical Self-Consciousness.....	130
Chapter 3: Ruth Behar:	
The <i>Juban</i> Configuration.....	289
Conclusion.....	370
Bibliography.....	386

## Introduction

This study will examine selected works by Margo Glantz (b. 1930 Mexico City, Mexico), Nora Glickman (b. La Pampa, Argentina 1944), and Ruth Behar (b.1956 Havana, Cuba), in order to demonstrate how these writers have individually succeeded in establishing a literary homeland in place of the geographic one which they all lack. This homeland, created with words, becomes the space in which each writer is free to explore her multiple identities without the societal or canonical demands of embracing a single nationality, religion, language, culture, or literary style. The borderless territories of these imagined homelands are made up of plays, novels, short stories, autobiographical works, essays, and poems. This diversity of literary expression provides the writers with the flexibility and freedom to utilize the most effective means to communicate their idea, express their creativity and share their lives with their readers. Through their effective and candid self-exposure, these writers ultimately establish a "post-exilic discourse" and can invite their readers to visit their literary homelands.

It is clear that the impetus towards this discourse of diaspora arises in response to the seemingly inescapable condition of being de-territorialized culturally and geographically. The act of writing oneself into existence, or, according to the Jewish Rabbinical concept, inscribing oneself in the *Book of Life*, through their respective texts, serves as these writers' proof of citizenship in their self-made homelands. Through the power of their creative imagination, they have miraculously managed to put an end to their state of exile.

Glantz, Glickman, and Behar are not distinctive for being the first Latin American Jewish women writers to recognize and express their hybrid identities as Jews and women inhabiting multiple cultural and geographic spaces; but they are unique for the exceptionally creative ways that they develop and elaborate these themes in their work. All three writers address their sense of dislocation from a stable and concrete geographic space or specific nation (a form of perpetual exile), their personal and familial "transculturación"<sup>1</sup>, and their mechanisms for coping with the ongoing processes of assimilation, integration, and identity reconfiguration. Through their vividly imagined

---

<sup>1</sup> *Transculturación*, as coined by Fernando Ortíz, will be fully defined and applied further on in the text.

literary homelands, they reveal critical components of the identity and literary works of contemporary Latin American Jewish women writers. Glantz, Glickman, and Behar explore and express the intermingling and, at times, conflicting cultural, religious, and national affinities in their texts, bringing critical and original manifestations of the Latin American Jewish woman's identity to the literary forefront.

While Glantz, Glickman, and Behar may be only three Latin American Jewish women writers and academics among many, the connections between them are noteworthy, as well as how they contribute to the foundation of an alternative discourse by cross-cultural women writers. To begin with, they are representative of the evolution of Latin American Jewish women's writing throughout the generations. Glantz, born in Mexico City in 1930, reflects the impact immigration and integration had upon her and her family at a time in Mexican history when the Cristero Movement<sup>2</sup> was launching attacks on Jews and suspected communists. Glantz's writing

---

<sup>2</sup> The Cristero Movement occurred in Mexico in the 1920s and was a resurgence of pro-Catholic dogma, at a time when support for the Catholic Church had waned. There were waves of anti-Communist and anti-Semitic attacks throughout the country, in response to the potential threats to the Catholic Church. There was also a strong influence from the rising Nazi regime in Germany and the anti-Semitic campaigns across Western Europe.

is as much a reflection of the era in which she was born and lived as it is of her cross-cultural upbringing in a Jewish home, a Catholic country, a society tinged with indigenous culture, and her loose ties to the life her parents left behind in Russia.

Born in 1944 in La Pampa, Argentina, Glickman chronologically follows Glantz. Like Glantz's writing, Glickman's plays reflect her life as the child of immigrants in Argentina, as well as her own experiences as a transculturated individual in Argentina and the United States. Born at the end of World War II and the Holocaust, Glickman was acutely aware of the persecution of Jews in Europe and the potential dangers of being Jewish in the Diaspora. Her writing reflects the lives of immigrants that have been marked by historical hardships and persecutions, and the inheritance of a diasporic consciousness that spans the generations.

Behar, born just twelve years after Glickman in Havana, Cuba in 1956, completes the generational link between the three writers. Behar is also an heir to the immigrant consciousness as a result of being born to parents who had immigrated from Eastern and Western Europe to Cuba, and she attests to the impact the immigrant and exile experiences have made upon her life and writing.



Just as Glantz and Glickman's identities were impacted by the political and social upheaval during their childhoods, Behar was born on the eve of Castro's rise to power and the political, social, and financial restructuring of the country. The diversity of the Cuban population, Behar's own cultural hybridity, and her immigration to the United States in 1961 due to Cuba's political instability, all play a significant role in the ways in which Behar conveys her mixed cultural background through her writing.

The similarities and commonalities between Glantz, Glickman, and Behar can be found in their sense of physical, cultural, and psychological exile from their various homelands. These include their use of literature as a means to reconfigure their identities and recover their homelands, and their welding of various literary styles and genres to communicate themselves through the written word. The fact that Glantz, Glickman, and Behar have different nationalities and places of birth is a factor that warrants discussion.

Beginning with Margo Glantz, I will primarily address her autobiographical work, *Las genealogías* (1982), which began as chronicles of her life and her parents' lives, and later became a complete work. It is exemplary of her diverse cultural and religious affinities and her unique

form of literary expression, and although the work easily falls into the category of autobiography, she incorporates elements of narrative, collective memory and interview techniques, which ultimately place *Las genealogías* in a category of its own. Glantz simultaneously serves as the narrator of her own life and the chronicler of her family history. She acts as the primary and secondary agent in the recuperation of personal and family memories, traditions, and experiences in order to reconstruct and communicate her identity in a Spanish-speaking and predominantly Catholic world that fails to reflect her diversity. Her memoirs not only speak to her own experiences, but represent a strong collective voice of Latin American Jewish immigrants as well.

Glantz further explores her Jewish identity in a more global context in *No pronunciarás*, in which she examines the nature of nomenclature and the inherent biblical quality of her work. Glantz illuminates the cultural derivations of words and demonstrates that their utilization provides further proof of a culture's presence and endurance. There is a clear connection between Glantz's examination of the complex and multi-layered nature of words in *No pronunciarás* and the anecdotes she weaves into *Las genealogías*.

Nora Glickman also employs multiple writing styles to communicate her complex identity as a Jew, an Argentine woman, a New Yorker and a Latina. She has composed various short stories and theatrical works that speak directly to her potentially perplexing and conflicting hybridity in which she attempts to resolve her inner conflicts through fictitious characters who bear a striking resemblance to her and to her family members. Instead of relying upon personal testimony or autobiography to express herself, as Glantz and Behar do, Glickman animates other characters to resolve the difficulties of being Jewish in Argentina, or Latina in the United States, while she simultaneously relates to multiple cultural, national and religious affinities in whatever geographic space she inhabits.

The most striking short theatrical piece that addresses a clearly Jewish quandary is *Liturgias*. This play deals with the Mexican Inquisition and its impact on the contemporary Jewish and *criptojudío*<sup>3</sup> conscience. Glickman explores the undeniable impact of the Inquisition

---

<sup>3</sup> *Criptojudío* was a term employed to describe those Jews who secretly continued to practice Judaism after supposedly converting to Catholicism. After several generations of preserving many sacred traditions, the descendants of these *criptojudíos* were unaware of their Jewish heritage and continued to perform certain religious rites without realizing they were Jewish.

upon contemporary Mexican Jews through the relationship of a married couple living in New Mexico, who both appear to be - and believe they are - Mexican Catholics. The wife, Blanca Días, suffers from recurring nightmares about being burned at the stake in an *auto da fe*<sup>4</sup> for propagating the Jewish faith. In her conscious state, Blanca Días (who curiously shares the same name with a woman who was in fact burned at the stake in an *auto da fe*), remembers certain peculiar practices of her family: lighting the *Shabbat* candles<sup>5</sup>, reciting prayers in a foreign tongue (Hebrew), and preparing for burial recently deceased family members with great care and ritual.<sup>6</sup> Upon realizing that these practices were indeed those shared by *conversos*<sup>7</sup> and *criptojudíos*, she

---

<sup>4</sup> The *autos da fe*, translated as displays of faith, were the public events in which accused Judaizers, propagators of the Jewish faith, would be tortured or burned at the stake.

<sup>5</sup> The beginning of *Shabbat*, the Jewish Sabbath, is at sundown on Friday evening and is marked by the lighting of two candles.

<sup>6</sup> Recently deceased Jews are bathed and closely watched from the time of their death to their burial. Friends, neighbors and other Jews can perform this act of respect for the deceased.

<sup>7</sup> *Conversos* were Jews that either had been forced to or had willingly converted to Catholicism. Many secretly continued to practice Judaism and were, therefore, referred to as *criptojudíos* (see footnote 3 above).

vows to recuperate her lost Jewish identity and confront her husband about their secret past.

Unlike the wife, the husband refuses to accept the possibility that he could be of Jewish descent and defiantly points out that it is already difficult enough to be Latino and an "Other" in the United States. The thought of being a member of yet another ostracized minority does not bode well with him, to say the least. The husband's denial of his Jewish ancestry, because of the stigma attached to it and the burden of honoring a faith that he has until now repudiated, is reflective of a broader Jewish identity crisis. Glickman is acutely aware of the perpetual push for individuals of both Jewish and Latin heritage to negotiate between conflicting religious doctrines and practices, cultural norms, and expectations. She creatively demonstrates this internal and external discord through her fictional characters' struggle to accept and embrace their internal cultural and religious dichotomies.

In another theatrical piece by the same author, *Noticias de suburbio*, the central focus of the text revolves around the obstacles and hardships of being an immigrant (especially from Latin America) and a woman in the United States. The characters simultaneously dispel oppressive stereotypes and transform themselves into high-

powered, successful, and independent women. Glickman lends a great deal of her own personal experience as a Latin American immigrant in the United States to the play and its fictitious characters, in order to resolve common identity crises of immigrants and demonstrate that they can indeed begin to redefine themselves and their notion of homeland while in exile.

A third stage play by Glickman, *Un día en Nueva York*, continues to explore the difficulties of being an immigrant in the United States, with a particular emphasis on the Latin American and Jewish immigrant experiences. The two central characters, Luisa and Golda, immigrants from Latin America and Poland, respectively, struggle to find their place in a city and a country that fail to take the place of their lost homelands. Oblivious to each other's sense of displacement, they long to have what the other seems to have in terms of stability, identity, and ability to find their way in the world. Although they do not recover their lost national and ethnic homelands during the course of the play, they do provide a critical look at the perpetual search for personal identity and cultural homeland among immigrants in the Americas.

The last theatrical work by Glickman analyzed in this study is *Una tal Raquel Lieberman*. Distinct from the other

works, in which all the action takes place in the United States, *Una tal Raquel Lieberman* takes place in Argentina. Raquel Lieberman is a semi-fictional character, one of the many Polish immigrants to that country who was tricked into a life of prostitution in order to survive and support their families in Argentina or back "home" in Poland. However fictionalized, Raquel's story embodies the tremendous hardships and pitfalls of being an immigrant in Argentina and the struggle to recuperate a lost identity and life in a foreign country and culture. Although Raquel herself never reclaims her lost identity or sense of self-worth, Glickman demonstrates that Raquel's granddaughter comes to recognize her valor and noble acts. In the end, Raquel is immortalized by the written record of her valiant dismantling of the illegal prostitution ring that had enslaved her and countless other immigrant women. While Raquel was never able to break free of the psychological shackles that held her back from self-acceptance, keeping her in perpetual exile, the theatrical piece itself and the historical documentation of her life (and the lives of others who were similarly abused) creates that imaginary space within which she can realize her self-worth and claim a legitimate identity.

*Tradition and Innovation*, an anthology of Latin American Jewish writers edited by Nora Glickman and Robert DiAntonio, reflects the editors' desire to uncover and expose the multifaceted nature of Jewish experiences and identities in contemporary Latin America. The introduction alone is revealing of the editors' desire to carve out a new space for Jewish writers who have such diverse backgrounds and practices. Glickman's efforts to erect a literary homeland of her own clearly are furthered by the introduction and promotion of fellow Latin American Jewish writers to a broader audience. The investigative character studies in various theatrical pieces, narrative works, and essays in the anthology are similar to those in her own plays and short fictions.

Interestingly enough, in *Tradition and Innovation*, Glickman foretold a world in which contemporary Latin American Jewish women writers would search unceasingly for an intangible space in which they could embrace their hybridity. Glickman seemed to be ironically unaware of the magnitude of this prophetic observation and its effect on her subsequent creation of a literary homeland. She observed the following about Latin American Jewish women writers:

The duality of living within two groups simultaneously, as women in a dominantly male Jewish



literary tradition, and as Jews in a dominantly Latin American Catholic culture, is an inherent trait they all share. They insist on belonging to two worlds, but ideally, what they strive for is an intangible, liminal space, for between both worlds lies the wonderful space of the writer, a space overflowing with mysteries, waiting to be discovered.<sup>8</sup>

It is noteworthy that Glickman does not include herself in this assessment of Margo Glantz, Sabina Berman and Angelina Muñiz-Huberman. Perhaps standing outside of this intimate circle, to which she so clearly belongs, enables her to fortuitously appreciate her own efforts as a *mestiza*<sup>9</sup> woman, while bringing such multifaceted women to the literary forefront.

Ruth Behar capitalizes on her professional status as a cultural anthropologist to become an ethnographer of her own life. She delves into her multi-layered identity of

---

<sup>8</sup> Nora Glickman and Robert DiAntonio, eds., *Tradition and Innovation...* (Albany: State University Press, 1987) 321.

<sup>9</sup> The term *mestizo* has been traditionally used to describe people in the Americas who were a mix of Spanish or criollo (children of Spaniards born in the Americas) and indigenous blood. *Mestizo* was first formally employed by Ricardo Feierstein of Argentina in his novel of the same name to describe integrated Jews in Argentina.

being Cuban, Latina, Jewish, female, American, and an inheritor of both Ashkenazi and Sephardic traditions in the form of autobiographical stories, poems, narrative and dialogues with other women of similar backgrounds.

Behar's intentions in exploring and resolving her identity conflicts are multifaceted. She expresses a clear desire to create a literary space where she can be Latina, Jewish, Cuban and American without being forced to sublimate one affinity for another. She rejects the notion that she cannot be a true feminist, Cubana, Jew, Latina, or American because she is a hybrid. As expressed in her earlier works, Behar struggled for many years with the belief that she was a fraud -- an illegitimate Cubana, Jew and Latina who could not fully identify with or be accepted by any one of those groups because of her failure to choose or be one of those exclusively. Luce Irigaray, a prominent feminist theorist, provides the following observation and response to Behar's conflicting identities: "(Re) discovering herself, for a woman, thus could only signify the possibility of sacrificing no one of her pleasures to another,

of identifying herself with none of them in particular, *of never being simply one.*"<sup>10</sup>

The need to create a space in which all components of her hybridity could be expressed and celebrated is satisfied by the creation of the literary homeland that Behar

---

<sup>10</sup> Luce Irigaray, "The Sex Which Is Not One," *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997) 367.

has constructed. This literary homeland not only responds to her own personal desire for unrestricted literary expression, but to an aspiration shared by many cultural anthropologists who recognize the demand for an innovative and interdisciplinary writing style that incorporates personal testimony, collective memory and identity, historical facts, and various literary genres.

There is an array of works written and edited by Behar which speak to her search for self and a space in which she can bring together and animate all of her disunited connections to Judaism, Cuba, Latina women, and the United States. Her most striking anthropological work, *The Vulnerable Observer*, responds directly to the immigrant quest for homeland (particularly that of second-generation Cuban Americans). The text is noteworthy because it responds to a growing need among immigrants to establish a space where they can maintain their cultural ties and native language while becoming legitimate citizens of their new countries of residence. *The Vulnerable Observer* is a direct response to the predicament of living in the Borderlands. Behar writes: "As the Indian-English novelist Salman Rushdie has written, it is impossible for emigrants to recover the homeland they left behind. The best they can do is 'create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but

invisible ones, imaginary homelands.'"<sup>11</sup> This observation made by Rushdie and embraced by Behar speaks to the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of a true return to one's own or one's family's homeland - while simultaneously providing the ultimate antidote to the fact that the concrete homeland is unattainable. The text itself, resplendent with fictionalized memories and family histories, creates an imaginary space that the writer - and her readers - can call home.

In *The Vulnerable Observer*, Behar also employs Daniel and Jonathan Boyarin's somewhat controversial definition of Diaspora<sup>12</sup>. This term has had multiple definitions and implications over the generations, and an examination of all of its denotations and connotations are absolutely critical and understanding of what it means for Behar, Glantz, and Glickman to be living in "the Diaspora," as well as how they manage to escape this exilic state through the creation of their literary homeland.

*Bridges to Cuba* is an anthology of Cuban women writers who once inhabited the island of Cuba and continue to call

---

<sup>11</sup> Ruth Behar, *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology That Breaks Your Heart* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996) 134.

<sup>12</sup> The term Diaspora will be fully defined and explained in the theoretical section of this study, as its meaning has evolved and altered over the centuries.

it their home, in spite of the fact that they currently reside in the United States. The women are of diverse backgrounds – African, Asian, and Jewish – and struggle to maintain strong ties to the homelands they left behind. Behar and her interviewees share the need to safeguard their own and their families' memories and traditions back on the Island, but also grapple with the demand to immerse themselves in their new country, culture and language. Oral and written communication have become the only way for them and Behar to recover themselves and hold on to all that they risk losing from their past.

*Women Writing Culture* is another anthropological work that recognizes women as ethnographers of their own lives. Behar stresses the double marginalization that women experience as a result of their gender and because they are immigrants or descendants of immigrants. She demonstrates how their writing and verbal exchanges provide the healing and uniting influence they so desperately need to become whole.

"*Juban América*" is a short piece composed by Behar and published in various anthologies and the literary journal *Poetics Today*. The title coins a humorous and original term to account for Jewish Cuban hybridity, and responds to the need for appropriate rhetoric to describe individuals

of traditionally unclassifiable backgrounds. In this work, Behar reveals her multiple selves and the desire to identify a single term that will speak to her diversity.

Although *Juban* is a catchy term, the essence of the work is her explanation of who she is and the need for the creation of alternate forms of literary expression that speaks to the experiences of those straddling multiple cultural and geographic fault lines.

The diversity present in these unclassifiable works by Glantz, Behar, and Glickman requires an intimate examination from diasporic, exilic, deterritorialized, assimilated, integrated, and transculturated theoretical standpoints. The ultimate conclusion - that these writers have essentially established imagined literary homelands through their writing, and engaged their readers in a *post-exilic discourse* through a range of genres - will answer the significant question, "how does one find, let alone recover, a place in the world?"<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> Kathryn Hellerstein, "In Exile in the Mother Tongue: Yiddish and the Woman Poet," *Borders, Boundaries, and Frames - Cultural Criticism and Cultural Studies*, ed. Mae G. Henderson (New York: Routledge, 1995) 72.

## A Theoretical Framework

In order to demonstrate effectively that Margo Glantz, Ruth Behar, and Nora Glickman have indeed created a literary homeland through their diverse and polyphonic works by means of a *post-exilic discourse*, it is essential to examine their writing from multiple theoretical perspectives. Because their writing has characteristics of various styles and genres, it is necessary to carefully address each one.

The term utilized most often in this study is "Diaspora." Whether it is written formally as *Diaspora* or less so as *diaspora* depends on the theorist and his or her intentions. According to controversial scholars Jonathan and Daniel Boyarin, as well as theoretician Howard Wettstein, there is a need to redefine what the Diaspora is because some feel it no longer maintains the exclusively negative connotations as it did in centuries past. Wettstein's definition is highly beneficial to this study, as it rejects the traditional belief that there must be a concrete territory to return to in order to recover from an exilic state.

Diaspora does not refer us to those scattered tribes whose identity can only be secured in



relation to some sacred homeland to which they must at all costs return, even if it means pushing other people into the sea. This is the old, the imperializing, the hegemonising, of "ethnicity..." The diaspora as I intend it here is defined, not by essence of purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity; by a conception of "identity" which lives with and through, not despite, difference, by hybridity.<sup>14</sup>

Wettstein sees the need to differentiate between *galut* (which roughly translates from the Hebrew as exile) and Diaspora/diaspora as it is defined today. He elucidates the radical evolution of the terms *galut* and Diaspora from an entirely negative state as something to be overcome and terminated, to becoming merely a characteristic of a people's flexibility, endurance, and determination:

To be in *galut* is to be in the wrong place; it is to be dislocated, like a limb out of socket. Indeed, it is tempting to suppose that exile suggests, in Erich Gruen's words, 'a bitter and doleful image, offering a bleak vision that

---

<sup>14</sup> Howard Wettstein, "Coming to Terms With Exile," in *Diasporas and Exiles: Varieties of Jewish Identity*, Ed. Erich S. Gruen (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002) 47.

issues either in despair or in a remote state of reverie of restoration.' Or, as Bluma Goldstein puts it, it is 'a condition of forced homelessness and anguished longing to return to the homeland.'<sup>15</sup>

Diaspora, on the other hand, although it suggests absence from some center -- political or religious or cultural -- does not connote anything so hauntingly negative. Indeed, it is possible to view diaspora in a positive light. Gruen discusses the view that Jews and Judaism require no 'territorial sanctuary or legitimization;' as 'the people of the Book, their homeland resides in the text.' Diaspora would then impose no special burden. It might even facilitate the spread of the word.<sup>16</sup>

The definitions and distinctions made by Wettstein and Gruen are critical to this study, namely because of their belief that a "territorial sanctuary and legitimization" are not necessary for Jews who reside outside of the borders of the biblical homeland. Although still extremely

---

<sup>15</sup> Wettstein, 1-2.

<sup>16</sup> Wettstein, 2.

controversial, a number of critics and academics do support the radical and daring thesis that diaspora may not be an entirely bad thing. Further, while the description of the Jews as "People of the Book" is usually a religious observation, it is not necessarily exclusive of secular Jews. Comparable to Jews who choose to inscribe themselves in the *Book of Life* through religious observance of the words of the Scriptures, Jewish writers who construct texts that provide refuge and residence from an otherwise exilic existence legitimize and safeguard their identities within in their own writings. In Erich S. Gruen's essay in *Diasporas and Exiles*, he further develops the idea of a "territorial sanctuary" outside of the confines of a religious interpretation:

The alternative approach takes a very different route. It seeks refuge in a comforting concept: that Jews require no territorial sanctuary or legitimization. They are 'the people of the Book.' Their homeland resides in the text – not just the canonical Scriptures, but an array of Jewish writings that help to define the nation and give voice to its sense of identity. Their 'portable Temple' serves the purpose. Diaspora, geographical restoration, is therefore super-

fluous, even subversive. Diaspora, in short, is no burden; indeed it is a virtue in the spread of the word.<sup>17</sup>

The belief that the Jewish homeland is to be found and recovered through the written word is clearly a rabbinical assertion, as rabbis and other Jewish scholars thought that through the continuous study of the Old Testament, and later rabbinical texts would provide them with a portable homeland; however, Gruen extends this notion to Jewish writing of all kinds. The recovery of self and memory through literary expression is, essentially, a biblical practice because of its mimesis of uttering the word of God, holding it sacred and ensuring that memory, identity, and culture are recovered and preserved.

Despite the fact that Gruen, Wettstein and other academics have provided such potentially positive interpretations of Diaspora, this study demonstrates how all three writers have in some way experienced life in the Diaspora/diaspora as at least an internal struggle if not always an external one. They - and their characters - have endured a heightened sense of dislocation from various homelands, cultures, and religions, so the traditional

---

<sup>17</sup> Erich S. Gruen, "Diaspora & Homeland," in *Diasporas and Exiles: Varieties of Jewish Identity*, Ed. Erich S. Gruen (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002) 18.

definitions of *galut* and Diaspora are critical to this study.

Indeed, whether we accept or deny the definition of Diaspora/diaspora as possibly being favorable, the implication of living in this condition does imply being in a state of exile, whether material or psychological. All three writers attest to feeling psychologically exiled from their ancestors' homelands, their countries of origin which they themselves left behind and tried to revisit, the new countries in which they currently reside - and from their own true selves because of the push to conform, integrate and redefine themselves. It is therefore essential to examine the various interpretations and definitions of exile in order to understand how for these authors, their writing itself has put an end to that seemingly perpetual state of cultural and national homelessness.

Properly understood, exile is a subspecies of the more general notion of human mobility across geographic and political space. It implies the idea of forced displacement (as opposed to voluntary expatriation) that occurs for political or religious reasons rather than economic ones...<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> Thomas Pavel, "Exile as Romance and Tragedy," *Exile and Creativity: Signposts, Travelers, Outsiders, Backward*

Pavel's interpretation of exile is overly simplistic, as is his synopsis of the immigrants' experience in the following quote:

Immigrants begin a new life and find a new home; exiles never break the psychological link with their point of origin. Among the features of exile must thus be included the coercive nature of the displacement, its religious or political motivation, and the exile's faith in the possibility of homecoming.<sup>19</sup>

The recognition that exiles can suffer from a perpetual state of psychological displacement is accurate, but Pavel fails to acknowledge that even voluntary (or semi-voluntary) immigrants also suffer similar if not identical predicaments. An immigrant may choose to immigrate to a new country with hopes of improving his or her social and economic standing; however, the choice does not ensure a favorable outcome, and a certain level of discomfort and "feeling out of place" is almost guaranteed.

Angel Rama provides a more accurate, albeit lengthy and verbose, explication of exile in his text entitled *La riesgosa navegación del escritor exiliado*. He also demonstrates how the Latin American Jewish diasporic condition mirrors that of the historic Jewish Diaspora outside of the Land of Israel. Glantz, Glickman, and Behar are not in exile from the Land of Israel, they are in exile

---

*Glances*, ed. Susan Rubin Suleiman (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998) 26.

<sup>19</sup> Pavel, 26.

from their homelands in Latin America, and from their parents' and grandparent's homelands in Eastern Europe. It is a condition that has been shared by Jews throughout the world who have been uprooted, dislocated, and estranged from their native homelands. It is a universal diasporic consciousness that originates from the exile from the Land of Israel, but continues to be experienced by Jews throughout the world. Angel Rama explains being in exile from a Latin American literary perspective:

La palabra exilio tiene un matiz precario y temporero: parece aludir a una situación anormal, transitoria, algo así como un paréntesis que habrá de curarse con el puntual retorno a los orígenes. Esto la distingue de la palabra emigración que traduce una resolución definitiva de alojamiento e integración a otra cultura. Pero como ya hemos visto, en la realidad ambas situaciones se confunden, del mismo modo que muchos exilios se transforman en migraciones, muchas migraciones se acortan por múltiples razones y devienen períodos de exilio en el extranjero. Sin contar que desde el clásico ejemplo de Dante, los exilios, aun los duros e ingratos, devienen una condición permanente de la vida, son ellos los que

proporcionan la textura de la existencia durante un largo período de la vida adulta, con su peculiar desgarramiento entre la nostalgia de la patria y la integración, por precaria que parezca, a otras patrias, todo ello actuando sobre un estado de transitoriedad y de inseguridad que resulta constitutivo psicológicamente de esta experiencia vital<sup>20</sup>

Rama points out that the term *exilio* has an impermanent connotation that, perhaps, contains some element of hope for eventual integration and permanence. The reality is, however, that a state of *exilio* can be never-ending, unlike the related term and experience, *emigración*, which is completed once the individual has left his/her native homeland and moved to a new country of residence. Although *exilio* and *emigración* are related, as many immigrants find themselves trapped in a perpetual state of exile, they are clearly distinct. To synthesize Rama's idea, exile is often interminable and forces the individual to feel like he/she will forever be part of an incurable Diaspora.

That said, it is important to examine other interpretations and definitions of exile by various writers and

---

<sup>20</sup> Angel Rama, *La riesgosa navegación del escritor exiliado* (Montevideo: Arca, 1993) 18.



theorists. Because Glantz, Glickman, and Behar write about a sense of psychological, cultural, and physical exile which they transform into literary expression, it seems appropriate to concentrate on the definition and manifestations of exile in literature. At the same time, one must consider that when writing about exile, there are a variety of reasons which give rise to the exilic state, including political unrest, forced exile, and fear of persecution. Although Behar's family had anticipated political imperilment at the onset of Castro's regime, they faced no immediate threat to their livelihood. Had those conditions existed for Behar's family, perhaps the romanticized nostalgia and longing to return to her native homeland of Cuba possibly would have been absent from her writing and search for self.

With regard to the literary manifestations of exile, Michael Seidel incorporates the experiences and perspectives of Vladimir Nabokov and Walter Benjamin into his theoretical interpretation of the exilic state. Nabokov and Benjamin viewed their exilic psyches as the key to their imaginative literary expression. The ultimate homelands they created were inspired by nostalgia, memories, and their imagination. The act of writing, for them (as for Glantz, Glickman, and Behar, and their semi-fiction-

alized characters) ultimately recreated the lost homeland through the power of the imagination and the need to salvage one's lost identity.

In *Speak, Memory*, Nabokov writes of the consequences of his exile after the Russian Revolution, and he claims, despite years of anguish and his unique sense of Russophilia, that the "break in my own destiny affords me in retrospect a syncopal kick that I would not have missed for the worlds." [Nabokov, *Speak Memory* (New York: Putnam, 1966) 250] Like his young poet, Fyodor, in *The Gift*, Nabokov summons up by writing what he calls his "shorthand" for "Russia far." Fyodor learns that the imagination not only compensates for exilic loss but also registers that loss an aesthetic gain. [Nabokov, *The Gift* (New York: Putnam, 1963) 187.]<sup>21</sup>

Although Nabokov was forced into exile, Seidel notes that the conclusion Nabokov draws after having endured expulsion bolsters the argument that exile can give way to an overwhelmingly positive consciousness and literary composi-

---

<sup>21</sup> Michael Seidel, *Exile and the Narrative Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986) x-xi.

tion. Nabokov goes on to explain that Fyodor, the protagonist in *The Gift*, was ultimately rescued from his exilic state through the power of the imagination. Fyodor had imagined what his beloved Russia would be like upon his return, and, ultimately, recreated a Russia that was better in his mind's eye than in reality.

What is gestating inside the exile's writerly skull displays itself as a kind of hologram.

When Fyodor thinks of actually getting back to Russia, he understands that he has, in effect, already done so. Russia is reachable in only one real way: "I know that when I reach it, it will be with pen in hand." [Nabokov, *The Gift*, 37]

For the exile, native territory is the product of heightened and sharpened memory, and imagination is, indeed, a special homecoming.<sup>22</sup>

These definitions of diasporic condition, as outlined by the Boyarins, Gruen, and Wettstein, among others, is bolstered by Gloria Anzaldúa's creation of the Borderlands theory. Anzaldúa provides a critical component of the salve needed to heal the self or the selves sacrificed to the new country of residence. Her personal quest to salvage all aspects of her hybrid self, as a *Chicana*,

---

<sup>22</sup> Seidel, x-xi.

*mexicana, tejana, americana, and mestiza*, culminates in the creation of the "Borderlands." This is a fictitious place which provides a dwelling place for recent immigrants, children of interracial marriages, and people of multiple racial, ethnic, religious, cultural, sexual, and linguistic affinities. The Borderlands is not necessarily a chosen place of residence, but rather, a seemingly eternal state of limbo in which one is trapped between communities, languages, and cultures, usually against one's will or despite one's attempts to join or connect with a single identifiable group. It is a place where each resident must rely on memory, imagination, hope, and pride to recuperate the selves lost in the shift from one country to another, one language to another, one culture to another - or mixed into a hybrid combination of two or more often conflicting sources.

Although Anzaldúa conceived of the Borderlands to account for her complex Chicana identity and those of other Latinos who suffer from racism, exclusion, isolation, and confusion, it has become the dwelling place of immigrants and hyphenated peoples who have embarked on a quest to salvage the parts of themselves that were forced into a state of dormancy due to their exilic state.

Much like Anzaldúa, Glantz, Behar, and Glickman struggle to reconstruct their identities through the act of writing. These writers, who are reborn in the written word, embrace the biblical belief from the Old Testament that one can be inscribed in the Book of Life through one's acts. Anzaldúa provocatively captures the essence of the Borderlands and what it means to reside there in the following poem:

... To live in the Borderlands means to  
 put *chile* in the borscht,  
 eat whole-wheat *tortillas*,  
 speak Tex-Mex with a Brooklyn accent;  
 be stopped by *la migra* at the border checkpoint  
 ... To survive the Borderlands  
 you must live *sin fronteras*  
 be a crossroads.<sup>23</sup>

In addition to Anzaldúa's concept of the Borderlands, other feminist theories and perspectives must also be considered in order to analyze the writings of Glantz, Glickman, and Behar. In order to do this, one must have an understanding of what feminist literary theory is and what it entails. Ann Louise Keating provides the following

---

<sup>23</sup> Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands=The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Spinster/Aunt Lute, 1987) 1.

explanation of the various components of contemporary feminist literary theory:

Generally, feminist literary theory is divided into four stages or trends focusing in various ways on gender-based textual issues: (1) an analysis of representations of women in male authored texts; (2) "gynocriticism," a term coined by Elaine Showalter that refers to the development of a uniquely female aesthetic and an alternative, women's literary tradition; (3) "gender studies," or an analysis of the ways all texts, including those written by men, are marked by gender; and (4) explorations of how racial, sexual, and class differences among women expand previous models of gendered reading and writing.<sup>24</sup>

For the purpose of addressing the selected works by Glantz, Glickman, and Behar, numbers two and four of Keating's criterion will prove most relevant. Behar's publication of *Women Writing Culture*, in which she directly responds to the striking absence of a feminist voice in a well-recognized anthology of ethnographic studies entitled

---

<sup>24</sup> Ann Louise Keating, "Feminist Literary Theory," *An Encyclopedia of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Culture*, Ed. Claude J. Summers (Chicago: glbtq, Inc., 2002) 1-3.

*Writing Culture*, as well as the absence of a feminist perspective in anthropological writing in general, is an example of Elaine Showalter's "gynocriticism." Behar deliberately sought to expand the corpus of women's writing that ultimately provides a feminist model in literature.

*Women Writing Culture* also responds to Keating's fourth criterion, as the contributors to Behar's anthology address the challenges to Caucasian women anthropologists who seek to account for racial and class divides among women. If the writer herself is not a minority, the issue arises as to how to accurately represent the minority subject. Behar grappled with that dilemma in *Translated Woman: Crossing the Border With Esmeralda's Story*, as she had to convey Esmeralda's struggles to survive as an impoverished and destitute woman living on the U.S.-Mexico border.

The plays by Glickman that are addressed in this study also respond to the same two feminist literary criteria as Behar's work. Glickman's female protagonists break the traditional mold for Latin American women and Latinas in the United States. The characters' assumption of roles and identities historically and stereotypically reserved for men is in keeping with Showalter's "gynocriticism."

Glickman's creation of characters of varying ethnic, cultural, national, social, and religious backgrounds is a direct reflection of Showalter's fourth criterion. In addition to converting women into protagonists from domestic bystanders or enablers of men, Glickman creates an imaginary space in which the lives of women from varying ethnicities, cultures, nationalities, and economic backgrounds intersect. The women in Glickman's plays confront their own and each other's cultural and ethnic stereotypes, and these encounters ultimately serve to correct their respective misperceptions and contribute to their greater understanding and appreciation of the supposed "Other." Although Glickman's fictional interactions between women of diverse backgrounds maintain a subtle feminist agenda, she ultimately demonstrates how feminism can go beyond the traditional discourse between Caucasian women of privilege. A close examination of Glickman's plays and characters in the second chapter elucidates this assertion.

For Glantz, the feminist agenda is even subtler. Beyond examining the selected texts for this study, one must also consider Glantz's primary field of study: Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, an early Latina author. Glantz chose to dedicate her professional life to the work of de la Cruz, who has become known as the first woman writer in



the Americas, and, in defying the gender norms of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, the first known feminist of her time.

With regard to the two works analyzed in this study, *Las genealogías* and *No pronunciarás*, Glantz's writing is also in accordance with Showalter's criterion. Although *Las genealogías* can be classified as an autobiography, Glantz incorporates numerous interdisciplinary techniques, including ethnography, narrative, history, and psychology. Such an interdisciplinary approach to writing by Glantz is directly aligned with Showalter's "gynocriticism" as the creation of a unique female and feminist literature.

Another critical feminist theory central to the study of select works by Glantz, Glickman, and Behar, is the assertion that woman's body functions as text. The ways in which a woman writer conveys her identity and imagination through writing essentially become an extension of her physical being. The written word functions as a mirror image of the female writer, since both the woman's physical body and her literature are closely examined, interpreted, perceived, misperceived, and altered according to the readers' understanding and agenda.

Hélène Cixous further explains the intimate connection between the female body and the written word. She expounds upon the oppression women have undergone because of their

gender, and the patriarchal institutions that have enforced such marginalization of the female sex, but she also points out that in spite of it all, women surmount the obstacles through writing:

Whatever the difficulties, women are inventing new kinds of writing. But as Irigaray's erudition and plays with the speaking voice show, they are doing so deliberately, on a level of feminist theory and literary self-consciousness that goes far beyond the body and the unconscious. That is also how they need to be read.<sup>25</sup>

In examining the writing of Glantz, Glickman, and Behar, one can confidently conclude that they have indeed deliberately invented and expanded the canon of feminist literature.

Julia Kristeva presents an oppositional point of view that discourages women from producing alternative discourses like that of the post-exilic discourse engaged in by Glantz, Glickman, and Behar. Kristeva feels that a feminist position must logically oppose everything that is

---

<sup>25</sup> Ann Rosalind Jones, "Writing the Body: Toward an Understanding of l'écriture feminine," *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, Eds. Robyn R. Warhol and Diana Price Herndl (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997) 380.

patriarchal in nature and "be at odds with what already exists so that we may say 'that's not it' and 'that's not it.'"<sup>26</sup> Kristeva essentially undermines the creation of new discourses that challenge the male dominated literary canon, for she firmly believes that what needs to be tackled and dismantled are the current male forms of discourse. Ann Rosalind Jones interprets Kristeva's position in the following way and incorporates direct quotes from Kristeva to substantiate her conclusions. Kristeva doubts, however,

---

<sup>26</sup> Rosalind Jones, 372.

whether women should aim to work out alternative discourses. She sees certain liberatory potentials in their marginal position, which is (admirably) unlikely to produce a fixed, authority-claiming subject/ speaker or language:

"In social, sexual and symbolic experiences, being a woman has always provided a means to another end, to becoming something else: a subject-in-the-making, a subject on trial."

Rather than formulating a new discourse, women should persist in challenging the discourses that stand: "If women have a role to play... it is only in assuming a *negative* function: reject everything finite, definite, structured, loaded with meaning, in the existing state of society. Such an attitude places women on the side of the explosion of social codes; with revolutionary movements."<sup>27</sup>

Kristeva's proposal to negate and combat the underlying structure of society in order to eliminate all patriarchal control is extreme and largely unfeasible. The suggestion that all institutions must be overhauled in order to rectify the relations and inequities between the

---

<sup>27</sup> Rosalind Jones, 372.

sexes is too radical to be implemented. The recognition that the oppression and suppression of women is deep in the fabric of society is not incorrect; however, the means by which Kristeva insists that such a patriarchal infrastructure must be dismantled are not realistic.

The alternative discourse in which Glantz, Glickman, and Behar engage is an example of what Kristeva feels is not as effective as her radical proposal. Their post-exilic discourse, however, is feminist in nature, as it places women, however fictional, in positions of authority, and subtly yet directly challenges the male-dominated literary canon. Such alternative discourses enable the women writer to express her opinions, reconfigure her identity, and communicate with a readership that may be influenced and impacted by her writing. Although the act of writing is not as revolutionary in nature as direct opposition to everything that is already in existence, as Kristeva urges, alternative discourses by women further embolden the feminist literary canon and challenge the patriarchal traditions that have dictated women's ability to navigate the world. These writings provide a theoretical and intellectual foundation for the work of those who actively challenge male hegemony in society and its various

institutions such as business, the media, law, government, and even academia.

In addition to the important feminist approaches to a thorough analysis of the selected works by Glantz, Glickman, and Behar, Fernando Ortiz's neologism and cultural philosophy, known as *transculturación*, serves as an appropriate forerunner to Anzaldúa's theory of the Borderlands. While Ortiz was combatting more traditional and historical impositions of the colonizer over the colonized in Cuba and throughout the Caribbean and Latin America in the 1930s and 40s, Anzaldúa wages a struggle in order to overcome discrimination against and exclusion from mainstream society of people of color, individuals of mixed cultural and racial backgrounds and sexual persuasions.

Ortiz's theory of *transculturación* is critical to this study because it promotes the value of all contributing cultures and rejects the notion that the dominant or colonizing culture necessarily supercedes and is superior to that of the colonized. The result of such a *mestizaje* is a unique amalgam of all contributing cultures, incorporating characteristics of each without favoring one over another. Ortíz defined *transculturación* according to the following guidelines:

Entendemos que el vocablo *transculturación* expresa mejor las diferentes fases del proceso transitivo de una cultura a otra, porque éste no consiste solamente en adquirir una cultura, que es lo que en rigor indica la voz anglo-americana *aculturación*, sino que el proceso implica también necesariamente la pérdida o desarraigo de una cultura precedente, lo que pudiera decirse una parcial desculturación, además, significa que la consiguiente creación de nuevos fenómenos culturales que pudieran denominarse neoculturación.<sup>28</sup>

The imperialistic tendencies to which Ortíz was so opposed are not clearly identifiable in the previous definition of *transculturación*. Upon examining this theory in greater depth, however, it is easier to recognize his rejection of the supremacist approach to cultural encounters. Pérez-Firmat offers a clarifying interpretation in the following way:

Coined by the Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortíz, the term 'transculturation' was a specifically Latin American reading, or a culturally motivated misreading of the ideological metatext of the term 'acculturation' which was coming into vogue among North American anthropologists in the 1940s. Whereas the theorists of acculturation had envisioned it as the process of interaction and mutual influence between cultures, Ortíz

---

<sup>28</sup> Norma Suárez, Ed. *Fernando Ortíz y la cubanidad*, (La Habana: Ediciones Unión, 1996) 42.

understood it as the theory of the one-way imposition of the culture of the colonizers. He created the neologism 'transculturation' to undermine the homogenizing impact implicit in the term 'acculturation,' which in his view obfuscated the true dynamics at

work in colonial situations. Instead, Ortíz insisted on understanding inter-cultural dynamics as a two-way *toma y daca* (give and take).<sup>29</sup>

The distinction that Ortíz makes between *transculturación* and *aculturación* is critical to this study, as all three writers have felt that they have acculturated and have been acculturated by their respective mainstream societies. Silvia Spitta explains acculturation in the following manner:

---

<sup>29</sup> Gustavo Pérez-Firmat, *The Cuban Condition: Trans-lation and Identity in Modern Cuban Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 161.



'Acculturation' was first defined systematically by Redfield, Linton, and Kerskovits in the 1930s. They defined it as follows: 'Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups... Under this definition acculturation is to be distinguished from culture-change, of which it is but one aspect,

and assimilation, which is at times a phase of acculturation.<sup>30</sup>

Angel Rama provides his interpretation of *transculturación* in his previously mentioned text, *La riesgosa navegación del escritor exiliado*, employing an academic rhetoric, which speaks more to the effects of transculturación on literature than directly on people:

La transculturación es el proceso de modernización mediante el cual una literatura hasta entonces marginal y secundaria, defendiéndose de los paradigmas 'eurocéntricos,' logró procesar y seleccionar influencias, usarlas en su provecho para elaborar productos intelectuales y artísticos que a su vez la desmarginalizaron y la colocaron en un centro de atención mundial.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> Silvia Spitta, "Transculturation, the Caribbean, and the Cuban-American Imaginary," *Tropicalizations: Transcultural Representations of Latinidad*, ed. Frances R. Aparicio and Susana Chávez-Silverman (Hanover: University of New England Press, 1997) 176.

<sup>31</sup> Rama, 18.

Rama's interpretation of *transculturación* clearly aids in the understanding of the phenomena from another theoretical perspective. For this study, however, Ortíz's own definition and Pérez-Firmat's explication will provide the basis from which Margo Glantz, Ruth Behar and Nora Glickman's work will be analyzed.

In addition to the neologism *transculturación*, Ortíz was the first to coin the hyphenated identity "Afro-Cuban." This specific term merits its own separate studies but, examined as a hyphenated construction, is critical to this study. Ortiz recognized the African heritage and people as a critical factor in the Cuban population and culture, and the hyphen between the seemingly disparate identities demonstrates that they are indeed interdependent and reciprocal, much like the other cultures and peoples in Cuba and other countries in the Americas. Perhaps the insertion of the hyphen seemed only logical to Ortíz, given the fact that he saw all components of the Cuban identity as vital. However, the impact this term has had on the recognition of other such identities in the Americas is undeniably profound. Although that particular neologism did not alter the experiences of Glantz, Behar, and Glickman, the insertion of the hyphen alone validates and reinforces their

claim to and establishment of a hybrid identity and imaginary homeland.

To further support the creation of an imaginary homeland that seeks to retrieve lost or displaced memories, put an end to cultural estrangement, and reconfigure an identity that harmonizes the past and the present, Walter Benjamin's literary construction, known as "ethical messianism," proves to be quite useful.<sup>32</sup> Benjamin expressed the desire for unadulterated access to the past in order to avoid relying on one's creativity, imagination, and will to recuperate one's lost identity. Benjamin's "ethical messianism" adapted the messianic belief that all truths would be revealed upon the arrival of the Messiah, to a literary construction that would reflect an infinite knowledge of the past. For Glantz, Glickman, and Behar, their literary works are a response to the absence of "ethical messianism," as they write in order to fill the cultural and linguistic voids that Benjamin also longed to fill.

This study employs the aforementioned theories to analyze selected works by Glantz, Glickman, and Behar, in order to demonstrate that the three writers have indeed

---

<sup>32</sup> Benjamin's theory of "ethical messianism" is discussed by Homi K. Bhabha in *Nation and Narration* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

created a post-exilic discourse with their readers. Through their work, they have created a literary realm that imaginatively substitutes for a physical homeland, and at least somewhat alleviates the pain and sense of isolation caused by living in Diaspora/diaspora. Glantz, Glickman, and Behar demonstrate that they are transculturated, imaginative, hybrid individuals who respond to the demand for "ethical messianism" with unique and interdisciplinary literary texts. Through their own writing they achieve a new life, becoming living examples of "People of the Book."

## Chapter 1

### Margo Glantz: An Identity Conceived in the Word

Margo Glantz, born in Mexico in 1930, is the first of the three writers in this study to initiate the creation of a new literary genre by engaging in a *post-exilic discourse* with her readers. That discourse allows Glantz to express and explore her cultural hybridity through her nonconformist literary style, an exploration continued by Glickman and Behar. Glantz is an individual who ascribes to numerous cultural, linguistic, religious and national affinities, and these affinities, in turn, make her a writer who adheres to no one genre or literary form. Her multifaceted identity is effectively communicated to her readers through the incorporation of narrative, humor, historical facts, and collective testimony. Her many roles as a critic, professor, creative writer, ethnographer of her own life and that of her ancestors, essayist, and mother contribute to, as well as explain, her eclectic literary style.

Prior to examining *Las genealogías* and *No pronunciarás*, two works which exemplify the diverse cultural, religious, and linguistic influences on her life and

writing, it is crucial to recognize the significant contributions Glantz has made to the Mexican literary canon. Glantz is primarily recognized as a leading scholar of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, the 17<sup>th</sup> Century Mexican woman who defied cultural and societal norms by masquerading as a nun in order to satisfy her insatiable thirst for knowledge. She composed volumes of poetry, essays, and letters. As a result of her clandestine activities as a writer behind the walls of a Franciscan nunnery, she was punished by the Catholic Church and banned from reading secular literature and writing of any kind. One work in particular, that was published against Sor Juana's will, is *La Respuesta*, a letter written to her spiritual guide and supposed confidante. In the letter, Sor Juana attempted to defend her intellectual pursuits by apologizing for her weakness of character and imperfect being. The irony behind her apology was that it was as much an attack on the institution that prohibited her from writing as it was self-deprecating.

With the knowledge of Glantz's extensive and noteworthy research and publications on Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, one cannot help but see the connection between the two writers. Sor Juana was a woman who defied cultural and societal norms in order to pursue her intellectual passions

at a time when women were afforded two options in life: to commit their lives to the Catholic Church, or marry and commit their lives to their husbands and families. Her rejection of both invited tremendous suspicion, punishment and potential persecution by the Catholic Church and the Inquisitorial authorities for her possible clandestine Jewish faith. One poem in particular, which condemned the persecution of Jews by the Inquisition, fomented the suspicion of Sor Juana being a *converso*. Although Glantz has not experienced persecution and prohibition as a writer, her success as a writer and intellectual are tied to the sacrifices made by Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. Sor Juana was the first recognized Mexican woman writer to create the foundation upon which future Mexican women writers - such as Margo Glantz - would build.

Not only does Glantz follow in the footsteps of Sor Juana as a female writer contending with a predominantly patriarchal society, it can be said that there is another connection between the two women. Sor Juana was suspected of being a *converso*, although the suspicion was never confirmed. Her defense of the Jews in Mexico, as expressed in her poetry, as well as her feelings of empathy for the indigenous population, speak to Glantz's professional endeavors and personal experience. Although never per-

secuted for being Jewish, Glantz recalls in *Las genealogías* how her father was mistaken for Lenin by a group of anti-Communist and anti-Semitic men while at work in Mexico City. A Mexican police officer came to his aide and promised to protect him. Glantz's exposure as a child to the rich indigenous cultures of Mexico through her caretakers gave her an appreciation and understanding of the indigenous people and the hardships they experienced as a result of being members of an oppressed minority. Such knowledge and compassion are reflected in Glantz's historical and critical analyses of the life and writings of Sor Juana, as well as in her autobiographical work, *Las genealogías*.

It is critical to address the fact that if not for the composition of *Las genealogías* and *No pronunciarás* there would be no indication of Glantz's hybrid identity and identification with her Jewish roots, her upbringing in a predominantly Catholic world mixed with traces of indigenous culture and beliefs, and her cross-cultural background. If not for those two works, Glantz would not be considered a Jewish writer, in terms of the content of her writing, nor would she have been a subject in this study. *Las genealogías* and *No pronunciarás* reveal Glantz's hybridity, as well as instigate a greater understanding of her



research on the life and writings of Sor Juana and the reasons why Glantz chose Sor Juana as a literary and historical subject.

Glantz's writing is a reflection of her diverse experiences due to her Jewish upbringing in a predominantly Catholic country. The exposure to such diametrically opposed religious practices and beliefs in Mexico sparked a profound need and desire in her to discover who she really was underneath all of the layers of her hybrid self. Her strong identification with Jews, Catholics, and indigenous peoples enriched her world yet complicated her sense of identity.

Glantz realized her goal of discovering herself through the composition of her autobiography, *Las genealogías* (1987). Although it can easily be classified according to criteria for autobiographical works, Glantz incorporates an eclectic array of literary tools, including interviewing her own family members, taking on the role of self-ethnographer, narrating her own life and that of her family, as well as playing the role of a psychoanalyst. All the roles she plays in *Las genealogías* transform the work into clearly something that transcends the autobiography genre, as well as any established literary form.

Glantz responded in the following way to García Pinto's question about her chosen form of written expression and the literary world in which she resides:

I feel that the world I've chosen is a marvelous world, so I feel a great joy that I need to communicate. But it's been difficult to look inside myself and to work, because of all of my inner struggles. Writing has redeemed me as a being, as a body. In that sense, writing is very important to me because it's a way of putting myself back together, of remaking myself tissue by tissue, cell by cell... It's somehow like a dialogue with your mirror.<sup>33</sup>

The imaginary space that Glantz has created with *Las genealogías*, among other works, fills the void created by the absence of a national and cultural homeland left behind. However imaginary, this literary creation enables her to reconstruct her identity, validate and preserve her hybridity, and provide a space for other writers and individuals who can claim no geographic territory as their own to take residence and nationalize themselves in a place that cannot

---

<sup>33</sup> Magdalena García Pinto, *Women Writers of Latin America: Intimate Histories*, Trans. Trudy Balch (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991) 117.

revoke their citizenship or rob them of their culturally mixed identities. In response to Garcia Pinto's question "What led you to write *Las genealogías*?" Glantz responds in the following way:

... I wanted to know the world they came from, what their reality was like -- so different from mine. At the same time this kind of writing is a voyage inside oneself. I wanted to live that sort of interior voyage, like the interior voyages of medieval women, which were so important in that era... I think that *Las genealogías* was a way of recovering my parents, of forgiving them for a childhood that was painful, as all childhoods are. It was also a way not to feel aggression and anger for the way they'd stamped my life and, simultaneously, to bring them back as human beings with great tenderness and affection, with all their faults and at the same time to put myself together - that is, a kind of biography of exiles. The book has been very well received, but for me it forms a completely logical part of my entire development as a writer.<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup> Garcia Pinto, 119.

Composing *Las genealogías* was an act of self-recovery and discovery for Glantz and the provision of a collective history of and for fellow Jewish immigrants and exiles. The fact that Glantz considers the composition of such an eclectic and unclassifiable work an essential step in a writer's development exposes her critical need for a discourse that accounts for such eclecticism. She recognizes that her book responds to the need for such a discourse in the following way: "My book is a way of stringing together these scattered beads that I couldn't interweave at first."<sup>35</sup> What other form of literary expression would allow a writer to step outside of the confines of the genre to establish an imaginary yet functional identity, unique to the author yet applicable to many readers of similar mixed heritage or multicultural experience?

Magdalena García Pinto recognized Glantz's versatility in her act of recording her family history in *Women Writers of Latin America*:

She recorded these conversations to preserve the details, and with that material she created *Las genealogías*, which can be read not only as an autobiography, but also as a documentary work on the life of European immigrants in early mid-

---

<sup>35</sup> Garcia Pinto, 112.

twentieth century Mexico. E. Otero Krauthammer, one of the critics who studied this work, defines it as a double voyage in space and time: 'One of the journeys takes place on an objective level, external, historical, cultural, documentary, biographical, and illustrative. This journey becomes reality through family stories and conversations, telephone calls, photographs, and historical-cultural anecdotes as much as national as international. The other journey is subjective, internal, self-searching, emotional, and tender. This second journey, verbalized through commentaries, questions, reflections, and interior monologues is perhaps born of an interior need of the author to be one.'<sup>36</sup>

Both García Pinto and Krauthammer recognize Glantz's diverse blend of literary expression in her effort to recover an individual and collective past, preserve family memories and traditions, in the hope of making herself whole. As an interviewer of her parents, she takes an objective stance, allowing them to share their experiences as Russian refugees and Jewish immigrants, as prompted by her probing questions. As a social historian, she presents a personal

---

<sup>36</sup> Garcia Pinto, 112.

account that is also a collective history of many Jewish immigrants in the Americas. As an ethnographer, she explores the impact upon her own psyche (and the Jewish community) of such diverse and, at times, opposing cultural, religious and national beliefs and practices. All of her talents and techniques enable her to create a world that relies solely on her imagination and desire to be whole.

In order to appreciate fully the imaginative and creative ways in which Glantz has established her literary homeland, a close examination of *Las genealogías*, followed by an examination of her shorter piece entitled *No pronunciarás*, is necessary.

### ***Las genealogías***

Glantz begins *Las genealogías* with a detailed explanation in the Prologue of why she recorded her family history. She describes herself as an eclectic blend of multiple cultures and religions, even if she does not actively observe or practice them. She identifies with many communities at once, yet feels equally dislocated from them due to her lack of exclusive loyalty to one and her lack of comprehensive knowledge of any. She incorporates a con-

siderable number of Yiddish expressions and makes reference to several religious practices that she has never observed, nor with which she identifies. Glantz explains that she is a descendant of *Genesis* for reasons of necessity. This provocative confession serves as an introduction to her strong ties to Judaism and the role that it plays in her cultural identity. What directly follows this statement is a reference to the places in which her parents were born and emigrated to, respectively, the Ukraine and Mexico, two places far removed culturally and geographically from the land of Israel. The distance between the traditions and homelands of millennia past and those of her present reality created the need and the desire to recover and restore them in order to reconstruct and create a new realm of existence and belonging.

Drawing on Boyarin and Boyarin's controversial view of the term "Diaspora" as evolving from its original definition as an exclusively negative condition, Glantz makes reference to the history of the Jews being a rejected and vilified minority:

Quizá lo que más me atraiga de mi pasado y de mi presente judío sea la conciencia de los colores, de lo abigarrado, de lo grotesco, esa conciencia que hace de los judíos verdaderos

gente menor con un sentido del humor mayor, por su crueldad simple, su desventurada ternura y hasta por su ocasional sinvergüenza.<sup>37</sup>

As seen in the preceding theoretical chapter, the historical view of Jews as suffering from a Diasporic consciousness because of their lack of attachment or belonging to their countries of residence, for being a perpetually wandering people who bear the brunt of being ostracized and distrusted for their supposed lack of loyalty and patriotism to any one country, Glantz identifies with and is attracted to this notion. It is not until the completion of *Las genealogías*, followed by *No pronunciarás*, that the notion of the Diaspora and its implications begin to be transformed into something positive and inhabitable, albeit imaginary and literary in form.

Glantz also admits that she is drawn to the stories of her relatives in Russia who studied the *Torah* and attended *cheders*, religious elementary schools, followed by the *Yeshiva*, in which they engaged in an intensive study of the *Torah*, the Five Books of Moses, and Jewish laws. Glantz herself never studied Hebrew nor had any form of religious education, but she is nonetheless intrigued. Those relig-

---

<sup>37</sup> Margo Glantz, *Las genealogías* (México, D.F.: Alfaguara, 1987) 19.



ious practices determine who she is not and serve as a way to establish who she is and where she does belong. She makes reference to one of the concrete spaces that she has inhabited which serves as confirmation of the sense of dislocation precipitated by her immigrant past and consequent consciousness in the following description:

Yo sí me he metido en los hornos. En la calle de Uruguay, siempre por esas calles de nombres lagunilleros y conosureños, como premonición y nostalgia de las posibilidades múltiples que tuvimos de emigrar a tierras desconocidas.<sup>38</sup>

The streets with South American names seemed to embody the immigrant experience of having inhabited so many spaces, countries, and cultures and the omnipresent feeling of nostalgia and a sense of displacement and dislocation.

Even though Glantz strongly identifies with her Jewish ancestors in their struggle to carve out a space for themselves in various geographic spaces, she also identifies with practices, peoples and religions that are often diametrically opposed to Judaism. Even in the prologue, it is easy to detect the multiple affinities that define her, and the consequent need to create a literary realm where she

---

<sup>38</sup> Glantz, *Las genealogías*, 20.

can explore and safeguard her hybridity. Her collection of Jewish and Catholic religious objects in her home illustrate her unique religious ties and consequent amalgamations, and her confession that she is a Jew as well as a *goy*.

Yo tengo en mi casa algunas cosas judías, heredadas, un *shofar*, trompeta de cuerno de carnero, casi mística, para anunciar con estridencia las murallas caídas, un candelabro de nueve velas que se utilizan cuando se conmemora otra caída de murallas durante la rebelion de los macabeos, que ya otro *goi* (como yo) cantara en México (José Emilio Pacheco). También tengo un candelabro antiguo, de Jerusalén, que mi madre me prestó y aquí se ha quedado, pero el candelabro aparece al lado de algunos santos populares, unas réplicas de ídolos prehispánicos...<sup>39</sup>

Glantz clearly has a multicultural menagerie of religious icons that reflect her own enigmatic identity. She identifies with the plight of the Macabees and the blasts of the *shofar* signaling the beginning of the Jewish year,

---

<sup>39</sup> Glantz, *Las genealogías*, 20.

as well as with the non-Jewish world of Catholic saints and indigenous culture.

Because of her eclectic collection and interfaith beliefs and practices, family members, among others, question her cultural and religious legitimacy. Glantz offers her reasoning why she has written *Las genealogías* and why many people question her religious and cultural loyalties in the closing lines of the Prologue.

Por ellos, y porque pongo árbol de navidad, me dice mi cuñado Abel que no parezco judía, porque los judíos les tienen, como nuestros primos hermanos los árabes, horror a las imágenes. Y todo es mío y no lo es y parezco judía y no lo parezco y por eso escribo -- estas -- mis genealogías.<sup>40</sup>

Although Glantz was born Jewish, according to certain family members, she doesn't "appear" Jewish. Her incorporation of Christian rituals in her life, including the display of a Christmas tree in her home, makes her a foreigner to her Jewish relatives. In spite of that lack of Jewish religiosity and loyalty, she is still Jewish. Because of

---

<sup>40</sup> Glantz, *Las genealogías*, 21

the internal and external religious and cultural dichotomies, Glantz composed *Las genealogías* in order to explore and explain her hybridity. Ultimately, the text becomes a dialogic space in which she establishes an imaginary homeland to which she repatriates herself.

Glantz's textual repatriation has, ironically, been characteristic of the Jewish people since biblical times. The belief that Jews are "People of the Book" suggests an inherent ability to transport their "portable homeland," as the essence of the Jewish identity is derived from the Hebrew Scriptures and not to any geographic space. In the second chapter of *Las genealogías*, Glantz alludes to her internal conflict caused by her Russian lineage and her Mexican citizenship. She identifies with Dostoyevsky because of their shared internal conflicts when she refers to the difficulty she has in pronouncing her ancestors' Russian names:

Esta constatación (y la pronunciación adecuada de los nombres, cosa que casi nunca ocurre) me hacen sentir personaje de Dostoievski y entender algo de mis contradicciones, por aquello del alma rusa encimada al alma mexicana.<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>41</sup> Glantz, *Las genealogías*, 21.

According to Glantz, the internal conflicts of identity that Dostoyevsky suffered from appear similar to her own. Her possession of a deterritorialized consciousness that spans two continents fuels her desire to be repatriated.

In a moment of bizarre humor, Glantz provides a fantastical glimpse of her unconventional childhood, in which she conceives of herself as a superhero who is able to transcend space and time. If she were to possess such superhuman qualities, she would be able to journey back to the homeland of her parents and ancestors to reclaim their lost memories and to piece together the fragments of their past. As ridiculous as the desire to be Flash Gordon may seem, the power of the imagination makes any journey, however abstract, possible.

Siempre quise ser Flash Gordon, sí, desde niña, nunca Dalia (Dale) Carter, ni siquiera la perversa Ornela Aura. Me hubiera gustado viajar por los aires en una bicicleta *rocket*, pero en blanco y negro, como viajaba el Flash Gordon episódico de mi infancia. En cambio, sólo he viajado en KLM cuando se hacían ventiocho horas (por lo menos) para llegar a Amsterdam...<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> Glantz, *Las genealogías*, 80

Although the passage is more of a humorous description of Glantz's adventures in traveling, it is also reflective of her desire to transform herself into someone or something else in order to gain access to all places, times and knowledge. Her imagination makes all of those objectives attainable, although the resulting creation is largely fictional. Alice Yeager Kaplan views the construction of fictional spaces and ultimately the reconstruction of self as something which can be achieved through writing. The incorporation of such fictional characters as Flash Gordon in Glantz's family history contributes to her recuperation of self and re-territorialization. "Literature aids in the construction of a self who can travel, and it finally heals the past and the present."<sup>43</sup> Yeager Kaplan's observation clearly contributes to the assertion that imaginary homelands can be erected through writing and imagination.

In one of her inquisitive conversations with her father, Glantz asks him if he ever had any desire to return to Russia. "¿Pensabas que ibas a regresar a Rusia alguna vez?"<sup>44</sup> He responds negatively with no detectable doubt.

---

<sup>43</sup> Alice Yeager Kaplan, "On Language Memoir," *Displacements: Cultural Identities in Question* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994) 63.

<sup>44</sup> Glantz, *Las genealogías*, 86.

It is not the response that is significant here, but rather, the question. Glantz asks her father if he ever wished to return to his native homeland because it is she who wants to return. She longs to restore their homeland, and even recover the past beyond her parents' recollection. She wants to realize Walter Benjamin's "ethical messianism,"<sup>45</sup> which would provide unadulterated access to the past. Even when Glantz herself goes back to Russia to reclaim those lost memories and identities, what she encounters is not at all characteristic of her parents' life there. Therefore, she turns to writing as a way to fill the void and find answers to her soul-searching questions. Glantz wrote in *Las genealogías* that imagining herself as various Jewish writers of the past enabled her to better understand her parents and piece together the fragmented memories that they had shared with her. "Aquí entra mi recuerdo, es un recuerdo falso, es de Babel. Muchas veces tengo que acudir a ciertos autores para imaginarme lo que mis padres recuerdan."<sup>46</sup> If she were to have access to Benjamin's "ethical messianism," she would not have to rely

---

<sup>45</sup> Benjamin's "ethical messianism" was discussed in the Theoretical Framework.

<sup>46</sup> Glantz, *Las genealogías*, 38.

on false nostalgia and fragmented memories to recuperate the past.

In the absence of such unrestricted access, Glantz believes: "Writing has redeemed me as a being, as a body. In that sense, writing is very important to me because it's a way of putting myself back together, of remaking myself tissue by tissue, cell by cell."<sup>47</sup> This shows the nature of the connection between this secular Jewish writer and the literal meaning of the word "re-ligion" - to tie back or re-connect. Glantz successfully reconstructs her multifaceted persona through writing, while also providing a unique autobiography of, and ultimately for, fellow exiles that suffer from similar geographic, cultural and religious dislocations and lack of a clear, single group affiliation or individual identity. She writes her quixotic self into existence through the act of writing and provides that new realm of existence for her readers and fellow deterritorialized individuals in search of an inclusive homeland. As Bella Josef observed in her essay, "Recuperar la biografía común":

"Margo Glantz en *Genealogías* confirma el encuentro y la fascinación de gran parte de su

---

<sup>47</sup> García Pinto, 117.



historia familiar. Es el testimonio de una generación, y el lector emprende un largo recorrido a través de ese universo nostálgico."<sup>48</sup>

The nostalgic universe that Glantz creates is a product of her imagination and a dwelling place for her readers and fellow displaced immigrants. The imaginary literary universe that she creates through the act of writing would have been made obsolete had Walter Benjamin's wish for unrestricted access to the past been fulfilled. Benjamin, a renowned German Jewish theorist, and one of Glantz's greatest intellectual luminaries:

...articulated an ethical messianism, a notion of a time when the memory of all the dreams and suffering of human history would be simultaneously available to each of us.<sup>49</sup>

"Ethical messianism" would miraculously provide writers with unadulterated access to the past so that they would no longer have to substitute false nostalgia, imagination, and

---

<sup>48</sup> Bella Josef, "Recuperar la biografía común"

<sup>49</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration* (New York: Routledge, 1990) 294.

fragmented memories for accurate memories and historical facts.

Glantz combines her autobiography, the biography of her parents, and the collective biographies of other Jewish immigrants who journeyed to the Americas in search of a new homeland and identity into one multi-genre text. Her stance is often subjective when she reflects on her childhood and the impact certain encounters made on her self-perception. At other times, she takes on a more objective voice when she is interviewing her parents or narrating their life history which also serves as a collective history or, as she describes it, "a kind of biography of exiles."<sup>50</sup>

Jonathan Boyarin observes the tendency in Jewish writing to provide a collective history as well as the personal one of the writer. The "biography of exiles" is therefore a common characteristic of Jewish writers in their own search for self and identification with others.

Postmodern sensibilities allow us to recuperate the alternative (and in this case traditional) resource of identifying with Jews as a collective through continuity (co-extension in time) at least as much as through contiguity (co-extension

---

<sup>50</sup> Glantz, *Las genealogías*, introduction.

in space). Jews have always, it seems, used narrative to recreate their shared identities across time. This technique demonstrates language as an ethnic strategy that need not impinge upon the autonomy of others.<sup>51</sup>

The way in which Glantz retrieves lost memories and recuperates her identity is therefore collective in nature, yet individual in style. Her writing, according to the Boyarins' notion of traditional Jewish narrative, is part of the "Jewish panchrony, Jewish collective identification through time."<sup>52</sup> The ability to transcend time and space through writing and provide a collective voice for generations of immigrants ultimately achieves what "Althusser once proactively wrote 'Space without places, time without duration.'"<sup>53</sup>

Glantz embraces this possibility of "space without places, time without duration" when she tries to explain her parents' history and legacy. She combines Althusser's

---

<sup>51</sup> Jonathan Boyarin, *Storm from Paradise: The Politics of Jewish Memory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992) xvii.

<sup>52</sup> Boyarin, xvii.

<sup>53</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, ed. *Nation and Narration* (New York: Routledge, 1990) 294.

notion of time and space with Isaac Bashevis Singer's notion of time and history.

'Los judíos -- dice en alguna parte Bashevis Singer -- no registran su historia, carecen del sentido cronológico. Parece como si, instintivamente, supieran que el tiempo y el espacio son mera ilusión.' Esa sensación de un tiempo largo, gelatinoso, contraído y dispuesto a resumirse en un tema con múltiples variaciones y *cadenze*, coincide con la vida de mis padres y con las conversaciones repetitivas de las que sale de repente una chispa que ilumina algún hecho histórico descuadrado por la cronología ideal que la historia nos quiere hacer tragar. El tiempo es un espacio califigrafiado y repetido sin cesar en las constantes letanías con que el judío religioso se ocupa de medir su vida.<sup>54</sup>

The lives of Glantz's parents clearly reflect Bashevis Singer's notion of history, time, and space. Perhaps their seemingly haphazard repatriation in Mexico after fleeing Russia was inevitable, as it was for fellow Jews who emigrated to the Americas and other parts of the world. Neither time nor space was relevant to these modern

---

<sup>54</sup> Glantz, *Las genealogías*, 41.

refugees' experience of constantly shifting homelands, borders, and identities.

Although the passage appears more than halfway through *Las genealogías*, Glantz makes reference to the power of writing and theatre in the transcendence from exile to freedom. A burlesque actor, much like a writer, can take on imaginary and often absurd roles that transcend time, space and reason. For Jewish immigrants and exiles that long to escape their sense of perpetual exile from themselves and their native homelands, theatre and literature provide an antidote.

¿Qué

mueve a los judíos del exilio a ver y cultivar esas obras de teatro? No será una nostalgia de un territorio que nunca les ha pertenecido, pero que sin embargo en algo fue suyo? ¿Será la creación de un espacio sagrado donde por un momento se vive en un contexto conocido porque se ha recreado en el escenario? ¿Será porque las expresiones de los rostros o el sonido de las voces resume un estremecimiento y figura una corporeidad?<sup>55</sup>

---

<sup>55</sup> Glantz, *Las genealogías*, 131.

Glantz equates the popular Jewish burlesque theatre of the early to mid-twentieth century with the act of writing because both serve as an escape from an undesired reality, and both create the possibility of entering into a new realm of existence and identification. The absurdity of the burlesque theatre, as well as its vulgar tendencies, does not suggest that her literary expression is also absurd or common; rather that there is a clear connection between the transformative quality that both theatrical performance and writing have for the actor/author and the audience/reader. As José Mindlin observed in his essay "Literatura y libertad," "Felizmente la literatura ofrece un refugio para quien busca el entendimiento."<sup>56</sup> Glantz's own perception of Jewish performance and literature, which is certainly a form of public performance, coupled with Mindlin's view of literature as refuge, further substantiates the assertion that literature serves as a homeland for the once-exiled writer.

In order to fully appreciate the state of exile in which Glantz and her family members find themselves, along with innumerable other immigrants, as well as the post-

---

<sup>56</sup> José Mindlin, "Literatura y libertad," *El imaginario judío en la literatura de América Latina: Visión y Realidad*, Patricia Finzi, Eliahu Toker y Marcus Faerman, eds. (Buenos Aires: Grupo Editorial Shalom, 1990) 2.

exilic state that is achieved through writing, it is critical to examine how Glantz and other theorists define

territory. For Glantz's parents, territory consisted of not only the physical homeland, but also the traditions, religious practices, native tongues and communities. According to this definition, much of her family's homeland was potentially portable. The obvious obstacles in transferring one's life, identity and culture to a new geographic space were entering into a new country that maintained different religious beliefs and practices, a new language, and a dislocated community.

If one were to focus on the psychological sense of homeland, as Walter Benjamin does in the following passage cited by Glantz, perhaps the internal dwelling place erected from preserved and resurrected memories and their preservation through writing could actually substitute for the lost physical space. Quoting Benjamin, Glantz explains her family's concept of territory:

'Hemos olvidado hace tiempo el ritual según el cual fue edificada la casa de nuestra vida.' La normalidad de su vida en Rusia incluye con naturalidad el concepto de territorio: El territorio propio, fundamental para el judío y para cualquier emigrante, es asumido por mi madre como aquello que se aloja en una cotidianidad que sin



embargo tiene historia: Sus padres, la familia, el idioma materno (el ruso), la casa paterna, su barrio, las costumbres judías, son la unidad, el territorio.<sup>57</sup>

Transforming the meaning of territory from something concrete and tangible to something that can be psychologically and verbally transported by an individual is not entirely possible for all immigrants. For Glantz's parents whose identity was tied to their Russian homeland and the life they led there, such transference is unlikely. For Glantz, who never lived in Russia nor maintained the same ties to the land and the community as her parents did, it is possible for her to of nationalize herself in a literary homeland. In order to accomplish this repatriation, one of the key elements in this process is an integral part of her parent's concept of territory; that of language. As Alice Yeager Kaplan wrote in her essay "On Language Memoir":

"That language equals home, that language is a home, as surely as a roof over one's head is a home, and that to be without language, or to be

---

<sup>57</sup> Margo Glantz, "La (Su) nave de los emigrantes," *El imaginario judío en la literatura de América Latina: Visión y Realidad*, Patricia Finzi, Eliahu Toker y Marcus Faerman, eds. (Buenos Aires: Grupo Editorial Shalom, 1990) 12-13.

between languages, is as miserable as to be without bread."<sup>58</sup>

The view that language equals home transforms the writer who maintains and preserves her native tongue into a territorialized individual who can transcend any cultural and religious space as well as time. One factor that complicates the establishment of such a verbal homeland is that the writer may have yet to find a language which grounds him or her. For Glantz, the native tongue of her parents was Russian, but she was raised in Mexico and therefore speaks Spanish. To further complicate the choice of literary expression, the liturgical language of the Jews is Hebrew and she is not at all proficient in that tongue. As an Askenazi Jew, the Yiddish language is more familiar to her, but it is hardly a second language to her, more of a set of expressions mostly having to do with food. The fact that she speaks a language that was once foreign to her parents and most certainly removed from the traditional Jewish tongues, places her outside of many linguistic and geographic homelands. It is with Spanish that she must construct her homeland as a first generation Mexican who

---

<sup>58</sup> Alice Yaeger Kaplan, "On Language Memoir," *Displacements: Cultural Identities in Question* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994) 63.

has been influenced and raised among numerous languages. This multilingual background is part of her hybridity, and it contributes to her eclectic and creative literary expression.

One period in Glantz's life that is recorded in *Las genealogías* speaks to her sense of displacement and exclusion due to the language barrier between Glantz and her parents. Because Spanish was Glantz's primary language and the only tongue in which she could communicate with her parents, the Russian and Yiddish spoken by her parents was incomprehensible. She was a stranger to those languages and cultures and, therefore, felt like an outsider within her own family. The Hebrew language wasn't a consideration at that point in her life, as she and her family led an entirely secular Jewish life, The following passage speaks to that linguistic isolation and consequent feeling of exclusion:

Libros incomprensibles para mí, porque en casa del herrero azadón de palo y esos ejemplares de libros rusos estaban escritos como quien dice en chino a pesar del bilingüismo natal de mis padres, bilingüismo que siempre utilizaron como mampara, como algo secreto, iniciático, del que estaba yo aparte, a pesar de mi pasión desmedida

e inconsistente por Dostoievski y del descubrimiento, durante mi adolescencia (tardía), de mi pertenencia (en una tercera parte) a esa alma rusa, arrodillada en la plaza pública y gritando al viento sus confesiones como lo hiciera alguna vez (con pésimos resultados para él) Raskolnikov y como lo hago ahora yo en estas páginas, *toute proportion gardée*.<sup>59</sup>

It is surprising that Glantz never tried to master the Russian language, given the fact that she studied both French and English; she insists that she is far from being linguistically inclined. Perhaps she satiates her desire to immerse herself in the Russian culture by uncovering the mystifying past of her parents, entering into the minds of great writers like Dostoyevsky, and identifying with their sense of displacement and internal conflict.

To further compound the sense of exile she experienced as a result of having parents who had emigrated to Mexico and who, on occasion, had been assailed for being Jewish, Glantz's childhood entailed a great deal of moving from apartment to apartment, school to school, and watching her father pursue various professions just to support his wife and children. She felt no sense of belonging to any com-

---

<sup>59</sup> Glantz, *Las genealogías*, 185.

munity, neighborhood, or family home, because they were constantly changing. In one instance in which she describes her identity as an exiled wandering Jew, she recounts a time when her father became a baker, tie salesman, etc. to sustain his family:

El pan se comenzó a vender muy pronto y su persistencia en mantenernos duró varios años; en los intersticios, algunas corbatas, mucho papel, peines de acero (quizá para despiojarnos en esos tránsitos por las escuelas públicas) y el paso indeterminado por distintos domicilios y, por consiguiente, el cambio constante de escuelas, la sensación del exilio permanente, los sobresaltos, quizá ya en los juegos de Chapultepec adonde nos llevaba a montar en burro o a caballo (y el caballo nos tiraba y nos derrumbaba los aires de amazona que llevábamos prendidos al cabello en unos sombreritos marineros), que solían volarse en las sacudidas de los látigos.<sup>60</sup>

In the interview with Magdalena García Pinto that was quoted earlier, Glantz explained that part of the reason for writing *Las genealogías* was to confront the anger and

---

<sup>60</sup> Glantz, *Las genealogías*, 149.

resentment she bore towards her parents for such an unstable childhood; of course, she also wanted to celebrate and memorialize them by capturing their essence and recording their stories. In the end, all of these efforts served as her own form of "religion", by which she put herself back together and re-constructed her very self.

Later in her childhood, Glantz describes how she became acutely aware of the fact that her parents led a largely secular existence. While other families were fasting on *Yom Kippur*, the Jewish Day of Atonement, her parents were drinking tea and visiting Xochimilco, the historic site of one of the Aztec battles, later known for its beautiful array of flowers.

En septiembre de 1925, en vísperas del *yom kippur*, la fiesta del ayuno, mis padres toman té, en lugar de asistir al servicio de *kol nidre*, canto a los muertos, cuando se pasan los pecados en la sinagoga. Al día siguiente mis padres van por primera vez a Xochimilco.<sup>61</sup>

Although Glantz did not have any strong religious compunction, the fact that her family had ultimately distanced themselves from the traditional Jewish community by not

---

<sup>61</sup> Glantz, *Las genealogías*, 107.

observing certain sacred holidays, impacted her sense of belonging and identification, and set the precedent for her lack of religiosity.

As an adolescent, Glantz became a Zionist, and although her political sentiments were strong towards the State of Israel, her linguistic limitations caused her to feel inadequate and distant from her fellow Jews. Recounting a trip she took with her sister Lilly to Pátzcuaro along with other Jewish children, she alludes to her sense of being an outsider:

Me acuerdo también de ese viaje que hice con Lilly a Pátzcuaro, con los niños del Colegio Israelita, niños que no tenían nada que ver con nosotras porque nosotras siempre fuimos a escuelas *goim* y yo, por lo menos, nunca he podido aprender otras lenguas. Mascullo el inglés, medio hablo el francés y apenas entiendo el yidish colloquial; del hebreo mal conozco las letras.<sup>62</sup>

Perhaps Glantz is just being humorously self-deprecating when she speaks about her linguistic shortcomings, but the sense of feeling dislocated from Jews like herself because

---

<sup>62</sup> Glantz, *Las genealogías*, 188.

of the language barrier is profound and has clearly impacted her identity and writing. The linguistic barriers combined with her quirky religious observances and beliefs and the perceptions by others of her status as an incomplete Jew and Catholic further propelled her toward the creation of her own literary space where she could be her own unique and hybrid self.

To further compound the linguistic isolation, Glantz was exposed to Catholicism as a young child along with her sister Lilly. As young children Glantz and Lilly were taught English by two "well-intending" women who lived next door and feared for the Glantz girls' perdition in hell for not being Christian. After being converted to Catholicism in a nearby church, the girls would be taken to confession on Sunday followed by a trip to the movies to see *Dracula*, *Flash Gordon* and other mesmerizing animated cartoons. Due to this unique *mélange* of the Catholic religion and a world of fantasy, Glantz conceived of a bizarre Christianity, which still remains a part of her consciousness today.

Por esa época abandoné la religión de mis antepasados. Lilly y yo aprendíamos el inglés, con unas señoritas decentes venidas a menos que vivían con su mamá en una buhardilla en la azotea, al lado de nuestra casa. Esta jóvenes



sintieron lástima por nosotras, les parecíamos dos niñas angelicales y tuvieron miedo de que muriéramos sin conocer el Paraíso: nos volvieron cristianas. Nos bautizó un padre de la iglesia de Popotla que tenía las manos casi negras y muy enmarañada, vestía una sótana café y nos bendecía con grandes sonrisas y nos daba a besar su peluda diestra. Desde entonces no solo sueño con Drácula sino también con King Kong al que le dedico mi libro sobre el cabello. Nuestro bautizo fue seguido de una primera comunión organizada por la familia Sodi Pallares que vivía por la colonia de Santa María la Ribera en una casa porfiriana con emplomados y lámparas estilo Tiffany. El desayuno de primera comunión fue servido con tamales, atole, *Que Vadis?* y *Fabiola*, y misales encuadernados en piel blanca con un bello crucifijo dorado. Cada domingo nos confesábamos y comulgábamos y volvíamos al cine Popotla a ver los episodios de Flash Gordon. Por eso mi cristianismo se mezcla con los héroes de los *comics* y con los episodios seriados por donde deambulan La Sombra. *Fabiola*, Drácula y King

Kong. Es seguramente un cristianismo maravilloso.<sup>63</sup>

Glantz's Christianity is undeniably unlike any other as it is mixed with fantasy and superhuman feats. Given her unique *mélange* of religion and superheroes, it is easy to see how such bizarre religious and fantastical syncretism would place her outside of the Catholic mainstream. She clearly derives humor from her odd set of beliefs and associations, although ultimately they serve to separate her from the mainstream Catholic community. Similar to her experiences in the Jewish community as a secular Jew who never mastered Hebrew or Yiddish, she was an outsider among Catholics as well, and was forced to rely on her own sense of self in order to escape or at least ameliorate the feelings of isolation and exile.

Another example of Glantz's religious syncretism and consequent confusion and conflict is when her parents finally discovered that she and her sisters had been converted to the Catholic faith. The conversion was obviously incomplete, as she was still immersed in the Jewish culture of her parents and did not participate in Christian holiday celebrations, but the fascination with Christmas and the longing to take part in the festivities remained.

---

<sup>63</sup> Glantz, *Las genealogías*, 207-208

Mis andanzas religiosas terminaron cuando mi madre, bañando a Susana (tendría como cuatro años), descubrió una medallita o un escapulario que llevaba en la camiseta. Lilly y Susana recibieron una buena paliza. Mi rápido paso por el cristianismo me dejó un hábito muy marcado de lecturas y una preferencia especial por las torturas. Cada domingo llevaba el Niño Jesús en mi corazón y cuando comía las muéganos sentía una especial desazón y un miedo muy grande de molestarlo.<sup>64</sup>

The influence Christianity had on Glantz as a child contributed to her hybridity. Every aspect of her being from her self-perception to the consumption of food was affected by her unique religious exposure. The fact that her brief period as a Catholic was brought to an abrupt and undesired end caused even greater confusion, resentment and self-doubt. The straddling of two cultures and religions at such a young age was indicative of her inevitable quest for the ultimate space that would permit such cultural hybridity.

Yet another example of the culture clash produced by the longing to participate in both religions, and the

---

<sup>64</sup> Glantz, *Las genealogías*, 210-211.

disappointing reality of being unable to belong to neither is when Glantz received no presents for Christmas or Hanukkah. The constant reminder that she was among the "Chosen People" (a term and identity that the Boyarins reject) intensified her longing to be Christian or someone who could take part in the Christian festivities. The fact that she was not involved at all in the modern "tradition" of gift-giving and receiving on Hanukah disturbed her even more because there was no benefit, in her young mind, to be one of the "Chosen People."

Alguien me dice que quizá todo se deba a esa sensación terrible de pertenecer al pueblo elegido o al sentimiento intenso de desolación que experimentaba cuando el 6 de enero me asomaba debajo de la cama y no encontraba ningún juguete, semejante a los que ostentaban, por todo el barrio de Tacuba, enfrente del Árbol de la Noche Triste, que ya no existe (se formó un ripio), los niños católicos. Tampoco se hace coherente la posibilidad de compararme con el Niño Jesús cuando lo veía sentadito en un altar del convento de Tacuba o cuando lo tenía sentadito en el interior de mi alma o cuando caminábamos con las hermana Lechuga y con Chonita en las procesiones

de las posadas. Ningún regalo de *Jánuka*, ni las monedas de a peso de verdadera plata que nos daba mi tío Guídale, cuando lo visitábamos en su panadería de la calle de Uruguay (ni las rosquitas de chocolate), bastan para deshacer el recuerdo y la triste sensación de niña expósita que me ha atacado siempre y me ha hecho estudiar con verdadera *Los bandidos de Río Frío y Pedro Páramo*.<sup>65</sup>

Although Glantz recounts this story with melodramatic humor, her sense of estrangement from both Christian and Jewish cultures and practices was evident at a young age.

As an outsider of both cultural communities and geographic spaces, the push to repatriate herself is great. The predicament of being deterritorialized and disassociated from any one community leads to her inevitable reliance on literature to fill the void and establish an imaginary homeland. From a Jewish perspective, Jews are seen as people of the Book who carry their portable homeland with them by way of the Scriptures. This a religious conclusion, but not exclusionary to secular Jews. The notion that one is tied to the book can be understood to include Jewish writers, Jewish writing and the derivation of a

---

<sup>65</sup> Glantz, *Las genealogías*, 197.

Jewish identity, however secular, religious, hybrid or quixotic. As Erich S. Gruen wrote in his essay "Diaspora and Homeland," and as quoted earlier in the theoretical chapter:

...Jews require no territorial sanctuary or legitimization. They are 'the people of the Book.' Their homeland resides in the text -- not just the canonical Scriptures, but also an array of Jewish writings that help to define the nation and give voice to its sense of identity. Their 'portable Temple' serves the purpose. A geographical restoration is therefore superfluous, even subversive.<sup>66</sup>

Even though Gruen asserts that the establishment or restoration of a geographic homeland would be unnecessary and even antithetical to the writers' purposes, that does not erase the fact that Margo Glantz, as well as Nora Glickman and Ruth Behar, among innumerable others, do not long for that space and the ability to return. If they were to have such an actual geographic territory, their acts of self-discovery and recovery might become superfluous.

---

<sup>66</sup> Erich S. Gruen, "Diaspora and Homeland," *Diasporas and Exiles: Varieties of Jewish Identity*, ed. Howard Wettstein (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002) 18.

If the possession of a geographic homeland was uncharacteristic of and unnatural for Jews, then Isaac Bashevis Singer's and Althusser's theories are confirmed. Bashevis Singer believed that time and space were merely illusions and Althusser proposed "Space without places, time without duration." Nabokov's assertion that the imagination and act of writing replaced the lost physical homeland because the mind is far more effective in replicating the past and creating a false nostalgia that overtakes reality and becomes far more attractive and appealing than what was left behind. Nabokov felt that as a result of his nostalgic writing and efforts to recreate and return to Russia, he would look up one day from his desk and see his beloved homeland, just as he had remembered it:

"Ought one not to reject any longing for one's homeland, for any homeland besides that which is with me, within me, which is stuck like the silver sand of the sea to the skin of my soles, lives in my eyes, my blood, gives depth and distance to the background of life's every hope? Some day, interrupting my writing, I will look through the window and see the Russian autumn."<sup>67</sup>

---

<sup>67</sup> Vladimir Nabokov, *The Gift* (New York: Putnam Press, 1963) 187.

The truth is that such a return is only possible through the power of the imagination and the act of writing, and the "window" through which the writer apprehends this vision is the mind's eye. Nabokov's notion of an imaginary homeland erected through words further substantiates Glantz, Glickman, and Behar's desire to establish a literary homeland. The fact that Nabokov was not Jewish does not detract from the assertion that an imaginary space can replace a physical homeland, which for the Jews is the historic land of Israel.

Leon Pérez advocates the belief that Jews are tied to no geographic space and that their identity is derived from their portable Judaism. Jews are inhabitants of history and travel through time and space without being tied to either. Pérez ignores, however, that the historic homeland of the Jews is Israel and the holy city is Jerusalem where the first and second temples are said to have stood. He makes the claim that Jews have adapted to being de-territorialized and, therefore, no longer require a physical space, nation, or country to legitimize their identities and reclaim their homelands.

El pueblo judío es ante todo un habitante de la historia. Tiene su patria en el tiempo mucho antes que en la geografía. De allí que está



expatriado de su tierra pero no de su judaísmo y que la verdadera pérdida de identidad judía, ocurre cuando ocurre la expatriación histórica.<sup>68</sup>

Pérez's theory would be helpful in contributing to the notion that homelands are products of the will and imagination of the individual; however, it is predicated on the belief that Jews derive their identity from their religious beliefs and practices. For Glantz, who practices a unique and unconventional Judaism interwoven with Catholic and indigenous beliefs, this theory would prevent her from being a member of this abstract Jewish homeland. The belief that a homeland can be imagined and sustained in one's mind is nevertheless applicable to Glantz's literary creation. Although Pérez does not speak to the power that writing has in the maintenance of such a homeland, Glantz undoubtedly does.

In addition to the critical role that literature plays in her establishment of a homeland, her writing also serves as the epicenter for a dialogue, which, in turn, supports the creation of the literary space. The act of writing allows Glantz to engage in an internal conversation, as well as converse with her ancestors and her readers. It is

---

<sup>68</sup> Leon Pérez, *La identidad reprimida: Judíos negros* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Galerna, 1968) 12.

an ongoing interchange that ensures numerous interpretations, perspectives and self-discoveries. Nancy Miller concluded that the text serves as "a site of dialogic encounter"<sup>69</sup> and is forever evolving, as are the writer and critic. According to Miller, the writer (in this case Glantz) engages her readers in a post-exilic discourse that includes the telling of her personal history and the invitation to explore the opportunities for literary repatriation and reterritorialization.

Another perspective on the essential roles played by literary construction is provided by Stuart Hall:

"...it is an arena that is 'profoundly mythic... a theatre of popular desires, a theatre of popular fantasies. It is where we discover and play with the identification of ourselves, where we are imagined, where we are represented.'"<sup>70</sup>

To counterbalance the overwhelmingly positive interpretations of the construction of a literary homeland as an antidote for the absence of a geographic one, Gloria

---

<sup>69</sup> Discussed in Nancy K. Miller, *Getting Personal: Feminist Occasions and Other Autobiographical Acts* (New York: Routledge, 1991).

<sup>70</sup> Stuart Hall, "Introduction: Borders, Boundaries and Frameworks," *Borders, Boundaries and Frameworks*, ed. Mae G. Henderson (New York: Routledge, 1995) 19.

Anzaldúa's concept of the *Borderlands* provides another perspective. Anzaldúa's creation of an imaginary space is in response to society's rejection of her hybrid lesbian self and the Chicano population in the United States. She finds herself unable and unwilling to continue straddling cultural and geographic fault lines and, therefore, resides in a place in which others like her must dwell. It is not a chosen residence, but rather an imposed one upon those who cannot or will not conform to social, cultural and national norms and expectations.

Glantz shares this cultural isolation and rejection to a certain extent and responds to it in the same manner that Anzaldúa does: by writing herself into existence. Daniel Walden recognizes the similarities between Jewish and Chicano struggles for acceptance and integration; however, he notes that economic divides distinguish them:

The Jews have achieved a kind of structural incorporation within the economic sphere where the Chicano has to some extent achieved but not in the same sense the Jew has...

That is the struggle to be part of yourself connected with your roots, and then also the struggle within the context of the pushes and the

pulls of Americanization. That applies to Chicanos as well as it applied to Jews more in the past.<sup>71</sup>

Although Walden is referring to the Jewish North American population, his observation is useful because it recognizes the pressures to assimilate and shed one's cultural differences in order to be accepted.

Given the positive interpretations of self-representation, recuperation and identity formation, it can be asserted that the creation of a literary homeland is far more effective and practical than the attainment of a geographic one. The ability Glantz has as a writer to transcend cultural, religious and national boundaries makes her a border-crosser with a purpose - that of transforming her writing into a form of genuine citizenship and identity legitimization.

To contribute to the positive view of writing as an act establishing a homeland, a comprehensive understanding and appreciation for border crossing is necessary. Border crossing, according to Mae G. Henderson's explanation, is

---

<sup>71</sup> Daniel Walden, "Parallels Between Chicano and Jewish-American Writing," *Melus: The Journal for the Society for the Study of Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States* 8:2 (1981): 59.

an essential component of the post-exilic discourse en route to the establishment of a literary homeland:

What we are proposing is 'border crossing with a difference' - as an act of creation rather than violation ... In methodological terms, re-mapping the borders between disciplines contributes to the larger intellectual project of rethinking culture, canon and disciplinarity. In redrawing these lines, subjects and disciplines that were previously inconspicuous or uncharted are made visible and located according to their own coordinates. Border crossing yields what W.E.B. DuBois calls 'double-vision' -- it expands our field of vision without being expansionist; it includes without consuming, it appreciates without appropriating; and it seeks to temper politics with ethics.<sup>72</sup>

Border crossing ultimately results in establishing a borderless literary homeland. It is, therefore, not a subversive act, but rather, a quest for acceptance and validation within an accommodating and multicultural space.

---

<sup>72</sup> Walden, 27.

The fact that Glantz became a border-crosser was not accidental. Although her parents were once citizens of Russia, their Mexican citizenship was quite haphazard. The frenzied nationalization of her parents in Mexico contributed to the legacy of cultural displacement and identity crises that she came to inherit. The ship on which they traveled made various stops in the Americas, including Havana, Cuba. Her parents strongly considered disembarking in the Cuban port, however, the humidity and the darkness of the sky and the people, something they had had no exposure to in their native Russia, convinced them to stay on board until they reached Veracruz, México. They truly longed to go to the United States where they had family, but the U.S. government no longer allowed Russian Jews into the country, as the "quotas had been filled." As Glantz described her parents' random repatriation, "Ese maniqueísmo espantado fue la causa de mi nacionalidad."<sup>73</sup>

In the following citation, Glantz explains the tendency among women in particular to engage in a timeless search for their origins and true homeland. Taking into consideration the "manequismo espantado" que "fue la causa de mi nacionalidad" which she describes in the passage above, the relentless search for homeland and an identity,

---

<sup>73</sup> Glantz, *Las genealogías*, 84.

which was born in that homeland, has come to fruition in *Las genealogies* and explained in the following way by Glantz. She also identifies with Columbus as a world traveler because she, too, is an identity seeker in all lands and spaces. However, Glantz asserts that women had been attempting to solve the enigma of territorial destiny and derivation long before Columbus.

Pero en realidad de verdad, como dicen los colombinos y muy especialmente mi amiga Nancy Vicens, todas mujeres tenemos que ver con el huevo, a todas nos ha ocurrido, antes que a Colón, resolver el famoso enigma placentario. A todas se nos ha pasado, si no por la cabeza sí por otra parte, resolver prácticamente la dicotomía y hemos conjuntado huevo y gallina hasta en la escritura. Por eso viajamos, porque antes para hacerlo teníamos que ir rodeadas de una escolta o cubiertas de gorgueras (como la hija de Lope de Aguirre o la amante de Diego de Úrsula), travestidas como George Sand o Don Gil de las Calzas Verdes o como Rosaura, la verdadera heroína de *La vida es sueño*.<sup>74</sup>

---

<sup>74</sup> Glantz, *Las genealogías*, 173-174.

Not only does Glantz share her father's identification with Christopher Columbus, she also inherited the tradition of women defying gender roles and restrictions by staking out a literary territory all their own. She refers to such groundbreaking women writers as George Sand who had to masquerade as a man, and adopt a pen name, in order to be published; she could not reveal her true identity because societal norms and expectations would not permit it. All of the women referred to in the quote above traveled the world in order to compose their fictions and discover and recover their beginnings and resolve their enigmatic and multifaceted identities.

For Glantz, her multi-genre writing style and hybrid identity go against mainstream cultural practices and traditional genre criteria. Without the fortification that unobstructed writing provides her, she would still be in search, like Columbus, of a new promised land. Even with the creation of a literary homeland, Glantz still retains her father's nomadic ways, much like Telemachus inherited from Ulysses:

Mis viajes han sido más modestos y en lugar de buscar oro en mis largas travesías por este continente (quizá compré algunas figas, unas llamas, una mola y una modesta turmalina impura)



he seguido, como Telémaco las de Ulises, las huellas de mi padre.<sup>75</sup>

She continues to compare herself to Columbus in his search for riches (even though hers are psychological rather than physical), as well as identifying with Telemachus whose father's voyage home left so much to be recovered and understood by both father and son. Although Jacobo Glantz, like Ulysses, maintained a concrete homeland, his journeys altered his sense of home and his ability to recover it. As children of parents with nomadic pasts, whether accidental or desired, Glantz and Telemachus both find themselves assuming the quest that their fathers had not succeeded in completing prior to their demise.

Although Glantz was the heir to many of her father's quests and characteristics, she did not share his ability to communicate in Yiddish, nor did she embrace many Jewish traditions that he held sacred. As a writer she clearly blazed her own path, and as an individual she did the same. Unlike her sisters who married Jewish men, Glantz chose to marry outside of the faith, much to the disappointment of her parents, for even though they were not religious Jews, they still felt strongly about Judaism's endurance. In spite of the disappointment expressed by her parents, her

---

<sup>75</sup> Glantz, *Las genealogías*, 174.

recollections about their responses to her marriage to a goy (a non-Jew) are quite humorous:

Mis padres sufrieron mucho cuando me casé con un goi, pero se consolaron cuando supieron que por obra y gracia de la providencia mi marido era circunciso antes de su nacimiento y que algo le tocaba del Mesías. Ahora mi padre acepta complacido cuando algún joven no judío, casi siempre de edad madura, le ruega que le sirva de padrino para una circuncisión tardía, ejetado con el objeto de contraer santo matrimonio con una muchacha judía de padres ortodoxos.<sup>76</sup>

Glantz's parents were able to accept some degree of inter-faith unions as long as the prospective gentleman caller would agree to certain alterations. In the case of Glantz's first husband, her parents were consoled by the fact that he had been circumcised at birth in the hospital, one of the mandates in the Jewish Scripture for male infants. As far as her future suitors were concerned, they would have to agree to be circumcised in accordance with Jewish law.

A more profound impression that Glantz's parents made upon her was that one's homeland resides in oneself. Her

---

<sup>76</sup> Glantz, *Las genealogías*, 189.

parents' constant shifting of geographic and cultural spaces prevented them from ever truly claiming one country as their own. They internalized the sense of "belonging" because the external geographic spaces were ephemeral. From her parents, Glantz learned to live from within and, from her father in particular, she learned that to truly live she had to write. Although Glantz follows in the footsteps of her parents' territorially unbound identity, ultimately she territorializes and immortalizes both them and herself through the composition of *Las genealogías*.

El esfuerzo de mi madre por reterritorializarse -- horrible y significativa palabra -- es su único remedio, su única arma para derrotar historia, cuyo discurso genealógico 'normal,' como diría ella, cubre 300 años engullidos con ferocidad por el paso trágico pero también maravilloso, la persistencia del judaísmo en la Europa oriental. La emigración a América exige otro esfuerzo de integración mental, estar al otro lado del océano revoluciona el signo. En el nuevo territorio, él del exilio, se reacomodan las cosas, el judaísmo se reintegra a su raíz, se habla el yidish, los enemigos son amigos y el ruso sigue siendo un idioma de unión, el idioma

secreto del amor y el de convivencia con otros exiliados del antiguo y propio territorio. Los hijos nacen en otra tierra y en otro idioma, las costumbres se yuxtaponen, los antagonismos inmediatos o seculares desaparecen y se antoja posible una integración. Los antiguos enemigos: los judíos -- *nosotros* -- y los rusos antisemitas -- *ellos* -- constituyen un todo, un nuevo *nosotros*, él de los emigrantes, los *otros* ya no son un bloque formado por los antagonistas tradicionales sino los habitantes naturales del territorio de elección. Este territorio, por el hecho mismo de haberse elegido, se transforma y *ellos*, sus habitantes, en este caso los indígenas y los mestizos, constituyen un parámetro totalmente distinto de referencia. La nave de los inmigrantes, ese territorio flotante, intermedio, favorece la conversión, inclina a la sustitución, en suma, rearticula la idea del exilio, la prepara, la dulcifica, y asegura la posibilidad un nuevo espacio donde todo puede reacomodarse armónicamente.<sup>77</sup>

---

<sup>77</sup> Glantz, *Las genealogías*, 238-239.

The long-desired coexistence between Russian Jews and non-Jews in Mexico unified fellow Russian exiles in a foreign land. Their shared language served as a linguistic homeland for their lost geographic one and enlivened a world long gone and one that offered no hope of return. For the Russian-speaking immigrants, the language substituted for a concrete territory, however, their children did not share this linguistic space. The second generation's sense of exile and dislocation differs from that of their parents, because the children cannot reminisce about the "Old Country", and yet they still feel that their present country of residence cannot fill the void their parents' lost homeland left behind, which, therefore, causes them to feel doubly exiled. As Kathryn Hellerstein poetically wrote, "The language in perpetual exile mirrors the experience of the writer."<sup>78</sup>

While immigrant parents are able to reconnect and make amends with past enemies, which helps them to empathize and ground themselves in a foreign land, the children can make no such amends or reconnect with their past life because they have none of which to speak. The second generation

---

<sup>78</sup> Kathryn Hellerstein, "In Exile in the Mother Tongue: Yiddish and the Woman Poet," *Borders, Boundaries, and Frameworks*, ed. Mae G. Henderson (New York: Routledge, 1995) 64.

longs for such a time and space, but their only recourse is to write themselves and their homelands into existence, as Margo Glantz has done. Although Glantz's mother was able to reconnect with non-Jewish Russian immigrants in Mexico through their shared language, the repatriation was never complete or fulfilling. She struggled with her de-territorialized status her entire life and, ultimately, in her daughter's eyes, established a corporeal homeland that resided within her. The fact that Glantz waits until the last few pages of *Las genealogías* to pay homage to her mother is striking because she seems to attribute much of her identity and literary existence to her father. Perhaps the death of her mother compelled Glantz to immortalize her and ensure that she had a homeland other than the one she internalized. Perhaps that literary homeland serves as that long-awaited territory in which her parents, ancestors, and other exiles can reunite.

Tenía casi 95 años. Murió con la dignidad, la finura, la paciencia, el sentido de humor, los gestos que la habían caracterizado siempre.

¿Cómo pudo sobrevivir a mi padre tanto tiempo?

¿En dónde encontró su territorio? Es más probable que su verdadero territorio, él de ella y él de mi padre, fuese su propio cuerpo, ese

cuerpo finito, reducido, llegado con el que murió, ese cuerpo que alguna vez fuera armónico y hermoso, ese cuerpo en él que me alojé alguna vez, ese cuerpo que me permitió ser lo que soy. La lloro, la admiro, me lleno de culpas y escribo estas precarias palabras totalmente insuficientes para recordarla y para ponerle un punto final, ahora sí, mis genealogías.<sup>79</sup>

Following in the Jewish tradition, Glantz inscribes her parents in the Book of Life. It is not necessarily the Book of Life that is referred to in a traditional religious context, but one that is conceived by the act of writing. Words are the essence of Glantz's existence, identity, and world, and it is through the words of her post-exilic discourse in *Las genealogías* that she conceives of her literary homeland.

### ***No pronunciarás***

Glantz chooses the words made sacred in the *Torah*, "You shall not say the Lord's name in vain," for her elaborate study of nomenclature. She presents both comical and

---

<sup>79</sup> Glantz, *Las genealogías*, 240.

absurd explanations on the origins of popular and historical names in an authoritative voice that seems to be all-knowing. The author of these elaborate explanations is a fictional Juan López Evangelista, a cleric-scribe who boasts an unparalleled knowledge of the origin of religious and secular historical figures. In reality, it is Glantz who dictates the fragmented anecdotes and enlivens them with her creativity and imagination. Her own hybridity is undeniably infused in the text, as the fictional Evangelista incorporates both Catholic and Cabalistic traditions. Naomi Lindstorm observed the following in her study of *No pronunciarás*:

Obra supuestamente católica y devota, el texto muy pronto se revela como depósito de ideas que la Iglesia clasificaría de herejes y el sentido común de delirantes. El autor, un tal Juan López Evangelista, se impone el ejercicio espiritual de enfocar el Nombre sagrado, pero su imaginación desbordante y conocimientos ocultistas dispersan su pensamieto y dan a su discurso una heterogeneidad irreducible. El texto se desplaza de la 'Oratio cristiana' que anuncia el título hacia la cabalística. Elabora la noción, arraigada en la



mística judía, del Nombre que sustenta la creación. La pronunciación del Nombre, normalmente imposible, acarrea cataclismos o genera cosmos.<sup>80</sup>

The fact that the text combines Jewish and Catholic beliefs, various writing styles including narrative, historical fiction, the creation of a false author, the insertion of absurd and humorous anecdotes, proves that *No pronunciarás* is a reflection of Glantz herself. She essentially created a text to reflect her hybridity and, in so doing, further expanded the parameters of her multi-genre form of literary expression. In order to fully appreciate that observation, a close examination of the text is required.

*No pronunciarás* is a seemingly haphazard mix of fragmented anecdotes, citations and commentaries on nomenclature. The fictitious author, Juan López Evangelista, addresses the origins of such famous names as Maria Magdalena - a curious choice considering the name of the true author of the text is Caesar - in order to demonstrate that an individual inherits a history and a fate because of

---

<sup>80</sup> Naomi Lindstrom, "No Pronunciarás de Margo Glantz: Los nombres como señas de la imaginación cultural," *Instituto Internacional de Literatura Iberoamericana*, Arturo Azuela, Pres. (Providence: Brown University, 1988) 281.

his/her name. According to Evangelista/ Glantz's conclusions, "Sólo el nombre cuenta."<sup>81</sup>

The reference to Glantz's own first name is yet another comical interlude in the text. Instead of providing a praiseworthy and flattering historical etymology of her name, she offers a rather unworldly description:

Además de aplicarse a salones de belleza, a tiendas unisex, a carpas populares, a tintorerías, a restaurantes, a actrices de cine norteamericano y a boutiques de provincia, el nombre de Glantz sirve para designar una marca de pinturas-esmalte de rápido seco.<sup>82</sup>

This comical, yet slightly self-deprecating explanation of the applications of her name, demonstrate that as laden as names are with cultural and historical meaning, they can also be a source of entertainment and self-derived amusement.

To return to the more foundational characteristics of names, including the role that history plays as an inherent part, it is not only determinant of an individual's fate, according to Glantz, but it is also indicative of a cul-

---

<sup>81</sup>Lindstrom, 278.

<sup>82</sup> Margo Glantz, *No pronunciarás* (México, D.F.: La Red de Janás-premia Editora, 1980) 59.

ture's endurance. Such names as Vetus or Caesar demonstrate that the ancient Roman and Greek cultures are still a part of modern civilization. Glantz demonstrates her belief that the continued employment of names demonstrates a culture's survival:

Este segmento, con sus acontecimientos poco comprensibles, demuestra el intento de arraigar cualquier sociedad actual en la antigüedad greco-romana es una versión tendenciosa de la historia cultural. El episodio de Vetus, supuestamente 'nuestro' pasado, es tan ajeno como si tuviera lugar en una tradición denominada 'otra'.<sup>83</sup>

The fact that Greco-Roman names are still used in modern society may demonstrate that those cultures, albeit to a lesser degree than in ancient times, are still alive. The flipside to the continued usage of such names makes those names peculiar and anachronistic. The incorporation of elements from such a distant past has the result of turning the cultural tradition of safeguarding ancient names into an "Other." The cultural repercussions are obviously not as great as for contemporary cultures and peoples treated as Others and consequently rejected by society. Glantz

---

<sup>83</sup> Lindstrom, 282.

undoubtedly values diversity and multiculturalism and seeks to preserve the cultures of the past and present. In addition to safeguarding Greco-Roman names, Glantz invokes names originating from Spain and Spanish America, and the exotic names produced as a result of contact with the indigenous civilizations. The names that Glantz chose are reflective of Catholic traditions, but emphasize the exotic *mestizaje* in the New World and the rich multiculturalism that resulted:

En su libertad para disfrutar de los nombres exóticos y sus resonancias, Glantz no omite las tradiciones de España y el Nuevo Mundo. Enfoca, en particular, las excentricidades que florecieron dentro, o en las márgenes, del catolicismo. A pesar del continuo esfuerzo por hacer del catolicismo una fuerza centrípeta, uniformadora, Glantz admira de esta tradición las extravagancias imaginativas a que ha dado lugar, sobre todo en sus extensiones aisladas (la Colonia, lejos de Roma: retiros de ermitanos) y al entrar en contacto con las civilizaciones indígenas. El vigor inventivo que se produce lejos de la

autoridad central eclesiástica se patentiza en las prácticas en torno a los nombres.<sup>84</sup>

To return to Glantz's belief that an entire history is embodied in a name, she wittily observes that most famous people learn the lesson early about changing their names. To enter into the public eye with an unpronounceable or unattractive name could jeopardize a rising star's career. In this case, Glantz feels that a name's history is detrimental to the individual's social survival. She does not consider cultural survival, perhaps because she sees movie stars as having their own distinct culture: "Todo el mundo lo sabe y por lo menos lo sospecha: a ningún personaje célebre puede serlo si no aprende a cambiarse el nombre."<sup>85</sup>

According to the tremendous importance that Glantz places on a person's name, it is curious that she advocates changing it for theatrical purposes. Of course she is less than serious when she speaks of the public pressures to have an attractive name in show business, but the change still entails identity loss and the discarding of the rich history attached to one's real name.

---

<sup>84</sup> Lindstrom, 282-283.

<sup>85</sup> Glantz, *No pronunciarás*, 3.

There is another instance when Glantz advocates the altering of one's name, even though it implies cultural and historical loss: in the case of persecution, when people are trying to escape annihilation, the changing of one's name can mean survival. The work of those who falsified people's names in order to help them escape were not guilty of robbing people of their past but rather ensuring that they had a future. "La labor de los falsificadores profesionales de pasaportes era cambiar los nombres de las personas y facilitar las salidas de los perseguidos."<sup>86</sup>

In cases of the Spanish and Mexican Inquisitions in which the names were preserved and the identity was supposedly changed by the conversion from Judaism to Catholicism, the name ensured the survival of the Jewish people and culture. It was the name that guaranteed the existence of future generations of Jews in spite of the false conversion. "Moser Ferriz (seguramente converso, a pesar de la limpieza de sangre que relumbraba en sus cuatro apellidos)..."<sup>87</sup> According to Glantz, no *limpieza de sangre*, the strategy employed by the Spanish Crown and Catholic Church during the Spanish Inquisition to eliminate

---

<sup>86</sup> Glantz, *No pronunciarás*, 73.

<sup>87</sup> Glantz, *No pronunciarás*, 53.

any trace of Jewish blood in the kingdom, could successfully eradicate the Jewish culture and people if the name was kept alive.

With regard to those escaping persecution, Glantz includes yet another fragmented memoir of an exile. There is no direct connection to the preceding or upcoming anecdotes, as the text is largely fragmented and unsystematic. However, the term exile also functions as a name and an identity and is often synonymous with being Jewish, according to Glantz's conjecture. The following passage is a letter supposedly written by an exiled man who attempts to explain his seemingly inescapable predicament.

Permítame presentarme: soy un exiliado por partida doble y cargo a costas la trampa del destierro. Soy como los cuadrúpedos pero mis patas son las lenguas aunque a diferencia de las lenguas de las vacas que son internacionales, las mías conducen por algunas zonas periféricas y sureñas. Sufro como sufría el Marqués de Sade cuando no pudo ponerle el nombre al sexo de las vacas. Sus últimos diarios lo revelan y yo los utilizo para poder describir coherentemente esta enfermedad que, como el cáncer, es ahora endémica en los países de donde se ha extirpado la bru-

jería. Pido disculpas, sin embargo, como de costumbre - cosa además habitual en este síndrome - no puedo seguir adelante mi tarea si no me ocupo de las dedicatorias. Por lo general, los atacados por esta curiosa enfermedad deben proceder, antes de cualquier tratamiento especial, a dedicarle todos sus síntomas a sus benefactores, sus detractores, sus padres, sus hermanos, sus compañeros, sus amantes, sus acreedores y sus bastardos. La dedicatoria puede decirse de viva voz o dejarse como simple alusión. Una vez hecho esto y habiendo puesto antes el nombre que define a la enfermedad puedo, como Propp, proceder a describirla.<sup>88</sup>

The exilic syndrome that is described by an imaginary character is equated with being Jewish. Glantz demonstrates that the sense of exile, intolerance, isolation and deterritorialization experienced by exiles is commonly shared by Jews who are considered "Others" and perpetual outsiders wherever they are.

Not only are the characteristics of exiles apparent to those around them, they often suffer from what Glantz

---

<sup>88</sup> Glantz, *No pronunciarás*, 89.



refers to as "manchitas rojas en la ingle"<sup>89</sup> as well. These spots, also seen on Jews, are a further branding by society and confirmation that they indeed suffer from an incurable disease. Of course these spots are an extreme and imaginary sickness that Glantz invented in order to show how damaging and stigmatizing it is to be an exile and a Jew. "Los médicos han acabado por denominarlas manchas del exilio. Algunos desterrados que lo son doblemente por ser judíos, acuden a las frases clásicas y acaban lamentándose con la voz de las profetas."<sup>90</sup> The outward and internal signs of an exile are inescapable because their "sickness" is always in public view. The severity of the outward appearance of an exile is obviously exaggerated in this description. However, it is indicative of the internal suffering experienced by exiled individuals.

As Glantz wrote in *No pronunciarás*, and Althusser brought to light years before, names function as signs and signifiers and, in this case, signs and signifiers of a people's history. It need not be so extreme as the "manchitas del exilio," however, names play a central role in the exilic identity. "En verdad, el mundo de los nombres

---

<sup>89</sup> Glantz, *No pronunciarás*, 90.

<sup>90</sup> Glantz, *No pronunciarás*, 90.

es el mundo de los signos, la posibilidad de transferir al dominio de los símbolos lo que un pueblo ha vivido."<sup>91</sup> The safeguarding of a name that is laden with such a daunting history and legacy might not seem so appealing when a name change could facilitate greater acceptance and integration into the dominant culture. If there is an option, it is up to the individual to break with the past and work towards a post-exilic existence.

In cases where circumstances do not necessitate the falsification of names, Glantz sees it as a moral imperative for nations that experience an influx of immigrants and cultures to accommodate and assimilate the newcomers without requiring their traditions and languages to be devalued or discarded. There are obvious implications for a newly arrived immigrant to adapt and integrate in the new country and embrace a new culture; however, Glantz feels that this demand is also made on the new nation and dominant culture. As she wrote and Lindstrom quoted, "Una sociedad incapaz de asimilar las cosas nuevas es una sociedad muerta. *La muerte de los nombres es la muerte de una civilización.*"<sup>92</sup> Glantz in this instance is referring to the forced name changes made by immigration officials or

---

<sup>91</sup> Glantz, *No pronunciarás*, 60.

<sup>92</sup> Glantz, *No pronunciarás*, 60.

those made by the immigrants themselves under pressure to assimilate and integrate into their new "homelands."

Glantz's believes that the assimilation and integration process should be reciprocal, in the sense that both societies and peoples contribute to the other's culture and practices, as well as adopt traditions and elements from the other. Thus neither culture or people is superior to the other because both equally offer and embrace the other's culture and identity. Fernando Ortíz, the Cuban anthropologist who was introduced in the theoretical framework of this study, created the idea of *transculturación*, which is essentially an equal give and take in cultural encounters. It rejects the notion that there is a dominant culture or civilization that has the right to eradicate another or assimilate it to the point beyond recognition. Ortíz's complete rejection of any form of cultural or national imperialism was spurred by the long history of cultural annihilation in the New World and the African continent.

Glantz clearly embraces Ortíz's notion of *transculturación* and strives to preserve cultural traditions and histories through the safeguarding of names. Glantz believes that names are indicative of a culture's survival and the rich history that preceded an individual's receipt

of his/her name; the disappearance of certain names implicates the death of that civilization. Naomi Lindstrom emphasizes this fatalistic conclusion made by Glantz by employing the powerful statement cited in the previous quote:

En uno de los pocos pronunciamientos directos que emite Glantz en su libro, afirma la importancia de los nombres como indicios del vigor cultural:

'Una sociedad incapaz de asimilar las cosas nuevas es una sociedad muerta. La muerte de los nombres es la muerte de una civilización.'

Efectivamente, la creación de nuevos nombres para expresar las vivencias del grupo social, el cambio lingüístico que sufre un nombre como reflejo de una nueva circunstancia social, y la pérdida de nombres una vez corrientes son cuestiones que considera de sumo interés para la comprensión de la evolución de las comunidades.<sup>93</sup>

The fact that Glantz frequently employs Yiddish words and expressions in *Las genealogías*, as well as invoking the names of distant places in Russia, demonstrates her desire

---

<sup>93</sup> Lindstrom, 283.

to ensure the cultural survival of the Jewish civilization and the memories of places where her ancestors lived and endured hardships. Despite its secular nature, her autobiographical text ensures Jewish cultural survival because the written word is an indisputable proof of existence. With regard to ensuring her father's legacy, both in name and in literary expression, she tells her mother in one of the conversations recorded in *Las genealogías* that she wants to archive her father's books for the sake of history, his own and those he recorded. "Vas a mandar los libros y papeles de papá para que los archiven y los arreglen. Me parece bien, serán útiles y ayudarán a la historia o a las historias."<sup>94</sup> It is evident that both Jacobo Glantz's own texts and the ones he kept in his library emphasize cultural survival and the preservation of language, which are essentially interdependent. His appreciation for the stories recorded by others and the desire to record his own was passed on to his daughter, who has embraced that tradition with all of her being.

Not only does Glantz promote the preservation of names in general, she is interested in safeguarding women's names

---

<sup>94</sup> Glantz, *Las genealogías*, 89.

in particular. She discourages the abandonment by women of their maiden names upon marriage. Glantz feels that the patriarchal tradition and expectation that the woman assume her husband's name is unnecessary and implies the cultural and historical loss attached to her former name. In addition to safeguarding a woman's lineage through the preservation of her family name, Glantz advocates the opportunity to alter one's name at the age of eighteen and choose a new nationality if he/she is discontented with the one assumed at birth. The name change obviously implies a loss of cultural and historical identity, but it allows the individual to create and define his/her own identity instead of assuming one by default. Just as Glantz blazed new territory in the creation of a literary homeland, young adults should be able to claim their own space in the world beginning with a new name:

Para impedir la muerte definitiva de los nombres hay que evitar los patronímicos y lograr que el código civil se modifique: cada quien debe poder optar, al cumplir los 18 años, no solo por la nacionalidad que prefiera, sino también por el nombre que le venga en gana y han de instituirse

tribunales especiales para que el cambio de nombre sea expedito y perfecto.<sup>95</sup>

The messages that Glantz sends to her readers are undeniably bold. She rejects patriarchal traditions; she advocates freedom of choice for 18 year olds who want to change their names, identities and nationalities; she celebrates the rich cultural diversity embodied in names, and she believes that nomenclature is not solely reserved for the Divine or for the powerful. Although Glantz makes fun of the tendency among Hollywood stars to change their names to something far more glamorous and befitting for a movie star, the suggestion that individuals, not institutions and patriarchal traditions, have the power to alter their histories and futures, is noteworthy.

Glantz substantiates her argument in favor of name preservation by incorporating yet another reference to Walter Benjamin. His desire to preserve names also includes the safeguarding of women's maiden names for he believed that a woman's beauty and essence was embodied in her name. She quotes Benjamin describing the woman's name is the true source of love, passion, intimacy, and sustenance:

---

<sup>95</sup> Glantz, *No pronunciarás*, 76.

Walter Benjamin asegura en *sombras breves* que 'la naturaleza y el amor se perfilan rigurosamente en el destino que ese amor prepara al nombre y al apellido. El matrimonio, que quita a la mujer su apellido original para poner en lugar el nombre del marido, tampoco deja intacto su nombre de pila -- lo cual vale para casi toda aproximación sexual. Lo envuelve, lo cerca con con apelaticos cariñosos bajo los cuales es frecuente que no vuelva ya a aparecer más durante años, decenios. Al matrimonio, en este amplio sentido se opone el amor platónico y es así solamente como puede este determinarse de veras, en el destino del nombre, no en el del cuerpo -- con su único auténtico, único relevante sentido: como amor que no satisface en el nombre de su deseo, sino que ama a la amada en su nombre y en su nombre la mima. Que guarde intacto, que proteja el nombre de la amada es la sólo expresión de la tensión, de la inclinación a la lejanía que se llama amor platónico. Para él la existencia de la amada procede, como rayos desde un nucleo incandescente, del nombre, y de este procede incluso la obra del amante. Y así *La Divina Comedia* no



es otra cosa que el aura en torno al nombre de Beatriz: la expresión más poderosa de todas las fuerzas y figuras del cosmos proceden, del hombre que surge a salvo de amor.<sup>96</sup>

This passage reinforces the importance of a name, in this case of the woman, because it is the source of love and sustenance. Although it is often thought that it is the carnal beauty that draws the attention to a woman, according to Benjamin it is the name that embodies all aspects of her being. In the absence of such historic names as Dante's Beatrice and Petrarch's Laura, their illustriousness would have been diminished.

In addition to advocating the preservation of women's names, Glantz reaffirms the safeguarding of culture, and Latin American culture in particular. Since women and indigenous peoples have been altered and enfeebled to accommodate the dominant and patriarchal culture, she advocates the maintenance of Latin American names with indigenous roots as an effective means to keep the indigenous and subjugated cultures and people alive:

Esta disposición me permite definir un hecho capital: la importancia cada vez mayor en la

---

<sup>96</sup> Glantz, *No pronunciarás*, 49-50.

literatura latinoamericana en que los personajes pueden ostentar aunque sea de generaci3n en generaci3n los variados nombres de Ursula, Amaranta, Mercedes, Aureliano, Jos3 Arcadio (y Aureliano Jos3).<sup>97</sup>

The preservation of names with indigenous origins not only serves to legitimize and confirm the contributions the indigenous people have made in Latin America, it helps to secure their future as legitimate members of the population. As Glantz wrote, "La pronunciaci3n del Nombre crea mundos."<sup>98</sup> Although the "N" in "Nombre" is capitalized to refer to the Divine, the secular interpretation of such a statement affirms that the continued usage of names is inextricably linked to the creation of new worlds and civilizations. In the Jewish tradition, the salvation of one person is considered the equivalent of saving the entire world. Each person represents a world because they have the ability to procreate and carry on the Jewish faith and culture.

The conservation of names not only ensures a future for the Jewish people and culture, the letters themselves

---

<sup>97</sup> Glantz, *No pronunciarás*, 60.

<sup>98</sup> Glantz, *No pronunciarás*, 54.

represent worlds of centuries past. Entire civilizations, cultures and peoples are embodied in the letters that are employed today:

Todas las cosmogonías enseñan que no hay nada nuevo bajo el sol. Sabemos que la Biblia es un plagio: surge de los arameos, los hurritas, los hititas y los filesteos, los súmeros y los caldeos. Cada una de esas cosmogonías ha sido cuidadosamente trabajada en caracteres rúnicos que luego plagiaron Plinio y Tito Livio, transformándolos en el alfabeto que ahora escribe todos esos nombres.<sup>99</sup>

There are two profound observations made by Glantz in this passage. First, she makes the connection between ancient and contemporary civilizations which serves to emphasize the importance of cultural and linguistic history. It is already clear that Glantz embraces language and writing to record histories and immortalize memories and people. However, the emphasis placed on distant and far-removed civilizations and cultures demonstrates that she is a true defender of cultural plurality and hybridity. Glantz, once again, upholds Fernando Ortíz's commitment to safeguarding

---

<sup>99</sup> Glantz, *No pronunciarás*, 24.

cultural hybridity and ensuring that minority cultures and peoples are not subjugated and thus obliterated.

The second powerful message embodied in *No pronunciarás* is the unifying power that letters have because of the fact that they are the essence of communication between people in the Occidental world. Even though there are numerous languages that make use of the alphabet, they all trace back to the same civilizations and cultures. It may seem unrealistic to suggest that peoples who simply share the same alphabet should find commonalities and maintain amiable relations based on that shared past. However, the recognition that our written and verbal expressions originate from the same source might help to diminish the imposed assimilation, discrimination and eradication of minority cultures intersecting with more dominant ones.

It can be said that Glantz transforms Ortíz's *transculturación* into a universal form of expression, beginning with the creation of a literary homeland, and expanding it to intercultural relations. Just as Jacobo Glantz held words sacred and used them to record his past and immortalize collective histories, his daughter follows in his footsteps by erecting a literary homeland with those sacred and shared words and letters from centuries past. Her writing serves not only to enliven the Jewish, Catholic and

indigenous cultures with which she directly identifies, but those of the ancient Greeks, Romans and Philistines as well. Language is for Glantz, as it is for Glickman and Behar, the foundation upon which literary homelands are made and multicultural identities are authenticated and celebrated.

## Chapter 2

### Nora Glickman: Theatrical Self-Consciousness

Nora Glickman was born in La Pampa, Argentina in 1944 to Jewish parents of Eastern European background and grew up in cultural dichotomy of Jewish, German, Argentine and Catholic enclaves. She experienced the difficulties of being a Jewish woman in a country that had a tumultuous history of anti-Semitism and an historic expectation of complete integration.

Prior to immigrating to the United States, her studies in England and Israel contributed to her identity formation and the ways in which she would express her cultural juxtapositions in her theatrical and fictional writing. In addition to her plays and short fictional pieces which are infused with Jewish, Catholic, and North American experiences, Glickman translated Leib Malach's *Regeneración* from Yiddish into Spanish, thus crossing another cultural divide by introducing Yiddish writers to a Spanish-speaking population. Leib Malach's work, which would be otherwise unknown to the Argentine population, told the story of the prostitution of Jewish immigrants in Buenos Aires, similar to Glickman's *Una tal Raquel Lieberman* and other historical

studies of Raquel Lieberman's life. The cultural and religious intersections that were experienced and reproduced in Glickman's writing produced a degree of estrangement from her country of birth, her parents' homeland, and the United States, where she would later come to reside.

Once in the United States, Glickman entered yet another phase in her cultural and national exile. The immigrant identity that she had absorbed from her parents and ancestors became reflective of her own life when she arrived in to the United States and immersed herself in North American and New York culture in particular. As a result of the cultural and geographic shifts, Glickman found herself relying more and more upon the act of writing to escape the profound sense of dislocation, identity loss, and consequent psychological exile.

Glickman employs multiple writing styles and combines various genres in order to communicate her complex identity as a Jew, an Argentine woman, a New Yorker and a Latina. She has composed various short stories and theatrical works that speak directly to her potentially perplexing and conflicting hybridity in which she attempts to resolve her inner conflicts through fictitious characters that bear a striking resemblance to her and her family members.

Instead of speaking as herself in the form of a personal testimony or autobiography, as Glantz and Behar do, she animates other characters to resolve the difficulties of being Jewish in Argentina and a Jewish Latina in the United States, while she simultaneously ascribes to multiple cultural, national and religious affinities. Darrell Lockhart recognizes Glickman's infusion of her own life into fictional characters, but also points out how she began her career as a writer and the impact she has had on the expansion of an avant-garde literary expression:

Glickman began her career as a literary critic, writing a doctoral dissertation on "The Jewish Image in Brazilian and Argentine Literature," one of the first critical evaluations of Jewish writing in Latin America, which has now become a burgeoning field of academic research and inquiry.<sup>100</sup>

Lockhart also observed the significant contributions Glickman has made, not only as an historian of Latin American Jewish Literature, but as a feminist scholar whose "creative writing can be characterized by the author's intent to write about and/or from a specifically feminine/feminist

---

<sup>100</sup> Darrell Lockhart, "Nora Glickman," *Latin American Jewish Writers: A Dictionary*, ed. Darrell B. Lockhart (New York: Garland Press, 1997) 228.



perspective, often literally writing from the body." Lockhart continues:

"Other stories from this same collection draw on her own experience, mainly in the US, as an academic professional and mother attempting to cope with the pressures heaped the characters as they attempt to deal with the hectic and often beleaguering stress of everyday life in New York."<sup>101</sup>

The reference to the stresses associated with immigrants adapting to New York and North American lifestyles refers to *Un día en Nueva York*, and *Noticias de suburbio*.

Although Glickman's career began with an examination of a history in which she played a critical part, she anonymously addresses her experiences as a transculturated woman by deliberately speaking through her characters. Although she chooses not to express her search for self in the form of an autobiography, her chosen means of self-investigation and escape from exile are highly effective. Diana Raznovich observed Glickman's clever tendency to animate fictitious characters in order to confront and resolve her own cultural identity crises in the introduction to *Cuatro obras de Nora Glickman*:

---

<sup>101</sup> Lockhart, 228.

Sin duda el abordaje de la obra teatral de Nora Glickman implica dos presupuestos básicos. Uno es su transculturación, ya que escribe en Estados Unidos, más precisamente en Nueva York, pero esa distancia física es una modalidad estilística y, por paradójal que parezca, una forma de intimidad diferente con su propio país de origen. El otro presupuesto es su condición judía, lo que también significa un aporte sustancial a su dramaturgia y colabora creando esta intercodificación que da jerarquía e internacionalidad a sus textos.<sup>102</sup>

Raznovich made the critical observation that the collection of four plays displays numerous cultural and ethnic elements, although it favors no one culture or ethnicity over another. While Glickman's Jewish identity has an undeniable impact of her writing, one cannot assert that hers is a strictly Jewish literature. The combination of plays taking place in Argentina, New York and New Mexico, as well as the intersection of Jewish, Catholic, Mexican, and

---

<sup>102</sup> Diana Raznovich, "Introducción" *Cuatro Obras de Nora Glickman* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Nueva Generación, 2000) 11.

Eastern European cultures, renders her writing as multi-dimensional as she is.

Raznovich's reference to *transculturación* as one of the two predominant elements in Glickman's collection of four plays is critically linked to the assertion that Glickman, as well as Glantz and Behar, is indeed a transculturated individual who transcends cultural and geographic borders with her unconventional writing style. Glickman's childhood in Argentina was marked by interaction with Jews from the Old World who continued to observe Jewish traditions and religious rites, while Glickman's mother favored a more modern and assimilated lifestyle who occasionally revisited her dormant Jewish identity. Early on Glickman was exposed to various cultural and religious dichotomies that were fundamental in her identity formation.

Upon moving to the United States, Glickman became transculturated once again. She transformed herself into a New Yorker, all the while maintaining her Jewish, Argentine and Latina identities. Her own *transculturación* helped her to appreciate and connect with other women who had endured similar cultural and geographic transferences. This quandary of being a transculturated individual is addressed in *Un día en Nueva York*, *Liturgias*, *Noticias de suburbio*, and *Una tal Raquel Lieberman*. It is not that Glickman is

promoting the phenomena of *transculturación*, as Ortíz did and Behar echoed. It is simply a fact that Glickman is a transculturated individual who identifies with others like herself, particularly women, and such hybridity becomes the essence of her theatrical and critical performances.

Glickman does not evade her cultural and ethnic demons, deliberately confronting them in her theatrical and critical pieces. As Raznovich observed, Glickman's writing renders her transparent and it is not only her theatrical works that serve as a performance; Glickman's own identity formation becomes a critical part of that performance.

### Liturgias

The most striking short theatrical piece that addresses a clearly Jewish quandary is *Liturgias*. This play curiously deals with the Mexican Inquisition and its impact on the current Jewish and *criptojudío*<sup>103</sup> conscience.

Glickman herself has no direct connection to the Mexican Inquisition, as her family immigrated to Argentina; how-

---

<sup>103</sup> *Criptojudío* was a term employed to describe those Jews who secretly continued to practice Judaism after supposedly converting to Catholicism. After many generations of preserving many sacred traditions, the descendants of these *cripto judíos* were unaware of their Jewish heritage and continued to perform certain religious rites without realizing they were Jewish.

ever, the impact that such persecutions had upon Jews in the Americas left an indelible mark on the Jewish Latin American conscience, just as the Holocaust did on the global Jewish community, and indeed humanity at large. Glickman explores the undeniable impact that the Spanish and Mexican Inquisitions made upon contemporary Mexican Jews, including those now residing in the United States, through the relationship of a seemingly Mexican Catholic couple living in New Mexico. The identity crisis and cultural alienation they endure, as Latinos living in the United States and, as they later discover, as Mexican Jews living under the guise of Catholicism, intensify their state of psychological exile.

The wife, Blanca Días, suffers from recurring nightmares about being burned at the stake in an *auto da fe*<sup>104</sup> for propagating the Jewish faith. Her complete name, Blanca Días-Rael, subtly spells "Israel," thus making Blanca's Jewish identity part of every aspect of her being. The irony behind Blanca's concealed Jewish identity in a name that so unmistakably contains the name of the historic

---

<sup>104</sup> The *autos da fe*, translated as displays of faith, were the public events in which accused Judaizers, propagators of the Jewish faith, would be either tortured or burned at the stake

Jewish homeland (once again pointing up the importance of names as personal signifiers). What is obvious to Blanca, however, is that she shares the same name with a woman who was burned at the stake in an *auto da fe*; she also remembers certain peculiar practices of her family: lighting the *Shabbat* candles<sup>105</sup>, reciting prayers in a foreign tongue (Hebrew), and preparing recently deceased family members with great care and ritual.<sup>106</sup> Upon realizing that these practices were indeed those shared by *conversos*<sup>107</sup> and *criptojudíos*, she vows to recuperate her lost Jewish identity and confront her husband about their subverted past. The inclusion of "Israel" in Blanca's last name is inserted, therefore, to emphasize the concealed and undeniable connections between Blanca and Judaism.

Immediately following the realization that she is a *converso*, Blanca seeks advice and consolation from the

---

<sup>105</sup> The beginning of *Shabbat*, the Jewish Sabbath, is at sundown on Friday evening and is marked by the lighting of two candles.

<sup>106</sup> Recently deceased Jews are bathed and closely watched from the time of their death to their burial. Friends, neighbors and other Jews can perform this act of respect for the deceased.

<sup>107</sup> *Conversos* were Jews that had either been forced to or willingly converted to Catholicism. Many secretly continued to practice Judaism and were, therefore, referred to as *criptojudíos*

local Catholic priest. She tells him of her nightmares and suspicions that she indeed might be of Jewish descent. Much to Blanca's dismay, the priest instructs her to recite several *Hail Marys*, a common prescription in the Catholic faith after confession. The priest expresses absolutely no remorse for the persecution of Jews during the Mexican Inquisition and discourages her from pursuing the absurd possibility that she may in fact be Jewish. Dissatisfied with the priest's response, Blanca decides to visit with the local rabbi. The fact that the rabbi is female adds a new twist to Blanca Días' empowerment, as well as the promotion of women as authority figures and role models.

Much to Blanca Días-Rael's surprise during her visit to the rabbi, she is greeted with skepticism. The nightmares that she suffers from and the consequent paranoia that she feels are not enough to convince the rabbi that she is indeed Jewish.

BLANCA: Desde el principio se me hizo obvio que la gente me miraba como si me estuviera juzgando. Sentía que me miraban como diciendo 'Vuélvase al lugar de donde vino.'

RABINA: Le previne que al principio no se sentiría cómoda. Hay prejuicios de ambos lados.<sup>108</sup>

In her determination to indeed prove her indissoluble link to the Jewish people and understand her secret faith, Blanca questions the rabbi about the historic Jewish traditions which are maintained, particularly with regard to the importance of the family tree. Perhaps she questions why she feels such a profound connection to Judaism without truly knowing it.

BLANCA: ¿Por qué les importa tanto poder trazar una genealogía?

RABINA: A muchos les cuesta comprender un vacío de cinco siglos. Ellos mismos son productos de diasporas; la idea de mantener una fe escondida por generaciones no debería resultarles extraña. Y sin embargo...<sup>109</sup>

The rabbi explains the profound long-term effects of being part of a diaspora and the continued feeling of dislocation and displacement that results in many Jews feeling like

---

<sup>108</sup> Nora Glickman, *Liturgias; Cuatro Obras* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Nueva Generación, 2000) 164.

<sup>109</sup> Glickman, *Liturgias*, 164.



they are trapped in a perpetual state of exile as the inescapable "Other."

Blanca's question about the importance of tracing one's genealogy is also significant because it provides a critical explanation of why so many Jewish immigrant writers are engaged in the act of recovering the past and molding it into an identity that accounts for lost homelands, languages and traditions. It is essentially this need for recovery and identity realization that spurs the creation of narratives and theatrical performances like *Liturgias which* enable both the writer and the audience to animate their hybrid identities.

Blanca Días-Rael responds to the rabbi's explanation that many Jews hide their faith and masquerade as Catholics because of fear of discovery by insisting that she has no intention to conceal her identity. On the contrary, she wants to publicly embrace it.

BLANCA: Pero yo no escondo mi fe, Rabina. Al contrario, ¡yo la acojo!

RABINA: Blanca, eres como una niña adoptada que busca a sus padres naturales. Ahora que los

has encontrado podrás estar disilusionada de ellos, pero no puedes negar que los tienes.<sup>110</sup>

It is at that moment that the rabbi indeed begins to believe that Blanca Díaz-Rael is a descendant of the Jews and encourages her to explore her past and formulate a new identity based on her discoveries. The rabbi does not present Judaism as an entirely enviable faith, however, since the Jewish people have suffered and endured numerous persecutions and holocausts, waves of anti-Semitism, and prejudice throughout history.

It is important to understand the significance of the terminology employed by Glickman to describe the hidden Jews of Mexico who migrated north to the Southwest of the United States. Although the play addresses the predicament of being Jewish in a predominantly Catholic world, the experience of being labeled as the "Other" in society is unfamiliar to any immigrant group or non-immigrant group that is considered undesirable by the mainstream. Diana Raznovich interprets Glickman's decision to use the *criptojudío* identity in Mexico as a model for the multi-layered identities that are characteristic of all immigrants. She asserts that all immigrants have, at some

---

<sup>110</sup> Glickman, *Liturgias*, 164.

point in their assimilation and integration into a new society, sublimated or negated some aspect of their identity in order to integrate themselves and be accepted by the dominant culture. The conscious and subconscious creation of a hidden and secret identity was born out of a need to maintain a connection to a silenced past. The inclusion of the *criptojudío* conscience in the play is clearly pertinent to the immigrant consciousness. Glickman's mission to breathe life into dormant identities and demonstrate how they can co-exist with more dominant and socially recognized ones is creatively actualized through the *criptojudío* metaphor.

Darrell Lockhart provides another critical insight to the incorporation of the *criptojudío* experience and identity in the following observation:

Liturgias (1995) is situated in present-day New Mexico and revolves around a young Hispanic woman's gradual discovery and realization that she is descended from crypto-Jews who settled there shortly after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492. Blanca Días undergoes a kind of awakening to her identity as the play addresses such contemporary issues as postmodern

configurations of personal identity, hybridity and the resignification of the traditional meaning of *mestizaje*. In addition to the young protagonist struggling against the machismo of her husband and the traditional roles imposed on her.

Nora Glickman's work is typical of contemporary Latin/a American women's writing for the way in which she articulates women's experience from the margins, but she is also a unique voice of considerable talent with much to say about what it means to live a variety of identities.<sup>111</sup>

Glickman expands the notion of a hidden yet vibrant identity with a revealing anecdote told to Blanca by the rabbi. The story embodies the history of anti-Semitism and the longstanding disregard for Judaism, but ends with a message of eternity and triumph.

RABINA: ¡Animo! Encontrarás que si bien el Judaísmo es una religion difícil, también tiene sus ventajas. Ten paciencia. Cuentan de un cura que una tarde, mientras paseaba por el jardín de una iglesia con un cripto-judío (un

---

<sup>111</sup> Lockhart, 228.

judío secreto) éste último le dijo: ¡Qué tan hermoso tiene usted!' 'Sí," contestó el cura.

"Este es el jardín de todos los credos: las íris son para los católicos, las rosas son para los protestantes, las flores de cerezo para los budistas..." Y así el cura describió cada flor y la religión que está simbolizada. Cuando hubo terminada, observó el judío: 'Padre, se ha olvidado la flor de los judíos. ¿Qué flor esa?' 'La flor que representa a los judíos,' respondió el cura, 'es el cactus.' Luego una breve pausa, el judío dijo: 'Sí, Padre; comprendo por qué es el cactus. La gente puede pisotear y destruir todas las plantas del jardín, pero no puede destruir los cactus.'

BLANCA: Pero el cactus no es siquiera una flor...

RABINA: Sí. Da una flor efímera.

BLANCA: Es duro y espinoso.

RABINA: Pero sobrevive en el desierto, donde falla el agua. Y cuando abres la cascara del cacto, encuentras dentro la fruta más dulce.<sup>112</sup>

---

<sup>112</sup> Glickman, *Liturgias*, 144.

The fact that the Jewish people were overlooked and omitted in a tale about a sanctuary containing the world's religions is representative of the global Jewish experience, as well as so many other immigrant groups throughout history, who are simply subsumed within the dominant culture. The explanation that the cactus represents the Jewish people because of their collective ability to endure the most extreme conditions, with deprivation often being the focal point, highlights the Jewish people's endurance, resilience and triumph over tremendous adversity.

The revealing dialogue between the rabbi and Blanca Días reassures Blanca that her nightmares and paranoia were not irrational or symptomatic of insanity. The interaction between Blanca and her husband Luis, however, is extremely strained and hostile, due entirely to the fact that Blanca staged a re-enactment of an *auto da fe* at her daughter's birthday party. At that point, the audience begins to question Blanca's stability, if not her sanity. The audience is beside itself upon seeing Blanca prepare so feverishly for the grossly inappropriate performance, but somehow hopes that she will regain her senses before it occurs. To everyone's dismay and horror, the loud and terrifying performance culminates in a conflagration that envelops the curtains and threatens to burn the entire house down. Zu-

lema and her friends are hysterical, as are Luis, Blanca's friends and the other parents. Amidst the hysteria, Blanca maintains her composure and appears oblivious to the flames licking at her curtains and the screaming children around her. It is at this point that the audience, Luis, and Blanca's best friend realize that she has temporarily lost touch with reality.

After all of the children and parents have fled from the house, Blanca and Luis remain in the front hall. The couple engages in a dialogue that almost seems surreal after such a disturbing occurrence. Seemingly oblivious to the gravity of the situation, Blanca attempts to rationalize and justify her Jewish identity to her husband and herself. Paralyzed by the shocking incident and Blanca's seemingly nonchalant behavior, Luis can only interpret her perspective as threatening and irrational.

BLANCA: Lo que yo quisiera entender es cómo a mis treinta y tres años me siento judía cuando siempre he sido cristiana. Imposible ser las dos a la vez, ¿Verdad? Y si mis antepasados fueron forzados a convertirse, su cristianismo no pudo haber sido sincero.<sup>113</sup>

---

<sup>113</sup> Glickman, *Liturgias*, 144.



BLANCA: Pero si ya soy judía. Sólo debo decirlo en voz alta.<sup>114</sup>

LUIS: (Se ríe) ¡Basta! ¡basta! No sabes lo que dices. Estás obsesionada. (Nervioso y alterado). ¡Tú eras un monaguillo en la iglesia! Yo fui a una iglesia católica. ¿Cómo iba a ser judío? (Pausa) Mira, Blanca. Ya bastante difícil es ser hispanos en esta América. No compliques nuestra vida más todavía.<sup>115</sup>

The husband's denial of his Jewish ancestry because of the stigma attached to it and the burden of honoring a faith that he has until now repudiated is reflective to some degree of the Jewish identity crisis and the anti-Jewish sentiment that is often encountered in the United States. Glickman's acute awareness of the perpetual push to negotiate one's Jewish and Latin identities between conflicting religious doctrines and practices, cultural norms and expectations is creatively demonstrated in her fictional characters' struggle to accept and embrace their cultural and religious dichotomies.

---

<sup>114</sup> Glickman, *Liturgias*, 145.

<sup>115</sup> Glickman, *Liturgias*, 162.

Blanca Días-Rael's belief that one cannot be Jewish, Catholic, and Latina all at once is shared by many individuals and communities, which explains why so many immigrants and immigrant writers struggle to embrace their cultural plurality. As Margo Glantz wrote in the introduction to *Las genealogías* in which she described her collection of Jewish, Catholic, and indigenous menagerie of relics which attested to her hybridity, "Y todo es mío y no lo es y parezco judía y no lo parezco y por eso escribo -- éstas -- mis genealogías."<sup>116</sup>

In response to his wife's insistence that she is indeed Jewish, in spite of the seemingly irreconcilable conflicts of identity, Luis questions whether she has been accused of being a *mestiza*, a woman of mixed and impure background, instead of the noble Spanish blood that her grandmother had boasted.

LUIS: Tanto temes que alguien piense que no tienes sangre pura, 'noble' y 'española' como la que tu abuela pretendía tener, que estás dispuesta a convertirte en judía. ¿Eso es, Blanca? ¿Es que alguien te dijo que parecías una mestiza? ¿Es que alguien sospecha que hay

---

<sup>116</sup> Margo Glantz, *Las genealogías* (México, D.F.: Alfaguara, 1987) 21.

mezcla de sangre en tu familia? (Pausa). ¡A  
 ti no te importa arruinar mi vida y la de mi  
 hija!<sup>117</sup>

Luis's theory that his wife is questioning her true identity because someone has accused her of impurity of blood ironically ties directly into Blanca Días' recent nightmares of being burned at the stake for that exact reason. Luis is not so concerned, however, with his wife's fears as much as he is terrified of his own being confirmed. He wants nothing more than to protect himself from further cultural degradation and exclusion for being a member of yet another minority. He also suspects that he was denied partnership in his firm because the partners suspected him of being Jewish, or, perhaps, because he was "too Latino" to be considered worthy of such professional advancement. Blanca recognizes his paranoia and tremendous fear of being considered a member of yet another minority, however she is hardly sympathetic to his feelings of anxiety, and chooses to taunt him instead.

BLANCA: ¡Pobre Luis! Primero me haces reír,  
 luego me haces llorar. Antes, te las tomabas  
 contra los judíos. Ahora contra los mestizos y

---

<sup>117</sup> Glickman, *Liturgias*, 162-163.

los mulatos... todas estas razas inferiores' que no te dejan vivir en paz... No es fácil ser latino en América.

¿verdad Luis?<sup>118</sup>

Blanca explains to Luis in the following quote that Jews are no longer in danger of being persecuted as they were during the Inquisition. It is, therefore, not a question of fear that should keep him from confronting his true Jewish identity, for there is no real threat to his life.

BLANCA: Además que hoy nadie quema a nadie por ser judío. (Pausa) Aún esa palabra 'judío,' que tanto temes, ha dejado de ser una mala palabra... ¿Qué harías tú, me pregunto, si alguien te probara sin lugar a dudas que naciste judío?<sup>119</sup>

Luis responds immediately by spewing insults at Blanca. After calming himself down, he begins to remember curious stories that his father used to tell him. Luis enters into an almost trance-like state as he recalls the unforgettable and life-altering words of his father, and briefly forgets about the implications that such recollections will have on his future and identity. The symbolic "key" that he was

---

<sup>118</sup> Glickman, *Liturgias*, 163.

<sup>119</sup> Glickman, *Liturgias*, 163.

given and continues to safeguard illustrate that, however secretly and subconsciously, Luis has held onto the knowledge that he was born Jewish and still maintains ties to the land of Israel and the Jewish religion.

LUIS: Cuando mi padre me la entregó, me habló de los patriarcas de la Biblia. Me dijo que por siglos sus antepasados se habrían pasado esa llave de generación en generación. Y me dijo: 'Eres hijo de la Nación,' ¿Qué es 'hijo de la nación?' le pregunté. Entonces, me cantó 'Durme, Durme,' la misma canción de cuna que tú le cantabas a Zulema, pero en palabras que yo no había oído antes. Y mi padre repetía, 'Eres hijo de la Nación.' 'Eres judío.' '¡No!' le dije. '¡No soy judío, soy cristiano!' 'Eres judío,' insistía él. Me sentí tan humillado... Hubiera querido echar la llave al río y olvidar todo.<sup>120</sup>

The fact that Luis is able and willing to recall and reveal such a life-altering memory suggests two possibilities: one, that he has temporarily detached from himself in order to remember and recognize his sublimated past; or two, that, by confronting his secret past, he may indeed be

---

<sup>120</sup> Glickman, *Liturgias*, 168-169.

open to resolving his conflicted identity. The key that his father spoke of was symbolic of his ability to discover his true identity. What is even more significant is that up until that moment, Luis had held onto that key when he could have chosen to rid himself of it. To the audience's and Blanca's great dismay, he defiantly resists pursuing his Jewish heritage and abandons his Jewish identity, as well as his wife, for they are intrinsically linked. Responding to Luis' reference to the key, Blanca states the following:

BLANCA: Pero sin embargo guardaste el secreto  
 todos estos años.

LUIS: Hubiera preferido llevármelo a la tumba.  
 Pero tú comenzaste a escarbar en el pasado... Por  
 eso tuve que irme de esta casa, Blanca...

LUIS: Blanca, Blanca... Tal vez puedas olvidar  
 cuatrocientos años de rituales judaicos, pero  
 yo no consigo olvidar cuatrocientos años de  
 cristianismo. (Pausa). Esta ya no es mi casa.

BLANCA: Sí, Luis. Es tu casa. Tú no echaste la  
 llave al río. La guardaste todo este tiempo.

LUIS: Y ahora es tuya... Adios, Blanca,<sup>121</sup>

---

<sup>121</sup> Glickman, *Liturgias*, 169-170.

The hope that was embodied in Luis' memory of being told by his father that he was Jewish held great promise for Blanca. She felt that if he truly wanted to forget, he would have obliterated the knowledge from his memory. What she failed to recognize was that the recent nightmares she had suffered were also reflective of Luis' own fears of being discovered and persecuted. Perhaps his persecution would come in the form of cultural and professional exclusion, but the idea of being Jewish, privately and publicly, was torture. The discovery that Blanca was indeed Jewish allayed her fears and silenced her nightmares. For her, a new identity held great promise and hope, not the despair and devastation experienced by Luis.

The final words exchanged between Blanca and Luis, however, suggest that not all hope is lost for their reunification and Luis' acceptance of his sublimated identity.

BLANCA: No te vayas, Luis...

LUIS: Tal vez algún día...

BLANCA: Sí, algún día.<sup>122</sup>

After such a defiant rejection of his Jewish ancestry, it is almost surprising, yet perhaps reflective of reality, to

---

<sup>122</sup> Glickman, *Liturgias*, 169.

witness the possibility that Luis may one day return to his wife and his Jewish roots.

On the other hand, the almost instant embrace of Blanca's Jewish heritage seemed rather unrealistic in comparison to her husband's, but they had very different priorities. Blanca was looking for answers to her questions of identity, while Luis was trying to block them out. He was desperate to break free of the cultural restraints of being Latino in his professional advancement and the possibility of further stigmatization and exclusion as a Jew was as terrifying to him as his wife's nightmares. The re-enactment of an *auto-da-fe* served as confirmation of Luis' fears that this new identity would destroy everything that he had worked so desperately to achieve. Blanca did not understand Luis' concerns and rebuked him for wanting to be fully assimilated.

In spite of their disparate views on religious and ethnic identity, there is a glimmer of hope that assimilation will not continue to be a requisite for success and integration in the United States. The *llave* that Luis had held onto all those years, symbolizing the knowledge that secret Jews raised him, also holds great significance for all immigrants with regard to their hidden identities.



Diana Raznovich interpreted the significance of the key in the following way:

Es maravillosa la frase de Blanca que dice: 'No echaste la llave al río. La guardaste todo este tiempo.' Creo que este fragmento nos da la clave de la escritura de Glickman, juega con la llave, la esconde, la vuelve a poner sobre el tapete, pero no la echa al río. Esta llave es un prisma poético extraordinario, sus personajes son quienes nos llevan por laberintos de sus propias encrucijadas, que son las nuestras porque aunque las problemáticas parezcan distantes, los abordajes y su particular entrañabilidad nos torna inevitable la identificación.<sup>123</sup>

Raznovich is essentially asserting that the significance of holding onto the key is that Luis has kept his true identity alive, regardless of his secretiveness. According to this interpretation, Glickman demonstrates that identities can be masked, sublimated, and negated, but they cannot be destroyed or separated from the individual. One's true identity will ultimately be revealed, however public or private the unveiling may be.

---

<sup>123</sup> Raznovich, 13.

Raznovich also detects hope and salvation for Luis in his forced confrontation with his Jewish ancestry. In spite of the overt resistance and rejection of his Jewish identity, and his fear of being persecuted, Raznovich asserts that it is his subverted Jewish identity that will ultimately save him.

El descubrimiento del personaje de Luis, de su condición de judío y su deseo de no serlo, su deseo de ser cristiano, habla profundamente de esta dura condición del que no desea ser perseguido, del que teme la diferencia. Pero finalmente es esa diferencia la que lo salva como sujeto.<sup>124</sup>

The poetic reading of Luis' trepidation and antagonistic attitude becoming hopeful and promising seems rather idealistic - almost naïve. According to Diana Raznovich, a critic and writer who firmly believes that one's ultimate salvation comes from recognizing and acknowledging one's hybridity, it is undeniable that Luis' acceptance of his Jewish heritage would ultimately save him. The internal battle, waged against an inseparable part of himself, can only be terminated by embracing and expressing his Jewish identity. His ultimate appreciation of his full being

---

<sup>124</sup> Raznovich, 13.

mirrors the immigrant writer's search for a true identity and an unrestrictive space where he/she can explore and express his/her hybridity without fear of censorship, rejection and exclusion. The possibility still remains that Luis may some day embrace his Jewish heritage.

However, unlike the immigrant writer who is armed with an instrument to animate his/her cultural dichotomies and ethnic plurality and ultimately write him/herself into existence, Luis has no such tools or imaginative space. It is, therefore, Glickman who ultimately liberates him of his imaginary shackles, and enables him to explore and embrace his hybridity. Glickman's play functions as a theatrical replication of the Latino identity crisis in the United States, allowing Glickman to demonstrate the transformative power of writing in discussing the complexities of the immigrant experience. It is, therefore, the decision and power of the immigrant writer to escape psychological exile through the creation of a secure and creative literary space. The fictional characters, as well as those whose experiences reflect the plights of the characters, can enter that realm where hybridity is a uniting force, and ethnic and cultural plurality are the norm.

The use of the stage in order to recover one's true identity is a creative, and, perhaps, ultimately effective

means of resolving the hybrid identity crisis. As a Jewish Argentine writer, a North American Jewish woman, a Latina, and a mother, Glickman's life and writing clearly have a symbiotic relationship. She is essentially recording her own life on the page through a creative blend of conflicted characters and opposing identities, Luis and Blanca being two of her more prominent performers. As Diana Raznovich observed:

Nora Glickman -- y no siquiera anticipar ni los argumentos ni los avatares de sus excelentes textos -- es una autora argentina de primera línea, pero al mismo tiempo es una autora judeo-norteamericana, es decir es parte de una diáspora que encuentra en su discurso hecho de memorias de un fragmento que se indaga a sí mismo, una voz propia que los actors y las actrices que la encarnen en el idioma que sea entenderán en su riquísima diversidad.<sup>125</sup>

Raznovich's praise of Glickman's writing is undeniably accurate. She recognizes the infused diversity in Glickman's writing, the personal and collective memories, and the diasporic consciousness, that all originate from the writer and speak to fellow exiles and immigrants.

---

<sup>125</sup> Raznovich, 13.

She makes another critical observation of Glickman's intimate and personally revealing writing techniques in the prologue to the collection of plays. Raznovich notes that theatrical performances enable the playwright to confront personal demons and render herself ultimately transparent to her audience. Glickman makes herself as vulnerable as her characters do when they collectively confront their hidden identities and come to terms with their plurality.

Es evidente que la autora no teme a sus fantasmas, no tiene miedo de enfrentar lo que le duele, no intenta un discurso projudío a ultranza, su profunda convicción ética la lleva a indagar, antes que nada, en su propio territorio de pertenencia, porque entiende al teatro como una tragedia de desgarramiento personal y porque assume la valentía de la autocrítica como parte de un desafío vital de transparencia sin la cual es insostenible su propia mirada de escritora.<sup>126</sup>

Although the action is centered on Blanca and Luis' discovery of and confrontation with their Jewish heritage, the play is not intended to be an exclusively pro-Jewish piece. It can be argued that the antagonistic stance of

---

<sup>126</sup> Raznovich, 11.

the priest, to whom Blanca confesses her suspicions of being a *cripto-judía*, compared with the more embracing reaction of the rabbi, is evidence that she was indeed favoring Judaism over Catholicism. It is highly improbable, however, that Glickman used the priest and the rabbi as universal representatives of their respective faiths to show that Jewish and Catholic leaders all behave as they did in the play. What Glickman ultimately demonstrated was how the Jewish and Catholic faiths often intersect in the United States and, more importantly, that the Latino experience in the United States is as diverse as the individuals who make up the community. Blanca and Luis' characters illustrate the cultural and religious diversity of Latinos in the United States, and reveal a little-known Jewish infusion. Glickman utilizes fictional characters to show another facet of contemporary Latino identity in the United States.

### ***Noticias de suburbio***

Glickman continues to promote the empowerment and advancement of women and immigrants in *Noticias de Suburbio*. As Flora Schimovich explains in her introduction to the

play, it is "una propuesta utópica de comunión entre mujeres." Glickman conceived of four women of various American backgrounds, Argentine, Ecuadorian, North American, and Colombian, who find commonalities, strength, empowerment, and, ultimately, new identities. The pressures to assimilate and the cultural differences among the four women are the focal point of the play. These four women find themselves more able to be citizens of a new country and resist complete assimilation as a result of the union that is established between them.

La asimilación - nunca del todo realizada - al mundo anglosajón, la mezcla de identidades y de culturas, más allá de los contrastes, dan origen al tumulto de sensaciones y sentimientos que alimentan el mundo de la autora.<sup>127</sup>

This short play is also reflective of Glickman's current lifestyle and environment. The play takes place in the home of Alicia Harrods, an Argentine native who not accidentally resides in a small town in the New York suburbs, much like Glickman's home in Scarsdale, New York. The action centers on the four women, their economic and cultural backgrounds and status, and their roles as women

---

<sup>127</sup> Flora Schimovich, "Nora Glickman: Una propuesta utópica de comunión entre mujeres," *Teatro de Nora Glickman*. (Buenos Aires: Editorial Nueva Generación, 2000) 81.

in the United States. Their experiences and status are presented as reflections of contemporary life in the United States, the state of the traditional North American family, the role of women in society, and the struggle among Hispanic communities to acquire legal residency and acceptance. As Flora Schimonivich noted:

*Noticias de suburbio* enfatiza la unión entre diferentes clases sociales. Las fantasías y deseos de realización de las protagonistas juegan un papel importante en la comedia. La criada Magda convertirá en la socia de Alicia, ambas compartirán sus esperanzas de independencia económica y el american dream.<sup>128</sup>

Glickman is able, to a certain extent, to bridge the gap between Latin American women of different social and economic backgrounds in the United States. She brings Hispanic women of various nationalities and socioeconomic status together in the space of a recently divorced woman's home, and weaves together the lives of a recently divorced woman who has lost touch with her Argentine roots and Spanish language, a struggling immigrant woman and her friends confronting similar economic and cultural hardships, and an affluent native-born North American woman who

---

<sup>128</sup> Schimovich, 83.



initially has a generalized and narrow view Hispanic immigrants living in the United States. Glickman demonstrates how women of such diverse backgrounds find themselves and their lives intersecting in ways that dispel their respective stereotypes and, ultimately, bring them together. Regardless of their disparate economic standing, Alicia and Magda share the desire to achieve their own version of the American dream of being successful, independent of men, integrated into North American life, but not entirely assimilated.

With regard to promoting women's solidarity and independence in the play, Glickman seizes the opportunity to demonstrate that a strong and unified sisterhood can challenge the traditional patriarchal models that have alienated women, particularly Latinas, from the workforce and curtailed their professional advancement. Schiminovich also observed this technique in the following commentary:

La obra de Glickman proporciona una ingeniosa alternativa a los modelos sociales convencionales. Combina la exploración de la subjetividad femenina con la dimensión de la solidaridad de grupo, que inspira resistencia y activismo en lugar de una resignación pasiva y hace posible el proyecto de esperanza y cambio en el futuro. Si la sociedad,

en general, se caracteriza por la alienación, la división de trabajos y la diferenciación, una 'hermandad' entre mujeres de diferentes clases sociales - como se presentan en esta pieza - abre la posibilidad de relaciones que imitan los lazos de parentesco, entre personas del mismo sexo, forjando uniones interpersonales que sirven para desafiar la racionalidad fundamental de las relaciones sociales en la esfera pública, generalmente dominadas por los hombres.<sup>129</sup>

The empowerment of women through solidarity is a subtle, yet dominant element in the play. Unlike Behar's deliberate and overt efforts to bring fellow Latinas to the literary and societal forefront, Glickman chooses a non-threatening and imaginary setting for her characters to discover their commonalities and begin to actualize their dreams. Behar, on the other hand, combines poems, essays, and autobiographical stories that are undeniably aimed at rebuking traditional cultural, social, and economic norms and expectations of women. Glickman's understated and subtle style is equally effective in directly challenging the traditional gender roles and expectations for Latina women. The fact that the action takes place in what might

---

<sup>129</sup> Schimovich, 83.

be mistaken for a traditionally acceptable place for a woman, Alicia Harrod's home, is inconsequential. It is the process of self-discovery, recovery, empowerment and independence that takes center stage.

Although the play highlights the empowerment and unraveling identities of the four women who emigrated from Argentina, Ecuador, and Colombia, Alicia's best friend Karen Simmons, who is a Caucasian woman born in the United States, plays a critical role. It might be suggested that she plays a controversial role as a White woman who assists in her Hispanic friend's process of self-actualization. One might conclude that Gayatri Chakrovorty Spivak's theory of the subaltern unable to find her voice and speak without the acknowledgement, assistance, or promotion of a member of the dominant racial or cultural group is applicable to *Noticias de suburbio*.<sup>130</sup> Karen Simmons does not, however, play the role of the White enabler to her struggling Latina friend. On the contrary, this is a play that spans cultural, economic, and geographic frontiers and joins together women from various economic and cultural backgrounds in order to demonstrate that the commonalities among them as

---

<sup>130</sup> Gayatri Chakrovorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the interpretation of Culture*, eds. Cary Nelson and Larry Grossberg (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988) 84.

women are far stronger than the differences that distinguish them. As much as Karen Simmons enables her friend to realize her dreams, she does so as a friend and a woman, not as the token White woman who is racially indispensable.

La amiga de Alicia, Karen, tiene un papel muy importante en el desarrollo de la trama. Ella sirve de guía, es una figura que ayuda a la protagonista a realizar un examen crítico de su existencia, que ha sido gobernada por ciertas reglas incuestionables. Alicia empieza a rebelarse poco a poco, incluso ante los caprichos de sus hijos... Karen ayuda a Alicia en su etapa de transición de mujer casada a mujer divorciada y en la búsqueda de una empleada.<sup>131</sup>

The benevolence of Karen Simmons is unmistakable and it should not be misread as pity for her Latina friend. Their interactions are characteristic of female empowerment through unification.

Yet another critical element in the play is the extent to which the Latina women have become assimilated into the dominant culture, willingly and by mere consequence of the country in which they have come to reside. Alicia has lived in the United States the longest of all the charac-

---

<sup>131</sup> Schiminovich, 84.

ters (with the exception of Karen, who was born there) and shows the unmistakable signs of an assimilated woman. When it comes time for her to hire a housekeeper and caretaker for her children so that she can continue working as a divorced mother of two, and her friend Karen suggests that she hire a Hispanic woman, Alicia expresses concern that she no longer has command of her own native language after years of speaking in English. This insecurity reveals one of the unfortunate, yet common, consequences of assimilation. The debate over whether to hire a Hispanic woman also leads to the unfortunate, yet common, tendency among Latina women to generalize about other Latina women and their characters, due to their countries of origin.

Cuando Karen le sugiere que trate de conseguir a una empleada hispana, ella confiesa que se ha vuelto demasiado 'gringa' y que hasta sueña en inglés. Tanto Karen como Alicia funcionan todavía dentro de los estereotipos; y esto se hace evidente cuando comentan sobre las ventajas o desventajas de las minorías: 'Las hispanas son fieles a menos las mexicanas, las argentinas son engreídas, las colombianas no tienen mucha experiencia para cruzar la frontera ilegalmente, las

muy jóvenes son descaradas y provocadoras, las viejas pueden ser maniáticas.<sup>132</sup>

One can choose to concentrate on the stereotyping of Hispanic women, however, the overriding statement by Alicia is that she has become too much of a "gringa." The extent to which her own assimilation has taken her, linguistically, culturally and economically, separates her from more recent Latin American immigrants and causes her to feel out of place and inadequate among them, as well as within the affluent community in which she lives. The linguistic inadequacy stems from her immersion in an English-speaking world, and the feeling of being a foreigner in someone else's land stems from her residence in an affluent and homogenous region in New York while still feeling somewhat connected to her Latin roots.

Luce Irigaray provides relevant insight to women's relationship to the "Other," which directly ties into Alicia's feelings of inadequacy and outsider status. The various cultures, languages and lifestyles with which Alicia's character identifies propel her into a state of dislocation and disunity. Irigaray explains this feminine phenomenon in the following way:

---

<sup>132</sup> Schiminovich, 84.

Woman always remains several, but she is kept from dispersion because the other is already within her and is auto erotically familiar to her. Which is not to say that she appropriates the other for herself, that she reduces it to her own property. Ownership and property are doubtless quite foreign to the feminine... She herself enters into a ceaseless exchange of herself with the other without any possibility of identifying either.<sup>133</sup>

Alicia is conscious of being the "Other," but she also seems to appropriate a more "masculine" identity as the employer of a Latina woman as a housekeeper, and joins the workforce as a high-powered professional.

In spite of Alicia's reservations about hiring a woman about whom she maintains a cultural stereotype, she hires a young Ecuadorian woman by the name of Magdalena Ramírez. The bond that is quickly formed between the two women transcends the cultural and economic differences between them and, together, they defy the traditional gender roles that were automatically and arbitrarily assigned to them. The

---

<sup>133</sup> Luce Irigaray, "The Sex Which Is Not One," *Feminisms: an anthology of literary theory and criticism* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997) 367-8.

mutual recognition of their intelligence and capabilities helps them to chip away at the erroneous stereotypes that have promoted distrust and exclusion based on cultural ignorance and has stilted their unification.

Hay un pacto implícito, una intimidación que implica un rechazo del valor negativo que las mujeres han sido condicionadas a asignarle a su propio sexo. El reconocimiento que Magda, de 'la otra' mujer, sirve como una función simbólica de la afirmación del yo de la identidad genérica.<sup>134</sup>

It is critical to note that Alicia is characterized as the "Other." Schiminovich asserts that Alicia's ultimate acceptance and embrace of Magda is demonstrative of her recognition of her multifaceted identity and background. She can simultaneously identify with the homogenous and affluent community in which she lives, an international sisterhood of diverse women, and the Hispanic women of varying cultural and economic backgrounds that she encounters and befriends. Recognizing and accepting Magda's differences mirrors her own process of self-discovery and appreciation.

---

<sup>134</sup> Schiminovich, 84.



It may be said that the group of four women represents only a small fraction of the diversity among women; however, they successfully debunk false cultural stereotypes, transcend social and economic boundaries, and defy chauvinistic guidelines for women's behavior and vocations.

Aunque la comunidad de mujeres que presenta *Noticias de suburbio* no es muy grande, sirve igualmente para atenuar el desfase entre ideales individuales y fuerzas sociales opresivas, como el matrimonio o las instituciones que nos rigen. Este modelo permite que Alicia comience su libre acceso a la sociedad y considere unirse a un grupo social más amplio - base política de la experiencia comunitaria-. La existencia simultánea de una dependencia y una amistad entre Alicia y Magdalena funciona también como un refugio contra los efectos maléficos del orden social jerárquico, posibilitando una relación entre mujeres en la que no existe la explotación que está presente cuando hay metas e intereses comunes.<sup>135</sup>

---

<sup>135</sup> Schiminovich, 85.

The four actresses engage in a timeless dialogue among women of diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds that can realistically be continued beyond the theater walls. In fact, Glickman foments this lively and empowering discourse among Latina women of all backgrounds who are struggling to uncover their true identities, cope with or resist assimilation, and defy patriarchal models that have alienated them from public and private sectors. Darrell Lockhart provides an accurate synopsis of the play in the following description:

Her first play, *Noticias de suburbio* (1993), presents the realities of being a minority (Hispanic) woman in suburban, predominantly white, New York. The play is essentially about language, identity, and risks/benefits of rapid assimilation. The characters cope with becoming accustomed to the American way of life, while at the same time they discover they can hold onto elements of their disparate Hispanic identities and the play also emphasizes a sense of commonality between women, a sisterhood that transcends social class.<sup>136</sup>

---

<sup>136</sup> Lockhart, 228.

Although the resistance against upholding patriarchal models and traditions is not the focal point of the play, Glickman does take the opportunity to question men's centrality in women's lives and employment in particular, when the women are completely able to be self-sufficient. Alicia expresses her frustration with male family members serving as brokers for the employment of their sisters, wives, cousins, etc. as housekeepers and nannies. Alicia seems to equate the involvement of a male third party in "their" women's employment as a form of prostitution and is, therefore, even more disgusted with the practice. Even before Alicia recognizes herself as a self-sufficient, highly capable woman, she finds fault in the way men manage to undermine the women in their lives. As Schiminovich writes, "Este cuestionamiento del patriarcado converge con la aspiración de independencia de la protagonista y con su deseo de asumir responsabilidades propias."<sup>137</sup> In order to truly appreciate the scope of influence that this diverse union of women has over their own lives and over the lives of their male and female audiences, a close and intimate reading of the play is required.

The play opens in Alicia's living room in which she and Karen are discussing Alicia's dilemma about finding a

---

<sup>137</sup> Schiminovich, 85.

reliable housekeeper and caretaker for her children, and the difficulties in financing such an expense as a recent divorcée. In the background, the timeless "Born in the U.S.A.," and "10,000 Miles," a popular hit performed by an Irish band are playing on the stereo. "Born in the USA" sets the stage for the predominantly North American backdrop for the action, and "10,000 Miles" comically symbolizes the distance the characters have traversed and must continue to traverse to achieve their goals as women. Alicia presents her dilemma of having just endured a divorce in which she was granted full custody of her children and the consequent struggle to balance work, family and financial burdens for the first time in her life without the help of her ex-husband.

Karen suggests that Alicia hire a Hispanic woman to help her out at home and to keep her spirits up. Alicia is reticent about hiring a Hispanic woman because she feels that her fluency in her native tongue and her cultural ties have been weakened after years of living in the United States and being married to a "gringo." She feels that she too has been transformed into a "gringa."

She is undoubtedly insecure about the distance between her native Argentine culture and language; however, when she says that she is uncomfortable with a stranger in her

house, she is not only referring to the potential live-in housekeeper. The stranger is also Alicia herself, who has become so estranged from her cultural and linguistic roots that she feels inadequate and irrevocably distanced from her Latin roots and people. There is a critical part of her identity that has been forced into a state of dormancy since her marriage to a non-Hispanic Caucasian man and her conversion into a cosmopolitan New Yorker.

As if in a trance, Alicia recalls her own experience as a recent immigrant in the United States and the overwhelming sense of loss and disorientation, in spite of the fact that she had some command of the English language. The likelihood that the woman she hires will be lost and uneasy in the United States, as well as in her own skin, discourages Alicia from wanting to hire a Hispanic woman. Her fear of having to confront her own transformation and cultural and linguistic loss seems too great of a burden to bear. After listening to Karen's reasoning, they begin to discuss the reasons why or why not to hire Hispanic women from certain countries.

One could easily be offended by Karen's generalization about Latinas being good housekeepers, and, most importantly, loyal. She exempts Mexican women from this stereotype because she feels the close proximity of the U.S./Mexican

border makes it too easy to "go home." Karen grossly oversimplifies the idea of "return" for some immigrants and favors immigrants who have traveled greater distances because they are basically cornered into loyalty and residence.

The trap that the audience should not fall into with Karen's character is seeing her as a stereotypically ignorant North American woman who sees Latina women as desirable employees because of their supposed domesticity. Karen is one woman who represents a stereotype that undeniably reflects some women in the United States. Karen does insist, however, in response to Alicia's resentment over the male interference in the hiring of their sisters, cousins, etc., that she ask for references from an aunt or a female cousin. In spite of her flippant comments about certain Latin women, Karen ultimately proves able to transcend cultural frontiers and show her solidarity with all women.

A few days after their initial discussion about hiring a live-in housekeeper, Alicia updates Karen on her progress. Alicia is frustrated with the overwhelming male involvement in the hiring of a Latina housekeeper, and insists that she will only hire a woman completely free of a third party male go-between. Karen responds by saying that such a woman could only be found in a convent, and, even so, there are no guarantees that a man has not and

will not somehow play a part. It is Alicia's response that demonstrates just how involved and controlling men are in hiring a Latina housekeeper, as well as how the tables are turned so that it is Alicia who is being interviewed.

ALICIA: Imposible creer que no haya una sola hispana que sea independiente. Hasta ahora me he pasado entrevistando hombres. No. Más bien son ellos, los hombres, quienes me entrevistaban a mí. Puedes creer que el otro día uno me llamó porque su hermana quería saber qué clase de comida preparaba yo en mi casa? Después de escucharme, me dijo que esa no era una comida suficientemente hispánica. Ya lo estoy viendo alojado en mi casa, como huésped diario.<sup>138</sup>

Not only is Alicia disgusted by the mere existence of the "male trafficker," she is amazed at the requirements and specifications that the one mentioned above enumerates. A chord is also struck in her when one man in particular considers her supposed "Hispanic" cooking inadequate. His judgment intensifies Alicia's insecurity about being "too distanced" from her ethnic roots and practices to contemp-

---

<sup>138</sup> Glickman, *Noticias*, 95

late inviting a Latina woman into her home, who essentially mirrors her "other" lost self.

After seemingly endless weeks of fruitless searches for the "perfect Hispanic woman," Alicia finds Magdalena. After being reassured by "Magda" that she is indeed capable of taking care of two children and cleaning Alicia's home, Alicia clarifies one final requirement: that Magda be a "true woman." Alicia insists that Magda will be the "wife" while Alicia herself assumes the role of the "husband," because she will leave the children alone with Magda in order to go to work in the city.

Despite the independence and empowerment Alicia gains through entering the workforce, taking charge of her life, directing her children's activities, and forming bonds with other women, she is still, sadly, bound to the traditional gender roles that have been imposed upon her. Why is it that Alicia conceives of her professional pursuits as a game? Why does she insist on seeing herself as the "husband" who goes to work to earn a living while Magda plays the "wife," cooking, cleaning, and taking care of the children? It is obvious that Alicia's transformation cannot occur in a matter of weeks. The patriarchal models that have dictated her life for so many years are not easily changed. Alicia may be resentful of the continued oppres-



sion of women in American society, but she does not and cannot alter her notions of appropriate and desirable behavior for men and women. (Even so, it should be noted that Alicia makes it clear that although she is playing the role of the husband, she will be nothing like her ex-husband.)

Magda is amenable to all of Alicia's demands, including Alicia's refusal to be like her ex. From that moment on, Alicia dictates to Magda how the two of them are going to divide the work and responsibilities equally and create a perfect family unit. Alicia clearly oversimplifies the establishment of such a "perfect family"; however, she is successfully beginning to embrace her responsibilities and transform herself into an empowered career woman and mother. In the amusing conversation that ensues, Alicia demonstrates how simple it is to create the "perfect family":

ALICIA: Si yo trabajo fuera de casa, alguien tendrá que estar aquí para vigilar que todo siga su curso normal. ¿Comprende? Cuatro personas pueden formar un perfecto cuadrado familiar.

MAGDA: Cuadrado y perfecto. Seguro. O.K.

ALICIA: ¿Cuántas patas tiene una silla, Magdalena?

MAGDA: ¿Una silla? Cuatro, señora.

ALICIA: ¿Y cuántas paredes tiene una habitación?

MAGDA: Cuatro paredes.

ALICIA: ¡Así, justamente! La misma estructura que una familia cuadrada y perfecta: Un niño, una niña, una madre, una remplazante de padre!

MAGDA: ¡Qué divertida es la señora! Usted me muestra exactamente cómo quiere las cosas, y yo las hago.<sup>139</sup>

The dialogue between the Magda and Alicia practically mimics the buffoon-like conduct of Liza Doolittle, as Dr. Henry Higgins tries to "mold" her into a "proper" woman, and Alicia attempts to transform Magda into the "perfect woman." In spite of the absurdity of the interchange between Alicia and Magda, both characters are profoundly revealed. Magda proves to be the stereotypical Latina woman who is loyal, hardworking and agreeable. She also fits the stereotype for what Alicia conceives of as the "perfect wife." Alicia, on the other hand, represents an ambiguous role model. She neither describes herself as the "substitute husband," because she has yet to realize that a professional woman is neither devoid of her femininity nor

---

<sup>139</sup> Glickman, *Noticias*, 99.

robbed of her identity as a mother. Alicia is, however, breaking new ground with her belief that there should be an equal balance of responsibilities and involvement between the "perfect mother and father." There is a noteworthy inconsistency, however, in Alicia's supposed "equality" between Magda and herself. It is, clearly, Alicia who is dictating the rules and shared responsibilities between them, and not a mutually devised strategy to create the "perfect family." In spite of the initial inequity between them, due entirely to the fact that Alicia is the employer and Magda is the employee, both are on their way to becoming high-powered, independent women.

A noteworthy indicator that Alicia's desire for equality is being achieved is shown in the manner in which she and Magda address one another. When Alicia first met Magda and explained what her expectations were, they addressed each other with the formal *Usted*. Shortly after the relationship between them began to unfold, they both came to address each other informally, an indication that they were/are equals, friends, and partners. Although the power structure seems to favor Alicia, as she is the employer, the discourse between the two demonstrates that a hierarchy does not characterize their relationship.

The next conversation that ensues between Alicia and Magda is comical, yet revealing. Alicia is explaining to Magda what a strainer is and how to use it in the kitchen. Alicia has forgotten how to say the word for strainer in Spanish, yet another sign of her assimilation and her consequent cultural and linguistic insecurities. Magda appears to innocently confuse the word "strainer" with "stranger" and "foreigner," however; all three words are profoundly linked.

ALICIA: Perdone, Magda. El "strainer", ¿ves?

Con el tiempo se me olvidan ciertas palabras en castellano. Tú sabes... lo que uno pasa para "strain" las semillitas del tomate, o para colar el caldo de la sopa...

MAGDA: ¡Ah, claro! ¡El colador! ¿Cómo le dicen en inglés? "¿Stranger?" Usted debe enseñarme más inglés, señora, para que yo lo aprenda rápido.

ALICIA: Se llama "strain-er", un colador es un "strainer". "Stranger" significa 'extranjera' en español.

MAGDA: Entonces, ¿yo soy una "stranger" de Guatemala?

ALICIA: No me expliqué bien. "Stranger" no es lo mismo que "foreigner". Tú no eres una "extraña en esta casa, aunque eres una "foreigner", una "extranjera" como yo, en este país...<sup>140</sup>

The dialogue is not only indicative of the subtle variations in the English language that baffle non-native and native speakers alike, but it also plays with the meanings and implications of being a foreigner, a stranger, and the metaphorical strainer that both are often put through upon immigrating to the United States. It is also important to note that Alicia always addresses Magda with the formal *usted*, which serves as a sign that Alicia does not look down on her. The language they direct toward one another continues to be indicative of the mutual respect and emerging equality between the two.

When Magda says that she is a "stranger" from Guatemala, she is not all together wrong. She certainly feels like a stranger in a foreign country because she barely speaks the English language, and the culture is alien to her, just as she is perceived to be an alien by many North Americans. Alicia identifies with Magda's status as a foreigner in the United States, but she ironically insists

---

<sup>140</sup> Glickman, *Noticias*, 100-101.

that Magda is not a "stranger" in Alicia's home. Indeed it is Alicia who feels like a stranger in her own life after assuming the role of "father", "husband", and consequent breadwinner. She also feels like a foreigner in her own Argentine culture and language after years of assimilation and speaking English. Alicia is simultaneously experiencing intense feelings of cultural and linguistic isolation, as well as profound dislocation and estrangement from herself.

In addition to the previous revealing dialogue between Alicia and Magda, the music playing in the background is also telling. Gloria Estéfan's "The Rhythm is Gonna Get Ya" is a musical response to the increasing numbers of Hispanic immigrants in the United States and the inevitable infusion of Hispanic cultures and practices into North America. Estéfan responds lyrically to Fernando Ortíz's assertion that two or more cultures merging together will ultimately integrate and assimilate elements from the other without the minority culture being sacrificed to the dominant culture. Just as Hispanic immigrants in the United States have undergone various levels of assimilation, North Americans will and have found themselves and their country being influenced, shaped and transformed by Hispanic cultures and people.

On a smaller scale, the song speaks directly to Alicia who has been so far removed from her Argentine roots and native tongue. With the entrance of Magda into her home and world, a new identity is formed, as well as a newly established solidarity with women of diverse backgrounds. It is inevitable that Alicia will ultimately reconnect with her abandoned culture and language under Magda's influence and presence.

In the following conversation between Alicia and Magda, the music also sets the stage for Alicia's transformation. Carlos Santana's "Oye como va" is playing on the stereo. Although Alicia is still welded in her North American customs, Magda's insistence on "de-Americanizing" Alicia's children begins to transform the household into a Latinized refuge from the "all-American" world of McDonald's and peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. Alicia insists that her children have grown so accustomed to American food that Magda's efforts to feed them *flan de coco*, *rodajitas de pepino*, and *una malteada con leche* will be fruitless. Much to Alicia's surprise, she discovers that her children have taken to these foods just as Alicia has begun to open the floodgates to her cultural re-immersion. Alicia also recognizes Magda's indispensability

in her plans to open a Latin restaurant and their mutual rise to new professional and financial heights.

In order to ensure Magda's legal residence in the United States and her permanence in Alicia's home, Alicia offers to assist Magda in obtaining a green card. The proposed arrangement could prove to be an even greater equalizing element in their relationship and make them interdependent. In order to make the prospect of working with a female lawyer more attractive, Alicia likens the lawyer to a judge on the nighttime drama "L.A. Law." The example proves to be yet another indicator of Alicia's North American frame of reference because she fails to consider that Magda would be unfamiliar with such shows on television. Magda reminds her that she doesn't understand the programs in English and expresses her exclusive preference for *telenovelas*. Magda begins to inform Alicia at great length about the recent drama on her favorite shows and the two discuss the ensuing romances and mysteries as if they were the latest news headlines. As interested as Alicia appears to be in Magda's *telenovela* updates, she insists that Magda accustom herself to watching the American shows so that she can fill Alicia in when she misses an episode. The entire dialogue is defiantly anti-intel-



lectual; it demonstrates, however, the cultural negotiation and exchange between the two.

Although Alicia and Magda seem to be forming an honest and open relationship, Magda has, unbeknownst to Alicia, become involved with a supposed lawyer who is demanding large fees for what Magda believes will guarantee her a green card. Eventually, Alicia discovers Magda's clandestine affairs when she receives a phone call from her husband's secretary. Her husband had apparently been masquerading as an immigration lawyer and had threatened Magda with deportation. Alicia confronts Magda about her secret dealings and accepts Magda's promise that she will no longer hide anything from her.

Just when Alicia is beginning to feel reassured that Magda has put an end to her secretiveness, she is horrified by the fact that Magda has disappeared and has not returned to the house for four days. Karen automatically assumes that Magda has robbed Alicia blind and returned to Guatemala. Karen asserts that Alicia is too trusting and that women like Magda are always taking advantage of their employers. Once again, the "Us and Them" argument is made by Karen to distinguish the North American from the Latin American women and thus perpetuates the false stereotypes of both. After expressing her lack of surprise at the turn

of events, Karen reverts to offering Alicia constructive advice and reassurance.

At that moment, a haggard and beaten Magda walks through the door. Karen quickly excuses herself and leaves Alicia and Magda to talk. One can surmise that Karen's hasty departure was reflective of her surprise at Magda's innocence. After Alicia learns of Magda's attack and sequestration, she once again urges Magda to contact the female lawyer of whom Magda was initially skeptical. Alicia does not fault Magda for the unfortunate circumstances that befell her because of her cultural background. She merely recognizes Magda's vulnerability, which also reminds Alicia of her own.

The circle of women continues to widen with the entrance of one of Magda's friends, María. Magda confessed to Alicia that María is pregnant and that her boyfriend is pressuring her to have an abortion. Distraught by the fact that Magda has informed Alicia and, subsequently Karen, of her private business, María informs all three that she refuses to have an abortion. Karen immediately offers to assist her in any way she can, however, the dialogue between the four women comes to an abrupt end.

What is then revealed to Magda when she and María are alone is that María had a miscarriage and that she plans to

leave for Miami and begin a new life. When Magda insists that María go to the hospital to make sure that she is no longer carrying the baby, María informs her that she was already hospitalized, and under false pretenses. Her friend, Merceditas, gave María her green card and medical insurance card a few months prior so that she could receive treatment; unlike the last time María was refused admission for not being a legal resident. Ironically, after embroiling herself in her own legal mess, Magda warns María about the dangers of such illegalities. María reassures Magda with the following explanation:

MARÍA: Oh, no. Yo me parezco mucho a Merceditas, y a ella nadie la conoce en el hospital. Ay, Magda, te vas a volver loca si te preocupas así por cada cosa! La targeta de la Blue Cross es como la "Green card": Te sirve cuando la necesitas...Pero también es como un regalo de cumpleaños: Si te gusta y te sirve, quieres compartirla con tus amigos. La única vez que fui al hospital -- cuando me torcí el tobillo -- no tenía tarjeta y me mandaron de vuelta a mi casa. Esta vez yo fui más viva y les mostré la tarjeta de Mercedes. Tú sabes, tengo que

estar bien para mañana porque mañana me voy a Miami!<sup>141</sup>

The medical insurance card grants María, or whoever possesses it, privileges that she and so many other illegal immigrants would otherwise be denied. The card protects her from being discarded as one of "Them" and treated like an "Other." María's plans to go to Miami are reflective of her desire to reconnect with her roots and speak her native tongue freely. As safe and secure as Magda describes her life in the suburbs, ironically because of her own recent imperilment, María insists that Magda's freedom is completely dictated by Alicia. María believes that it is ultimately Alicia who has the power, the wealth and the influence, and that Magda's job and personal security are always at risk if Alicia decides to terminate her employment.

In spite of María's skepticism, the relationship and friendship between Magda and Alicia continue to grow. Upon returning home from grocery shopping, Alicia begins to tell Magda about one of her fantasies. As reminiscent of soap opera drama as the fantasy is, the dialogue reveals the degree to which both Magda and Alicia have recognized their independence from men and their capacity to achieve their

---

<sup>141</sup> Glickman, *Noticias*, 119-120.

goals. It is women's flexibility and adaptability that Magda first points out:

MAGDA: Pero nosotras, las mujeres, sí que podemos adaptarnos cuando queremos..

ALICIA: Somos más tontas que adaptables. Sabes, Magda, una de mis fantasías me lleva a una isla desierta, donde encuentro a todos los hombres de mi vida. Los que quise y no me quisieron; los que no quise pero me amaron. Están allí despreocupados, esperando pacientemente su turno. Ninguno sabe por qué está allí, ni menos qué tienes en común con nosotros. Sin que ninguno me vea, yo estudio a cada uno y recreo los tiempos pasados haciendo cambios, mejorando cada historia tal como hubiera gustado que terminara.<sup>142</sup>

As ridiculous as the reverie appears to be, Alicia is imagining what it would be like for her to revisit her past and take control of all situations in which she felt like a passive agent. The subtlety of her self-actualization and imaginary empowerment are, unfortunately overshadowed by the soap opera (or telenovela) nature of the dream. The

---

<sup>142</sup> Glickman, *Noticias*, 122.

fantasy is also indicative of Alicia's experience living in an affluent community and enjoying a privileged lifestyle. In spite of the triviality of Alicia's fantasy, Magda interprets it as a realization that Alicia does not need a man to be happy.

MAGDA: Un hombre no te basta... muchos parece que tampoco... El hombre de tus sueños no existe. ¿Tal vez no necesites un hombre para ser feliz?<sup>143</sup>

Magda's suggestion that Alicia and other women are capable of finding contentment without relying on a man is a feminist statement, but hardly a call to all women to reject men. Alicia had been so dependent upon her husband, in spite of his refusal to compromise and share the family responsibilities, which leads Magda to conclude that Alicia can be successfully independent on her own.

After listening to Alicia's vacation plans as a solution to her dilemma, Magda describes what her greatest fantasy is. Her wish is far more reflective of her own experiences as an illegal immigrant in the United States and the fear of being deported.

---

<sup>143</sup> Glickman, *Noticias*, 122.

MAGDA: Todo lo que yo quiero es entrar y salir de la aduana y refregarles mi tarjeta verde en las caras cada vez que paso. (Pausa) Pero antes de irnos debemos entrenar a una muchacha para que conteste el teléfono y tome los pedidos.<sup>144</sup>

In spite of her persistent fear of being discovered and deported, Magda is still determined to maintain the business venture she and Alicia have launched. As surprised as Alicia is to witness Magda's professional fervor, she is entirely at ease acceding control over to Magda.

ALICIA: ¡Qué empapada estás en el American dream luego de tan poco tiempo en el país! No será el fin del mundo si nos perdemos alguna venta. Pero si quieres, tú te ocupas. A mí me toca prepararme para el examen de fin de curso.<sup>145</sup>

The reference to Magda's pursuit of the "American Dream" is reminiscent of Flora Schiminovich's observation in the introduction. Both Magda and Alicia, individually and collectively, are in pursuit of their respective "American dreams." For Magda, obtaining her Green Card and

---

<sup>144</sup> Glickman, *Noticias*, 123.

<sup>145</sup> Glickman, *Noticias*, 123.

transforming herself into a successful businesswoman is the essence of fulfilling the American dream. For Alicia, claiming her independence by rejecting the notion that men are indispensable, and by enhancing her professional skills is her pursuit of the American dream. As mocked as the pursuit of the "Dream" is in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, due to the prevalence of racist treatment of Hispanic immigrants in the United States, Alicia and Magda begin to capitalize on their strengths and collectively transform the American dream into a feminist pursuit. Although both women maintain their respective objectives for professional and personal advancement, they extend their scope of interest and benevolence to disempowered and abused women. Foretelling Magda's instantaneous success in attracting attention for their collaborative enterprise to design and produce a marionette show, Alicia makes the following projection:

ALICIA: ¡Tendrías el público encantado desde el comienzo!

MAGDA: Alicia, ¿No crees que ya tenemos más ideas que brazos? Y si nos lanzamos, ¿a cuánto cobraríamos la entrada?



ALICIA: Haríamos una primera función a beneficio de la Mujeres Abusadas. Trabajo filantrópico.<sup>146</sup>

Alicia and Magda recognize their respective talents as promoters, doll makers, and entrepreneurs, to make their fortunes and assist struggling and disempowered women rise above their crises and succeed. Magda describes her elaborate plans for what they will be able to do with the money earned, but she does not lose sight of fellow immigrants who are still struggling to survive. Magda reminds Alicia how she provided Magda with a home and a job when she first arrived in the United States, and, now that she is in a position to help others, she chooses to enable Tito, a friend and struggling illegal immigrant, to attain his Green Card and share the benefits of the American dream.

MAGDA: Cuando llegué aquí tú me ayudaste con la residencia, Alicia. Ahora yo puedo ayudar a Tito con la suya. Tal vez deba casarme con él para hacerlo "legal" hasta que consiga sus papeles. En dos años nos divorciamos, si hace falta.

---

<sup>146</sup> Glickman, *Noticias*, 123.

ALICIA: ¿Más contratos y abogados? Pensé que las dos habíamos escarmentado... ¿Estás segura, Magda, que no hay nada serio entre ustedes?

MAGDA: Tan segura como que hoy es jueves.

ALICIA: Hoy es miércoles.<sup>147</sup>

Magda's humorous and questionable response to Alicia's concern, that Magda has ulterior motives for wanting to marry Tito, is further confirmation that the two women have an inseparable bond, but that Magda continues to maintain her own agenda. Magda's secretiveness is not meant to confirm an ethnic stereotype. On the contrary, both women maintain their independence and pursue their own dreams while working towards the collective goal of empowering Latina women to succeed in the United States.

At the conclusion of the play, Magda provides yet another comical twist to the action. Recalling Alicia's initial overly simplistic explanation of what kind of family she wanted and what kind of "woman" Magda was expected to be, she states the following:

MAGDA: A este paso dejaremos de ser la familia cuadrada y perfecta que estabas planeando.

ALICIA: ¿Cuadrada y perfecta?

---

<sup>147</sup> Glickman, *Noticias*, 123-124.

MAGDA: ¿Cuántas patas tiene una silla, Alicia?  
 ¿Cuántas paredes tiene un cuarto?

ALICIA: ¡Ni siquiera la tierra es tan cuadrada!  
 Así era el mundo antes de Colón. Nos estamos  
 volviendo más redondos, vamos rodondeando las  
 esquinas,,, <sup>148</sup>

Magda pokes fun at Alicia's initial conservative and regimented approach to raising a family and laughs at the possibility that such a nuclear family could exist. Alicia seems surprised at the words "cuadrada y perfecta," and insists with the same fervor, as when she first proposed such a rigid family unit that perfect and square are preposterous criterion for a family. Such a belief, she states, reflects the ignorance and stubbornness of the world before Columbus' voyage to the Americas. Alicia recognizes that she and Magda are evolving into worldly women whose frame of reference, capabilities, and determination are enabling them to blaze new trails and stake out their territory. Alicia and Magda, and other women like them, are chipping away at the patriarchal boundaries that historically impeded women's advancement and empowerment.

---

<sup>148</sup> Glickman, *Noticias*, 124.

The ultimate sign of their success is the catchy newspaper advertisement that Magda places in *El Diario*. The advertisement highlights the diverse range of services the enterprise "ALI-MAGDA" can provide, including catering and entertainment for *B'nai Mitzvot*<sup>149</sup>, banquets, floral arrangements, music, and a "Hispanic video" made by ALI-MAGDA that can be rented or purchased. In addition to the entertainment services, ALI-MAGDA provides domestic and office cleaning, as well as gardening.

The entrepreneurial skills the two women have acquired are instantly recognizable, as well as Magda's continued benevolence. The provision of housekeepers and gardeners would clearly extend beyond Magda and Alicia's capabilities, which makes it entirely likely that they are employing fellow immigrants, such as Tito, who, like them, are striving to achieve the "American dream" in the United States. The final line of the advertisement tells it all: "¿Necesita ideas nuevas? ¿Se encuentra aburrido? ¿Deprimido? ¡Siempre cuente con 'ALI-MAGDA'!"<sup>150</sup>

---

<sup>149</sup> *B'nai Mitzvot* is the plural form of *Bar* and *Bat mitzvah*, the ceremony marking Jewish boys' and girls' passage to adulthood.

<sup>150</sup> Glickman, *Noticias*, 125.

The "do-it-all" approach to servicing the suburbs is obviously meant to be an hyperbole of the extent to which immigrants can achieve the American dream. The overriding message is not that any Latin American immigrant, namely women, who perseveres, will advance professionally and make their fortunes in suburbia. Rather, the message is that women of various social, economic, and ethnic backgrounds can find commonalities, establish intimate relationships, and recognize their own self-worth and true identity through their solidarity with other women. The example that Magda and Alicia provide is that, in spite of the tremendous discrepancy in their financial status, their social circles, and the time between their arrivals in the United States, they were able to overcome stereotypes and prejudices and establish a friendship that equally empowered them and transformed them into capable, self-confident, independent, and successful women.

However secondary Karen and María appear to be in the play, they, too, play a critical role in the action and the delivery of the overriding message to the audience. Karen represents Alicia's closed, homogenous and affluent social circle in the suburbs. She presents common stereotypes of Latin American immigrants in the United States, and provides the opportunity for those stereotypes to be later

disproved by Magda's actions. Karen's skepticism of Magda because of what Magda supposedly represents culturally and socially is shown to be unfounded. Karen embodies false stereotypes, prejudice and ignorance not because Glickman wants to demonstrate that all affluent North American-born women are guilty of such prejudice. On the contrary, she was an ideal amalgam of what recent and established Latin American immigrants encounter and what Alicia and Magda defied together.

María embodies the common experience of recently arrived immigrants who long to return to an environment that reflects their culture and speaks their language. Although Magda quickly acclimates herself to the homogenous population and manicured lawns of suburbia, María rejects such homogeneity and "the safety and security" that Magda covets. Maria chooses, rather, to re-connect with her roots in Miami where Spanish is spoken more than English and the city is a microcosm of Latin American life. The physical displacement from her native homeland does not obliterate the longing to remain there, if only by substitution and imagination. For María, Miami represents hope, and the ability to restore her temporarily lost culture, identity and language.

The characters in *Noticias de suburbio* may be fictional and their lives imaginary, but they address an issue that is at the forefront in Latin America and the United States: the diminution of patriarchal dominance and the consequent advancement of women in public and private sectors. The dialogues between the actresses may seem superficial and anti-intellectual at times; they reflect, however, the predicaments, crises and successes of struggling Latin American immigrants of all backgrounds in the United States. The audience is witness to the gradual empowerment and identity recuperation of four women who transcend social, economic, cultural and ethnic differences, and derive their strength from their solidarity.

Glickman does not fall victim to the tendency in literature to speak for the victims of ethnic and racial prejudice. Her "privileged" female characters do not speak for the poor, wayward immigrants who cannot find their voice and stake their claim to freedom, expression and independence. There is no traditional privilege such as money or social status that makes one woman inferior or superior to another. Her characters are not what Spivak refers to as "subalterns" who require members of the dominant society to allow them to break the silence and find their voice. All women have the equal potential to

empower themselves and each other regardless of their differences. As Cynthia Duncan wrote in the introduction to *Theatrical Self-Consciousness*, female playwrights have challenged patriarchal models and traditional barriers that segregate women of different ethnic, cultural and financial backgrounds. This trend is clearly reflected in *Noticias del suburbio*, as well as the yet to be discussed *Un día en Nueva York* and *Una tal Raquel Lieberman*.

One constant we have noted is the desire of women writers to subvert or invert the traditions that have, up until now, determined discursive practices. They constantly seek to break free of the barriers that have been constructed by patriarchal society; whether on the thematic, structural, or semiotic level, they examine the limits that have been imposed by language, literature and, by extension, women in general, and call attention to the inconsistencies and injustices inherent in a system that has sought to exclude them on the basis of their gender. They have struggled to revise the Canon and make a place for themselves in literature, just as they have taught us to see with a more practiced eye on sexism in texts that previously might have struck



us as neutral or natural treatments of women.

Above all else, they have made us aware of the dangers involved whenever one person or group of persons attempts to speak for another.<sup>151</sup>

Glickman poignantly brings women to the forefront as protagonists and key players in her theatrical performances. In doing so, she becomes an active agent in the revision of the Literary Canon in order to include women and other minorities. She follows in Glantz's footsteps, who also introduced female characters as the protagonists, instead of following the patriarchal model in traditional Latin American literature which maintained men as the protagonists. It is not unusual, however, in Jewish literature for women to be the central characters, for in Biblical and secular writings, matriarchs are often at the center of the action. Although Glickman's characters are fictional, they reflect the common experiences of immigrant women residing in the United States, as well as the experiences of the writer herself. Whether the subjects are real or imaginary, they are equally effective in rejecting and diminishing the power and influence of patriarchal models and

---

<sup>151</sup> Cynthia Duncan, "Theatrical Self-Consciousness," *Latin American Women Dramatists*, Catherine Larson and Margarita Vargas, eds. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998) xxiii.

institutions, breaking down the cultural, linguistic, and economic barriers that divide women, and creating an open forum for intercultural and interracial discourse.

### ***Un día en Nueva York***

Keeping with the setting of *Noticias de suburbio*, *Un día en Nueva York* addresses two women who meet by chance in New York City and confront their remarkable commonalities as immigrants, Jews, and women living in the diaspora. The protagonist is Luisa, a young college professor in her 30s, narrating a typical day in New York for her Argentine friends back home who question her about what life is really like in New York. She includes everything from the most banal details to her most profound realizations.

During the course of the day, Luisa gives a lecture at her university about the illegal prostitution trade of Eastern European Jewish immigrant women in Argentina and the fabricated letters they wrote home to convince their parents and loved ones that they were happily married, employed and safe. After the lecture is over, a woman in her eighties approaches Luisa and tells her that she was in possession of many of those letters back in Poland. Luisa is beside herself to hear that this elderly woman played a

part in the history of Jewish prostitution in Argentina. Golda explains that she translated the letters that the innocent and ashamed victims had written to their families because the families could speak Yiddish, but were illiterate. During the short and perplexing time Golda and Luisa spend together, their characters are revealed, as well as their shared predicaments of being immigrants in the United States. Both share the inescapable and alienating feeling of being a stranger in New York and the United States, in spite of the years that they have lived there. Their sense of being lost, disoriented, and forever wandering from place to place is equally profound in both, and is reflective of the Jewish immigrant experience in the Americas.

At the end of the short encounter between Luisa and Golda, Luisa offers to drop Golda off at home on her drive to Soho. Golda does not specify an exact address or even the borough where she lives, which further highlights her mysterious and nomadic lifestyle. Luisa is frustrated by Golda's failure to provide an address where she can drop her off and continue on to her destination, but she does admire Golda for her apparent ability to find her way in a foreign land. Although Luisa has a house in the suburbs, a family and a profession, she feels equally lost and aim-

less, but far less equipped and capable than Golda at overcoming the condition as a diasporic wanderer and finding her way. Luisa admires Golda for her strength and stamina, and believes her to be one of the Biblical matriarchs. Luisa's inability to recognize Golda's struggles and fears contribute to Luisa's profound misperception of her.

Sensing Luisa's urgency to arrive at her destination on time, Golda tells her that Luisa can let her off at any random corner. When Luisa says that she thought Golda wanted to stop in Brooklyn, Golda tells her that there really is no difference between Queens and Brooklyn, just the name. Golda exits Luisa's car and disappears into a borderless space. Immediately following the car ride with Golda, Luisa meets up with her friends, Leo and Peggy, at a theater in Soho. Some homeless men who ask them for money approach Luisa, Leo, and Peggy. One homeless man in particular confronts the three friends and gives a performance of his own. He addresses the public around him and sardonically empathizes with their feelings of trepidation and harassment precipitated by being asked to give money to haggard-looking homeless men. He then explains that that trepidation and harassment are characteristic of the daily homeless existence in New York.

The homeless man's speech serves as a performance within a performance. He provides a bitter glimpse of the life that many lead in New York, and the sense of alienation felt by the homeless as a result of the treatment they receive from the rest of the population. Perhaps Glickman intended to provide another face of the "Other" in the United States and an extreme example of the alienation and rejection of undesirables. Perhaps Luisa's character was trying to convey to her Argentine friends back home the reality of life in New York and dispel the illusions that the United States is a dream come true for all who believe.

Leo and Peggy represent "typical" New Yorkers who are victims of the City's infamous rudeness and disturbing confrontation with conniving characters. Their unfortunate encounters and consequent desperation to get home safely as soon as possible also serve to dispel the idealistic notions of life in the United States.

In order to fully appreciate why Glickman chose to emphasize the unpleasant realities of life in New York through the eyes of immigrants and disenfranchised individuals, a close examination of the play and its characters is required. Everything from the music playing in the background to the invisible sets plays a critical role in the presentation of *Un día en Nueva York*.

The play and the day begin with Luisa leaving her home in the suburbs to teach a class at her university in Queens. She is pressed for time, but cannot resist the temptation to stop at a nearby house that appears to be having a garage sale. She makes her way into the living room, eyeing an array of attractive furnishings with no price tags on them. As she rummages through the living room, she overhears a solemn conversation between two people about the passing of the deceased for whom they have gathered that day. Horrified, Luisa scurries out of the house and jumps in her car. The comical start to Luisa's day not only entertains the audience, but it also sets the stage for Luisa's sense of being out of place and a stranger to her environment. The incident is clearly intended to surprise and amuse the audience, but it is an appropriate introduction to the psyche of the protagonist.

The music that Luisa is playing in her car throughout her drive also sets the stage for the satirical element in *Un día en Nueva York*. The music playing is the operatic version of *Candide*, which was written by Voltaire and turned into an opera by Leonard Bernstein. It is a picaresque romance that follows the young and naïve Candide across the globe in search of the meaning of life. The protagonist, Candide, is a disciple of the German Dr. Pan-

gloss, and is profoundly influenced by his philosophy that "This is the best of all possible worlds." He embraces this philosophy to a ridiculous extent, which ultimately renders the work completely satirical. It has been suggested that the extreme optimism expressed by Candide was an extension of Voltaire's own beliefs. Voltaire openly criticized the theology of the Enlightenment and the dogma of the Church; satirized Cartesian rationalism and rejected the notion that faith in God and observance of Christianity was the way to everlasting peace and perfection.

The satire unfolds as Candide travels the world with his friends as a naïve voyager in search of adventure. His belief that "This is the best of all possible worlds" remains steadfast, in spite of several life-threatening encounters. One such encounter, which is directly linked to the plot of *Un día en Nueva York*, occurs when Candide is about to be burned at the stake in an *auto-da-fe* during the Spanish Inquisition. Darrell Lockhart provides the following insightful observation:

It attacks the school of optimism that contends that rational thought can curtail the evils perpetrated by human beings. Thus, the name of the Enlightenment could be used to legitimize despotism. Moreover, witch-hunts and organized

campaigns of religious persecution continued well into the eighteenth century, and Enlightenment philosophy's propagation of reason as a social antidote did not bring a halt to the ravages of superstition and fear. *Candide* illustrates this fact in the figure of the Grand Inquisitor who orders an auto-da-fé to ward off earthquakes, among many other examples.<sup>152</sup>

Upon returning home, *Candide* realized that a life of adventure was not for him. The ultimate moral of the story is that: "Man must cultivate his garden." The applicability to Glickman's play is that the characters in her play, particularly Golda, have traveled the globe in search of themselves and their place in the world. The profound sense of being a wandering Jew in search of a true homeland and a sense of belonging parallels *Candide's* experiences to a certain extent. Both characters charter their voyages across exotic and dangerous terrain, and remain steadfast in their mutual search for self-discovery and a destined dwelling place. Thinking back on the encounter with Golda and the relevance the music of *Candide* has to Glickman's characters, the audience soon becomes cognizant of the connection between the music and Luisa's life and state of

---

<sup>152</sup> Darrell Lockhart, internet review.



mind. As an Argentine immigrant, she finds herself to be a stranger in a strange land, in spite of the years she has lived in New York and the professional success she has had. Her car, which is in a state of complete disarray, contains piles of books and papers, as well as half-eaten sandwiches and other miscellaneous objects, seems to be reflective of Luisa's emotional state. She seems to be perpetually frenetic and, as she admits after parting ways with Golda, she finds herself culturally and personally estranged.

Once in class, Luisa begins her lecture with an introduction to the topic of the day: "The illegal prostitution of Eastern European Jewish women in Argentina." She tells the class that the women were promised security, jobs and Jewish husbands in Argentina, but instead, they were deceived and forced into prostitution. Ashamed of their misfortune, they wrote letters in Yiddish full of lies to their families back home, with falsified stories of their wonderful husbands, beautiful homes and well-paying jobs. Since the families back in Poland, among other countries, were fluent speakers of Yiddish yet illiterate, Jewish women who could read and write in Yiddish served as translators. One such translator, Golda, a Jewish woman in her eighties, just happened to be in the audience to hear Luisa's lecture, and approaches Luisa afterwards.

Golda informs Luisa of her connection to the lecture she has just given, and Luisa invites her to have a coffee at the university's cafeteria. Instead, Golda leads her into the basement of the building and down a long corridor to a securely locked door. Luisa questions why Golda has brought her to such a deserted place and Golda assures her that she is bringing Luisa to her secret studio. The room that they enter is completely void of anything; however, Golda points out her sculptures, and Luisa comments on how suffocating the space is.

GOLDA: ¿Parece una celda? ¿eh? La hacen así para que no roben, para que no se lleven nada... Pero roban... mucho... Aquí se puede hacer escultura y otras cosas.

LUISA: (Desconcertada, examina el cuarto) Ya veo, un gran taller...qué impresionantes esas figuras de arcilla...

GOLDA: Este es el lugar donde trabajo.

LUISA: Tan apretado... ¿Dónde hay lugar para respirar entre tantas estatuas?<sup>153</sup>

---

<sup>153</sup> Nora Glickman, "Un día en Nueva York," *Teatro: Cuatro obras de Nora Glickman* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Nueva Generación, 2000) 69.

The uneasiness Luisa feels in the claustrophobic space is indicative of her inner conflicts. Luisa is uncomfortable in her own skin because she feels like a foreigner in a foreign city that does not recognize her as a legitimate resident. Being enclosed in such a confined space with lifeless statues looming over her exacerbates her discomfort.

The conversation soon turns to Golda's life in Poland and her immigration to the United States. Although Luisa and Golda share an immigrant past and present, the years between them and their distinct hardships since their arrival in the United States make them feel like they are worlds apart. Luisa tries to compare Golda to the Jewish immigrant women who were prostituted in Argentina in order to understand her plight; however, Golda makes a critical distinction between this America and the *other* Americas (South and Central).

LUISA: Usted también quería irse de Polonia, ¿verdad?

GOLDA: Yo quería, sí... tuve suerte. Mis parientes estaban en América. América del Norte.

ALICIA: ¿Y no tenía miedo que los traficantes vinieran aquí, también?

GOLDA: Nu... Aquí era distinto. Era una vida distinta, por Dios. (Divertida) Pero aquí había talleres (se rie), y a las muchachas también nos hacían esclavas; esclavas de las "Singer", las máquinas de coser.<sup>154</sup>

Once she "safely" arrived in the United States, Golda tells Luisa of her quarantine on Ellis Island. Golda explains that after convincing the doctors on Ellis Island that she was healthy enough to leave the premises, she was obligated to work for her extended family who did not assist her in any way until she proved to be employable. During the tireless years she worked in their sweatshop as a sewer, she was not paid a cent, nor did she ever see her true and immediate family again, as they disappeared in the concentration camps. The "family" that she had in New York was never more than slave drivers to her.

GOLDA: Mi gente nunca llegó. Disculpe. Todos murieron allá.

LUISA: (Compasiva. Abraza ligeramente a Golda)

GOLDA: Pero están vivos. Están aquí mismo.

(Señala a las estatuas del taller) ¿Ve estas estatuas? son de mi familia: mi madre, mi

---

<sup>154</sup> Glickman, *Un día*, 70.

padre, mis hermanos Itzik y Leib, mi abuela Reizel. (A la estatua) Reizel, ij nin elter ietzt vi di bist demolt geven. (Señala a su rabino) Mi rabino, a voiler mentch, hot gekent Zij ein kriejen in hartz." En el corazón lo llevo. Están aquí, y yo estoy con ellos, siempre.<sup>155</sup>

In a city and a country where Golda will always feel like a stranger, she has created a space where her past and her deceased relatives can come to life. She surrounds herself with imaginary sculpted images of her parents, siblings, grandmother and rabbi in an attempt to retrieve and safeguard a world that would otherwise fade into oblivion, just as her family vanished during the Holocaust. The airtight studio is the source of sustenance and identity for Golda and without it, she would be completely lost.

Not only do the statues embody a lost past for Golda, the Yiddish language that she employs when speaking about her family and friends transcends space and time and enables her to retreat into an imaginary world. Golda translates very little of the Yiddish into English for Luisa, either because she assumes Luisa will understand, or, possibly, because she retreats into her own world when she is

---

<sup>155</sup> Glickman, *Un día*, 71.

among the statues. The only translation Golda offers is the description of her rabbi as a true *mentch*, a genuinely good person, who, she says, she carries in her heart forever. The fact that Golda chooses not to translate the description of her grandmother indicates that when she is speaking about her family, it is an internal dialogue that is not meant to be translated or mistranslated, as is often the case.

In spite of the refuge her artistic talents and sculptures provide her, neither safeguards her creations from harm.

LUISA: (Se levanta y mira con curiosidad a otro grupo de estatuas, con torsos descabezados)

GOLDA: Esas pobres criaturas...

LUISA: Son torsos sin cabeza...

GOLDA: Obra de vándalos, juliganes, soneiúdim.

Les cortaron las cabezas. ¡Aún aquí vienen a aseinar a mi gente!<sup>156</sup>

The decapitation of Golda's statues is clearly and profoundly symbolic of the widespread annihilation of Jews during the Holocaust and the inescapable fear that it could happen again, anywhere. Even though Golda made an

---

<sup>156</sup> Glickman, *Un día*, 71.

important distinction between the United States and the rest of the Americas in terms of the endangerment of immigrants, she is unmistakably terrorized by the threat of annihilation in New York.

Golda's assumption that the vandals who decapitated her statues are anti-Semites determined to wipe out the remaining population of Jews is most likely an extension of the paranoia she feels after having lost her entire family during the Holocaust. Whether her fears are imagined or confirmed by the vandalism, Golda is undeniably surrounded and haunted by her ghosts. Perhaps that is the reason Luisa felt so suffocated in the tiny studio, for fear of being forced to confront her own ghosts and demons.

*Soneiúdim*, the word for the murderers of Jews, is the only other expression that Golda translates into English aside from the description of her rabbi, and only because Luisa asks her what it means. She is surprised that Luisa does not know who those killers were, and explains what suffering they have already caused Golda's.

GOLDA: ¡Soneiúdim! (Sorprendida) ¿Usted no sabe lo que son? Pues, debería saber. Son los que odían a los judíos! ¡Los juliganes!  
(Señala a otra estatua) Y esa es la balsa de la Muerte, que nos lleva a todos. A mí

también. Yo estoy aquí, con ellos en la balsa.

¿Me ve? Estoy muerta, también.

LUISA: Golda, usted está viva...

GOLDA: Yo, viva...

LUISA: ¡Y usted es una gran artista!

GOLDA: Ay, narishkain! Dice tonterías... Ay, ay, ay, si yo soy un cadaver andante. Es usted la que se engaña, profesoreske, usted y todas esas pobres almas allí arriba, que la oían con tanto respeto, tan calladitos...todos perdidos, fantasmas vagando por la ciudad. (Se ajusta un delantal a la cintura y comienza a moldear la arcilla) En esta estatua, cómo hacer destacar las mejillas sin que los ojos queden demasiado hundidos? (Ve que Luisa toma su cartera y sus llaves) Oh, ya se va...Muchas gracias por venir a mi trabajo...<sup>157</sup>

Golda's rejection of Luisa's flattery evolves into a description of herself as a walking cadaver. She expresses her pity for Luisa and all the other hopeful souls who continue to aimlessly wander the city streets, in search of life, meaning and salvation. As if she is alone, Golda

---

<sup>157</sup> Glickman, *Un día*, 71-72.



returns to molding one of her statues and notices Luisa only when she is gathering her belongings to leave. Suddenly conscious of Luisa, Golda thanks her for coming, although remains oblivious to the uneasiness she has caused Luisa with her remarks.

As Luisa makes her way to the door, Golda asks her where she is going and quickly decides to accompany her when she discovers that Luisa has a car. Golda does not indicate an exact address where she is heading, but rather informs Luisa that she, too, is going in the same direction. The irony of the statement is that both women, however unique in their experiences and lives, are wandering souls in search of a new life, a static identity and a sense of belonging, and, for the moment, are traveling the same path. Golda believes that Luisa has such a stable and secure existence because she possesses a car, a job and a family. At the same time, Luisa envies Golda because she believes her to have a true sense of purpose and conviction. In reality, neither has what the other requires for survival and sustenance. Their respective identities are imaginary and mere illusions that the other has created.

Once inside Luisa's car, Golda becomes suddenly aware of her aches and pains. She is also impressed with the size and beauty of Luisa's car, clearly characteristics

that she is lacking in her own belongings. Luisa does not see eye to eye with Golda and insists that the car is old and dilapidated. Golda interprets Luisa's statement on a more profound level, and points out that everything ages, including the two of them. Their differences in opinion and cultural practices and beliefs are comically revealed in the following dialogue:

GOLDA: (Toma su bolsos. Cierra el taller.

Ambas mujeres se dirigen al auto) Oy, ales tut mir vey... I'iz shver... meine beiner... los huesos duelen... todo duele... tsures y más tsures. ¿Ese es su auto? Un auto grande, bonito.

LUISA: Es un auto viejo y herrumbrado...

GOLDA: ¿Y qué le vamos a hacer? Todos nos volvemos viejos, mi querida. (Antes de sentarse, limpia el asiento con una servilleta de papel) Gevalt! Sánwiche, bolsitas de dulces y papas... ¿Usted vive en este auto? Un auto no es una casa! Una casa es una casa! (Luisa le ofrece una de sus bolsitas) No racies. Ya comí (Pausa) Está bien. Lo llevo para más tarde, por las dudas. (Viajan) Por favor, deténgase en la esquina. Bajo un momento a retirar mi gefilta fish y mi jala

para el shabes. Oh no, no hace falta que me ayude a cargar mis cosas. Toda la vida me he arreglado sola. ¿Por qué no hoy? Aún cuando mi pobre esposo - que en paz descansa - estaba vivo, yo hacía todo sola. El era estudiante en una Yeshiva. Viera las manos que tenía...más fina que la porcelana era su piel. (Se apea del auto y regresa con sus paquetes. Continúan el viaje)

LUISA: (Consulta su reloj) ¿Cuál es su salida?

GOLDA: Siga, siga. Yo le dire cuál es.<sup>158</sup>

The conversation between Golda and Luisa reveals the differences between them, from the most minor of perceptions, to the most striking. The nutritional deprivation Golda has known as an immigrant makes her acutely aware of what privileges Luisa has, including her house in the suburbs and her car, however untidy and unsightly. Luisa sees her car as old and dilapidated because she is looking at her possessions from a privileged standpoint. Golda has suffered starvation and deprivation in her life, and, therefore, acquiesces to Luisa's offering of leftovers in her car out of concern that she might go without again.

---

<sup>158</sup> Glickman, *Un día*, 72-73.

Luisa is perplexed by Golda's ambiguous residence, however she remains consumed by her own sense of urgency to arrive at the theater on time and keep in step with her fast-paced cosmopolitan lifestyle. Although Golda's and Luisa's lives intersect for a few brief hours, it as if they inhabit two distinct worlds.

As the two continue their drive into Manhattan, Luisa points out the Yiddish melody that is playing on the radio, the same melody that was playing when Luisa first began her drive to work that morning before listening to *Candide*. Golda slips into a light sleep, but, all the while, sings along softly to the melody of her youth. Suddenly aware that she had drifted off to sleep and began to snore, she quickly awakens herself, and questions Luisa about her religiosity and seemingly frenetic lifestyle.

GOLDA: ...¿Usted descansa los sábados? El sábado es día de descanso. (Luisa vuelve a consultar el reloj) Me parece que usted es de las que siempre anda corriendo. ¿De qué corre? (Preocupada por llegar a tiempo a su cita, Luisa busca afanosamente la salida de la carretera) Es un poquito más adelante...<sup>159</sup>

---

<sup>159</sup> Glickman, *Un día*, 73-74.

Luisa does not answer Golda's questions, which seem to be intentionally rhetorical in any case. Luisa is running from something (herself), while at the same time running towards what she hopes will be a place she can recover her lost identity and homeland. One can surmise from her lifestyle that Luisa is not a religiously observant Jew, but rather a woman who has attempted to masquerade as an authentic cosmopolitan New Yorker, while maintaining a remote connection to her Jewish and Argentine roots.

To return to the ambiguity surrounding Golda's existence, her vague reassurance that her destination is just a little further from where they are does little to ease Luisa's concern over arriving at the theatre on time. Perhaps the fact that Golda provides no direction for Luisa to follow exacerbates the general uncertainty that Luisa has about her own life.

LUISA: (Disculpándose) Es que me esperan en el  
Soho...

GOLDA: La saqué de su camino... ya sé. Puedo  
bajarme aquí mismo. No hay problema. No es  
nada si voy andando un poco... Es bueno caminar,  
uno tiene que caminar.

LUISA: Oh, no. No se baje. Está bien. No me  
importa...

GOLDA: Usted conduce muy bien... y es Buena  
 persona.

LUISA: Estamos llegando a Brooklyn, Golda.

GOLDA: ¡Brooklyn! Sí, me bajo aquí. Brooklyn,  
 en realidad, es Está en Queens. Es la misma  
 tierra, solo que lo llaman Brooklyn en el mapa,  
 eso es todo. Es guefelt mir Brooklyn! Es el  
 centro de estudios de la Torá, un gran centro,  
 sabe. (Pausa) Aquí me bajo. (Luisa detiene el  
 auto y ayuda a Golda). Manhattan, usted ¿no?  
 Al centro...<sup>160</sup>

The religious importance of the place clearly makes Golda feel safe and in a place of refuge. Curiously, Golda remarks to Luisa that she is on her way to Manhattan, "the heart of the city." Clearly, Golda and Luisa's "centers" are quite unique. For Golda, the Yeshivas and the synagogues of Brooklyn are the sign of life and endurance of her people. For Luisa, on the other hand, who has yet to recognize anything in New York as familiar and her own, Manhattan provides the constant movement and activity that she can throw herself into and keep moving.

---

<sup>160</sup> Glickman, *Un día*, 74.

As the two women part ways, Golda reminds Luisa to stop by and see her "true Argentine" friend in Brooklyn. Confirming her transient identity, Golda says that she, too, is an Argentine, as well as a Cuban, and a Brazilian. In all of the countries that Golda has lived, she has absorbed the cultures and become a temporary citizen. Her final farewell to Luisa is the ultimate indication of her migratory lifestyle and hybrid identity, for after she tells Luisa that she has lived in Argentina, Cuba and Brazil, she bids her goodbye in Yiddish.

GOLDA: Siga nomás; siga su camino. Y la próxima vez que pase por este barrio, venga a ver a esta (con acento gauchesco) "criolla de pura cepa" como dicen en sus pampas argentinas. (Sonríe) Sí, yo viví allá también. En muchos lugares viví; en Brasil, en Cuba. Hace tantos años...Adiós, mi querida. (Le echa un beso sonoro) ¡Zei guezunt!<sup>161</sup>

The impressions that both women have of each other do not at all reflect their respective realities. Golda admires Luisa for her impressive possessions and sees them as an indication that Luisa has achieved the American dream.

---

<sup>161</sup> Glickman, *Un día*, 74.

Golda cannot understand Luisa's frenetic lifestyle, but that is because she does not recognize that Luisa busies herself in work and activities in order to avoid confronting her loneliness and self-estrangement. Luisa's perceptions of Golda are equally blurred by her own insecurities and feelings of displacement; she equates Golda with the Biblical matriarchs and admires her fortitude and, ironically, her ability to find her way.

LUISA: (Regresa a su auto; mientras conduce y reflexiona sobre Golda se pone un collar, una pulsera, abre su bolsa de cosmética y se maquilla) Sus ojos brillaban de tristeza. Su piel parecía más tersa, más joven. Claro, ahora la reconocía. Era el fantasma de otras matriarcas. Era Lea, horneando la comida del sábado. Era Sara frente a su máquina de coser. Era la judía errante negociando con los criollos por una sárten, condoliéndose con un amigo ante la muerte de su hija. Se desplazaba de un lado a otro sin papeles, adaptándose siempre, llegando de algún modo... ¿Viviría cerca? ¿Tendría una dirección fija? No podría saberlo. Cerca o lejos, Golda tenía algo de



profeta... Ciertamente sabía, y tanto mejor que yo, cómo encontrar su camino.<sup>162</sup>

The jewelry and makeup with which Luisa adorns herself as she drives toward Manhattan do not hide the profound void she feels, due to her cultural estrangement and lost identity. The wealth and professional status Luisa seems to enjoy are the traditional markers of success and prosperity in the United States, but they do not help her to feel comfortable in her own skin or at home anywhere.

Not only does Luisa see herself as lacking the ability to overcome adversity and the difficulties of being a perpetual outsider, she sees Golda as one of the Biblical matriarchs, a stark contrast to her meager existence. Like Leah, Golda faithfully observes the Sabbath; like Sara, she sewed until her fingers bled in the sweatshops to survive, and because, like so many stoic Jewish women before Golda, she traversed the globe in search of a new homeland and identity and found her way.

What Luisa does not recognize as the overwhelming element in Golda's life is the profound and inescapable sadness she feels, due to the loss of her entire family during the Holocaust, and the fear of further persecution wherever she might find herself next. Luisa sees her as

---

<sup>162</sup> Glickman, *Un día*, 74-75.

timeless, with her faithful observance of the Sabbath and the consumption of traditional Jewish cuisine. Golda's connections to the Holocaust and to Jewish religious and cultural practices are reminders to Luisa of all that she lacks, which makes her feel even more like a stranger. She is a foreigner in New York and a stranger to herself because of her loss of cultural, linguistic, and religious connections.

Although both women hold each other in high esteem, they fail to recognize their shared identity crisis. Because both women are desperately hoping to put an end to their seemingly endless feeling of being an imperiled and/or perpetual foreigner in a foreign land, they mistake superficial indicators of wealth, cultural connections, and professional status for signs that the other has found her true place in the world and has made it her own.

After concluding that Golda indeed is a matriarch, Luisa continues her drive into the city, narrating as she goes. She leaves a message for her son and tells him that she will be home very late, but promises to make it up to him over the weekend. She concludes the message with "¡Muchos besos! ¡Love you! ¡Bye!"<sup>163</sup> which reminds the

---

<sup>163</sup> Glickman, *Un día*, 75.

audience that she lives in a bilingual and bicultural world. Although the use of English is minimal, her usage of both English and Spanish, as well as her comprehension of Yiddish, are an indication that she lives between multiple worlds, languages and cultures.

Luisa continues to describe her surroundings upon her arrival in Soho where she is to meet her friends, and observes some homeless people asking for money. Instead of translating the word "homeless" into Spanish, Glickman decides to use the English word, perhaps because the homeless are such a part of New York and the New York experience. One homeless man approaches Luisa and her friends Peggy and Leo, and Luisa gives him some money but then tells him to leave them in peace. The homeless man is automatically transformed and perceived as the "Other" by Luisa and her friends. It is an ironic twist of events as, just moments earlier, Luisa was inescapably conscious of her own foreignness and alienation. The lack of compassion for the homeless man and her insistence that the theatre is for the discerning public are surprising. Suddenly the theatre and the city are Luisa's and she feels she has the right to exclude those who are not as deserving and entitled as she.

Clearly, an unpleasant, yet telling performance has just taken place. The homeless man has publicized his plight in life and Luisa has revealed her true character. Desperate to be a true New Yorker, a true American, and a legitimate anything, Luisa inadvertently seizes her moment in the presence of one far more unfortunate, and vulnerable, who is even more robbed of his true identity than she. In response to the exclusivity she places on the theatre, the homeless man profoundly points out what Luisa also longs for:

LUISA: Tome y déjenos en paz. Este teatro es para el público serio. Es nuestro.

MENDIGO: Ah, claro; y el país es de todos...(Se dirige al centro del escenario) Vamos, gente, desembuchen la platita! Desfonden esos bolsillos!<sup>164</sup>

There is great irony and biting sarcasm in the homeless man's statement that the United States is for all to share and enjoy. Luisa was most likely enticed by the American dream and the promise of equality and prosperity when she first struggled to make her way as an immigrant in the United States. Although the homeless man and Luisa are

---

<sup>164</sup> Glickman, *Un día*, 76-77.

radically different in their station in life and socio-economic status, they are both desperate to escape their psychological and physical exile and feel as if they were legitimate members of society, rather than alienated outsiders.

One can compare the inability of Luisa and the homeless man to recognize their shared social outsider status to Golda and Luisa's inability to recognize their shared experience as psychological exiles and insecure navigators of their identity. It is not surprising that the homeless man did not recognize Luisa as an immigrant struggling to find her way and uncover her true identity, as she wore the guise of an entitled cosmopolitan woman. However, Luisa failed to recognize the homeless man as exemplary of an extreme of social alienation and psychological exile. The only element that Luisa seems conscious of is the price one must pay these days to come to Soho. Clearly, the statement is as metaphorical as it is literal. Soho represents the exclusivity of New York, the United States and any place that foreigners and outsiders feel intimidated and out of place. The fact that she sees herself as more entitled to be there demonstrates that her own sensitivity towards feeling excluded does not extend to "Others."

Once the play that Luisa and her friends attended has come to an end, the three of them make their way out of the theater. Leo and Peggy tell Luisa of their own frightful encounter with a couple of pranksters in the street prior to the performance, and how disturbed they are by the unfortunate chain of events that evening. Completely shaken, Peggy and Leo race off to catch a cab and refuse to take Luisa's offer to drive them home. Their apparent desire to escape the omnipresent desperation and devastation in New York is reflective of their privileged status and ability to shut out adversity. Although they are unaware of the impact of their actions, they are further widening the gap between the socially and culturally privileged and the disregarded others.

Once in her car, Luisa is regretful about not having had the opportunity to tell Leo and Peggy about Golda and her remarkable ability to navigate the world. Luisa turns on the music to *Candide* once again, and the audience realizes how central the opera is to *Un día en Nueva York*. The overriding message of *Candide*, "This is the best of all possible worlds", once again holds great irony in Glickman's play. After being confronted by homeless men and devious pranksters, Luisa and her friends would hardly conclude that this is the best of all possible worlds.

That said, their encounters are hardly comparable to Candide's miraculous escape from being burned at the stake and other near-death experiences. *Candide* was clearly a satire, and *Un día en Nueva York* follows suit, although in a less dramatic and philosophically censorious way. Glickman does not intend to mock New York or its cosmopolitan lifestyle, nor does she intend to make a mockery of her characters. She is essentially providing a unique perspective on life in New York as a Jewish Latin American immigrant for her friends in Argentina who have been mystified and intrigued by promises of the American dream.

At the conclusion of the play, Luisa stops at a supposedly 24-hour supermarket at two o'clock in the morning in order to buy groceries. The importance of Luisa's late night shopping is not to demonstrate that you can shop at all hours in the New York suburbs. The characters Luisa encounters, who are of Latino background, are the focus of Luisa and Glickman's attention. Before even entering the store, Luisa notes that the neighborhood surrounding the supermarket is transient, but largely international, comprised of immigrants who came by plane or by illegally crossing the Río Grande.

Upon reaching the checkout counter, Luisa is informed that the store closes at 2:00 AM and that the register is

closed. Enraged that the salesmen had not informed her before while she filled her cart, she insists that they allow her to pay. Unable to convince them to reopen the registers, Luisa furiously returns to her car. She resumes her role as narrator and concludes that this infuriating encounter serves as an appropriate conclusion to a typical *Día en Nueva York*. Just as she is about to drive off, one of the Latino cashiers from the supermarket taps on her window and gives her a small tomato plant and says: "Para su jardín, doña."<sup>165</sup> Luisa responds with the same words she just uttered in her car moments before, but in a much softer tone: "(Perpleja pero más calma, toma la planta y la observa) ¡Un día en Nueva York!"<sup>166</sup>

*Un día en Nueva York* is exemplary of Glickman's creative and captivating blend of various genres, cultures, perspectives and voices. The play is far from any traditional theatrical piece, as it incorporates narration in the form of composing a letter to friends in Argentina, characters engaged in internal as well as external dialogues, crises of identity caused by a constant shifting of geographic borders and the consequent assimilation, histor-

---

<sup>165</sup> Glickman, *Un día*, 80.

<sup>166</sup> Glickman, *Un día*, 80.



ical facts, and the technique of including various plays and performances within the play itself.

As seen in the initial analysis of the play, the protagonist begins by recording a letter to her friends in Argentina in order to give them an "accurate" account of life in New York. Luisa narrates the day's events until she actually becomes one of the characters and is completely immersed in her story. Even when she acts as the narrator, she fails to have an omniscient perspective. Luisa takes note of her own behavior and utterances, but she fails to possess a true understanding of the characters with whom she interacts. Once a part of the action, she loses her ability to analyze the people with whom she encounters. This unfortunate lack of understanding is all too evident in her interactions with Golda and the homeless man. Although an omniscient analysis of the characters in the play would enable Luisa to connect with Golda and the homeless man and discover their commonalities and work together to overcome their crises, Luisa's deficiency actually proves more logical and effective, as their shared lack of understanding and appreciation are completely reflective of reality.

Another critical and creative characteristic of the play is that there are multiple plays and performances

within the play itself. Luisa gives several performances: as the narrator in a self-directed dialogue with herself, in her encounter with Golda, and in her confrontation with a homeless man. Although the performances shift from an internal monologue to conversations with Golda, the homeless man, and her friends Peggy and Leo, the voice remains the same. None of the roles Luisa assumes have a more informed, enlightened or insightful perspective than the others. The versatility of Luisa's character is, however, still demonstrative of the multiple identities and roles individuals play, particularly female immigrants residing in the United States.

With regard to the historical content in the play, Glickman assumes the role as historian, and infuses yet another critical component. *Un día en Nueva York* not only contains semi-fictionalized autobiographical material, it also provides an historical background on female Jewish immigrants and the pitfalls of assimilation and alienation.

*Un día en Nueva York* transcends the traditional guidelines of theatrical performance and provides another literary *mestizaje* that reflects Jewish and Latina immigrant experiences in the United States and the establishment and recognition of hybrid identities.

***Una tal Raquel Lieberman***

*Una tal Raquel Lieberman* is yet another formative piece in its portrayal of certain Jewish immigrant experiences in Buenos Aires. The play addresses the interplay between Polish and Argentine cultures, but primarily focuses upon the illegal importation and prostitution of Jewish Polish women in Buenos Aires. In stark comparison with *Un día en Nueva York*, *Una tal Raquel Lieberman* highlights the perils of one historic and semi-fictionalized immigrant in Buenos Aires the *other* America. Upon reading about Raquel's perilous existence, one is reminded of the distinction Golda made in the previous play between the United States and Latin America. After having read the falsified letters that women like Raquel Lieberman wrote to their families, and after having lived in Buenos Aires, Golda was all too aware of the greater safety and security available to women in the United States, even though she had worked like a slave for her relatives in New York.

*Una tal Raquel Lieberman* not only highlights the hazardous life of Raquel Lieberman, it was the beginning of an extensive study by Glickman of the elaborate prostitution ring in Buenos Aires. Polish women in general were the targets of such traffickers, but Polish Jews soon became victims and slaves to that operation. When the

Jewish community in Argentina discovered the illegal prostitution trade, they did everything in its power to successfully dismantle it. Raquel Lieberman embodies the enslavement and forced prostitution of the thousands of innocent women that fell victim to illegal traffickers and the little-known perilous life of many Jewish immigrant women in Argentina. In Glickman's own words, she explains the connection between this play and the centers of Yiddish theater that produced plays that, like hers, portrayed the life of Jewish immigrants:

Entre 1920 y 1950 Buenos Aires junto con Polonia y Nueva York, era uno de los centros más importantes del teatro ídish. Este teatro tiene mucho que ver con mi obra, que incluye selecciones de Leib Malaj. Mi propósito consistió en ilustrar dramáticamente un episodio contemporáneo al que Raquel Lieberman pudo haber vivenciado, con el objeto de mostrar las condiciones peligrosas y precarias en que la comunidad bonaerense se encontraba al tener que lidiar con los elementos ilegales que invadían sus instituciones más importantes: sinagogas, cementarios, teatros.<sup>167</sup>

---

<sup>167</sup> Nora Glickman, *Una Tal Raquel Lieberman, Cuatro Obras* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Nueva Generación, 2000) 17.

*Una tal Raquel Lieberman* is another excellent example of Glickman's multifaceted writing style. She includes historical facts, emulates and embraces traditional Yiddish theatre, and ultimately introduces the play in New York and Buenos Aires. The play does address intercultural conflicts, the plights of immigrants, legal and illegal, however, they are not commonly tackled issues in Latina writing. Glickman clearly goes out on a limb to expand the range of Latina writing in the United States with an introduction to the prostitution trade of immigrants in Latin America, and a performance that incorporates elements from traditional Jewish theatre. It is a multigenre text that includes history, intercultural relations and personal testimony that are all based on personal letters, photographs and documents:

En los Estados Unidos, el tema de *Una tal Raquel Lieberman* parecería aislado de la temática "Latina" típica, que se ocupa mayormente de conflictos interculturales de integración y de asimilación de hispanos al mundo norteamericano. Pero la explotación ilegal de miles de inmigrantes indocumentados a los Estados Unidos, podría ser considerada análoga a las vicisitudes por las que atraviesa la protagonista de *Una tal*

*Raquel Lieberman*. Su testimonio personal, basado en cartas personales, en fotografías y en documentos descubiertos recientemente, es el de una mujer valiente, capaz de provocar el desbande de los traficantes de una organización criminal poderosa, como lo fue la Zwi Migdal en Buenos Aires durante la década de los veinte.<sup>168</sup>

Glickman clearly recognizes her contribution to the corpus of Latina literature in the United States, but her creation of a new genre is undeniable after reading *Una tal Raquel Lieberman*, in addition to the other plays in this study.

Although the play addresses the plight of one Jewish woman who fell victim to the illegal prostitution ring in Buenos Aires, it is not just a Jewish account of immigration. Raquel's character embodies the suffering caused by her enslavement, and the seemingly insurmountable obstacles encountered by many immigrants in Argentina. Raquel serves as the narrator of her past when she tells her granddaughter of her unspoken past life in Buenos Aires, which was never mentioned by Raquel's own children.

When Raquel is not engaged in dialogue with her granddaughter, she is transported back in time to the seemingly interminable period of her enslavement, and re-experiences

---

<sup>168</sup> Glickman, *Raquel Lieberman*, 18.

her victimization. Raquel's suffering at the hands of the prostitution traffickers is communicated so powerfully that the reader and the audience forget that Raquel is now a grandmother telling her granddaughter about her nightmarish past. The tendency to forget that Raquel is no longer in the hands of the traffickers is because the play begins with Raquel's testimony against them. The realization that Raquel is indeed free and now masquerading as an unscathed woman eludes the audience for the majority of the play, but ultimately allays their agitation.

The play begins with Raquel's testimony against the prostitution ring in Buenos Aires. She is asked to give the names of the men involved in her enslavement and prostitution; Raquel, in turn, asks whether she will be protected from possible retaliatory acts. The inspector assures her that her safety will be guaranteed, but adds that the fate of other women like her had been far worse:

ALSOGARAY: Bien, dése por contenta que no está muerta. Algunas acaban siendo mutiladas, sus restos echadas a los chiqueros de los puercos... Si a usted no la tocaron, Raquel Lieberman, es porque ya era demasiada conocida... más difícil de eliminar... Pero en este país de inmigrantes, y gente de Buena conciencia como usted debe

cortar de raíz con ese elemento, de una vez por todas.<sup>169</sup>

Upon being reassured of her safety, Raquel tells the inspector of her miserable existence in Poland and how she came to be a prostitute in Argentina. Tragically, Raquel's life both in Poland and in Argentina was marked by suffering and persecutions, however, Raquel falsified the details of how she became a prostitute in order to save her family from further public humiliation and shame:

RAQUEL: En Polonia, donde yo vivía, la vida se había vuelto insoportable. Miseria, persecuciones, pogroms. Un joven de apariencia respetable les prometió a mis padres que me llevaría a Buenos Aires para casarme con un hombre rico. Entonces yo era una muchacha inocente - una virgen. El me trajo a la Argentina y aquí me vendió a un traficante y su gerenta, que me tuvieron prisionera, y amenazaron con matarme si desobedecía. Me tomó unos años aprender sus nombres y sus maniobras: Kirstein, Madanes, Brutkievich... Korn...<sup>170</sup>

---

<sup>169</sup> Glickman, *Raquel Lieberman*, 22.

<sup>170</sup> Glickman, *Raquel Lieberman*, 22.



The scene then changes to the present day with Raquel and her granddaughter engaged in dialogue. The granddaughter wants to know why Raquel lied to the inspector by telling him that she was brought to Argentina under false pretenses as a naïve virgin. She wants to know why Raquel never revealed her true name to her family and why she never told the police and her family the truth until now. Raquel explains that she wanted to safeguard her children and protect them from further disgrace.

At this point in the dialogue, the audience is confused because they do not know Raquel's true story, nor do they fully understand her reasons for wanting to conceal the truth. The granddaughter is relentless in her efforts to uncover the truth and insists that her identity is inextricably linked to her grandmother. The absence of knowledge of her grandmother's past creates a gaping hole in her life that can only be filled by the truth. Raquel explains that it was Raquel's son who wanted to protect his daughter from information that could hurt her, and also keep her from depending upon a man. Raquel's past life as a prostitute when she was controlled and abused by men, was something to which her son never wanted his daughter exposed, even if that meant inadvertently shutting his mother out of their lives.

The granddaughter soon learns that Raquel was married to a man by the name of Iaacov, who journeyed first to Buenos Aires to establish himself and then send for his wife and children. They wrote each other letters in Yiddish, which Raquel's granddaughter discovered recently in her uncle's apartment. The granddaughter ransacked the uncle's apartment in search of information about her grandmother after watching a disturbing program on television about a woman who bore an uncanny resemblance to Raquel. The hidden letters she discovered turned out to be those exchanged between Raquel and Iaacov; however, they were written in a foreign tongue that the granddaughter wasn't able to read, let alone recognize. The granddaughter notes her uncle's clandestine efforts to cover up Raquel's past, and Raquel responds that he was unable to deal with the shame she had caused the family.

The shame that Raquel's secret past could bring to her family should the truth be discovered is far more revealing of them than Raquel. Raquel had already suffered from tremendous emotional and psychological distress brought on by her involvement in the Zwi Migdal and her failure to be an ideal and appropriate role model for her children. The fact that her children had forsaken her and actually prevented Raquel from being a part of her grandchildren's

lives revealed that they could not confront and overcome the shame and horror that their mother had lived with for her entire adult life. Had Raquel's children confronted the past and realized that her mother had fallen victim to an exploitative and abusive prostitution ring, perhaps they could have embraced Raquel and given her the peace of mind that would have mitigated her shame and self-loathing. Although Raquel's own children were unable to make such amends with her, the true story that Raquel discloses to her granddaughter serves to free both grandmother and granddaughter because they finally confront the truth and themselves, making it possible to reclaim their true identities. Such an encounter with her granddaughter, however, did not ultimately free Raquel of the emotional shackles she had worn all those years.

Raquel once again revisits the past and finds herself in the wedding ceremony to her husband Iaacov in her *shtetl* in Poland. Traditional Jewish music is playing while a *Hasidic* dance is performed for the couple, followed by the breaking of the glass by the groom. Following the celebration, the scene changes and the couple is engaged in a bittersweet dialogue on the eve of Iaacov's journey to Argentina. Iaacov promises to save money in order to bring Raquel to Argentina and she begs him not to forget the

Jewish holidays and to make sure he fasts on *Yom Kippur*. Raquel also tells him to learn the language quickly, knowing that will help him to integrate into the new culture and enable him to earn a living.

Raquel's advice is not contradictory; she is aware of the opposing struggles to safeguard one's Jewish identity in a foreign country, while making every effort to assimilate and take advantage of the society's benefits. Prior to becoming an immigrant herself, Raquel seemed acutely aware of the realities of being a foreigner, even more so than her husband.

Raquel and Iaacov continue to exchange letters during his journey from Poland to Spain and then on to Argentina. He tells her about the people he met on the boat and she tells him about his young son and their soon-to-be-born child. Not long after Iaacov's arrival in Argentina, his health fails and he is admitted to the hospital. They continue to exchange letters full of promise of health for Iaacov and the anticipated arrival of Raquel and their two children.

Upon Raquel's arrival in Buenos Aires, she is reunited with Iaacov and finds him to be in very poor health. Raquel insists that he must have faith, but Iaacov tells her that his illness is incurable. Just at that moment,

Iaacov's friend from the Old Country, Max Kaufman, enters the hospital room. Iaacov begs Max to promise that he will take care of Raquel and the children after he is gone and asks Raquel to recite the *Mourner's Kaddish*, the prayer for the dead, when he has passed. Raquel refuses to acknowledge the gravity of the situation, and Iaacov passes away shortly thereafter.

The next scene shows Raquel on the streets of Buenos Aires looking lost and alone. A woman approaches her by the name of Bronia and speaks to her in Yiddish. Raquel is overjoyed to speak her native tongue after feeling as if a part of her had been muted. Bronia asks where Raquel's husband is and Raquel informs her that he died just a month ago. Recognizing Raquel's destitute state, Bronia informs her that there is no lack of Jews in Buenos Aires and offers to take her under her wing. Bronia tells Raquel that the streets of Buenos Aires are dangerous, in an attempt to further convince Raquel to accept her offer of a safe place to live. Bronia also appeals to Raquel's religious and cultural ideals by saying that there is a synagogue around the corner from her house and that the two of them will go to *Yom Kippur* services together. Upon hearing that there is a Jewish haven in Buenos Aires where Yiddish is spoken, and where the Jewish community continues to pre-

serve cultural and religious practices, Raquel is convinced that living with Bronia is her destiny.

The two approach Bronia's supposed haven, which boasts Spanish architectural design, exotic flora, and the promise of Jewish life there for Raquel. Señor Dominguez, who offers the first indication that Raquel is about to enter the lion's den, greets Raquel and Bronia at the door. He observes Raquel's youth, cleanliness and beauty, to which Bronia responds that she is not for sale but that Bronia will keep her for him.

The scene changes to the inside of the brothel where men line up to admire and inspect their potential choices for the evening. Raquel is engaged in a dialogue with Bronia and tells her that unless she sends money to the woman taking care of her children, the woman will let them loose on the streets of Buenos Aires to fend for themselves. Raquel asks Bronia if she might bring her children to the house for a short while, and Bronia defiantly says no. She offers no solace, but tells Raquel that Señor Dominguez is a rich man and that she should take advantage of his interest in her. Raquel exclaims that she could never do such a thing, but Bronia reminds Raquel of the need to safeguard her children.

The scene changes once again and Bronia is telling Raquel that she doesn't want to hear any more complaints from the clients about her sobbing. Barely able to speak because of crying so much, Raquel screams: "¡La verguena... el horror! Que mis hijos nunca se enteren..."<sup>171</sup> Raquel is terribly ashamed of her immoral acts and begs Bronia never to tell her children anything about her sordid life. Bronia reassures her that her secret will be kept, but also tells Raquel that she is one of the lucky ones. Most women, like Bronia, were brought to the brothel under false promises of marriage. Because women were unable to own property, Bronia married her "agent" in order to buy the brothel and she has made a good life for herself. Bronia reassures Raquel that it will work out well for her too and some day soon she will be able to be reunited with her children again. Unconvinced, Raquel maligns herself by saying: "¡Qué imbécil fui al creer que tendría aquí un trabajo decente... que podría ser modista..."<sup>172</sup>

The desired professional success and dignity that Raquel never achieved was made all too evident by the regular visits to the clinic to ensure that she had not

---

<sup>171</sup> Glickman, *Raquel Lieberman*, 33.

<sup>172</sup> Glickman, *Raquel Lieberman*, 34.

contracted some life-threatening disease from her work as a prostitute. The necessary precautions that Raquel took made her horribly conscious of her sordid life and even more desperate to escape it. She, therefore, wrote a letter to her old friend Max Kaufman, whom she hadn't seen since her husband's death, begging him to help her escape from the hell masquerading as a garden house on Sarmiento Street.

The action then turns to the present day where Raquel and her granddaughter are discussing Raquel's past. After praising her grandmother's ability to deceive Bronia by convincing her that she had indeed accepted her life in the brothel, the granddaughter asks Raquel in a non-threatening manner why she didn't try to escape the brothel and return to Tapalqué where her children were living. Raquel explains that the three of them would have starved to death and, after all, she had accustomed herself to the "routine." She had successfully turned herself into a robot and trained herself not to feel any emotion or the touch of the bodies that invaded her skin. Nonetheless, she still felt the oppressive weight of the strangers on her body. Raquel seems to be confounded while recounting the horrors of her life as a prostitute, completely unaware of her granddaughter's presence and reaction.



The scene quickly changes back to the brothel where Brutkiev and Kirstien, the proprietors of the brothel, are engaged in a heated dialogue about Bronia. Kirstien is highly suspicious of Bronia's increasing pomposity and the liberties that she has taken. He insists that Bronia is only working for herself and leaving the two of them without commission. When Bronia enters into the conversation, Brutkiev and Kirstien warn her about treating Raquel and the others like queens. The two men insist that Bronia not indulge the women so much. After all, her job is to ensure that they remain loyal, keep away from drugs, and not take advantage of their situation.

The next critical scene takes place in one of the brothel's rooms with the long-awaited reunion between Max and Raquel. Raquel begs Max to use the money she has earned to buy her freedom and secure her a job in a nearby shop. Max offers his help to Raquel, but questions whether her Spanish is good enough to be a saleswoman. Raquel demonstrates her fluency by role-playing with Max as a client and her as a shop owner. Convinced, Max agrees to secure her a job and help her to escape.

In the interim, Raquel continues masquerading as a contented prostitute and prepares to go to the theatre with Bronia. She dresses herself in an elegant gown that Bronia

has given her and they proceed to the theatre. The play begins and the irony in the script becomes immediately striking. The protagonist is a woman by the name of Reizel, the Yiddish equivalent of Raquel, who is also a prostitute. A Dr. Silva proposes marriage and promises to liberate her from a world of immorality and danger. To the doctor's great dismay, Reizel refuses his offer, by explaining that she has been the mistress of so many men that she couldn't possibly be the wife of just one man. Dr. Silva reminds her of the perils that await her in the "real" world, but Reizel insists that she will go where every hour is like an eternity.

In the midst of the dialogue on stage, the public suddenly interrupts the play. Members of the audience scream out to their fellow Jews that the actors are involved in the scandalous and illegal prostitution ring of the Zwi Migdal, that runs the brothel where Raquel works. Starr, the actor who plays the part of Dr. Silva, pleads with the public to allow the show to go on. He insists that he is an actor for and of the Jewish community and that neither he nor any of the members of the cast have any connection to the prostitution ring. He also tells them that he was a famous actor in the Yiddish theatres of Poland and his prestige has followed him to Argentina. Unconvinced, the

audience continues to protest and insists that the play end.

Failing to persuade the audience to calm down and listen to reason, the focus turns from the actors on stage to the first row where Raquel and Bronia are seated. Immediately recognized as prostitutes from the infamous brothel, they are assailed with insults. As Raquel and Bronia make their quick exit, Bronia notices a sign posted outside the theatre that prohibits the entrance of traffickers of prostitutes and other villainous characters. Upon reading the notice, Bronia is infuriated that their entrance into the theatres is now prohibited, not to mention the synagogues and cemeteries. Bronia does not consider her line of work abhorrent or at all criminal, and she fails to recognize that the rest of society finds prostitutes immoral and ruined (and therefore unwelcome in religious and social forums).

Once "safely" back at the brothel, Bronia tells Raquel that she saw her cry during the performance. Raquel responds with great compassion and understanding of Reizel's actions to which Bronia exclaims that Reizel was a fool to turn down the doctor's proposal. Raquel explains that Reizel didn't know how to be a mother and that she had envisioned her own death. She then proceeds to recite a

line from the play with tremendous emotion and passion. Bronia recognizes Raquel's identification with Reizel and tries to convince her that Raquel's situation is far removed from Reizel's. Bronia also tells her to stop with her crazy ruminations because, after all, *this* is Raquel's reality, not the ridiculous fantasy of the play.

Back in the nightmarish reality of the brothel, Raquel is seen dressed up in a grossly provocative costume in which her breasts are exposed and painted red. The brothel is decorated for a masquerade party and the proprietors are in the midst of auctioning off their women. When it is Raquel's turn to be auctioned off, the auctioneer points out Raquel's irresistible beauty and womanliness and starts the bidding. Max and Kirstein compete with higher and higher bids for Raquel, and much to Kirstein's dismay, Max wins out with a bid of 9,000 pesos. Kirstein condescendingly congratulates Max and says that Raquel is undoubtedly worth her weight in gold. Max plays the part of a deceitful womanizer like Kirstein and Brutkiev by saying that he knows how to control women like Raquel. As Max and Raquel exit the brothel, Bronia meets them at the door. Bronia accuses Raquel of deceiving her all along. Unscathed by Bronia's words, Raquel insists that she knows what she is

doing and that Bronia had promised her that the money she earned at the brothel would one day pay for her freedom.

Months later, Kirstein enters the store where Raquel is working, just blocks from the brothel. Kirstein threatens Raquel, and Raquel replies by saying she will call the police. Relentless, Kirstein continues to harass Raquel, but she remains strong and unaffected by his words. When Kirstein threatens Raquel once again by saying that her debt to him hasn't been paid, Raquel responds with the following: "¡Perros hambrientos! Nos roen los huesos hasta que no queda rastro." Kirstein responds with even greater malice: "Entonces ven a comer de mi mano. Si no, te vas a arrepentir."<sup>173</sup> The insatiable greed and malevolence of Kirstein are once again revealed, but Raquel proves stronger and unyielding. She will not succumb to Kirstein's threats, nor will she give up her hard-earned freedom for any price.

The stalking of Raquel at her store does not cease, but becomes even more frequent. On one occasion, several "clients" from the brothel visit her store dressed up in horrific costumes. Korn, one of the infamous brothel owners, convinces Raquel that he wants to marry her and

---

<sup>173</sup> Glickman, *Raquel Lieberman*, 49.

protect her once and for all from this life of danger and death threats. Raquel succumbs to his pleadings and agrees to marry him. Following the sham of a wedding and the signing of the *ketubah*, the Jewish marriage contract, which seals Raquel's fate to Korn, she finds herself once again, locked into the world of debauchery of Bronia's brothel.

Upon their reunion, Raquel tells Bronia that she will never submit to her re-enslavement. She would rather go to the authorities to confess the truth about her sordid life, and brings to an end once and for all the illegal prostitution ring of the Zwi Migdal.

The scene quickly changes to the courtroom where Raquel is providing her testimony against the Zwi Migdal. She tells the inspector about the illegally orchestrated marriage performed between her and Korn in the false temple on Junín Street. Raquel repeats the question she posed in the first scene in which she presented her testimony to the inspector, and he, once again, assures her that her protection will be guaranteed if she testifies against the prostitution ring.

Raquel's confession is interrupted by a return to the present and the emotional dialogue between Raquel and her granddaughter. The granddaughter continues to express her resentment of her parents for never telling her the truth

about Raquel. Distraught, she asks Raquel about a picture she found while rummaging through her uncle's hidden belongings when the granddaughter made the connection between her grandmother's life and a documentary of a woman who bore tremendous resemblance to Raquel and who had been a victim of the Zwi Migdal. The photo is of Raquel's two children that were sent to her in order to alleviate the sadness caused by their separation. The granddaughter wants to know who wrote: "Querida Mamita: Aquí te enviamos una foto, para que no llores tanto. Muchos cariños de Móishele y Dovidl. Te recordamos siempre."<sup>174</sup> Raquel tells her that it was the woman to whom Raquel had entrusted the care of her beloved children while she worked in the brothel. As they gaze at the long lost faces in the photograph, one of whom is the granddaughter's father, both grandmother and granddaughter simultaneously yearn to fill an inescapable void. Raquel laments her decision to part with her children and motherhood and imagines one more time what it would have been like if she, too, were in that photograph as the overjoyed mother of two beautiful children. The unfortunate reality was that once her children reached adulthood, they alienated their mother from their lives out of fear that her past would come to haunt her grand-

---

<sup>174</sup> Glickman, *Raquel Lieberman*, 58.

children. Raquel's children never spoke of the mother's transgressions and, in order to avoid any possibility that the truth be revealed, they distanced themselves from Raquel, therefore exacerbating her pain and suffering.

The next scene sadly finds Raquel in a weakened state in a hospital bed awaiting her death. She questions whether God is punishing her again for her sordid past, just as her children did by treating her like a leper and exiling her from their lives. She bemoans the fact that her hospital bed and the pungent odor of chloroform penetrating the walls around her will be her final resting place. Suddenly overcome by the need to make a list, she tells herself she must compose this list before the drugs she has been administered start to take effect on her body. Raquel does not explain what type of list she wants to compose, and the absence of clarity contributes to the mystery surrounding her life. Although the granddaughter is finally able to know her grandmother and learn about her true past, the mysteries and voids that Raquel was never able to fill continue to be emblematic of her life and character.

At the moment when Raquel questions whether the "Angel of Death" has come for her, the lights center on the granddaughter who is sitting next to her grandmother in the hospital room. Contrary to the bitter words that Raquel just



assailed herself with, the granddaughter sings Raquel's praises and describes her as a true heroine. She extols her grandmother's single-handed dissolution of the Zwi Migdal by providing critical testimony of their scandalous dealings. She tells Raquel that she should feel triumphant, not destitute and self-loathing.

NIETA: Mi abuela era una heroína judía y yo ni siquiera sabía quién era! ¡Mira los titulares de los diarios con su denuncia a la Migdal! "El escándalo de la década, con más de cuatrocientos traficantes arrestados, y más de cien burdeles clausurados!" ¡Abuela, debiste sentirte triunfante!<sup>175</sup>

The granddaughter's elegy, not by mere coincidence, resembles the Biblical poem "A Woman of Valor." She chooses to exalt Raquel, much like the matriarchs Sarah and Rebecca were honored in the *Book of Proverbs* in the Hebrew Scriptures:

A woman of valor, who can find? Far beyond pearls is her value.

---

<sup>175</sup> Glickman, *Raquel Lieberman*, 59.

Her husband's heart trusts in her and he shall  
lack no fortune.

She repays his good, but never his harm, all  
the days of her life.

She seeks out wool and linen, and her hands  
work willingly,

She is like a merchant's ships; from afar she  
brings her sustenance.

She rises while it is still nighttime, and  
gives food to her household and a ration to her  
maids.

She considers a field and buys it; from the  
fruit of her handiwork she plants a vineyard.

She girds her loins with might and strengthens  
her arms.

She senses that her enterprise is good, so her  
lamp is not extinguished at night.

She puts her hand to the distaff, and her palms  
support the spindle.

She spreads out her palm to the poor and  
extends her hands to the destitute.

She fears not snow for her household, for her  
entire household is clothed with scarlet wool.

Bedspreads she makes herself; linen and purple

wool are her clothing.

Well-known at the gates is her husband as he sits with the elders of the land.

Garments she makes and sells, and she delivers a belt to the peddler.

Strength and splendor are her clothing, and smilingly she awaits her last day.

She opens her mouth with Wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.

She anticipates the needs of her household, and the bread of idleness, she does not eat.

Her children rise and celebrate her; and her husband, he praises her:

"Many daughters have attained valor, but you have surpassed them all."

False is grace, and vain is beauty; a God-fearing woman, she should be praised.

Give her the fruit of her hands, and she will be praised at the gates by her very own deeds.<sup>176</sup>

There is great irony in the comparison of Raquel's granddaughter's elegy to her grandmother and the *Woman of Valor* elegy in the *Book of Proverbs* because the virtues

---

<sup>176</sup> Book of Proverbs, 31:10-31.

extolled in the latter seem to be lacking in the life led by Raquel. In spite of Raquel's indiscretions, the granddaughter saw her grandmother's ability to escape her perilous life as proof of her valor and dignity.

Raquel, however, quickly dismisses her granddaughter's praises and focuses only on the exhaustion she feels after her life and the painstaking desire to be reunited with her children. In the end, Raquel believes that everything she struggled to achieve in her life was in vain.

RAQUEL: (Con los ojos cerrados) Me sentí cansada cansad y con miedo. Mi único deseo era tener a mis muchachos a mi lado; quería llevar una vida normal... Pero todo en vano...<sup>177</sup>

Raquel never achieved her dreams; she was never reunited with her children, nor did she ever truly escape her miserable and terrifying life in the house of the Zwi Migdal. All Raquel ever felt was profound regret, exhaustion, fear and disappointment with her life.

Refusing to listen her grandmother's further self-deprecation, she tells her that she is the archetype about whom poets have composed elegies for centuries. Her valiant efforts ultimately freed thousands of women from the

---

<sup>177</sup> Glickman, *Raquel Lieberman*, 59.

shackles of enslavement, essentially converting her into a modern day Joan of Arc:

NIETA: Tu vida no ha sido en vano. Deberías estar orgullosa, abuela. Poetas han compuesto elegías a la mujer que rescató a miles de mujeres de la esclavitud y que supo hacer de una derrota, una victoria." ¡Eres una nueva Juana de Arco!<sup>178</sup>

It seems as if the granddaughter's words are said in vain because Raquel is unable to see herself as a savior. All Raquel can perceive is the pain and shame she brought to her family. She sees herself not as a heroine, but as a whore. However, despite Raquel's refusal to see herself and her achievements through her granddaughter's eyes, the granddaughter remains steadfast in her efforts to show Raquel that her children never did stop loving or respecting her.

NIETA: Durante todos los años que papá no habló de tí, conservó tu retrato encima del hogar. Y al cumplir los cincuenta y siete años, escribió estas palabras al dorso de tu retrato: "A la más

---

<sup>178</sup> Glickman, *Raquel Lieberman*, 59.

sublime y venerada figura en esta tierra: La Madre. Con amor, David."<sup>179</sup>

The audience never has the opportunity to witness Raquel's reaction to the long-awaited words that her granddaughter utters, which further contributes to the mystery surrounding Raquel's character. One can only imagine that she would have broken down in tears upon hearing that her son always kept her close to his heart, in spite of the fact that he insisted on keeping his mother a secret. According to the inscription written adjacent to Raquel's portrait, her son David shared his daughter's belief that Raquel was indeed a venerable matriarch for the ages. After all those years, it was the portrait of Raquel that symbolized and embodied the courage, strength and honor that Raquel had demonstrated throughout her lifetime. The woman herself never recognized her honorific qualities and efforts, yet the portrait told the true story of her life. Unlike the portrait of Dorian Gray in the novel by the same name by Oscar Wilde, whose face revealed the true evil and sickness of the protagonist, Raquel's portrait reveals her true valor and beauty that her physical being never allowed her to show.

---

<sup>179</sup> Glickman, *Raquel Lieberman*, 60.

In the tradition of centuries of elegizing poets, Raquel's granddaughter recites a poem that immortalizes her grandmother and elevates her to the level of sainthood:

Toma la blancura del jazmín,  
 la del agua cristalina  
 y verás  
 Cómo la sublime milonga cobra vida.  
 Una milonga para una heroína,  
 una milonga para Raquel,  
 que tuvo el coraje, sola,  
 de hacer frente a la Migdal.<sup>180</sup>

If Raquel had heard that poem before dying, she probably would have rejected it as an overly romanticized and fictitious portrayal of her life. She never saw herself as a heroine of anyone or anything. All she saw was that she made a life-altering sacrifice to fulfill a dream that she never realized. In reality, the sacrifices Raquel made in her life and the never-ending psychological and emotional battle she waged were very much in keeping with the traditional subjects of elegies and epic poetry. Raquel joins the innumerable women of valor before her who never tasted the freedom and justice that she stoically

---

<sup>180</sup> Glickman, *Raquel Lieberman*, 60.

ensured for others. One would almost expect to hear the granddaughter reciting the biblical "Woman of Valor"; however, she chose an elegy that spoke directly to Raquel's struggles. "Woman of Valor" was a poem composed by King Solomon in the *Book of Proverbs*, in which he extolled the virtues of the ideal Jewish woman. Raquel would argue that she is hardly deserving of such an elegy, since the "Woman of Valor" praises a woman who is whole and exhibits exemplary femininity, but there is great irony in the comparison between King Solomon's ideal woman and the suffering which Raquel endured in order to be exonerated from her guilt.

Similar to *Un día en Nueva York* and *Liturgias*, *Una tal Raquel Lieberman* is a play within in a play. In fact, there are multiple performances in the play: Raquel's testimony to the inspector; the charade she plays at the brothel in order to plan her escape and be reunited with her family; and the play she and Bronia attend at the theatre in which her own life is reflected in the dialogue. Raquel's character remains consistent in all of the episodes presented in the play. The only significant inconsistency or contradiction is how Raquel is perceived and how she perceives herself. To her granddaughter and her son, a fact that is discovered too late, and to the Jewish community of Buenos Aires, she is a valiant and revered



woman. Raquel, on the other hand, saw herself as a failed mother and an indecent woman. In the end, neither perspective was able to influence the other, and Raquel's life became a historic tragedy.

*Una tal Raquel Lieberman* is also a groundbreaking contribution to Latina writing. Instead of addressing the traditional struggles of assimilation and integration in the United States, Glickman chose to highlight the plight of an immigrant woman living in Argentina. Although the struggle to survive and rise above the oppression and exploitation of immigrants is a shared element in traditional Latina writing, the location and the victim distinguish the play from other works in the same genre. The fleshing out of a Jewish character, instead of a more commonly seen Catholic and/or indigenous woman from Latin America, places *Una tal Raquel Lieberman* in a category of its own. Although the play can still be considered a Latina piece, its content carves out a new niche within the corpus of Latina writing and further solidifies her creation of a new literary landscape.

With regard to the play's Jewish content, it can be seen as another noteworthy volume in the corpus of Jewish writing in Latin America. Glickman introduces to her Jewish and non-Jewish audiences to a version of Argentine history

that remains relatively unknown to the public. She is, therefore, not just producing a Jewish play, but a creative and somewhat fictionalized chapter in Argentine history.

Given the multifaceted nature of *Una tal Raquel Lieberman* with its Jewish, Latina, historical, imaginative and groundbreaking elements, the play is undeniably another formative example of Glickman's post-exilic discourse. As Flora Schiminovich observed:

In her works, Glickman creates a mixture of several cultures and identities. She translates her experience as a Latin American Jewish woman into a personal and distinctive mode of expression. She combines in her writings different attitudes and feelings mixed with her own spaces and desires, overflowing with hidden mysteries.<sup>181</sup>

Schiminovich's description of Glickman's writing in general certainly speaks directly to *Una tal Raquel Lieberman*, as well as the other plays discussed in this study. The mysteries Schiminovich speaks of are clearly mirrored in Raquel's hidden past, the seemingly inexplicable Jewish practices of Blanca Días in *Liturgias*, the

---

<sup>181</sup> Flora Schiminovich, "Nora Glickman," *Jewish Writers of Latin America: A Dictionary*, Ed. Darrell Lockhart (New York: Garland Publishing, 1997) 221.

fragmented past and present of Golda in *Un día en Nueva York*, and the uncertainties surrounding Alicia and Magda and their future as entrepreneurial women.

In terms of the infusion of her own personal experiences and desires into her plays, Glickman's life is unmistakably reflected in her fictitious characters. Her struggles to assimilate and integrate into North American and New York society in particular are clearly reflected in Alicia's character in *Noticias de suburbio*, and Luisa in *Un día en Nueva York*. The difficulties of being Latina and Jewish in the United States are reflected in the character of Blanca Díaz-Rael, as well as her husband Luis.

The theatrical pieces addressed in this study speak to Glickman's creativity, diverse writing style, and multifaceted identity. Her characters are as complex, mysterious, and multifaceted as she is and, together, they transform their post-exilic discourse into an ongoing public and private dialogue with the writers themselves and their readers, and an imaginary literary homeland.

### ***Tradition and Innovation***

In addition to her works of fiction, Glickman is a translator and literary critic. *Tradition and Innovation*, an anthology of Latin American Jewish writers edited by

Nora Glickman and Robert DiAntonio, is a noteworthy example of Glickman's desire to uncover and expose the multifaceted nature of the Jewish experiences and identities in contemporary Latin America, as well as her faithful translations of the writers in the collection. The introduction alone is revealing of the editors' desire to carve out a new space for Jewish writers of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

The anthology analyzes the work of seventeen Latin American Jewish writers and the role that Judaism has played in their lives and in their writing. As Glickman wrote, "My purpose in asking these questions was to gain insight into the authors' views of the world."<sup>182</sup> In response to her question, she gained the following insight: "The answers I received are as diverse and individualistic as the authors themselves; and yet, beyond their particular styles, there are some common ideas and themes that give coherence and unity to their responses."<sup>183</sup>

Glickman undeniably shares the commonalities that she discovered in her interviews with the seventeen writers, as

---

<sup>182</sup> Nora Glickman and Robert DiAntonio, eds., *Tradition and Innovation: Reflections on Latin American Jewish Writing* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993) 9.

<sup>183</sup> Glickman and DiAntonio, 9.

she is a transculturated Latin American Jewish woman writer who has traversed many continents, spoken multiple tongues, and adapted to numerous cultures. The following description of the seventeen writers certainly accounts for Glickman's writing and identity:

All these writers share a tradition of multiple exiles and migrations, and are all fully acculturated in the countries where they live. Thus, many of them have double or even multiple identifications, which might extend to being a Latin American, a Jew, a woman, a fighter against oppression, and so forth.<sup>184</sup>

It is interesting that Glickman employs the term "acculturated" to describe the writers' success in adapting to their new countries of residence. It would seem more appropriate to say that these writers are "transculturated," however; being acculturated suggests that these writers are still acutely aware of their exilic existence and struggles to negotiate their identities and how they accept the terms of the majority culture.

Glickman highlights Manuela Fingueret and Ariel Dorfman's concepts of exile, homeland, and a static identity as

---

<sup>184</sup> Glickman and DiAntonio, 9.

emblematic of the perpetual push to re-negotiate and establish one's identity in a new geographic and cultural space.

Manuela Fingueret, an Argentine writer, speaks of a movement of oscillation -- like a pendulum -- between the ties to an ancestral past and an attachment to the local lifestyles of her native country. And Ariel Dorfman expresses the desire for a homeland and for a sense of belonging: he observed that the experience of uprootedness from one's native land, coupled with the subsequent return to one's country, may result in the fear of not fitting in anywhere anymore. All of these writers have an awareness of sharing in the unique experience of living on the fringes of history, alienated and alone.<sup>185</sup>

The profound sense of loss, dislocation, and instability expressed by Fingueret and Dorfman are undoubtedly shared and expressed by Glickman in her semi-fictional works. Dorfman's experience of leaving his native Chile for the United States and then returning years later demonstrated that a true return to his homeland was impossible. Once an exile, he would never be able to consider himself a

---

<sup>185</sup> Glickman and DiAntonio, 10.

legitimate Chilean, as he finds himself forever caught between two languages, countries and cultures. Glickman points out that writers who reside outside of their native countries suffer from even greater cultural displacement, especially if they move to a country which has a different language.<sup>186</sup> Far removed from their parents' native homelands in Eastern Europe and the Iberian Peninsula, they add yet another element to their diasporic consciousness, which renders their exilic identity even more profound. Glickman is clearly one of those writers whose "cultural estrangement is sharpened" because she resides outside her native country, and work in a foreign tongue, as well.

In spite of the challenges of straddling multiple geographic spaces, cultures and languages, Glickman finds that these seventeen writers, among so many others, have succeeded in establishing a new space where they can celebrate their diversity as writers and individuals. "...[T]hey have created a space between different worlds, the Latin American and the Jewish, the Indian and the Biblical, the secular and the religious, the rational and the mystical. That space is the realm of the writers and his or her

---

<sup>186</sup> Glickman and DiAntonio, 10.

imagination."<sup>187</sup> That imaginative and imaginary space is, essentially, the literary homeland that Glickman, Behar and Glantz have deliberately constructed.

It can be said that Glickman's efforts to erect a literary homeland of her own are furthered by the introduction and promotion of fellow Latin American Jewish writers to a broader audience. She emphasizes the contributions and experiences of Latin American Jewish women writers, and the special addition of the Jewish element to their hybridity. As Jews, they are already outsiders in a predominantly Catholic world, and, as women, they are in direct opposition to the patriarchal hegemony that does not account for their participation and contributions to society. In her examination of Margo Glantz, Sabina Berman and Angelina Muñiz-Huberman, she observes the following:

The duality of living within two groups simultaneously, as women in a dominantly male Jewish literary tradition, and as Jews in a dominantly Latin American Catholic culture, is an inherent trait they all share. They insist on belonging to two worlds, but ideally, what they strive for is an intangible, liminal space, for between both worlds lies the wonderful space of the writer, a

---

<sup>187</sup> Glickman and DiAntonio, 10.



space overflowing with mysteries, waiting to be discovered.<sup>188</sup>

It is noteworthy that Glickman does not include herself in her assessment of these three writers. Perhaps standing outside of this intimate circle, to which she so clearly belongs, enables her to fortuitously appreciate, celebrate and expose the efforts of her fellow women writers to erect a literary homeland and become true citizens of the page. It also affords her a certain degree of objectivity in remaining outside of their intimate circle.

Glickman expands upon her analysis of the writers by closely examining each one individually. In her analysis of Glantz, Glickman demonstrates how religion, and its absence, has impacted her writing:

Some of the writers attest that, while they lacked a formal Jewish education -- or, as in the case of Margo Glantz, the Judaism of their childhoods was of a folkloric nature, sensually alive in ritual and practice, yet detached from written theology and history - still they find in their adult lives they still have adopted a

---

<sup>188</sup> Glickman and DiAntonio, 11.

Jewish consciousness that is present in their texts.<sup>189</sup>

Glantz's exposure to various religious practices and beliefs, as demonstrated in the first chapter, resulted in a comical and folkloric amalgam that has traces of Jewish, Catholic, and indigenous religions.

In addition to examining the role that religion directly played on the seventeen writers, Glickman investigates the impact that politics and history had upon the writers' consciousness and composition. She takes as an example of how political oppression and persecution impact the writers Ricardo Halac, for his writing embodies that suffering.

And Argentine dramatist Ricardo Halac draws his lessons from his own experience of persecution and intolerance and links it, in his plays, to that of the Jewish past - the Spanish Inquisition and the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492.<sup>190</sup>

Halac's re-enactment of Inquisitorial burnings and torturous acts mirrors Glickman's incorporation of the Mexican

---

<sup>189</sup> Glickman and DiAntonio, 11.

<sup>190</sup> Glickman and DiAntonio, 11-12.

Inquisition, as well as the Holocaust, into her theatrical pieces.

Although Glickman does not include herself in the historical representations of the Mexican Inquisition and the Holocaust, she does become a subject in the anthology in Murray Baumgarten's "Urban Life and Jewish Memory in the Tales of Moacyr Scliar and Nora Glickman." Glickman, although she does not include herself in the introduction of the anthology, becomes an appropriate subject in the analysis of Latin American Jewish writers. Murray Baumgarten begins his essay by quoting Ariel Dorfman, and appropriately relating the quote to Glickman and Scliar:

In a recent interview, Ariel Dorfman comments on the effects of bilingualism on his writing: "For a time... this really worried me, that I had these two languages. When you're in exile, you constantly examine your own actions for signs of betrayal, of forgetting where you came from." But as time went by, "I started just enjoying the dialogue between the two languages." Central to the work of many Latin American writers, this contested dialogue of languages and cultures is

encoded in the tales of Moacyr Scliar and Nora Glickman with exemplary force.<sup>191</sup>

Glickman's knowledge of and exposure to the culturally rich languages of Yiddish, Spanish and English further compounded her sense of "Otherness" and propelled her to address her cultural and linguistic plurality in the form of theatrical and semi-fictional writing. Baumgarten recognizes Scliar and Glickman's interweaving of historical facts and events with fictional characters, which ultimately produces a new interpretation of Jewish life in the Southern Cone:

Their fiction reframes the situation, encoding it as the interpenetration and multiple crossings of many linguistic and cultural systems. Their choreographic fictions represents the cultural diversity of South America, of Jewish exile and the possibility of secular citizenship.<sup>192</sup>

Scliar and Glickman's fictions not only speak to the cultural diversity of South America, but, more specifically,

---

<sup>191</sup> Murray Baumgarten, "Urban Life and Jewish Memory in the Tales of Moacyr Scliar and Nora Glickman," *Tradition and Innovation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987) 61.

<sup>192</sup> Baumgarten, 62.

to the cultural and religious juxtapositions that define their own environments and identities.

Baumgarten continues with an examination of the role citizenship and repatriation have played in the lives of Glickman and Scliar, as well as the impact their nationality has had on their writing:

In a world where citizenship is tenuous and differences of any kind can be life-threatening, the return of repressed Jewish memories overwhelms these characters. In this universe of discourse, political responses reveal themselves as linguistic phenomena – as an awareness of the demands of two and three languages and cultural codes akin to (but even more complicated than) Dorfman's willingness to put his bilingualism into play. Like Kafka's, they are tales that are apparently allegorical yet the keys to unlock their meanings are missing.<sup>193</sup>

The notion that being an outsider potentially entails life-threatening confrontations is evident in all of the plays discussed in this study. Blanca Días' nightmares of being burned at the stake in an *auto da fe* in *Liturgias*

---

<sup>193</sup> Baumgarten, 62.

were the reality of thousands of Jews persecuted by the Spanish and Mexican Inquisitions. Magda's abduction and battering in *Noticias del suburbio* are demonstrative of the perils that await immigrants who are vulnerable to such abuse. Both Luisa and Golda in *Un día en Nueva York* have fallen prey to the common feeling of dislocation and cultural and linguistic loss in a foreign country. The inescapable terrors of the Holocaust that continue to haunt Golda also invade her consciousness and prevent her from ever feeling safe and secure in her new country of residence. Raquel meets with an unfortunate and dangerous fate as a slave to a prostitution ring and is forever tainted by her sordid past. No ablution could ever wash away the psychological scars that her secret life left upon her.

Glickman withholds the keys to the mysteries of her female characters and to her own life. Although she reveals some critical background on her characters, Glickman leaves the audience perplexed. Did the eulogizing words of her granddaughter penetrate Raquel's conscience and help her to realize finally that her family saw her as a savior and matriarch for the ages? Was Golda merely an apparition that appeared to Luisa as a reminder her of her cultural and linguistic loss and an amalgam of Jewish tradition and history? And if Golda was indeed of flesh and blood, did

she have a home and an identity like the one Luisa was so desperate to acquire? Would the friendship and partnership between Magda and Alicia endure and ultimately empower them as women and entrepreneurs? Would Alicia choose to reconnect with the Argentine traditions that she had left behind and speak her native language like she once did? Would her Latina identity continue to lay dormant or would she embrace all aspects of her identity: Latina, New Yorker, suburbanite, mother, and professional woman? Would Blanca truly pursue her Jewish heritage and embrace her new identity or would she return to her life as an impure Catholic? Would Luis ever return to Blanca and embrace his Jewish ancestry and identity or would he succumb to the push to be like everyone else and escape further torment for being Latino *and* Jewish? All of these questions remain answered, however, just as Glickman imaginatively conceived of her characters and infused them with her own experiences and struggles, it is the audience who must creatively flesh out the characters and unlock the keys to the mysteries of their identities.

The audience does not abandon its quest for clarity and information, just as Glickman's characters do not give up on breaking the code to their sublimated cultural, linguistic, and religious identities. Although multiple

languages, cultures, countries and religions, surround Glickman's characters, none offers a community that embraces or accounts for their diversity. Baumgarten observed the cultural and linguistic isolation Scliar's and Glickman's characters endured in the following statement:

The Jewish protagonists of Glickman's and Scliar's worlds function as simultaneous translators; however, theirs is not the only cultural struggle of the Hispanic or Lusitanian worlds, but of the ancient Jewish and Christian, medieval and modern, Middle-Eastern and Western confrontations. In this multi-layered encounter none of the antagonists -- neither Jewish memory, big-brother bureaucracy, Catholic habits, Israeli life and the claims of Zionism, nor Latin experience -- can deploy a hegemonic discourse to marshal these varied sources into a hierarchical order without unacceptable racial distortion and reduction.<sup>194</sup>

Glickman's characters, according to Baumgarten, function as translators and as translated individuals. As translators, they convey their diverse and tumultuous

---

<sup>194</sup> Baumgarten, 63.



experiences as Jews in Latin America at the mercy of a corrupt and dangerous society that seeks to exploit recent immigrants. They also convey the difficulties of being an immigrant in the United States, without limiting those experiences to just those of Jews. Her characters are also mistranslated victims of the haphazard hegemonic order because, as immigrants and as women, they are converted into automatic outsiders, foreigners and inferiors. In the case of Raquel, she was vilified for her forced life of debauchery, and, in the case of Magda, she was brutalized for no reason other than for being a naïve and trusting immigrant.

Although Glickman's characters demonstrate the perils of being a female immigrant in the United States and Latin America, they do not just transmit messages of doom and irreversible loss. As Baumgarten optimistically observed, Glickman creates a "*puesto vacante*," an open space where cultures, languages and diverse peoples intersect and negotiate new identities and territories. It is that imaginary space where Glickman discovers her own identity and enlivens a new genre that responds to the need for a form of literary expression that is infused with cultural and linguistic plurality.

In the absence of such an ordering discourse, the reader discovers in Nora Glickman's powerful phrase the *puesto vacante* - the open place within which these worlds collide. A magical space, it is composed of a palimpsest of cultural scenarios. This overlay of scenes creates the effect of a jumbled group of snapshots awaiting their ordering into a family album. Similarly, the interpenetration of languages produces interference that multiplies rather than reduces possibilities. Rather than patriarchal hegemony, we enter the realm staked out by Phillip Roth in *The Counterlife*: "The burden isn't either/or, consciously choosing from the possibilities equally difficult and regrettable -- it's and/and/and/and as well. Life is and: the accidental and the immutable, the elusive and the graspable, the bizarre and the predictable, the actual and the potential, all the multiplying realities, entangled, overlapping, colliding, conjoined - plus the multiplying illusions! This times this times this..." This pluralistic view of American and Jewish possibility, an open-minded and rich limbo of potentialities, affirms the power of the

imagination and celebrates the multiple possibilities of life rather than its singular certainties.<sup>195</sup>

There are several observations that Baumgarten makes that are worth noting. The *puesto vacante* that Glickman has carved out becomes the space where memories, fragments, photographs and intimate histories are organized and melded together to produce unique and imaginative characters and performances. The family album that Baumgarten speaks of is not characteristic of a traditional collection of family mementos and anecdotal tales like Glantz's *Las genealogías* or Behar's *The Vulnerable Observer*. Glickman's *puesto vacante* gives rise to theatrical performances in which the writer's life, complexities and experiences are enlivened by fictional characters. The characters often replay events in Glickman's own life, as well as animate common terrors, struggles and crises of fellow immigrants and women. Her writing is far from traditional; it is a collective family album of immigrant experiences and discoveries.

The final pertinent observation that Baumgarten makes is that the public and private spheres converge in Glickman's writing. Glickman unquestionably reveals her personal struggles as a Latina living in New York and contending

---

<sup>195</sup> Baumgarten, 63-64.

with the desire to be a cosmopolitan New Yorker while simultaneously feeling like a foreigner and a dislocated Latin American. She enters into the public sphere by exposing herself in the form of theatrical performance. In addition to exposing her own experiences and crises of identity, she reveals the common feelings of paranoia of being persecuted or alienated for being Jewish, Latina, an immigrant, and female. Those fears are conveyed by Blanca Días and the re-enactment of the Mexican Inquisition, Golda and her fears that another Holocaust will attempt to annihilate the Jews, Alicia and her fears of being too assimilated and too feminine to reclaim her cultural and professional identities, and Raquel's fear of never overcoming her psychological and physical bondage. All of this personal angst is joined together and presented to the public in the form of semi-autobiographical historical fictions and compelling theatrical performances.

The four plays analyzed in this study are strikingly emblematic of Glickman's versatility, creativity, imagination and hybridity. She weaves history and fiction together in order to compose critical performance pieces that introduce the little known identity struggles and challenges to Jews and Latina/s residing in the United States and Latin America.

### Chapter 3

#### Ruth Behar: The *Juban* Configuration

Ruth Behar's writing is exemplary of the labyrinthine search for self that often occurs within the framework of the Jewish-Latino identity. As an immigrant from Cuba to the United States at the age of five, she followed closely in the footsteps of her ancestors who became members of the growing Jewish Diaspora. Behar and her parents left the island for New York in 1961 when she was five years old to escape Castro's regime and join family members who had emigrated years before. Her father's Sephardic background and her mother's Ashkenazi ancestry provided a diverse cultural backdrop in Behar's childhood; however, that diversity was insignificant compared to what she would later encounter and experience as a multicultural, multilingual and multifaceted Jewish-Cuban-American. Her experience straddling multiple cultural, national and religious fault lines caused her to feel dislocated from her native homeland of Cuba, her Jewish religion and culture, and other Latina women she encountered in the United States. Her writing is emblematic of the Diasporic consciousness, the

search for identity, and a desire to construct a space in which she can be Jewish, Latina, Cuban and American all at once without having to negate any critical aspect of her being.

Behar's intentions in exploring and resolving her identity conflicts are multifaceted. The predicament she finds herself in, because of her identification with so many cultural, ethnic and religious groups, propels her to establish a literary space where she can experience all the various aspects of herself without being forced to sublimate one affinity for another. She rejects the notion that she cannot be a true Jew, Cubana, Latina, and American because she is a hybrid. As expressed in her earlier works, Behar struggled for many years with the belief that she was a fraud -- an illegitimate Jew, false Cubana, fake Latina, feminist poseur and American imposter -- who could not fully identify with or be accepted by any of those communities because of her failure to align herself with or commit herself to only one of these groups on an exclusive basis -- or because she was in fact rejected by one or another of these somewhat closed-door communities, that did not want to accept someone of mixed heritage as a member.

The need to create a space in which all components of her hybridity could be expressed and celebrated is satis-

fied in the creation of the literary homeland that Behar has constructed. This literary homeland not only fulfills Behar's own personal needs; it is also valued by many cultural anthropologists who recognize the demand for an interdisciplinary genre that encompasses personal testimony, collective memory and identity, historical facts, ethnography and unrestricted literary and academic creativity.<sup>196</sup>

There are various works written, edited and directed by Behar that speak to her search for self and a space in which she can enliven all of her disunited connections to Judaism, Cuba, Latina women, and the United States. Her most striking anthropological work, *The Vulnerable Observer*, responds directly to her internal struggle to reconnect with her past, confront painful childhood memories, and find a way to return to the Cuba of her childhood. The text, resplendent with fictionalized memories and family histories, provides an imaginary space that Behar can call home. The pages of *The Vulnerable Observer* serve as Behar's sacred ground on which she reconstructs a fragmented past and recovers her homeland and identity.

---

<sup>196</sup>James Clifford, in *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), expressed a need for an unrestrictive genre and field of anthropology that would allow the writer to combine history, narrative, sociology, and anthropology into an accepted form of literary expression within academia.

In addition to establishing a link to Cuba, which she accomplished in *Bridges to Cuba/Puentes a Cuba*, Behar responds to the growing need expressed by anthropologists, as well as theorists from various disciplines, to establish a genre that is multidisciplinary and accommodating. This need was expressed by a cultural anthropologist, Clifford Geertz, and echoed by Behar, in the following statement. "Even Geertz recognizes that there is a problem: 'We lack the language to articulate what takes place when we are in fact at work. There seems to be a genre missing.'...Consider this book a quest for that genre."<sup>197</sup> It is Behar herself who proclaims her quest for a genre that incorporates multiple voices, writing styles and forms of expression and it is she who fulfills that goal by composing *The Vulnerable Observer*, *Bridges to Cuba/Puentes a Cuba*, *Women Writing Culture*, "Juban América," and her most recent direction of the autobiographical documentary "Adio Kerida."

***The Vulnerable Observer:***

*The Vulnerable Observer* recounts Behar's childhood in Cuba and the tremendous nostalgia she has felt for her homeland since she immigrated to the United States with her

---

<sup>197</sup> Behar, *Observer*, 9.



parents. The stories span several years of her life and illustrate the struggles she endured at various junctures. Much like the childhood stories that Glantz captured in *Las genealogías*, the voice of Behar as a young child echoes throughout the text. It is an anecdotal timeline that strings together fragmented and often painful memories, family traditions, rituals, and histories. Along with her personal and professional work as a cultural anthropologist, this text is reflective of her desire to combine self-ethnography, collective history, and personal testimony to carve out a new niche in anthropological expression and establish an interdisciplinary genre.

...I began to understand that I had been drawn to anthropology because I had grown up within three cultures -- Jewish (both Ashkenazi and Sephardic), Cuban, and American -- and I needed to better connect my own profound sense of displacement with the professional rituals of displacement that are at the heart of anthropology.<sup>198</sup>

In traditional anthropological writing, the anthropologist and ethnographer present an objective perspective on the lives of its subjects. The ethnographer does not

---

<sup>198</sup> Behar, *Observer*, 21.

infuse his or her writing with personal experiences or emotion; Behar, however, chooses to enliven the debate within anthropology over whether or not to identify, personalize, and become involved in the struggle, or to remain removed and detached from the subject's predicament. Behar clearly chooses to be a "Vulnerable Observer" who invests herself in the lives of her subjects, thus dismantling the age-old "us and them" approach to anthropology.

In terms of Behar's own life, acting as a self-ethnographer is clearly an effective means to excavate her past and recover her identity. Behar's techniques allow her to analyze and embrace her past in order to establish an internal dwelling place:

The tunnel I grew lost in was the tunnel leading back to Cuba. I took a long detour, via Spain and Mexico, to get back to this place where my childhood got left behind. And now I despair that for me Cuba will become just another anthropological field site. But it may have to be that or nothing. The dilemma of going home, the place that anthropologists are always leaving rather than going to, is the subject of "Going to Cuba." Nowhere I am more vulnerable than in Cuba and

among Cubans as I search for a way to become a bridge between the island and the diaspora.<sup>199</sup>

Behar speaks at length in *The Vulnerable Observer* of her inability and the refusal to break ties with her native Cuba. She feels a constant need to return there and recover her childhood and her lost identity. The promise of return for Behar is all-consuming and the hope that she can salvage lost memories and reclaim her identity compel her to keep going back.

In spite of the fact that she can physically return to her homeland, today's Cuba is not at all reflective of Behar's memories and childhood. The ability to return to a physical space neither translates into the return of identity, nor the recuperation of a true homeland:

In the case of Cuba, all this is complicated by the fact that return trips -- for me and all second-generation Cuban-Americans -- are always about recovering our abandoned childhoods. My family left Cuba when I was almost five and I return to Cuba in search of memories I never find. As Carmelita Tropicana puts it in *Milk of Amnesia*, her comic performance piece: 'I am like a tourist in my own country. Everything is new.

---

<sup>199</sup> Behar, *Observer*, 24.

I walk everywhere hoping I will recall something/Anything. I have this urge to recognize and be recognized. To fling my arms around one of those ceiba trees and say I remember you... I want a crack in the sidewalk to open up and say, yes, I saw you when you jumped over in your patent leather shoes holding onto your grandfather's index finger. But it doesn't happen. There is no recognition from either the tree or the sidewalk.<sup>200</sup>

The inability to fully recover her past and return to what she considers her homeland intensifies her feeling of being in exile. The trips back to Cuba compound the feelings of loss and dislocation because of the sense of estrangement Behar feels towards her lost homeland. She states in *The Vulnerable Observer* that the sense of exile she and so many others who fled the island to escape the oppressive society Castro had created is incurable because a physical return only serves to compound one's exilic identity:

But, of course, it's not leaving that puts the term 'immigrant' at issue; it is return, the obstacles to return. Indeed, as long as leaving means a one-way ticket, as long as being able to

---

<sup>200</sup> Behar, *Observer*, 141.

travel freely to and from Cuba continues to be impossible, as long as leaving remains the only way of voicing dissent against the political, economic, and ideological crisis in Cuba. I think we have no choice but to admit that Cubans outside Cuba do live in a kind of exile, a state of existential limbo, a continual waiting for Godot. And, though often forgotten, so too do those Cubans living inside Cuba, their *insilio* mirroring our *exilio*.<sup>201</sup>

The state of existential limbo that Behar speaks of is not necessarily existential because there is a constant acute pain and longing associated with the sense of being in perpetual exile. Perhaps the comparison with Godot speaks to the absurd element in constantly being locked into a state of exile and being unrelenting in one's desire to return "home."

The bond that Behar covets with her native Cuba is clearly imaginary because it is reflective of an inaccessible time and space that no longer exist. She synthesizes the notion of longing for the Cuba of her childhood and feeling disconnected not only from the island, but from her body as well. At the age of eight,

---

<sup>201</sup> Behar, *Observer*, 144.

Behar and her immediate family were in a terrible car accident which left her legs badly fractured, as well as injuring much of her lower body. For nine months she was confined to a body cast that made her feel disconnected and exiled from her own body. Once the cast was removed, she was placed in a less restrictive one that also greatly limited her mobility. This traumatic experience not only scarred her childhood, it had major repercussions on her adult psyche as well:

The girl in the cast lives within the woman who won't move, can't move; the woman who has been stopped in her tracks, the woman who will not make up her mind as to how to place herself in relation to the lost homeland, the Cuba that is part memory, part forgetting, part longing. It is a homeland she doesn't know if she ever has the right to claim it as her own. It is a homeland so imaginary that she will only accept as evidence that it exists when her body forces her to stop, listen, and look.<sup>202</sup>

Her physical dislocation made Behar acutely aware of the Jewish history of losing one's homeland and the

---

<sup>202</sup> Behar, *Observer*, 135.

perpetual struggle to recover it. Perhaps the tragic accident propelled her towards the exploration of her ethnic background and her exilic condition:

Like other children taken into exile in the United States after the Cuban revolution, I had grown up internalizing the Cold War between the United States and Cuba. I had absorbed both the Cuban immigrant paranoia about Cuba as a dangerous place, best left behind forever, and the United States ideology about Cuba as an enemy and a threat. There was also another issue for me, as a Cuban Jew. I kept asking myself what exactly I hoped to find in Cuba. After all, the members of my family were immigrants in Cuba, too. My grandparents, Jews from Byelorussia, Poland, and Turkey, had immigrated to Cuba in the 1920s, after the United States set sharp limits on Jewish immigration. All of my homelands, it seemed, were lost.<sup>203</sup>

Not only did Behar become inescapably aware of the separation from her native homeland, she recognized the politicized dilemma of living in the United States while

---

<sup>203</sup> Behar, *Observer*, 121.

maintaining strong ties to Cuba. The sense of loss was heightened because the anti-Castro and anti-Cuban sentiment in the United States during the Cold War, and now, seemed to ensure that returning to the island was impossible.

In spite of the pervasive sense of loss that Behar continues to feel due to her separation from her native Cuba, she refuses to let go of the possibility of return. Her numerous trips back to the island do not alleviate the sense of dislocation and estrangement, however, her writing, combined with her visits, seem to revitalize her quest for a true homeland. The connections she makes in her writing between the physical space and the memories she covets become the tools with which the literary homeland is erected.

To let go of Cuba is to let go of Cuba's dreams -- huge, immense, gigantic dreams, in which we have wanted, desperately, to take part. Our reluctant awakening - amid the leaky rafts of the *balseros*, the prostitutes of the Malecón, and the crumbling buildings of Old Havana -- has been fitful, painful, and unspeakably sad.<sup>204</sup>

---

<sup>204</sup> Behar, *Observer*, 150-151.



The physical ruins of the buildings in Havana are symbolic of the fragments of history, memory and identity that Behar untiringly tries to rescue from oblivion. There seems to be no other way to reverse that decay except for the act of writing, which ultimately preserves the Jewish Cuban identity and breathes life back into a country that has been imperiled by political and cultural oppression.

Behar cites Salman Rushdie in the following passage and notes his recognition of the power of the written word and one's imagination in the quest for recovering the past:

As the Indian-English novelist Salman Rushdie has written, it is impossible for emigrants to recover the homelands they left behind. The best they can do is 'to create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homeland.' It seems to me that the notion of an imaginary homeland is very helpful for thinking about childhood. Aren't all of our childhoods imaginary homelands? Aren't they fictions about places left behind? Homelands from which we have become exiled in the process of growing up and becoming adults?<sup>205</sup>

---

<sup>205</sup> Behar, *Observer*, 134.

As an antidote to that profound sense of loss of her homelands, Behar responds with a literary creation that rescues her and her fellow Cubans who no longer inhabit the island. As she poignantly stated in Marjorie Agosín's *Passion, Memory and Identity: Twentieth Century Latin American Jewish Women Writers*: "For us, the passion of writing seems clearly linked to a deep need to make shattered lives whole, to make connections of ruptures."<sup>206</sup>

Just as writing creates a constant dialogic space, the body of the writer becomes an essential part of the homeland. It is the writer, equipped with memories, nostalgia, imagination and the desire to flesh all of these elements out in the form of written expression, who gives life to her literary homeland and it is within her and her texts that the homeland is born.

Here I assert that the body is a homeland -- a place where knowledge, memory, and pain is stored by the child... She finds that the path back leads to an imaginary homeland -- that space on the frontier of consciousness where, as James Olney puts it, words fail, but meanings still exist;

---

<sup>206</sup> Marjorie Agosin, ed. *Passion, Memory and Identity: Twentieth Century Latin American Jewish Women Writers* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999) xxxix.

where meanings -- unspoken, inchoate raw, and throbbing with life - wait to be found, to be given voice.<sup>207</sup>

Because of the type of homeland that Behar is compelled to establish, she seeks out theoretical confirmation that will further validate her literary construction. Because she has felt so inadequate as a Jew, Latina, Cubana, and American for failing to be any one of those exclusively, she creates a theoretical base with which she can prove that physical spaces are not required for a homeland to exist. She employs Daniel and Jonathan Boyarin's concept of Diaspora and homeland in the following passage:

Diaspora, they (Daniel and Jonathan Boyarin) conclude, may well be Judaism's most important contribution to the world, showing 'that peoples and lands are not naturally and organically connected... [that] a people [can] maintain its distinctive culture, its difference, without controlling land.'<sup>208</sup>

---

<sup>207</sup> Behar, *Observer*, 134-135.

<sup>208</sup> Behar, *Observer*, 146.

Living in the Diaspora is prevalent in the modern Jewish experience and that commonality can be seen as a great source of validation, acceptance, and understanding in terms of feeling displaced and dislocated from their countries of origin. If a positive conception of the Diasporic consciousness is embraced, it seems, therefore, natural for Jews to be without a geographic space from which they derive their national and fixed identity:

Judaism, they suggest, 'as lived for two thousand years, begins with a people forever unconnected with a particular land, a people that calls into question the idea that a people must have a land in order to be a people... Abraham had to leave his own land to go to the Promised Land; the father of Jewry was deterritorialized.' Diaspora, they conclude, may well be Judaism's most important contribution to the world, showing 'that peoples and lands are not naturally and organically connected... [that] people [can] maintain its distinctive culture, its difference, without controlling land.'<sup>209</sup>

---

<sup>209</sup> Behar, *Observer*, 146.

In examining Behar's echoes of the Boyarins' rather unusual belief that there is no real physical place from which that identity is derived, we must ask why so many Jewish writers feel such a desperate need to return, and how can they accomplish this feat? As Behar herself asks: "If there is no true place of origin, no native land, only diasporas layered on top of diasporas, what can return mean?"<sup>210</sup> The notion that Jews are free from geographic limitations on the source of their identity can be interpreted as positive because they are able to function as a cohesive culture despite being highly mobile and adaptable to various societies. The reality, however, is that whatever postmodern and overwhelmingly positive interpretation of the Diasporic consciousness is configured, it does not miraculously bring an end to the sense of loss, displacement, and "Otherness" caused by the experience of being an ethnic and cultural minority far from one's native land. Conceiving of a positive diasporic consciousness provides an antidote to secular Jews living in the Diaspora. The Boyarin argument, however, does not account for the Biblical prayers that speak of Zion as the true homeland of the Jews and the birthplace of Judaism. As shown by the Gypsies and other itinerant groups who have been stereo-

---

<sup>210</sup> Behar, *Observer*, 148.

typed, ostracized, and rebuked for centuries, overt wanderers have been perceived as a threat to national identity and cohesion -- and are often persecuted for just that reason.

The rationalization of the proposed "normal and historic" condition of not being tied to a particular land does not diminish the exilic consciousness. The sense of belonging is, therefore, to be ultimately achieved by the writer through the written word. Citizenship in Cuba, Mexico, Argentina or the United States does not guarantee a stable identity or sense of belonging. Behar, therefore, nationalizes herself as a citizen of her own page.

That said, it can be asserted that in spite of the optimistic interpretations offered by the Boyarin brothers, among others, the opportunity to immerse oneself in the new culture and country of residence is never enough. Behar recounts that upon relocating to the United States, she and her family felt alienated from the North American Jewish communities whose members were unable to comprehend and accept that Jews could also be from Latin America. The oppressive stereotypes within the North American Jewish communities proved to be equally strong as those upheld by non-Jewish ones.

Even if the new country is emblematic of the rich diversity of its immigrant population, the sense of being "home" is rarely achieved. Whether it is the linguistic barriers that stand between complete immersion and isolation or unfamiliar streets that do not recognize the footsteps of the "trespasser," the only true home seems to remain miles away on another continent or island. Rosario Morales, a Puerto Rican writer who now resides in the continental United States, poignantly captures this sentiment in the following passage:

'This is not home. Eleven years could not make it home. I'll always be clumsy with the language, always resentful of the efforts to remake me, to do what my parents couldn't manage... I was shaped on Manhattan island; Ironic. On the plane down I'm conscious only of my soft tropical core. Here I'm only aware of the North American scaffolding surrounding it, holding it up.'<sup>211</sup>

New York appears to be an inappropriate setting for an identity performance that should take place in Puerto Rico, as there is a large and active *Nuyorikan* community. The shifting of environs has done little to shake the

---

<sup>211</sup> Behar, *Observer*, 150.

foundation upon which Morales continues to stand. The fact that her feet do not tread upon the same soil as her soul propels her into a perpetual state of displacement and dislocation.

Perhaps Morales comforts herself with the promise that one day she will return to her beloved Puerto Rico, but much like Behar and so many other who now reside in North America, that return, or better said, the invention of a homeland, in the complete sense of the word, is only possible through writing.

For Behar and other Cubans living in the Diaspora/diaspora, the celebration of the Jewish exodus from Egypt, embodied in the declaration "Next year in Jerusalem" is adapted to the Cuban experience of exile. For Jews residing in the United States who sit at the *seder*<sup>212</sup> table every year and proclaim their allegiance to Israel and express the desire to return there some day, they are participating in a ritual that often has no physical return. There is, however, an explicit and irrefutable desire to bring an end to the Diasporic consciousness and the sense of displacement. "Just like the Jews, what is important to us is that

---

<sup>212</sup> A *seder* is the traditional meal on the first two nights of Passover in the Diaspora, or one night in Israel. The *Haggadah*, the text recounting the Jews' escape from slavery in Egypt, is read aloud among traditional families.



we keep on saying it [Next year in Havana]... That's what unites us, that feeling. It's an emotional thing, something no one should try to take away." <sup>213</sup> The hope of return is never-ending, however difficult a true return may be.

With the intention of emphasizing the historical displacement experienced by immigrants, Behar includes Stuart Hall's explanation of the African diasporic experience in order to demonstrate the commonalities shared by diasporic peoples. He echoes the belief that physical return is impossible because of the tremendous changes that have occurred since the African people were forced to leave the African continent behind. He proposes, however, what diasporic people can do to recover themselves and their past:

[Hall] reminds us, 'Whether it is, in this sense, an *origin* of our identities, unchanged by four hundred years of displacement, dismemberment, transportation, to which we could in any final or literal sense, return is open to more doubt. The original "Africa" is no longer there. It too has been transformed... Africa must at last be reckoned with... but it cannot in any simple sense be merely

---

<sup>213</sup> Behar, *Observer*, 145.

recovered... We can't literally go home again.'

Hall suggests that the return to Africa must happen "by another route," that is, "what Africa has *become* in the New World, what we have made of 'Africa" - as we re-tell it through politics, memory and desire.'<sup>214</sup>

Although Hall is addressing the African diasporic condition and the continued desire expressed by the descendants of Africans forced to leave their homeland, he feels that the longing for return is shared by Jewish immigrants as well as by other immigrant groups trying to establish their homelands in exile. What he failed to highlight in the preceding passage is that the Jews have had the option to move to Israel since the creation of an official Jewish homeland in 1948. The alternative to a true return, which Hall explains is impossible, is through the written word and its power to capture memories, desires, and identity.

Behar further expands the sense of displacement caused by living in diasporic exile when she quotes Victor Fowler, a Cuban writer who visits her in Michigan. The two of them are browsing through an ACE Hardware store when Fowler begins to gather an array of glue products. "I've come

---

<sup>214</sup> Behar, *Observer*, 147.

unglued, *estoy despegado*."<sup>215</sup> Fowler is expressing his dislocated identity and the desperation he feels to make himself whole again. He seems to have tried everything to recover his fragmented identity and sense of lost homeland. The glue products are a comical, yet desperate way to attempt putting oneself back together. As Mark Krupnik wrote, "Displacement is an exile from older certitudes of meaning, a possibly permanent sojourn in the wilderness."<sup>216</sup> There aren't too many ACE Hardware stores in the wilderness, but Fowler certainly experiences a sense of loss and a seemingly interminable nomadic condition.

For Behar, capturing this sentiment and transferring it onto the page is an act of recovery and a way of making herself, Fowler, and so many others, whole. The power of the written word clearly transcends space and time and perhaps has greater appeal than a physical return, which Behar has shown to be potentially disappointing and painful, if not actually impossible. The ability to reconstruct memories through imaginative writing seems to be a

---

<sup>215</sup> Behar, *Observer*, 150.

<sup>216</sup> Mark Krupnik quoted by Marianne Hirsch in "Pictures of a Displaced Childhood," ed. Angelika Bammer, *Displacements: Cultural Identities in Question* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994) xiv.

more comforting remedy. "Really, it is better not to return, not to look back. Memory is sweeter."<sup>217</sup>

Behar not only identifies with fellow Cubans who now reside in the United States, but with Chicanos who also feel culturally and geographically displaced from Mexico. Her ethnographic study of women and children living in abject poverty not far from Tijuana, Mexico, in *Translated Woman*, consists of interviews with those individuals about their daily struggle to stay alive by living in a contaminated garbage dump. She sees their plight as that of a doubly alienated and vilified people, so close to the U.S.-Mexico border and so discarded by both countries. Although the case is extreme, she demonstrates how border crossers or straddlers have been overtly and historically rebuked. It was through various Chicano/a struggles that Behar began to discover herself:

I know that I came to my sense of Cuban-American identity through my reading of Chicana/Chicano imaginings of home and homelands. Experiencing in my own flesh the visceral reality of the U.S.-Mexico border, which I had crossed so many times bringing back Esperanza's story for *Translated Woman*, made me think about the kind of walls, and

---

<sup>217</sup> Behar, *Observer*, 148.

possible bridges, that existed between Cubans of the island and the diaspora. At the same time, I wondered about my privilege, as the bearer of a U.S. passport, to cross borders.<sup>218</sup>

Not only does Behar identify with Esperanza, the Mexican woman on whom she did an extensive and highly personalized ethnography, she also recognizes her privileged status as an American woman. Her American passport enables her to travel freely throughout the world, with the ironic exception of Cuba, where her profession permits her to investigate people's lives that seem to be on the verge of extinction.

Although there exists a real, yet invisible dividing line between Behar and the people that she studies, based on their economic status and ethnicity, she maintains a strong bond with Chicana writers. As quoted below, Behar is indebted to Gloria Anzaldúa and other Chicana feminists who were the first in their field to erect an imaginary homeland. They transformed ethnographic writing into personal narrative and ultimately challenged the norms for such written expression in anthropology.

Another influence, in the United States, is the work of minority writers, like those included in

---

<sup>218</sup> Behar, *Observer*, 148-149.

the anthology *This Bridge Called My Back*, edited by Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherríe Moraga, which discussed experiences of racism and discrimination as well as of coming to ethnic consciousness. These first-person narratives, written by those who previously had been more likely to be the ethnographized rather than the ethnographer, challenged monolithic views of identity in the United States, asserted the multiplicity of American cultures, and deconstructed various orientalisms, challenging the assumption that the anthropologist was the sole purveyor of ethnographic proof.<sup>219</sup>

Behar was clearly empowered by these women who had broken the silence of their exile and suffering. The transformation from being the subject to the ethnographer challenged the traditional norms and expectations of minority subjects. It also served to validate and reinforce Behar's own quest for a genre that enabled the disenfranchised to speak, that didn't require a strictly objective stance, and that allowed for diversity of identity and expression.

There are undeniable differences between the Chicana experience in the United States, particularly in the case

---

<sup>219</sup> Behar, *Observer*, 27.

of lesbian Chicana writers who defy patriarchal traditions and cultural expectations and are, therefore, rebuked by both North American and Mexican societies, and Behar's experiences as a Jewish woman of color. Much like Chicana feminists who are largely misunderstood and misinterpreted by "mainstream" society, Behar suffered such mistranslation upon her relocation to the United States. Her Jewish Cuban background was seen as something exotic, yet handicapping because of her inability to speak the English language. Hardly exotic, Behar was placed with the mentally retarded children upon entering third grade in her first school in the United States. Instead of receiving *ESL* classes, she was perceived as mentally deficient:

My well-meaning teacher placed me in a classroom for the retarded part of the day to facilitate my learning English... Did my new language ignorance make me more like those children, so limited in every way, so frighteningly mature yet peculiar? ... Sometimes stumbling over a sentence I reached for the unfamiliar English but retrieved a muddle of familiar Spanish and Yiddish words.<sup>220</sup>

---

<sup>220</sup> Behar, *Observer*, 89.

The misperception of Behar as mentally retarded because of her linguistic difference contributed to her longing to be a part of the dominant culture and not a misunderstood and mistranslated outsider. That incident, among many others, exacerbated her sense of being an *Other* and, to a certain degree, abnormal. She was "not like the other children" and every time she opened her mouth she was robbed of her secret. Her linguistic and cultural diversity threw her into an even more tormented exile. As Kathryn Hellerstein observed, "The language in perpetual exile mirrors the experience of the writer."<sup>221</sup> Because Behar was made to feel like an outsider when she was just beginning to speak English, and because she was removed from her native Cuba where her first language of Spanish was spoken, her sense of being in exile was intensified.

Behar's experience as being perceived as mentally deficient instead of simply unable to speak English fluently upon her arrival to the United States parallels the alienation that many Chicanas feel. Her experience of being mistranslated and misunderstood by many is comparable to a certain extent to the Chicano experience in the United

---

<sup>221</sup> Kathryn Hellerstein, "In Exile in the Mother Tongue: Yiddish and the Woman Poet," *Borders, Boundaries, and Frameworks*, ed. Mae G. Henderson (New York: Routledge, 1995) 149.



States. In spite of that commonality, there still exists the invisible chasm between her and Latinas in the United States. Contributing to that chasm, Behar feels that her exile from Cuba to escape Castro has given her some political collateral in the United States and that her "whiteness" has made her into a *gringa*:

As an 'exile from Cuba', I had benefited from unique U.S. immigration policies that gave me symbolic capital as a defector from Fidel Castro's revolutionary government. There was no such welcome mat for the Mexican undocumented immigrants, and Esperanza and other people who accepted me into their intimacy never let me forget that I was in Mexico as a *gringa* with *gringa* privileges and *gringa* money.<sup>222</sup>

Even with that privilege, Behar is still a border crosser. Although her situation is not as extreme as those impoverished women on the U.S.-Mexico border, her "whiteness" prevents her from crossing certain cultural barriers. The only way that she can attempt to minimize the dividing lines between Behar and her subjects on the other side of the border is through the act of writing which essentially

---

<sup>222</sup> Behar, *Observer*, 149.

creates a safe haven for Esperanza and so many others like her whose lives would otherwise be obliterated by neglect and decay. With the publication of *Translated Woman*, Esperanza has been written into existence and her identity has been authenticated. So Behar demonstrates how writing can be critical to self-discovery and recovery. Although Behar was acting as the agent in telling Esperanza's story, a literary homeland was created for Esperanza. Her ethnographic study became the foundation upon which she would establish her own literary dwelling place.

Behar also breached the criteria for ethnographic studies, as she clearly personalized and emotionalized Esperanza's story. She consciously decided not to maintain an objective stance by rejecting the guidelines of her discipline. The end result was, therefore, her first multi-genre text. It was her first response to the need for a new genre within anthropology and beyond, as well as the beginning of her personal quest for self-retrieval. As she wrote in a revealing statement: "I am here because I am a woman of the border: between places, between identities, between languages, between cultures, between longings and illusions, one foot in the academy and one foot out."<sup>223</sup>

---

<sup>223</sup> Behar, *Observer*, 162.

Behar's sense of being outside of the academy is not only spurred by the lack of conventionalism in her writing, but also because she posed a challenge to the University of Michigan when they tried to classify her along ethnic lines. She was either to be categorized as a Latina or Caucasian because there was no official category for multiethnic individuals. It proved more advantageous to the university, according to Behar, for her to be classified as Latina because it increased their diversity profile.

Although Behar was categorized by a system that fails to recognize cultural and ethnic hybridity, she does not adhere to any such boundaries in her personal and professional expression. She embodies the internal and external struggle to maintain ties with Cuba, the Latina/o communities in the United States, and her Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jewish traditions. She fleshes out that struggle in the form of narratives, ethnographies and interviews, and essentially becomes the bridge between such ethnic and cultural diversity. As Behar eloquently phrased it: "I am the raft, the bridge, the piece of driftwood heading north."<sup>224</sup>

---

<sup>224</sup> Behar, *Observer*, 155.

***Bridges to Cuba/Puentes a Cuba:***

Behar continues her quest to reconfigure and renegotiate her Jewish-Cuban identity in an anthology of Cuban writers entitled *Bridges to Cuba/Puentes a Cuba* (1995). In this compilation of poems, essays, short stories, and narratives, she brings together Cuban writers in the diaspora who seek to maintain the uniqueness of their hyphenated identities with Cuban writers who still reside on the island and struggle to make sense of their identities in Cuba since Castro came to power.

*Bridges to Cuba* is a meeting place, an open letter, a castle in the sand, an imaginary homeland. It is a space for reconciliation, imaginative speculation, and renewal. It is a first-time event. 'Diaspora, like death, interrupts all conversation,' writes Jorge Luis Arcos from the island. After being 'enemies,' it isn't easy to trust one another. But conversations can begin again. Walls can be turned on their side so they become bridges. It is possible to resurrect ourselves. As

Jesús Barquet writes from this side, 'Let's think of the bridges peace could bring us.'<sup>225</sup>

She creates this imaginary homeland for herself and for fellow Cubans who struggle to salvage what they left behind in Cuba while attempting to forge a new homeland in the United States. Within the secure walls of this imaginary space, Behar's own *Borderlands*, she is able to ask herself the critical questions that will lead her towards a more reconciled self.

*Bridges to Cuba* stems from a personal quest for memory and community. As a Cuban Jew growing up in the United States, where you can only check one box for your ethnic identity, I had often been questioned about the authenticity of my Cubanness. How could I, being Jewish, claim to be Cuban? Wasn't my Cuban identity nothing more than an accident of history, another stop in the Jewish diaspora? It wasn't deep, it wasn't in my blood, the Cubanness, so who was I fooling?<sup>226</sup>

The questioning of the authenticity has been a constant for Behar in her search for unconditional acceptance

---

<sup>225</sup> Ruth Behar, *Bridges to Cuba/Puentes a Cuba* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995) 5.

<sup>226</sup> Behar, *Bridges*, 6.

by Jewish, Latina, Cuban, North American and academic communities. She finds herself fighting the ongoing battle to justify herself to various cultural, national, and religious communities that are perplexed by her cultural, national, ethnic and religious plurality. This feeling of cultural desperation and the refusal to be appropriately categorized was triggered once again whenever she was asked to check a box for her ethnicity on standardized forms in the United States. As a Caucasian, Latina, Jewish Cuban, there was no easy answer and there certainly was no category that accounted for such diversity. The standardized forms were merely confirmation that she had no true or recognized cultural or ethnic identity. She was an incurable hybrid.

Behar echoes this feeling of religious inadequacy in the introduction to *Bridges to Cuba/Puentes a Cuba*. She feels that her secular Jewish identity combined with her strong cultural identity as a Jew are often in conflict. Her overwhelming devotion to her professional endeavors caused a gaping hole to be ripped open when she chose her ethnographic work over her wish to be by her beloved grandfather's side as he was dying. His worsened state occurred, ironically, while she was completing fieldwork in a Spanish village. The fact that her ancestors fled Spain

for Turkey at the time of the Spanish Inquisition propelled her to return to Spain and reclaim her lost homelands and identity, yet she failed to return to her immediate Jewish relatives in the United States to bridge the gap that existed between them.

In her personal effort, and professional endeavor to investigate the Spanish village, Behar quickly learned that the subjects of her ethnographic studies were fellow nomads who were also desperate to recover their homelands and identities. It soon became clear to Behar that there were a multitude of others who experienced a similar sense of loss and displacement:

As the chorus of voices and visions grew in strength, it became clear that there is an immense need for a forum such as this, in which Cubans can openly define themselves and dismantle, once and for all, the hurtful stereotypes of the islander as a brainwashed cog of a Marxist state and the immigrant as a soulless worm lacking any concern for social justice.<sup>227</sup>

Behar addresses the political stereotypes that erroneously have defined Cubans on and off the island while

---

<sup>227</sup> Behar, *Bridges*, 3.

making it evident that she wants to redefine the Cuban immigrant identity in the United States. She resists the tendency for U.S. politics to define Cubans as communist supporters of a dictatorial, anti-democratic state and promotes a Cuban identity that emerges from the exiled people themselves. *Bridges to Cuba* is the chorus of multiple voices that converge to tell their stories and reclaim their identities. The text is a public performance for its readers, and a private and sacred space for its writers.

In the introduction in which she celebrates the foundation of a bridge to Cuba, Behar pays homage to one of the writers in the anthology who she feels wrote that foundation. Behar feels that Lourdes Casal is the epitome of a true Cuban citizen with her multi-ethnic background.

"There is no question that the first plank of the bridge to Cuba was thrown into the sea by Lourdes Casal, a woman of middle-class background whose own mix of African, Spanish, and Chinese heritage epitomized the mosaic of Cuban culture."<sup>228</sup> Lourdes Casal's multi-ethnic background was what Fernando Ortíz valued so highly and celebrated in his works

---

<sup>228</sup> Behar, *Bridges*, 9.



on *transculturación*.<sup>229</sup> The Chinese, Spanish, Jewish, and indigenous civilizations were what defined Cuba for Ortíz and what continue to define it for Behar and the multitude of hybrids included in the anthology, on the island, and in the diaspora.

Behar continues her tribute to Lourdes Casal by including the poem written by Casal "For Ana Veldford." It emphasizes the difficulty Ana Veldford had in her efforts to safeguard her Cuban identity while attempting to become a "true New Yorker." Neither Behar nor Casal explain what a "true New Yorker" was or is, but the implication is the same: there are difficulties one must endure in the process of integrating into a new culture and city, and it is virtually impossible to escape the feeling of perpetually being an outsider. The end result was that she was too much of a *neuyorkina*, as Casal phrased it, to still be considered Cuban, and too *habanera* to be a true New Yorker. The internal cultural divide became inescapable due to public standards and perceptions:

Lourdes Casal's poem, "For Ana Veldford," with its lines about being 'too *habanera* to be *new-yorkina* and too *neuyorkina* to be anything else,'

---

<sup>229</sup> Fernando Ortíz, *Contrapunteo cubano* (La Habana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1983) 10.

spoke for a generation of Cuban Americans who reclaimed the lost country of their childhood, recognized that immigration had left them unable to think of home as being in any one place.<sup>230</sup>

No matter what great effort so many immigrants like Ana Veldford had made in order to create a new home for themselves in the new country, the sense of "being home" in a foreign land was unattainable. The exiles yearned for a geographic space they could call their own but, according to Casal, this wish was never fulfilled. In the absence of such a concrete space, Casal, Behar, and the other contributors to the anthology construct an imaginary bridge that leads them back to a homeland created in and out of their own literary works.

#### Women Writing Culture

*Women Writing Culture* is an anthology of essays by female anthropologists of various ethnic and cultural backgrounds who discuss issues and experiences that are central to being a woman writer in contemporary western society. The issues that the essayists tackle include:

---

<sup>230</sup> Ortiz, 10.

writing against the grain in order to safeguard culture; combatting the traditional gender roles and limitations; recognizing and accepting lesbian ethnography; faithfully translating writings from the borderlands; creating a feminist ethnography; and accurately representing women of color and the politics of representation. The essayists do not fall into the trap of writing and speaking on behalf of the marginalized and voiceless women they wish to safeguard. On the contrary, various essayists in the anthology address the all-too-common mistranslations of women, and of women of color in particular. The editors of this anthology, Ruth Behar and Deborah Gordon, set out to provide a feminist perspective on anthropology, in response to a previous work entitled *Writing Culture*, which was devoid of female contributors and a feminist point of view. Behar conveys the essence of the collection in the following description:

This book was born of a double crisis -- the crisis in anthropology and the crisis in feminism. It is a 1990s response to two critical projects of the 1980s that emerged separately, like parallel lines destined never to meet, but which this book has set about to join together. One project, emerging within anthropology, was

the postmodernist or textualist critique, best exemplified by the anthology *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, edited by James Clifford, a historian of anthropology, and George Marcus, an anthropologist and critic of "realist" traditions in ethnographic writing.

...The other project, stemming from critiques of white middle-class feminism by lesbians and women of color, emerged from outside the academy and yet entered the women's studies mainstream through the anthology *This Bridge Called My Back*, edited by Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, a pair of Chicana lesbian poet-critics.<sup>231</sup>

According to Behar, this anthology responds to two growing demands within anthropology: the creation of a new niche within the field that provides anthropologists with greater leeway in their ethnographic studies and writing, and the introduction of women of color as creators of culture and anthropology in their feminist writing. Although Behar confesses that these two projects were "destined to never meet," they share the same goal. Behar and Gordon, as well as Clifford and many other interdisciplinary

---

<sup>231</sup> Ruth Behar and Deborah Gordon, eds., *Women Writing Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995) 3.

anthropologists, are intent on transforming anthropology and ethnographic writing into something far more liberal and inclusive. As Behar expressed in *The Vulnerable Observer* and *Bridges to Cuba/Puentes a Cuba*, there is a great need for a new genre that incorporates the self-revealing and diverse corpus of writing by people of all religions, cultures, ethnic backgrounds, racial profiles, genders, and sexual orientations. The need for a genre and/or a new form of anthropology that provides authentic and accurate cultural representations was essentially the driving force behind *Women Writing Culture*, as well as Behar's ultimate goal for literary expression.

There are many women of color who are discussed and celebrated in *Women Writing Culture*; however, one woman's work in particular is the true inspiration for Behar and Gordon's intimate examination of female and feminist anthropology: Gloria Anzaldúa has profoundly impacted Behar's writing and appreciation for radical feminist writing by women of color. *This Bridge Called My Back* is an anthology of feminist essays, poems, and personal narratives by little-known Chicana women, compiled and edited by Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherrie Moraga. The powerful metaphor embodied in the title refers to the tremendous burden that women of color, particularly Chicanas, must bear. Their

experiences of being relegated to the margins because they belong to neither Mexico or the United States, and because of the authors' unconventional religious, cultural and sexual orientations, they are forced to be their own country and serve as the bridge between two or more worlds.

For Behar, the contributors to *Women Writing Culture* are a critical component of the bridge's infrastructure, as well as guardians of the bridge that so many marginalized women writers have constructed -- the bridge holds them together, and ensures that they can cross back and forth from one culture to another without checking one aspect of their identity at the border. The bridge metaphor was also a direct influence on Behar's *Bridges to Cuba/Puentes a Cuba*. Just as Anzaldúa did not intend to simplify the male-female opposition, Behar seeks to empower women and distinguish their writing from the traditional male hegemonic order. Just as Anzaldúa responds to the absence of women of color in mainstream literary composition, Behar responds to the absence of women's voices in *Writing Culture*, an anthology of anthropological essays. Behar notes that the only female contributor to the anthology was Mary Louise Pratt, making it an overwhelmingly male-centric text. She explains the irony behind *Women Writing Culture* in the following passage:

And thus the irony of this book -- which might never have come about if not for the absence of women in *Writing Culture*. Just as the anthology *Woman, Culture and Society*, the landmark text of our 1970s feminist predecessors, appropriated and thereby transformed the anthropological classic, *Man, Culture and Society*, so too have we reclaimed the project of *Writing Culture*...<sup>232</sup>

More than twenty years ago Adrienne Rich asserted that male writers do not write for women, or with a sense of women's criticism, when choosing their materials, themes, and language. But women writers, even when they are supposed to be addressing women, write for men; or at least they write with the haunting sense of being overheard by men, and certainly with the inescapable knowledge of having already been defined in men's words. That is why "re-vision," the act of "entering an old text from a new critical direction," is for women "an act of survival... We need to know the writing of the

---

<sup>232</sup> Adrienne Rich, "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Revision," *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence: Selected Prose 1966-1978* (New York: Norton, 1979) 35-38.

past... not to pass on a tradition but to break its hold over us."<sup>233</sup>

Behar looked to Adrienne Rich for an explanation for why and how women write, and to examine the way in which women like Rich and Anzaldúa boldly return to the past in order to create a literary canon by and for women. Feminist writers, like Behar, Rich and Anzaldúa ensure that patriarchal tendencies in literature and in the recording of history do not continue to dictate women's written expression. Behar takes in to consideration, however, that the feminist ideals and demands of the 1960s and 1970s, which serve as the foundation for feminism today, were largely devised by and for the Caucasian female population of the United States, and failed to account for the diversity and demands of women of color. The combination, therefore, of pioneers in feminist activism, like Adrienne Rich who fought to break the tradition of male dominance over women, and contemporary Chicana lesbian feminists like Gloria Anzaldúa, who struggle to alter the mistranslations of Chicana women, continues to reinforce the foundation for a profound transformation of the literary canon.

---

<sup>233</sup> Ruth Behar, "Introduction: Out of Exile," *Women Writing Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995) 5-6.



Behar continues to pay homage to Anzaldúa and *This Bridge Called My Back* by recognizing her critical introduction of women writers of color into the literary canon. Behar prides herself on reproducing the same racial, cultural, ethnic and religious diversity in *Women Writing Culture*. She plays the dual role of an anthropologist who seeks out diverse subjects and provides an intimate and accurate examination of their lives, as well as a woman of color who identifies with her fellow Latin American, Latina, Chicana, Asian, Jewish, Italian, and North American pioneers in the field.

*Women Writing Culture* follows in the spirit of *This Bridge Called My Back* by refusing to separate creative writing from critical writing. Our book is multivoiced and includes biographical, historical, and literary essay, fiction autobiography, theater, poetry, life stories, travelogues, social criticism, fieldwork accounts, and blended texts of various kinds. We do not simply cite the work of women of color or recite the mantra of gender, race, and class and go on with academic business as usual, handling

difference over with one hand and taking it away with the other.<sup>234</sup>

The above description of the anthology could also be considered an accurate synopsis of Behar's overall writing, and particularly the works addressed in this study. She is clearly intent on breaking down academic, literary, political, social, cultural and gender barriers in order to establish a literary forum in which the female subject is no longer the mistranslated and misrepresented other. The following statement is confirmation of the intentional multitude of voices in *Women Writing Culture*, as well as of Behar's goals as a writer and anthropologist:

Many of the contributors to this book are they themselves women of color or immigrants or people of hybrid identity who know what it is like to be othered and so bring to anthropology a rebellious undoing of the classical boundary between observer and observed... Our individual trajectories are certainly as diverse as our contributors to this book. If there is a single thing, a common

---

<sup>234</sup> Behar, *Women*, 7-8.

land that all of us are seeking, it is an anthropology without exiles.<sup>235</sup>

Behar highlights the divide between her and other women of color, particularly Latina and Chicana women, because of her apparent "whiteness." The unfortunate commonality of being ostracized, however, allows them to come together in an imaginary space where their oppressive stereotypes are removed. Once within the borderless literary realm created by texts like *Women Writing Culture*, *This Bridge Called My Back*, and *Bridges to Cuba/Puentes a Cuba*, the once marginalized and disenfranchised women can break free from their exilic existence and acquire irrevocable citizenship of the page, celebrate their shared experiences, and claim a new individualized cultural identity that cannot be devalued.

Behar responds directly to the alteration of the literary canon by stressing the importance of becoming an active agent, not just the passive observer and traditional ethnographer in the recording of the intimate lives of anthropological subjects. The problem with immersing oneself in the struggles of the *Other*, however, is that many critics object to the loss of objectivity. When Behar, and writers like her, identify with their subjects

---

<sup>235</sup> Behar, *Women*, 8.

and reject the singularity of being an observer, they invite the criticism of traditionalists who insist on upholding the long-established criterion for academic writing. In response to such traditionalist thought, Behar offers the following:

As Lorraine Nencel and Peter Pels state, "To be taken seriously in the academy, we also have to write ourselves *in* the history of the discipline and, consequently, write *off* rival academic currents."<sup>236</sup> That is, of course, how canons are constructed.<sup>237</sup>

The defiant statement by Nencel and Pels is demonstrative of the tensions in academia and the resistance to eliminating the criterion that guide traditional anthropological writing. The creative writing found within anthropology challenges traditional criterion and becomes a critical outlet for interdisciplinary and post-exilic discourse. Behar defends creative expression within the academy:

---

<sup>236</sup> Lorraine Nencel and Peter Pels, "Introduction: Critique and Deconstruction of Anthropological Authority," *Constructing Knowledge: Authority and Critique in Social Sequence*, Eds. Lorriane Nencel and Peter Pels (London: Sage Publications, 1992), 17.

<sup>237</sup> Behar, *Women*, 11.

Although the literary turn in anthropology is often dismissed as an exercise in self-indulgence, Ebron and Tsing offer a fresh reading of minority discourse as a way of forming alliances among the once colonized. That reading is subtle and crosses many borders simultaneously, showing how representational authority is differently achieved by women and men of color in the United States.<sup>238</sup>

The assertion that creative literary expression does not belong in the field of anthropology threatens to alienate Behar from the academy. Her personal and professional writing, as demonstrated in this study, is emblematic of the minority discourse that Ebron and Tsing describe. Behar challenges representational authority as well as direct authority with her own creative writing and the inclusion of minority discourse into her anthologies.

Behar does not, however, fall into the trap of the empowered White woman who speaks for marginalized minorities in *Women Writing Culture*. Even her fellow contributors are acutely aware of the discrepancies between them, as privileged women of color in academia, and women of color outside of the academy, as well as outside of the

---

<sup>238</sup> Behar, *Women*, 20.

United States. Aihwa Ong, who identifies herself as an "expatriate Chinese," points out that even though she and other women of color like her who are inside the academy know what it is like to be a minority in the United States, she is not the ideal or the most effective agent of minority women's struggles outside of the academy. In spite of the fact that they share the same culture, native language, and country of origin, the discrepancies within their communities can be profoundly distinct and ultimately divisive. Behar cites Ong's critical observations thus:

At the same time, she questions the notion of privileged nativism and notes that being positioned as some kind of insider to the culture does not predispose one to produce a politically correct ethnography of the Other. Indeed, she reminds us that Third World women in the Anglophone academic world are privileged in comparison with women from their ancestral cultures. Feminist ethnographers need to develop a "deterritorialized" critical practice that deals with inequities not only in that "other place" but also in one's "own" community.<sup>239</sup>

---

<sup>239</sup> Behar, *Women*, 21-22.

Ong is clearly warning against the tendencies for well-meaning female anthropologists of color, as well as other academics, to assume that the shared culture with their subjects makes them ideal translators of their subjects' lives. Ong points out that the professional, social, and economic privileges that academia provides radically alter one's cultural perspective. Anthropologists can continue to write ethnographies of their de-territorialized and marginalized subjects; however, they should refrain from speaking for them and attempting to equate or compare their subjects' plights with their own.

Perhaps Behar's intimate ethnography of Esmeralda in *Translated Woman: Crossing the Border With Esperanza's Story*, is exemplary of Ong's caveat. Behar recognized the difficulty in communicating Esmeralda's story to an English-speaking readership on the other side of the U.S.-Mexican border; however, she did not refrain from comparing her own experiences as an "othered" woman of color in the United States with Esperanza's struggles to stay alive. She became the "Vulnerable Observer" that went on to write the autobiographical work of the same title. Behar does not comply with Ong's entire criterion, but she does transform a field of anthropology into an intimate study of both the observed and the observer.

Behar admits to her personal investment in Esperanza's story and the hope of being vindicated for her tumultuous relationship with her parents. She was plagued with guilt for having slandered her parents in a controversial article she wrote in the op-ed section of *The New York Times*. She felt that if she successfully and accurately conveyed Esperanza's story to a readership that had remained ignorant of her suffering, her benevolence would help allay her guilt. Perhaps Ong's warnings would have served Behar well if she had not allowed her own struggles to influence the composition of Esperanza's story.

Indeed, as I relate in my essay "Writing My Father's Name," I had to engage in the most profound predicaments I had ever faced as an anthropologist when I brought struggles from home into my own ethnography, *Translated Woman*. It pained me to discover that I had alienated my parents by writing about them in ways they found disturbing. Anguished about my "wickedness," I returned to Mexico, hoping to be vindicated by giving the book I had written about her to my *comadre* Esperanza. But there was no redemption; my *comadre* told me that she did not want to keep a text that she would never be able to read.



Writing hurts.<sup>240</sup>

Behar's personalization of her ethnographic studies prevents her from maintaining an objective stance. Her subjects' stories become collective, not only because they are often representative of their community's plights, but because Behar herself becomes part of the extended collectivity as well. Even during her first professional ethnographic study in a small village in Spain, her decision whether or not to fly home to Miami when her grandfather was dying influenced her writing. She initially chose her work over her family, but ultimately fused the two together. Behar undeniably has been a "Vulnerable Observer" from the beginning of her career.

In her essay "Writing in My Father's Name," Behar explains the balance she attempts to strike between her life as an anthropologist and her personal life. The following passage highlights the tensions between investigating the lives of her subject "Others" and confronting the "Other" at home:

In my training to become an anthropologist I was taught to worry about how I represented "the other" in my writing. I became attuned to the ethical, cultural, and political implications of

---

<sup>240</sup> Behar, *Women*, 23.

using the life stories of faraway people to provide anthropological insights back home.

But what do you do when your parents are "the other"?<sup>241</sup>

It is ironic that Behar equates the foreignness of her subjects with that of her parents. She is so careful not to mistranslate, miscommunicate or betray Esperanza, as well as her other subjects, but she unabashedly exposes the intimate details of her parents lives in her ethnographic writing. The investment in safeguarding her subjects seems to be almost exclusively reserved for non-family members.

Putting aside the question of how professional it is to mix one's personal life with one's academic and anthropologic endeavors, Behar deliberately and consciously transforms ethnography into an intimate project that makes the agent part of the collectivity. Behar comes to recognize the difficulties inherent in this novel and less-objective approach, as she reiterates: "Foolish, foolish is the anthropologist who mixes up the field with her life."<sup>242</sup> Perhaps transforming anthropology into an active exchange

---

<sup>241</sup> Behar, *Women*, 67.

<sup>242</sup> Behar, *Women*, 77.

between the observed and the observer puts both at risk of over-exposure and mistranslation.

Behar concludes the essay with a description of her travels across the United States in an attempt to "sell" and promote Esperanza's story. While she receives some critical responses for divulging her family problems in an ethnographic study of a severely destitute woman in Northern Mexico, however, she finds solace and reassurance in the belief that her writing was indeed effective if it provoked such a strong reaction from her readers. She relies on Nancy Miller's perspective to justify her mode of expression:

*I'm told by a women's studies professor that she was embarrassed by the sections of the paper that were so intensely focused on my conflicts with my family. But then she told herself that if I were saying these things about Esperanza they wouldn't bother her at all. They'd just be ethnography. I'm reminded of Nancy Miller's point that personal writing creates an unsettling awareness of the cost of writing. As she says, "The embarrassment produced in readers is a sign that it is working. At the same time, the embarrassment*

*blows the cover of the impersonal as a masquerade of self-effacement."*<sup>243,244</sup>

Behar highlights the risks of being a vulnerable observer from both a personal and a professional perspective. Although she does run the risk of embarrassing or offending readers and critics with her intimate ethnographic writing, she is also establishing the foundation for a new form of anthropology, a new genre that straddles literature and the social sciences that allows such formerly forbidden liberties to be taken.

"Adio Kerida" is the culmination of Behar's relentless search for her lost homeland. The documentary was born out of ten visits to Cuba in an effort to recover her lost past, document contemporary Jewish life on the island, and reconnect with a community that she left behind in 1962. Behar narrates the entire documentary and accompanies her audience on a voyage to her past and a search for identity. The documentary is the ultimate act to bring an end to her sense of exile and loss. It is a personal tale and a collective one, as she focuses on the current Jewish community

---

<sup>243</sup> Nancy K. Miller, *Getting Personal: Feminist Occasions and Other Autobiographical Acts* (New York: Routledge, 1991) 24.

<sup>244</sup> Behar, *Women*, 80.

in Cuba, as well as the people she left behind decades ago. Yoshie Furuhashi provides a comprehensive description of the documentary in the following passage:

Adio Kerida is a personal documentary about the search for identity and history among Sephardic Jews with roots in Cuba. The title is borrowed from a Sephardic love song in order to highlight the themes of expulsion, departure, and exile that are at the crux of the Sephardic legacy. At the same time, the title invokes the creative energy that is injected into a culture when it crosses racial, ethnic, and national lines. It also has a personal dimension and references the desire for reconciliation between the filmmaker and her Sephardic father.<sup>245</sup>

Furuhashi not only highlights the polyphonic, multinational and multiethnic nature of the documentary, he also points out the personal significance of the film to Behar with the bridge that is built between Behar and her father. Behar discussed the tumultuous relationship that she and her parents had as a result of having divulged their private lives

---

<sup>245</sup> Yoshie Furuhashi, "Adio Kerida," 25 May 2003 00:38 UTC. [Http://Archives.econ.utah.edu/archives/Marxism/2003w20/msg00392.htm](http://Archives.econ.utah.edu/archives/Marxism/2003w20/msg00392.htm)

and, in turn, brandishing their names in *The Vulnerable Observer*, and an explicit article in the *New York Times*. The piece, "Writing in My Father's Name," was the beginning of her reconciliation with her father, and the documentary solidified that effort.

Because the film is touted as a critical anthropological piece documenting the current state of the Jewish community in Cuba and its cross-cultural relations with the African and Spanish population, the insertion of her own life story and the intimate details of her own search for identity might be considered controversial.

Behar is, however, inextricably connected to the people that she interviews and the places that she explores in Cuba, making it impossible to be a divested observer. The people she interacts with in the documentary are not mere subjects of an unaffected ethnographic study, they are an extension of her own community and abandoned past.

As a Cuban Sephardic Jew herself, the filmmaker refrains from treating the Jews on the island as a sad group of castaways and delves deeply into the way the members of the Sephardic Jewish community in Cuba bring meaning, joy, song, and

laughter to their everyday lives. While the filmmaker's story informs her journey, it never overpowers the stories of her protagonists, each of whom is seen as an individual with his or her compelling quest to create an identity out of the mixture of Cuban and Sephardic cultural elements.<sup>246</sup>

The reality is, however, that as an active agent in the documentation of contemporary Jewish life in Cuba, she loses the ability to present her subjects from an unbiased and neutral perspective. As guilty as Behar may be of personalizing her ethnographic studies, "Adio Kerida" is an appropriate forum for the collective stories to which she is undeniably linked. As Furuhashi vividly describes in the following observation, Behar brings new and insightful vision to anthropology.

Intimate interviews with Sephardic Jews in Cuba and Cuban Miami, as well as family stories, are meshed with probing footage of dilapidated Jewish cemeteries and new Judaic rituals in Cuba to

---

<sup>246</sup>Furuhashi website.

create a filmic memoir that offers a uniquely poetic and humanistic anthropological vision.<sup>247</sup>

Not only does Behar personalize the experiences of the current Jewish community in Cuba, as well as their relationships with the Afro-Cuban population, she demonstrates the cultural encounters between Jews, Africans, North Americans, Asians and Spaniards on the island. The mixture of all those peoples and cultures is most pronounced in the passionate rhythms of their music.

Conversion, intermarriage, and cultural mixing, or mestizaje, are recurrent themes in the stories. The cinematography and the narrative are juxtaposed with music that transcends the history being told with Afro-Cuban drumming, Jewish liturgical music, Sephardic love songs, tangos, boleros, loud solos, flamenco, Cuban salsa, and American jazz. The diverse range of forms embraced by Cuban Sephardim becomes a vivid presence in the documentary. Song, music, and dance emerge as a vital necessity in the lives of the Sephardic Jews of Cuba.<sup>248</sup>

---

<sup>247</sup> Furuhashi website.

<sup>248</sup> Furuhashi website.



All of the musical elements that Behar incorporates into the documentary are also emblematic of her own life. She, too, is a *mestiza*, due to her Sephardic father and Ashkenazi mother and as well as her identity in the United States as a woman of color and as a Jew, and the exposure as a child to the Afro-Caribbean culture and the *santería* religion. Her marriage to a non-Jewish man from Texas also gives her intimate knowledge of the cultural and religious implications of intermarriage. Although her objectivity is lost as a vulnerable observer, she proves to be exemplary of the diversity she presents in the documentary.

Upon returning to Miami, where the largest population of Jewish Cuban and non-Jewish Cubans reside off the island, Behar illustrates the diversity of the exiled Cubans living there. The rich *mestizaje* found on the island between Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews, and Afro-Cubans, and Eastern Europeans is equally vibrant in Miami, and uniquely characteristic of Miami's hybrid culture as well.

In Miami, we hear from sellers of good luck charms, a gay hairdresser who celebrates the marriage of his Cuban Sephardic mother and Cuban Catholic father, a belly dancer who merges flamenco, Afro-Cuban, and Turkish traditions, and

the aging former rabbi of the Sephardic community of Havana.<sup>249</sup>

And at the end of the journey, the video daringly explores the life of the filmmaker herself as she returns home. We follow her as she learns family secrets from her Sephardic relatives in Miami, then moves on to an encounter with her Sephardic father, who distrusts her motives in making the film, and finally see her interacting with her brother, a jazz musician who questions the purpose of anthropology and her hunger to travel to other places.<sup>250</sup>

The ultimate conclusion that is drawn at the end of the documentary is that Jews, Cubans and Latino/as are as diverse as their cultures, languages and communities. The intersection between Jewish and Cuban cultures and communities produces a *mestizo* population that defies traditional cultural stereotypes. The diversity presented in the documentary is characteristic of Behar's own identity, which remains an enigma to cultural purists, and demands the creation of a new form of expression and recognition.

---

<sup>249</sup> Furuhashi website.

<sup>250</sup> Furuhashi website.

Behar establishes a meeting place between the observer and the observed through her personalized ethnographic studies and her transformation of indifferent academic writing to something far more personalized and reflective of the writer as much as of the observed.

Adio Kerida is a story of continuing diasporas and intercultural adaptations. Thus, when the filmmaker's mother blissfully digs her teeth into a mango synonymous with the flavor and the scent of a Cuba she left behind, we are reminded of Proust's Madeleine, and led to reflect on the search for a lost time that continues to leave its mark on the fleeting moments of the present.<sup>251</sup>

### **"Juban América"**

"Juban América" is a clever and comic response to Behar's quest for self-understanding and the creation of a term that speaks to her hybridity. She seeks to legitimize the Cuban-Jewish identity, seen as incongruous in the United States, and forge a new "Juban" identity that is viewed as a legitimate and exemplary variation of the North

---

<sup>251</sup> Furuhashi website.

American prototype. Behar explains it best in the abstract below:

This essay weaves autobiographical narratives together with cultural critique and historical interpretation to reveal the multifaceted construction of the Jewish-Cuban identity. Moving from Poland and Turkey to Cuba and the United States, the essay unsettles the classical map of Latin America as well as the classical definitions of 'Latin' and 'Jew.' Refusing to ignore my own presence in the text, I stand revealed as a situated participant-observer who is still in the process of forging a 'Juban identity.'<sup>252</sup>

The fusion of Jewish and Cuban identities into one leads to the emergence of what Behar refers to as the "Juban" identity. It is a construct that exists in the space created for such hybrid identities, the Borderlands. The traditional expectations of being an Eastern European Jew who speaks Yiddish and English with a stereotypically "Jewish accent" are defied by Behar and her family who not

---

<sup>252</sup> Ruth Behar, "Juban América," *Poetics Today* 16:1 (Spring 1995): 153.

only speak Yiddish, but Spanish with a Yiddish accent, Ladino, and English with a Cuban accent.

An example of the linguistic diversity of her family is the story of her grandfather's encounter with the Spanish language and his complete immersion and acceptance of the new language and, as a result, leaving Yiddish by the wayside.

Spanish was not my grandfather's 'mother tongue.' He was a stepson of the language, yet he claimed it as his own. He spoke Spanish to his children and grandchildren; the Yiddish that he spoke with my grandmother and others of their generation failed to get passed on, while English, learned in a second exile, never entered his veins. My relationship with my grandfather, a man of the Jewish European Old World, was entirely lived in Spanish. To be more exact, it was lived in a combination of Spanish and silence.<sup>253</sup>

It is curious and unsettling for Behar to realize that her grandfather's past was willingly obliterated by his exclusive use of the Spanish language with his family. His life in Eastern Europe remained untold and, therefore,

---

<sup>253</sup> Behar, *Juban*, 153.

created a void that was filled only with silence. It is that silence that Behar struggles to break with her quest for identity and homeland.

In that quest, Behar has come to some enlightening, yet disturbing, conclusions about her hybridity. As quixotic as it may be for others to imagine and accept a Jewish Cuban with Spanish and Eastern European roots. As she wrote in *Bridges*, Cuba and its exiles have been stereotyped and vilified by North American politics and this has contributed to their alienation in the United States.

It has taken me a long time to reach an obvious conclusion: I am *cubana* because I am Jewish. I am *cubana* because my grandparents were unwanted cargo that could not be delivered to the United States. I am *cubana* because the border between 'our America' and 'the other America which is not ours' is a real border guarded by guns and decorated with ink.<sup>254</sup>

This configuration of her identity is rather pessimistic, making a positive conception of her ethnic diversity questionable. It seems likely that her negativity stems from the resentment she feels of the long history of

---

<sup>254</sup> Behar, *Juban*, 157.

cultural discrimination and quotas in the United States. That discrimination was experienced first hand by her grandparents when they attempted to enter the United States in the 1920s and, later, by Behar and her parents once they were living there. Behar points out that her parents would have always been classified in Cuba according to their Sephardic and Ashkenazi backgrounds, however the misperception and categorization in the United States seemed far more oppressive. The labeling in Cuba seemed to be simply reflective of the recognition of the country's diversity, not a way to discriminate:

In Cuba my mother would have remained *polaca*, and my father a *turco*; at the very least, they would always have been the children of *polacos* and *turcos*. It is in the United States that they have settled into their Cubanness. In this America that is not theirs, they are viewed as Latinos, quirky Latinos, to be sure, but Latinos nonetheless.<sup>255</sup>

Not only were Behar's parents automatically classified according to their Latin roots which did not exclusively define them, they were equally discriminated against by

---

<sup>255</sup> Behar, *Juban*, 161.

fellow Jews and colleagues. Behar recounts one such experience while her mother was working for New York University:

In her office she's now the only Latina, and she finds herself having to straddle between her white American and black American female co-workers. She's neither black nor white in that context, but certainly a little more black than white. It doesn't help her much that she's white and Jewish because a white Jewish woman in America doesn't usually speak the kind of "broken English" that Latinas and Latinos speak. Her accent and her ongoing struggle with the English language are an ever-present reminder that she is an immigrant in America which is not hers, that she is "*originally* from" elsewhere.<sup>256</sup>

Behar's mother seems to defy the norms and expectations of her "whiteness" and her religion. Her Latin accent betrays her apparent "whiteness" and places her among African-Americans and other women of color who are treated as second-class citizens in "white" America:

She realizes she's being 'othered' all the time, and she notices how the black women in the office

---

<sup>256</sup> Behar, *Juban*, 162.



get the same treatment. And so, as she tells me, 'I'm with them, the women of color.' And I say to her, 'Ma, don't you see: Here you are a woman of color too.'<sup>257</sup>

In the case of her father, Behar explains "My father gets Latinized not just because of his accent, but because of his García Márquez eyebrows and mustache that come from his Sephardic origins."<sup>258</sup> This romanticized perception of her father is hardly emblematic of how he is perceived by his fellow Jewish employers in the United States. He is not stigmatized because he speaks English with a Latin accent or for because he is a shade too dark to be considered 'white' and a member of the privileged class. Rather, it is the mere fact that he is a Latin American Jew that separates him from his Jewish co-workers. He is regarded as a second-class citizen simply because of his country of origin. "He's the Latino smuggled into a company where all the bosses are third-generation American Ashkenazi Jews who drive Jaguars. They're nice enough to my father, but he knows he's not one of the boys."<sup>259</sup>

---

<sup>257</sup> Behar, *Juban*, 162.

<sup>258</sup> Behar, *Juban*, 162.

<sup>259</sup> Behar, *Juban*, 162-163.

In the case of Behar's parents, one does not know what aspects of their hybrid identities are held most sacred to them or how they wish to conceive of themselves and be seen by others. All that remains apparent is their mistaken identity, the resentment that her father feels, and Behar's interpretations of her parents' actions.

This past summer, as we cleared our poolside snacks at an undistinguished Holiday Inn on the northern outskirts of Philadelphia, he said, "Don't leave a mess, okay? *Porque si no van a decir que somos puertorriqueños.*" My father has often been mistaken for a Puerto Rican and this bothers him. Being Puerto Rican represents, to him, not making it in America, staying poor, not being a reasonable, white, middle-class, right-thinking person just like you.<sup>260</sup>

This incident illustrates the resentment felt by Latino immigrants who are falsely identified as something "other" than who they truly are. It also attests to the tensions and prejudices among fellow Latinos and the stigmas attached to being from one Latin American country as opposed to another.

---

<sup>260</sup> Behar, *Juban*, 162.

Behar captures the defiant sentiment that she and so many mistranslated others profoundly feel when she quotes Aurora Levins-Morales, a Puerto Rican feminist writer who follows in Anzaldúa's footsteps. In spite of the failure of others to correctly perceive her *Latinidad*, she proudly claims that identity as her own:

I'm going to be a Latina, *no a las buenas pero a las malas*, the hard way, because... that's the identity that, exactly inverse to my mother, they're always trying to take away from me, because 'I'm white like you, english-speaking like you, right-thinking like you, middle-class living like you, no matter what I say.'<sup>261</sup>

Unlike Levins-Morales' defiant statement and conviction that she will not succumb to the all-too-painful reminders that she is not loyal to any one culture or homeland, Behar continues to question her authenticity and delve deeper into her cultural and religious vulnerabilities. As a member of the greater Jewish Diaspora, her true affinities were supposed to be with Israel, the true homeland of the Jews. How could she, therefore, be both loyal to her ancestral homeland and that of her birthplace?

---

<sup>261</sup> Behar, *Juban*, 162.

Was being Cuban incompatible with being Jewish if it meant choosing one nationality over another? Behar echoes the difficulty she had straddling multiple cultures and defying familial demands in the following passage from *The Vulnerable Observer*. The intense dilemma of dislocation from her family and her homelands is presented in *The Vulnerable Observer* met with a potential solution in "Juban América."

I struggled inwardly with the conflict between my secret, forbidden attachment to Cuba and my family and ancestral loyalties: after all, where do we belong as Jews if not in Eretz Israel, the land of Israel?

While the Boston community where I have made my home represents my most inclusive compromise embracing Rybishevish, La Habana, and Miami, my choices had always been shadowed by my loss of homeland and compounded by my family's unyielding demand for loyalty.<sup>262</sup> ... You are either with us or not one of us. Out of their own vulnerabilities, they barred me from direct access to my own traditions, as both a Cuban and a Jew who wished to live a socially committed life.<sup>263</sup>

---

<sup>262</sup> Behar, *Observer*, 91.

<sup>263</sup> Behar, *Observer*, 94.

The questions that Behar posed and began to answer in her writing reflect issues in Jewish writing in Latin America since the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The push to assimilate combined with the simultaneous desire to hold onto one's original language and culture produced a rich literature that enlivened the cultural, religious and linguistic predicament of Jewish immigrants in Latin America.

In addition to the isolation she felt from her own family for trying to deny her access to her Cuban and Jewish identities, Behar struggled with the dilemma of discovering or deciding where she belonged in the world. She maintained no strong ties to Israel, which seemed to contradict the traditional sense of a Jewish homeland. Her sense of belonging to Cuba was overwhelming, but she continually questioned her entitlement to return to her beloved homeland. Once again, the feeling of inadequacy intensified the sense of dislocation and desire to put an end to her exilic state. "Me, this inauthentic Jubana who had been unhinged from Cuba at the age of five, what did I think I would find?"<sup>264</sup>

Ruth Behar's experience and reflections on her Jewish-Cuban self reaffirm the complexity of her hybrid identity.

---

<sup>264</sup> Behar, *Juban*, 166.

The experience of being wedged between her Eastern European and Sephardic Jewish affinities and Cuban loyalty within North American borders has propelled her towards the expansion of Anzaldúa's Borderlands in order to carve out a safe abode for Jewish-Latina/os through her writing. The experience that Saúl Sosnowski speaks of in the following quote addresses some of the awkwardness associated with being a Jewish Latin American. As Behar wrote, "To join together Latin American *and* Jewish, terms that are not 'normally' joined together, creates a shock effect; as Saúl Sosnowski puts it, one encounters 'astonished gazes and conflicting images of the accepted and simple clichés for both'"<sup>265</sup> Behar further develops the unrealistic and narrow expectations of Jews with regard to the language they speak, their countries of origin, and the cultures they practice. Behar synthesizes the erroneous perceptions of Jews and the seemingly "abnormal" condition of being a Latin American Jew, which, in reality, is rather common. In recognizing the ignorance and rejection of the Jewish Latino/a identity, Behar responds with the creation of the term "Juban," in the hope that the existence of such a word will authenticate the existence of such an identity.

---

<sup>265</sup> Behar, *Juban*, 163.

A Jew is not expected to have Spanish as a mother tongue, nor to be from Latin America. But in the Cuban Jewish milieu that I have known firsthand, these uncommon expectations exist in a common reality, a Cuban-Jewish sense of identity, of being-in-the-world. It is essential, Sosnowski feels, to 'protect the hyphen' in the Latin American-Jewish sense of identity. The hyphen highlights the unease produced by the incorporation, even smuggling, of the Jew into the monolithic territory of Latin America. It also signals 'the inability of language to produce a composite word and of beings to give birth to a gray, melted self.' And yet, in the Cuban-Jewish case, there *is* a composite word, 'Juban,' which gets at a sense of *mestizaje* rooted in a creative amalgam that is different from assimilation. Such an amalgam is possible because of the criollism at the center of Cuban culture.<sup>266</sup>

Behar is referring to Fernando Ortíz's belief that Cuba was and continues to be a rich *mestizaje* of cultures, languages, and peoples. The term "Juban" is befitting because it reflects one of the multiple cultural amalgams

---

<sup>266</sup> Behar, *Juban*, 164.

in Cuba. The explanation that being mestizo/a is the norm in Cuba and Latin America invalidates the notion that one has to be a "pure Latina" or a pure anything. There are no criterion that one has to meet in order to be considered a legitimate Cuban, Jew, Latina/o, etc.

With regard to the power the term "Juban" has, one cannot help but think back on Margo Glantz's comical, yet profound examination of nomenclature. Her belief that the continued use of a name confirms the existence and endurance of a particular culture directly applies to Behar's creation of the term "Juban." Behar is essentially authenticating and ensuring the Jewish-Cuban identity and people. The term, which is clever and captivating, helps to ensure the survival and recognition of the Jewish-Cuban identity for as long as the term is employed.

Behar cites a comical and clever example of the Cuban heterogeneity that Gustavo Pérez-Firmat recorded in *The Cuban Condition*. He attended a Cuban-Jewish wedding in Miami where the well-known Cuban singer, Willie Chirino, performed. Although not Jewish, the musical fusion of both Jewish and Cuban cultures by Chirino was striking.

His example is a Cuban-Jewish wedding that took place in Miami, where the Cuban singer Willie Chirino performed a version of the Jewish song



'Hava-Nagilah' in *guarancó* rhythm, creating a 'Havana-gilah' to which people danced 'a *horah* with *salsa* steps.' For Pérez-Firmat, there was 'something peculiarly Cuban in that irreverent, creole translation of this Hebrew song. And I agree with him. But there was also, I would add, something peculiarly *Juban* in that irreverent, creole acceptance of Willie Chirino's 'Havana-gilah' as something to which you could dance a *horah con salsa*. If only a *Juban* would have had the bicultural fluency to make sense of that creole language - and invent a way to dance to it. *Jubans* have outdone the *ajiacó* sense of identity. They don't just have a translation sensibility; they are themselves translated people.<sup>267</sup>

It is clear that the blending of Jewish and Cuban traditions, music, and cultures is not only accomplished by Jewish-Cubans or "*Jubans*," but by non-Jewish Cubans as well. The linguistic amalgam that Chirino produced sparked a need in Behar for fellow *Jubans* to create a dance to the *horah con salsa* and, simultaneously provide an accurate translation of the linguistic and cultural amalgam.

---

<sup>267</sup> Behar, *Juban*, 164-165

Behar further elaborates the importance of the "Juban" identity, as well as the imaginary space of "Juba," by once again incorporating Salman Rushdie's notion of exile and homeland. Rushdie believes that immigrants cannot return to or recover their original homelands, and therefore, imaginative and soul-searching writing is the only answer. Writers who are exiles, emigrants, and expatriates are haunted by the desire to 'reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt,' notes Rushdie. Yet the real distance from the places left behind 'almost inevitably means,' Rushdie is careful to add, 'that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands.'

This is the second time in Behar's writing that she quotes this exact passage from Rushdie. Perhaps it seems repetitive to do so; however, the notion of trying to reclaim an irretrievable homeland directly impacts Behar's creation of "Juba" and her literary homeland. Behar explains it in the following manner:

This essay has been a first effort on my part to begin to imagine Juba, a Juba that I want to build, salt pillar by salt pillar, from both

family stories and my own struggle to reclaim all the little forgotten villages of my mestiza identity, Villages, *pueblitos*, mean a good deal to me. I went into anthropology because I thought that a discipline rooted in the foreignness of other worlds would help me to solve the puzzle of my identity.<sup>268</sup>

It is evident that "Juban América" is an integral component of her literary homeland. As she wrote, it is a work in progress, and largely collaborative, because it comprises the voices of her parents, her grandparents, writers and friends from various Latin American countries, and so many others from Cuba and the United States. Although it is the act of writing that establishes her new homeland and identity, the physical return does play a role in the foundation of a homeland. Salman Rushdie's belief that a true return to one's original homeland is impossible due to the changes that have occurred in both the immigrant and the country since his/her departure is not challenged by Behar's trips back to Cuba. What she finds there is not what she had hoped or needed it to be. Just as Rushdie explained, it is often more painful to physically return to one's homeland, if a return is even possible. Behar is

---

<sup>268</sup> Behar, *Juban*, 165.

devastated to discover that Cuba neither recognizes her, nor does she recognize it. There are a few places with familiar faces, and the old towns and businesses bear little resemblance to her childhood memories. Withstanding that disappointment and melancholy, Behar's determination and need to carve out an inhabitable, flexible, and welcoming space in Cuba by melding the past with the present, ultimately prevail. Her nostalgia and insatiable desire to taste, feel, and breathe in Cuba sustain her Jubana identity and give life to her imaginary homeland:

With the taste of that rum cake in my mouth, I begin to know why my family made Cuba their promised land. I begin to know, too, that I must keep reconnecting with the Cuba that my family refused, the Cuba they are afraid of and that I believed I also should fear, the Cuba that dawdled on my visa and almost didn't let me in, but also the Cuba of the young baker in Agramonte who offered me rum cake because I happened to be walking by. To imagine it all is not enough. This Jubana will have to taste the salt of memory and of loss, but

she will also have to make a *riconcito* for herself  
in the Cuba of the present.<sup>269</sup>

---

<sup>269</sup> Behar, *Juban*, 168.

## Conclusion

The literary works analyzed in this study by Margo Glantz, Nora Glickman, and Ruth Behar record and reflect on the lives of individuals in a state of permanent reconfiguration. They maintain an interdisciplinary approach to writing in order to communicate their complex and hybrid identities in a vividly imagined literary realm. Their multi-genre style of writing allows them to engage in a polyphonic dialogue with their readers, which they sustain in order to bring an end to their psychological and physical exiles from their various homelands. Their post-exilic discourse, the writing itself, becomes their imaginary homeland.

Beginning with Margo Glantz, a careful analysis of her autobiographical text, *Las genealogías*, demonstrated the ways in which she harmonized various writing styles to convey her hybridity as a writer and as an individual. The way in which Glantz recorded and examined her life and that of her parents from personal, historical, anthropological, inquisitive and ethical standpoints is characteristic of her hybrid writing style.

*Las genealogías* was the first work in which Glantz engaged in the *post-exilic discourse*. She transcended space and time by attempting to retrieve lost and forgotten personal and family memories, her parents' stories of life in Russia, their immigration to Mexico, and their slow and often perilous assimilation and integration into Mexican society. As a child of immigrants, Glantz always felt estranged from her parents' native homeland, as well as her country of citizenship. Her dislocation from the past and the Jewish community of Mexico with which she did not at all identify, as well as her surreal connection to Catholicism, propelled her into a state of psychological exile. Although her writing is not at all emblematic of one who is in a constant state of crisis, the discovery of her true identity was contingent upon the establishment of a legitimate homeland.

Although not in crisis, Margo engaged in a tireless search for self through the composition of *Las genealogías* followed by *No pronunciarás*, in which she explored the origins of names and their consequent identities. *No pronunciarás* has distinctly religious overtones, as the original privilege of naming inanimate and animate objects was reserved for the divine. Glantz haphazardly explored the assumption of that privilege by human beings and the

power that one had to acquire in order to achieve such social and economic status. She provided examples of certain historic names and the profound effect the granting of such names had upon individuals for generations to come. The significance of the name, be it positive or negative, forever altered the destiny of an individual who bore the name of a Catholic saint, a Jewish prophet, or a condemned victim of religious impropriety. One's fate was essentially sealed upon receiving one's name at birth.

Glantz pointed out yet another critical element contained in a name: proof that the culture from which the name originated was still maintained and had managed to evade extinction. She provides examples of various names that arise from particularly obscure Greek and Roman origins, yet are still given to children in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. As oblivious as people may be to ancient cultures and civilizations, the maintenance of a cultural, religious, or ethnic name indicates that the culture and/or civilization still maintains a place in the contemporary world.

Although a religiously unbiased text, the phrase *No pronunciarás* is clearly Biblical, and translates to "You shall not take the Lord's name in vain." To make a strong connection with *Las genealogías*, the preservation of her



parents' culture, Jewish identity, memories, and legacies is reflected in the creation of the text *No pronunciarás*. Just as the composition of her family memoirs immortalized her parents, and their hybrid Jewish, Russian, and Mexican identities, *No pronunciarás* demonstrated that the mere utterance of a name and its maintenance throughout the generations ensures cultural survival. It is, therefore, evident that the composition of *Las genealogías* and *No pronunciarás* is proof of Glantz's reliance on multi-genre writing to create a literary homeland where a culture's survivability is ensured and where identities can be discovered and safeguarded.

Nora Glickman continued the tradition of rescuing and exploring hybrid identities in the four plays analyzed in this study: *Liturgias*, *Noticias del suburbio*, *Un día en Nueva York*, and *Una tal Raquel Lieberman*. She combined multiple genres under the guise of theatrical performance, as she incorporated historical facts, personal experiences, cultural perspectives, and anecdotal writing. Her characters often embodied her own fears, cultural crises, struggle to assimilate, and academic research, as in the case of Raquel Lieberman. The plays addressed in this study largely reflect the Latina/o experience in the United States, however, the works fall outside of and expand the

parameters of traditional Latina writing by including the Latin American Jewish immigrant experience in the United States and in the Southern Cone.

Beginning with *Liturgias*, the Latina/o struggle to assimilate and be accepted in the United States was the focal point of the play. The characters explored and denied their secret heritage with equal fervor in an effort to uncover their true identities or continue to subvert them. The main characters, Blanca Díaz-Rael, and her husband Luis, found themselves in direct opposition to one another, as Blanca wished to confront and embrace her secret Jewish identity, while Luis refused to be doubly marginalized as a Latino and as a Jew. Critical questions arose as to whether one could be Jewish, Catholic, Latino/a, and American all at once, and the response was that such a hybrid identity often conflicted with traditional cultural norms and societal expectations. The re-enactment of this crisis in the form of a theatrical performance provided an imaginary space in which such dialogues can be had and resolutions can be made.

*Noticias del suburbio* also took place in North America and directly addressed the difficulties in being a Latina immigrant in the United States. Glickman's characters confronted and challenged traditional stereotypes of Latin

American immigrants living in the United States while they worked together to empower themselves, become independently successful, and redefine traditional gender roles.

All of the main characters were women who combated unseen men who threaten to undermine their importance and control their lives. Although the balance between Alicia, the Latin American divorcée who hesitantly assumed the role of the "husband" in order to support her children, and Magda, the "ideal" housekeeper who substituted as the mother of Alicia's children while she was at work, seemed unequal at first, ultimately the two women stood on equal ground. Although their socioeconomic differences were significant, Alicia and Magda did not allow their discrepancies to drive a wedge between them; instead, they overcame their differences, defied mutual stereotypes and traditional gender roles, and became a unified force and entrepreneurial team.

The bond that was formed between Alicia, who questioned her authentic Latin American identity after having assimilated to such a great extent to affluent North American suburban life, and Magda, who was struggling to assimilate into North American society while maintaining her Ecuadorian culture, was established within the imaginary literary space created by Glickman. The tensions

that were resolved between the two women of different socioeconomic backgrounds and the identities that were discovered through their collaborative empowerment occurred in an imagined space.

*Noticias de suburbio* is a creative blend of tales of, integration, identity reconfiguration and self-discovery by Latin American women living in the United States. However imaginary, the theatrical piece became an extension of Glickman's literary homeland where her characters explored and reclaimed their true identities.

*Un día en Nueva York* is yet another story of immigrant women struggling to find themselves and acceptance in a foreign city. While not an exclusively Jewish piece, the main characters were both Jewish, although they did not share the same native homeland. Luisa was an Argentine immigrant in her thirties living in the New York suburbs and working as a college professor; Golda was an immigrant in her eighties from Poland also living in New York, yet without a known address. Both women found themselves lost in a city in which they felt like perpetual foreigners and exiles. Although their circumstances and backgrounds were quite distinct, they shared a pervasive exilic consciousness.

Luisa and Golda embodied the hardships of Latin American and Jewish immigrants living in the United States, New York in particular, yet they failed to recognize their commonalties. Although neither one escaped their psychological exile during the course of the play, they falsely perceived the other as having found her way in the world. As much as the play became an imaginary space in which these two women had the opportunity to intersect and begin to work through their cultural and personal estrangement, it was also a unique opportunity for them to conceive of a post-exilic consciousness. Both women erroneously misperceived the other's happiness, stability, success, and survival skills, yet the misperception gave them hope that they, too, would be able to bring an end to their psychological exile. *Un día en Nueva York* provided an imaginary glimpse at the post-exilic consciousness that Glickman so clearly achieves in her writing.

The final play analyzed in this study by Glickman was *Una tal Raquel Lieberman*. Distinct from the preceding three, *Una tal Raquel Lieberman* takes place in Buenos Aires, Argentina. It is consistent, however, with the immigrant theme and the search for identity and self-acceptance.

As it was demonstrated in the analysis of the play, Raquel embodied the struggles and perils of being an immigrant in Buenos Aires. She fell victim to a prostitution ring under the guise of a traditional Jewish community that promised to replicate the life Raquel had left behind in Poland. The play explored the specific and extreme circumstances of a Jewish immigrant tricked into a life of debauchery and the seemingly inescapable psychological exile from herself and her native homeland. The traditional issues confronting immigrants, including assimilation, adaptation to the new culture and language, and a profound longing to recuperate one's lost identity and homeland were all central to Raquel's experience.

The final critical element of the immigrant experience analyzed in *Una tal Raquel Lieberman* was the focus on the Jewish immigrant experience in Latin America. Just as Glickman accomplished in the preceding plays, she expanded the scope of Latina literature by incorporating the Jewish experience into traditionally Catholic Latina writing. The expansion is indicative of Glickman's unique writing style, as she defied the norms of traditional Latina writing, incorporated historical facts into the theatrical piece, infused her characters with personal experience and per-

spective, and ultimately educated her audience about less widely known experiences of immigrants in the Americas.

The last writer analyzed in this study was Ruth Behar. Like Glickman, her personal writing and documentary film span multiple geographic regions, cultures and experiences. As a writer and a self-ethnographer, she explored her multilayered identity in order to retrieve her lost homelands and identity. After several trips back to her native Cuba, Behar concluded that the life she had left behind was irretrievable. Her only recourse was to write her new identity and homeland into existence, which is exactly what she accomplished with *The Vulnerable Observer*, *Bridges to Cuba/ Puentes a Cuba*, *Women Writing Culture*, "Juban America," and *Adio Kerida*.

It was in *The Vulnerable Observer* that Behar admitted to her intimate connection to her ethnographic studies and anthropological writing. She consciously defied the norms of ethnographic writing by personalizing her subjects' experiences and risking objectivity for the sake of producing more authentic writing. Her untraditional writing, therefore, became unclassifiable according to anthropology guidelines, and she found herself forging a new identity and a new style of writing within and outside of her discipline. Taking on the role as an ethnographer of her own

life in *The Vulnerable Observer* became her *modus operandi* for rescuing her lost identity and homeland, saving her subjects from oblivion, and composing her future texts.

*Bridges to Cuba/Puentes a Cuba* was a continuation of Behar's search for self and a true homeland. She collaborated with fellow Cuban exiles living in the United States, and women still living on the island, in order to rescue and revive the Cuba of the past and ensure that their homeland would not be lost forever or forgotten.

Behar's own essays and poems, combined with those of her contributors, formed an imaginary yet indestructible bridge between Cuba and the United States that replicated Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands*. The imaginary bridge essentially became the substitute for the writers' lost *patria* and the expansion of Behar's literary homeland to include other writers in a state of psychological and/or physical exile.

*Women Writing Culture* became a dialogic site among female cultural anthropologists who attempted to redefine ethnography and the relationship between the observer and the observed. The presentation of minority cultures and voices was of central significance to the numerous essayists, and was directly related to Behar's own hybrid



identity and the struggle to represent her cultural dichotomies.

Behar explored her hybridity as a Cuban, Latina, and Jewish woman of color, as she calls herself, who straddled too many cultural, ethnic, and national fault lines to feel at home and accepted within the confines of just one. Her profound sense of loss of her homelands propelled her to redefine anthropological writing in order to write herself and her homeland into existence.

"Juban América" is undeniably one of Behar's most creative constructions, both as a neologism and as an identity. Her amalgamation of the Jewish and Cuban identities within the borders of the United States resulted in the creation of a "Juban" identity that satisfied her quest for hybrid terminology and a legitimate Jewish-Cuban identity.

The term "Juban" not only accounts for Behar's Jewish and Cuban backgrounds, but her identity as a Latina as well. Instead of relying upon the hyphen to account for her hybridity, which essentially became the dwelling place of many transculturated individuals, Behar forges a new space and a new name for what she is. Although it is "América" where the cultural intersection takes place, the "Juban" identity transcends physical space and implicates

the creation of an imaginary space where the new identity can be explored and fostered. That imaginary space was conceived in the written word and materialized on the page. Behar, and other Jewish, Cuban, and Latina writers like her, become citizens of the pages of their texts through their unorthodox and unconventional writing.

The final work analyzed in this study is Behar's documentary *Adio Kerida* which conveys contemporary life in Cuba and retraces Behar's lost childhood in Havana and surrounding villages. It is the product of numerous trips back to Cuba over several years and the relentless search for Behar's displaced identity and homelands.

Through the course of interviews with predominantly Afro-Cubans, and visits to her old neighborhoods, Behar began to bridge the gap between her and the island. Although she revisited her childhood home and reconnected with people from her past, she was not able to reconstruct and re-animate the lost Cuba of her youth. However, the filming of her documentary became a critical step in the creation of her imaginary space and an extension of the parameters of the literary homeland that she had established in her earlier written works.

Margo Glantz, Nora Glickman and Ruth Behar have realized the "Imagined Communities" that Benedict Anderson

discussed and elaborated in his critical text of the same title. They redefined the parameters of national and cultural identities and demonstrated that a literary homeland is far more practical and flexible than a geographic one. Although they have been engaged in an exhaustive search for a concrete homeland that speaks to their cultural, linguistic, ethnic and religious hybridity, these three writers ultimately discovered that no such physical place exists for them. Their ancestral homelands no longer bear resemblance to those in their parents' memories, or their own youth, and their countries of origin do not account for their cultural, linguistic and religious plurality.

Speaking directly about the ineffectiveness of nationality to provide an adequate and satisfactory identity for all of its citizens, Anderson makes the following observation: "nationality, or as one might prefer to put it in view of that world's multiple significations, nation-less, as well as nationalism, are cultural artifacts of a particular kind."<sup>270</sup> If Anderson is indeed correct, then Glantz, Glickman, and Behar's creation of a literary homeland from which they derive their identities and imagined

---

<sup>270</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Versa, 1991) 4.

and irrevocable citizenship is completely legitimized. The belief that nationality and nationalism are "cultural artifacts" explains the prevalence of the diasporic consciousness and the perpetual search for one's true homeland. Glantz, Glickman, and Behar have poignantly demonstrated that the creation of a post-exilic discourse that gave rise to their literary homeland is the ideal anathema to the oppressive diasporic consciousness caused by psychological and/or physical exile.

Anderson's nation-less proposition is compatible with Daniel and Jonathan Boyarin's belief that a concrete homeland for the Jews in particular is unnecessary, because they have maintained a long history of living everywhere but the Biblically prescribed homeland of Israel. The historic diasporic consciousness has become obsolete, in their opinion, as the probability of return to the land of Israel is incompatible with most Jews living in the "Diaspora/ diaspora." For Glantz, Glickman, and Behar, it is clear that their notion of return has little correlation to Israel, but rather a homeland of memories, childhood experiences and ancestral heritage from a variety of sources. That intangible and irretrievable homeland that was, in effect, never based on a physical reality, according to the Boyarins' interpretation of diaspora/Diaspora,

is ideally replaced or replicated by way of the post-exilic discourse and the consequent creation of a literary homeland.

Glantz, Glickman, and Behar irrefutably respond to and promote the emerging dissolution of national, cultural, and geographic borders in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century that have historically determined identity formation. They have creatively responded to the historic dilemma of immigrants struggling to find their place in the world, by claiming an identity that emerges their imaginary transnational and transcultural homeland. Through their post-exilic discourse, engaged on the pages of their autobiographical, ethnographic, theatrical, critical, historical, cinematographic, and fictional texts, they become founders of a new genre that responds to a growing demand among scholars and immigrants alike for a literary realm that speaks to their emerging transculturated and transnational identities. In the end, by breaking historic rules of form, they have become permanent citizens of an imaginary homeland which they created, welcoming others who don't quite fit in wherever they are, to join them in this new and accepting land.. to become "People of the Book" as well.

## Bibliography

### Primary Bibliography

- Agosín, Marjorie. Uncertain Traveler: Conversations with Jewish Women Immigrants to America. Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 1999.
- , ed. Passion, Memory, and Identity: Latin American Jewish Women Writers. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999.
- , ed. The House of Memory: Stories by Jewish Women Writers of Latin America. New York: Feminist Press of the City University of New York, 1999.
- Baskin, Judith R., ed. Women of the Word; Jewish Women and Jewish Writing. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994.
- Behar, Ruth. Adio Kerida. Ann Arbor: LSA Media Services, 2002.
- . The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology That Breaks Your Heart. Boston: Beacon Press, 1996.
- , ed. Bridges to Cuba/Puentes a Cuba. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995.
- , ed. Women Writing Culture. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.

- . "Juban América." Poetics today. 16:1, Spring 1995, 151-170.
- . Poemas que vuelven a Cuba = Poems Returned to Cuba. Matanzas: Ediciones Vigía, 1995.
- . Translated Woman: Crossing the Border With Esperanza's Story. Boston: Beacon Press, 1993.
- . "Cuba y su diáspora." Puentelibre - Revista de Cultura. 2:5-6 (1895): 7-13.
- . "Questioning Otherness: Papers from the 1995 Distinguished International Lecture Series." Des Moines: Center for International and Comparative Studies, University of Iowa, 1995.
- Bettinger-López, Caroline. Cuban-Jewish Journeys: Searching for Identity, Home, and History in Miami. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2000.
- DiAntonio, Robert and Nora Glickman, eds. Traditions and Innovation: Reflections on Latin American Jewish Writing. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993.
- Glantz, Margo. Las genealogías. México, D.F.: Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1987.
- . "Mi escritura tiene..." Revista Iberoamericana. 132-3 (1985): 475-8.
- . "Fantasmas y jardines: Una familia lejana." Revista Iberoamericana. 48 (1982): 397-402.

- . Zona de derrumbe. Rosario: Beatriz Viterbo Editora, 2001.
- . Esquina de cintura. México, D.F.: Consejo Nacional para las cultura y las Artes, 1994.
- . La lengua en la mano. México, D.F.: Premía, 1983.
- . De la amorosa inclinación a enredarse en cabellos. México, D.F.: Ediciones Océano, 1984.
- . Síndrome de naufragios. México, D.F.: J. Mortiz, 1984.
- . El día de tu boda. México, D.F.: Martín Casillas Editores: Cultural SEP, 1982.
- . Doscientas ballenas azules: y cuatro caballos. México, D.F.: UNAM, 1981.
- No pronunciarás. México, D.F.: Premia editora de libros, 1980.
- . Intervención y pretexto. México, D.F.: UNAM, 1980.
- . Las mil y una calories: novela dietética. México, D.F.: Premía Editora, 1978.
- Glickman, Nora. "Jewish Women Writers in Latin America."  
Women of the Word: Jewish Women and Jewish Writing.  
 Ed. Judith Baskin. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994.
- . Teatro: Cuatro obras de Nora Glickman. Buenos Aires: Editorial Nueva Generación, 2000.



- . The Jewish White Slave Trade and the Untold Story of Raquel Lieberman. New York: Garland Publishing, 2000.
- . Mujeres, memorias y malogros. Buenos Aires: Milá, 1991.
- , ed. Argentine Jewish Theater: A Critical Anthology. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1996.
- . The Image of the Jew in Brazilian and Argentinian Literature. Thesis (Ph.D) New York University, 1978.
- Gordon, Deborah A. "Border Work: Feminist Ethnography and the Dissemination of Literacy." Women Writing Culture. Eds. Ruth Behar and Deborah A. Gordon. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995. 373-389.
- Kalechofsky, Roberta. The Global Anthology of Jewish Women Writers. Marblehead: Micah Press, 1990.
- Matza, Diane, ed. Sephardic-American Voices: Two Hundred Years of a Literary Legacy. Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 1992.
- Sheinin, David and Lois Baer Barr, eds. The Jewish Diaspora in Latin America: New Studies on History and Literature. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1996.
- Stavans, Ilan, ed. Tropical Synagogues: Short Stories by Jewish-Latin American Writers. New York: Holmes and Meier, 1994.

### Secondary Bibliography

- Ahmed, Sara. Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality. New York: Routledge, 2000.
- Alvarez Borland, Isabel. Cuban-American Literature of Exile: From Person to Persona. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998.
- Anderson, Benedict. Imagined Communities. New York: Verso, 1991.
- Anzaldúa, Gloria. Borderlands: The New Mestiza. San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1987.
- . Bridge Called My Back: Writings By Radical Women of Color. New York: Kitchen table: Women of Color Press, 1983.
- Aparicio, Frances R. and Susana Chávez-Silverman, eds. Tropicalizations: Transcultural Representations of Latinidad. Hanover: University of New England Press, 1997.
- Bacon, David. "World Conditions: The Anti-Immigrant Backlash." Z Magazine 6, no. 12 (December 1993): 19-21.
- Bammer, Angelika, ed. Displacements: Cultural Identities in Question. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994.

- Baskin, Judith R., ed. Women of the Word: Jewish Women and Jewish Writing. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994.
- Baumgarten, Murray. "Urban Life and Jewish Memory in the Tales of Moacyr Scliar and Nora Glickman." Tradition and Innovation. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987.
- Behar, Ruth. Women Writing Culture. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.
- Bettinger-López, Caroline. Cuban-Jewish Journeys: Searching for Identity, Home, and History in Miami. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2000.
- Bhabha, Homi K., ed. Nation and Narration. New York: Routledge, 1990.
- Blau DuPlessis, Rachel. Writing Beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth Century Women Writers. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985.
- Boyarin, Jonathan. Storm from Paradise: the politics of Jewish Memory. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992.
- Boyarin, Daniel and Jonathan. Powers of Diaspora: Two Essays on the Relevance of Jewish Culture. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002.

- Broe, Mary Lynn and Angela Ingram, eds. Women's Writing in Exile. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989.
- Butler, Judith. Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity. New York: Routledge, 1999.
- Caijao-Salas, Teresa, Margarita Vargas, Isidora Aguirre, Sabina Berman, Myrna Casas, Lidia Falcon. Women's Voices in Hispanic Theater. Metuchen: Scarecrow, 1993.
- Caijao-Salas and Margarita Vargas, eds. Women Writing Women: An Anthology of Spanish-American Theater of the 1980s. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997.
- Cambeiro, Fernando García y Graciela N. Ricci Della Grisa. Realismo mágico y consciencia mítica en América Latina. Argentina: Colección Estudios Latinoamericanos, 1985.
- Centro de estudios migratorios latinoamericanos. Estudios migratorios latinoamericanos. Buenos Aires: CEMLA, 1989.
- Centro de Investigación y Difusión de la Cultura Sefardí. Presencia sefardí en América Latina contemporánea. Buenos Aires: CIDICSEF, 1996.
- Chakravorty Spicak, Gayatri. In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics. New York: Routledge, 1988.

- Chiawei O'Hearn, Claudine, ed. Half and Half: [Writers on Growing Up Biracial and Bicultural]. New York: Pantheon Books, 1998.
- Chodorow, Nancy J. Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989.
- Cimet, Adina. Ashkenazi Jews in Mexico: Ideologies in the Structuring of a Community. New York: State University of New York Press, 1997.
- Clifford, James. Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997.
- Cortina, Regina, ed. Mexico: The Artist is a Woman. Providence: The Thomas J. Watson, Jr. Institute for International Studies, Brown University, 1995.
- Dalton, Diane G. The Woman in Question: Patterns of Self-Examination in Modern and Postmodern Ethnography. Thesis (M.A.) University of North Carolina Greensboro, 1998.
- DiAntonio, Robert and Nora Glickman, eds. Traditions and Innovation: Reflections on Latin American Jewish Writing. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993.

- Di Leonardo, Micaela, ed. Gender at the Crossroads of Knowledge: Feminist Anthropology in the Postmodern Era. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.
- Dominguez, Virginia. "Questioning Jews." American Ethnologist 20, no. 3 (1993): 618-24.
- Dorfman, Ariel. Heading South, Looking North: A Bilingual Journey. New York: Penguin Books, 1998.
- Duncan, Cynthia. "Theatrical Self-Consciousness." Latin American Women Dramatists. Catherine Larson and Margarita Vargas, eds. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998.
- Eagleton, Terry, Frederic Jameson and Edward Said. Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990.
- Eagleton, Terry. Literary Theory: An Introduction. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.
- . The Idea of Culture. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, Ltd., 2000.
- Fernández, Damián J. y Madeline Cámara Betancourt, eds. Cuba, The Elusive Nation: Interpretation of National Identity. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000.
- Finzi, Patricia, Eliahu Toker y Marcos Faerman, eds. El imaginario judío en la literatura de América Latina:

Visión y realidad. San Pablo: Grupo Editorial Shalom,  
1990.

Foster, David William. Cultural Diversity in Latin  
American Literature. Albuquerque: University of New  
Mexico Press, 1994.

---, ed. Cuban Writers On and Off the Island. New York:  
Twayne Publishers, 1999.

Frank, Gelya. "The Ethnographic Films of Barbara G.  
Myerhoff: Anthropology, Feminism, and the Politics of  
Jewish Identity." Women Writing Culture. Eds. Ruth  
Behar and Deborah A. Gordon. Berkeley: University of  
California Press, 1995. 207-232.

Fuentes, Mario Luis, ed. La dimensión en el tiempo:  
Autores nacidos en los años 1920-1930. México, D.F.:  
Ediciones Castillo, 1999.

Furuhashi, Yoshie. "Adio Kerida," 25 May 2003 00:38 UTC.  
[Http://Archives.econ.utah.edu/archives/Marxism/  
2003w20/msg00392.htm](http://Archives.econ.utah.edu/archives/Marxism/2003w20/msg00392.htm)

García-Pinto, Magdalena. Trans. Trudy Balch. Women  
Writers of Latin America: Intimate Histories. Austin:  
University of Texas Press, 1991.

Ginsburg, Faye and Anna Tsing, eds. Uncertain Terms:  
Negotiating Gender in American Culture. Boston:  
Beacon Press, 1990.

- Gladhart, Amalia. "Nothing's Happening: Performance as Coercion in Contemporary Latin American Theatre." Gestos: Teoría y Práctica del Teatro Hispánico 9:18 (1994 Nov): 93-112.
- . "Playing Gender." Latin American Literary Review 24:47 (1996 Jan-June): 59-89.
- Gliemmo, Graciela. "Señales de una autobiografía: las genealogías de Margo Glantz." Revista Monográfica. IX. (1993): 189-197.
- . "La transgresión que no cesa: Charla con la escritora mexicana." Feminaria 3:6 (1990 Nov.): 36-37.
- Gojman, Alicia. "Minorías, estado y movimientos de la clase media en México: Liga anti-china y judía." Judaica Latinoamericana. (1988).
- Goldberg, David Theo and Michael Krausz, eds. Jewish Identity. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993.
- Gordon, Deborah A. "Border Work: Feminist ethnography and the Dissemination of Literacy." Women Writing Culture. Eds. Ruth Behar and Deborah A. Gordon. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995. 373-389.
- Gordon, José, coord. Humanismo y cultura judía/textos de Margo Glantz. México, D.F.: UNAM, 1999.



- Gorodischer, Angélica. Esas malditas mujeres: Antología de cuentistas latinoamericanas. Rosario: Ameghino Editora, 1998.
- Grindal, Bruce and Frank Salamone, eds. Bridges to Humanity: Narratives on Anthropology and Friendship. Prospect Heights, Ill: Waveland Press, 1995.
- Gruen, Erich S. "Diaspora and Homeland." Diasporas and Exiles: Varieties of Jewish Identity. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.
- Gullestad, Marianne, ed. Imagined Childhoods: Self and Society in Autobiographical Accounts. Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1996.
- Gutiérrez, Ramón and Genaro Padilla, eds. Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage. Houston: Arte Público Press, 1993.
- Gutman, Daniel. "Servir a otros dioses: Consideraciones sobre el exilio judío y otros exilios." Noaj. 1:2 (1988): 22-5.
- Hawayek de Ezcurdia, Alejandro de la Mora, Enrique Movsovich, and Hugo Yoffe. "Immigrant Languages of Mexico." International Journal of The Sociology of Language. 96, 1992, 111-127.
- Heisler, Samuels. The Last Minyan in Havana. Chutzpah Publishing, 2000.

- Hellerstein, Kathryn. "In Exile in the Mother Tongue: Yiddish and the Woman Poet." Borders, Boundaries, and Frames- Cultural Criticism and Cultural Studies. Ed. Mae G. Henderson. New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Henderson, Mae, ed. Borders, Boundaries, and Frames- Cultural Criticism and Cultural Studies. New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Hind, Emily. "Historical arguments: Carlos Salinas and Mexican Women Writers." Discourse: Journal for Theoretical Studies in Media and Culture. 23:2 (2001): 82-101.
- Horno Delgado, Asunción, Eliana Ortega, Nina M. Scott and Nancy Saporta Sternbach, eds. Breaking Boundaries: Latina Writing and Critical Readings. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1989.
- Hurtado, Aída. The Color of Privilege: Three Blasphemies on Race and Feminism. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996.
- Hurtig, Janise and Kate Gillogly, eds. Gender Transformations. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990.
- Irigaray, Luce. "The Sex Which Is Not One." Feminisms: an anthology of literary theory and criticism. Eds.

- Robyn R. Warhol and Diana Price Herndl. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997.
- Israel, Raquel. "Territorios del exilio." Noaj. 1:2 (1988): 26-32.
- Jones, Ann Rosalind. "Writing the Body: Toward an Understanding of l'écriture feminine." Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism. Eds. Robyn R. Warhol and Diana Price Herndl. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997.
- Jorgensen, Beth E. "Margo Glantz: Tongue in Hand." Re-interpreting the Spanish-American Essay: Women Writers of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries. Ed. Doris Meyer. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995. 188-95.
- Keating, Ann Louise. "Feminist Literary Theory." An Encyclopedia of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Culture. Ed. Claude J. Summers. Chicago: glbtq, Inc., 2002.
- Koenig, Rachel, Sabina Berman, Gretchen Cryer, Lidia Falcon, Margaret Hollingsworth, Tess Onwueme. The Woman Playwright: Identity and Transformation. Metuchen: Scarecrow, 1993.
- Ker Conway, Jill. When Memory Speaks: Exploring the Art of Autobiography. New York: Vintage Books, 1999.

- Krauze, Enrique. Mexico: Biography of Power, A History of Modern Mexico, 1810-1996. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1997.
- Kalechofsky, Roberta. The Global Anthology of Jewish Women Writers. Marblehead: Micah Press, 1990.
- Kaminsky, Amy. Writing the Latin American Diaspora. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.
- Larson, Catharine and Margarita Vargas, eds. Latin American Women Dramatists. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998.
- Lavie, Smadar. "Border Poets: Translating By Dialogues." Women Writing Culture. Eds. Ruth Behar and Deborah A. Gordon. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995. 412-428.
- Leñero, Vicente. La nueva dramaturgia mexicana. México, D.F.: Ediciones El Milagro: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1996.
- Levine, Robert M. Tropical Diaspora: The Jewish Experience in Cuba. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1993.
- Lindstrom, Naomi. "No pronunciarás de Margo Glantz: Los nombres como señas de la imaginación cultural." Instituto Internacional de Literatura Iberoamericana. (1992): 275-87.

- Lockhart, Darrell B., ed. Jewish Writers of Latin America: A Dictionary. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1997.
- Lott, Bernice. "The Devaluation of Women's Competence." Journal of Social Issues. 41:4 (1985): 43-60.
- Lutz, Catherine. "The Gender of Theory." Women Writing Culture. Eds. Ruth Behar and Deborah A. Gordon. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995. 249-266.
- Maerker, Denise. Mujeres y poder. México, D.F.: Hoja Casa Editorial, 2000.
- Maíz-Peña, Magdalena y Luís H. Peña, eds. Modalidades de representación al sujeto auto/bio/gráfico femenino. Grafo Print Editores, 1997.
- Maiz-Peña, Magdalena. "Sujeto, género y representación autobiográfica: *Las genealogías de Margo Glantz*." Confluencia: Revista Hispánica de Cultura y Literatura 12:2 (1997): 75-87.
- Martínez, Elizabeth. "Latino Politics: Scapegoating Immigrants." Z Magazine. 6:12 (December 1993) 22-27.
- Martínez, Elena M. "La problemática de la mujer en los textos de Julio Ortíz Griffin, Mireya Robles y Nora Glickman." Escritores inmigrantes hispanos y la

familia. Ed. Silvio Torres-Saillant. Jackson Heights: Ollantay, 1989.

Martinez de Olcoz, Nieves. "Decisiones de la máscara neutra: Dramaturgia femenina y fin de siglo en América Latina." Latin American Theatre Review 31:2 (1998 Spring): 3, 5-16.

--- Teatro de mujer y culturas de movimiento en América Latina. Santiago: Editorial Cuarto Propio, 2000.

Matza, Diane, ed. Sephardic-American Voices: Two Hundred Years of a Literary Legacy. Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 1992.

Messinger Cypess, Sandra. "Dramaturgia femenina y transposición histórica." Alba de América: Revista Literaria 7:12-13 (1989 July): 283-304.

Miller, Nancy K. Getting Personal: Feminist Occasions and Other Autobiographical Acts. New York: Routledge, 1991.

Miller, Tom. Cuba: True Stories. San Francisco: Traveler's Tales, 2001.

Mindlin, José. "Literatura y libertad." El imaginario judío en la literatura de América Latina: Visión y Realidad. Eds. Patricia Finzi, Eliahu Toker y Marcus Faerman. Buenos Aires: Grupo Editorial Shalom, 1990.

- Nagy-Zekmi, Silvia. Paralelismos transatlánticos: Postcolonialismo y narrativa femenina en América Latina y Africa del Norte. Providence: Ediciones Inti, 1996.
- Nelson, Cary and Larry Grossberg, eds. Marxism and the interpretation of Culture. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988.
- Nencel, Lorriane and Peter Pels, "Introduction: Critique and Deconstruction of Anthropological Authority." Constructing Knowledge: Authority and Critique in Social Sequence. Eds. Lorraine Nencel and Peter Pels (London: Sage Publications, 1992) 17.
- Nudler, Julio. Tango judío- Del ghetto a la milonga. Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1998.
- Ortíz, Fernando. Contrapunteo cubano. La Habana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, c1983.
- Otero-Krauthammer, Elizabeth. "Integración de la identidad judía en *Las genealogías* de Margo Glantz." Revista Iberoamericana. LI. 132-3 (1985): 867-73.
- Oyarzun, Kerny, Ed. Bordering Difference: Culture and Ideology in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Mexico. Riverside: University of California Press, 1991.
- Pavel, Thomas. "Exile as Romance and Tragedy." Exile and Creativity: Signposts, Travelers, Outsiders, Backward

- Glances. Ed. Susan Rubin Suleiman. Durham: Duke University Press, 1998.
- Pelletieri, Osvaldo, ed. El teatro y su crítica. Buenos Aires: Galerna, 1998.
- Pérez, León. La identidad reprimida: Judíos negros. Buenos Aires: Editorial Galena, 1968.
- Pérez-Firmat, Gustavo. Life on the Hyphen: The Cuban-American Way. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994.
- . The Cuban Condition: Translation and Identity in Modern Cuban Literature. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Rich, Adrienne. "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Revision." On Lies, Secrets, and Silence: Selected Prose 1966-1978. New York: Norton, 1979, 35-38.
- Robertson, Susan L. Women, America, and Movement - Narratives of Relocation. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1998.
- Rosenberg, Ruth. "The New Jewish-American Literature." Melus: The Journal for the Society for the Study of Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States. 8:2 (1981). 48-56.



- Saldívar, José David. Border Matters: Remapping American Cultural Studies. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.
- Sayers Peden, Margaret. Out of the Volcano: Portraits of Contemporary Mexican Artists. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991.
- Schimovich, Flora. "Nora Glickman: Una propuesta utópica de comunión entre mujeres." Teatro de Nora Glickman. Buenos Aires: Editorial Nueva Generación, 2000.
- Seidel, Michael. Exile and the Narrative Imagination. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986.
- Sefchovich, Sara. Mujeres en espejo. México, D.F.: Folios Ediciones, 1983.
- Seligson, Silvia. Los judíos en México: Un estudio preliminar. México, D.F.: Centro de Investigaciones Superiores en Antropología Social, 1983.
- Senkman, Leonardo. "Introduction." Noaj. 1:2 (1988): 2-3.
- Sheinin. Eds. David and Lois Baer Barr. The Jewish Diaspora in Latin America: New Studies on History and Literature. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1996.
- Sklar, Deidre. "Can Bodylore Be Brought to Its Senses?" Journal of American Folklore. 107:143 (1994): 9-22.

- Socolovsky, Maya. "Moving Beyond the Mint Green Walls: An Examination of (Auto)Biography and Border in Ruth Behar's *Translated Woman*." Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies 19:3 (1998): 72-97.
- Sosnowski, Saúl. La orilla inminente: escritores judíos argentinos. Buenos Aires: Editorial Legasa, 1987.
- Spitta, Silvia. "Transculturation, the Caribbean, and the Cuban-American Imaginary." Tropicalizations: Trans-cultural Representations of Latinidad. Eds. Frances R. Aparicio and Susana Chávez-Silverman. Hanover: University of New England Press, 1997.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakrovorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the interpretation of Culture*. Eds. Cary Nelson and Larry Grossberg. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988.
- Stacey, Judith. "Can There Be a Feminist Ethnography?" Women's Studies International Forum II. No. I (1988): 22-23.
- Stavans, Ilan. The Hispanic Condition: Reflections on Culture and Identity in America. New York: Harper Collins Press, 1995.
- . The Essential Stavans. New York: Routledge: 2000.
- , ed. Growing Up Latino: Memoirs and Stories. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1993.

- , ed. Tropical Synagogues: Short Stories by Jewish-Latin American Writers. New York: Holmes and Meier, 1994.
- . The Inveterate Dreamer: Essays and Conversations on Jewish Culture. University of Nebraska Press, 2001.
- . Mutual Impressions: Writers from the Americas Reading One Another. Durham: Duke University Press, 1999.
- . On Borrowed Words: A Memoir of Language. Viking Press, 2001.
- Suárez, Norma, ed. Fernando Ortíz y la cubanidad. La Habana: Ediciones Unión, 1996.
- Suleiman, Susan Rubin, ed. Exile and Creativity: Signposts, Travelers, Outsiders, Backward Glances. Durham: Duke University Press, 1998.
- Summers, Claud J., ed. An Encyclopedia of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Culture, Chicago: glbtq, Inc., 2002.
- Todorov, Tzvetan. The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other. New York: Harper Perennial, 1984.
- . Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogical Principle. Trans. Wlad Godzich. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.
- Troyano, Alina. I, Carmelita Tropicana: Performing Between Cultures. Boston: Beacon Press, 2000.

- Valdivieso, Mercedes. "Conversación con Margo Glantz."  
Literatura Chilena: Creación y Crítica. 9:1 (1985):  
 32-34.
- Vásquez, Ana. "De rupturas y distancias." Noaj. 1:2  
 (1988): 56-61.
- Walden, Daniel. "Parallels Between Chicano and Jewish-  
 American Writing." MELUS. 8:2, (Summer 1981), 57-61.
- Warhol Robyn R. and Diana Price Herndl, eds. Feminisms: An  
 Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism. New  
 Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997.
- Wettstein, Howard, ed. Diasporas and Exiles: Varieties of  
 Jewish Identity. Berkeley: University of California  
 Press, 2002.
- Yaeger-Kaplan, Alice. "On Language Memoir" Displacements:  
 Cultural Identities in Question. Bloomington: Indiana  
 University Press, 1994.
- Yañez, Mirta, ed. Cubana: Contemporary Fiction by Cuban  
 Women. Boston: Beacon Press, 1998.