
Hemispheric American Studies

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13. I mean the term "circumcoceanic" to recall Joseph Roach's conception of a "circum-Atlantic world (as opposed to a transatlantic one) [which] insists on the centrality of the diasporic and genocidal histories of Africa and the Americas, North and South, in the creation of the culture of modernity" (see Roach's *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1996], 4).
14. Michael S. Murashige, "Karen Tei Yamashita: Interview," in *Words Matter: Conversations with Asian American Writers*, edited by King-kok Cheung (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000), 320-342, 332.
15. Lesser, *Negotiating National Identity*, 148.
16. Ibid.
17. See Jeffrey Lesser, "Japanese, Brazilians, Nikkei: A Short History of Identity Building and Homemaking," in *Searching for Home Abroad: Japanese Brazilians and Transnationalism*, ed. Jeffrey Lesser (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 1-20.
18. David Cleary provides a helpful overview of the significance of Freyre to the formation of Brazilian national identity in the early twentieth century in "Race, Nationalism, and Social Theory in Brazil: Rethinking Gilberto Freyre," Working Paper 99-09, David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, Harvard University, online at www.transcomm.ox.ac.uk/working%2520papers/cleary.pdf (accessed January 5, 2006).
19. Alex Woloch, *The One vs. the Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003), 14.
20. Ibid., 17-18.
21. Ursula K. Heise, "Local Rock and Global Plastic: World Ecology and the Experience of Place," *Comparative Literature Studies* 41 (2004): 126-152.
22. Ibid., 139.
23. See Rody's "The Transnational Imagination" for a discussion of *Tropic of Orange* as a "border novel" in the tradition of Chicano literatures.
24. An estimated 200,000 dekasegi currently live in Japan, mostly in Japanese Brazilian communities, which are the communities that are of particular interest to Yamashita. Daniel Touro Linger's *No One Home: Brazilian Selves Remade in Japan* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2001) offers an illuminating study of the dekasegi phenomenon and experience.

The Northern Borderlands and Latino Canadian Diaspora

RACHEL ADAMS

The title of Carmen Aguirre's play *¿Que Pasa with La Raza, eh?* (2000) entices us with a provocative fusion of linguistic and cultural referents.¹ *La raza*, a synonym for *la gente* or *el pueblo* (the people), refers to the imagined community of Latin American people of diverse races and backgrounds. The juxtaposition of English and Spanish words implies an audience familiar with both languages. Most intriguingly, the interjection "eh" at the end of a question written largely in Spanish gestures to a Canadian interlocutor. Beginning with the inverted question mark particular to Spanish and ending with Canadian English, Aguirre's title announces a drama that will span the hemisphere. In its representation of Latino community, the play itself addresses such familiar themes as the struggle for cultural expression, the perils of border crossing, the exploitation of migrant workers, and encounters with racism.² What makes *¿Que Pasa?* distinctive is that, where we might expect it to be set somewhere in the southwestern United States, it actually takes place in Vancouver. Its Latino characters' search for self-definition unfolds in the context of a critique of Canadian multiculturalism, and it refers to "America" as a synonym for the entire hemisphere rather than for the United States alone. Throughout the play, an enormous, upside-down map of Latin America hangs behind an otherwise bare stage.³ At the beginning, a slide projects the words "South America," also upside-down, onto the map, introducing a performance that will confuse the familiar geographies of Latino diaspora. But rather than literally turning the map on its head, as this image might suggest, *¿Que Pasa?* moves the border north, giving center stage to Canadian Latino communities that are virtually unknown south of the 49th parallel.

Despite the relatively small size of those communities, it is worth paying attention to the cultural representations they have generated because they can lead to new perspectives on the relationship between hemisphere and nation that is one of the principal subjects of this volume. The hemisphere

has become an attractive framework for Americanists eager to shake off the field's association with the nation-state. Acknowledging the plurality of Americas that lie beyond U.S. borders has been a healthy corrective to the tendency within American Studies to conflate America with the United States. Many efforts to remap the field have found particular inspiration in Chicano Studies, which treats the U.S.-Mexico border as a transnational contact zone linking the United States to Latin America. However, Canada is rarely mentioned in such scholarship, and virtually nothing has been written about Canada's Latino population within the context of the hemisphere.⁴ In what follows, I will argue that drawing Canada into this emerging interdisciplinary conversation is not simply an additive move, but one that has the potential to alter the way we currently think about the borderlands and the Americas.

Looking at the hemisphere from a perspective that grows out of U.S.-Mexico border studies, we tend to see borders in an entirely negative light. Borders restrict human mobility, perpetuate inequalities, and create artificial divisions among peoples and environments. However, borders can also be a means of protection and a guarantor of rights and services to those who reside within them. In the nineteenth century, crossing the U.S.-Canadian border was so important to escaping slaves that they equated Canada with the Promised Land. In the twentieth century, many Canadians look to the border as the last line of defense against the hegemony of U.S. culture and politics.⁵ Their calls for more stringent regulation of the border are motivated by quite different political convictions than those articulated by the U.S. conservatives who advocate the erection of a massive fence along the border with Mexico. Without romanticizing Canada as the antithesis to all that is wrong with the United States, we can still acknowledge that including it in our understanding of the hemisphere encourages us to think about American borders in more nuanced ways. Canada adds an important third term to scholarship on the hemisphere, which is often framed in terms of a dichotomy between the United States (or the more amorphous North America) and Latin America. With Latin American nations, Canada shares concerns about free trade, the regional impact of globalization, and the ubiquity of U.S. culture. But like the United States, it has become a major destination for immigrants because of its political stability and promise of economic opportunity. Globalization and changing patterns of migration are creating new and more direct ties between Canada and Latin America. Recognizing these circumstances offers a way out of the bilateral framing of most conversations about the hemisphere, which, much like foreign relations in the region, tend to be mediated through the United States.

As is often the case, cultural critics are guided by insights that are already latent in literature and the arts. My contribution to this conversation will take place via a consideration of the Argentinian Canadian author Guillermo Verdecchia, whose plays and short stories imagine an America that extends from Toronto to Tierra del Fuego. Although he is clearly conversant in U.S.-Mexico

border studies, Verdecchia seeks to transform its symbolic geographies by deemphasizing the United States, while explicitly incorporating Canada into a symbolic mapping of the American hemisphere. I focus on his short story collection, *Citizen Suarez* (1997), and his play *Fronteras Americanas: (American Borders)* (1993), which are about the different forms of human mobility—migration, travel, flight—that link Canada to Latin America. Canadian history, settings, and cultural referents crop up frequently in these works, as if to highlight the fact that they are *not* about the United States. Verdecchia thus reminds us that the United States is not the only endpoint for immigration from Central and South America, nor is its border with Mexico the only meeting ground for Anglo- and Latin Americas. Hemisphere and nation are thus salient categories for understanding his work and, because the nation that most concerns him is Canada, his writing, in turn, provides an opportunity to think further about what it would mean to incorporate Canada into prevailing understandings of the American hemisphere.

Ultimately I argue that Verdecchia's expansive view of American borders must be understood, in part, as a form of situated knowledge that emerges from his location in Canada. Unlike the United States, Canada has only one border of any consequence, and the majority of its population lives within 100 miles of it.⁶ It has no border region comparable to the U.S. Southwest, with its distinctive culture and distance from centers of national power. Instead, Canada as a whole is often characterized as a "border society." As Roger Gibbens explains of the Canadian border region, "the most important impact comes not from proximity of the international boundary itself, but from the more general proximity of the United States."⁷ I suggest that Verdecchia's view of the borderlands as a pervasive cultural phenomenon, rather than a geographically specific one, has much to do with the fact that Canada is his adopted home. Verdecchia's work thematizes the connections between Canada and Latin America, while also offering a model for thinking more broadly about the hemisphere from the perspective of Canada.

Latino Canadian Diasporas

Citizen Suarez and *Fronteras Americanas* are about a Latino population in Canada that has largely gone unnoticed in the United States. This oversight is not surprising, given that Latinos constitute a far larger and more significant demographic presence south of the Canadian border. Whereas there are some 35 million Latinos in the United States, comprising 12.5 percent of the total population,⁸ there are only 500,000 to 800,000 in all of Canada.⁹ And whereas Mexican Americans have occupied the southwestern borderlands region since before it belonged to the United States, the majority of Latinos in Canada arrived during the second half of the twentieth century. Their numbers began to increase as political dissidents fled the Cuban Revolution in 1953, then the

military dictatorships that rose to power in the 1970s and 1980s in Brazil, Uruguay, Chile, and Argentina. In the 1980s, civil wars in Nicaragua, Guatemala, and El Salvador drove Central American migrants north in search of refuge and economic opportunity. Canada, which was seeking to augment its labor force, proved a more welcoming destination than the United States, which turned away many Latin American political refugees because of their suspected communist leanings.¹⁰ Today, the largest number of Spanish-speaking migrants live in Quebec, although there are also sizable Latino communities in Vancouver, Toronto, Ottawa, Edmonton, and Winnipeg.¹¹

Among the migrants from Latin America are significant numbers of authors, artists, and intellectuals. Until recently, many maintained the stance of political exiles who continued to identify with the home country, seeing their residence in Canada as a necessity rather than a choice.¹² Writing as exiles, they presumed the place of origin as a primary site of identification. Much of their work was concerned with the violence and repression in their home countries, nostalgia for the people and places they had left behind, and the difficulties of adjustment to a new environment. Others turned to forms of modernist experimentation that were devoid of all references to the immediate social or political context. Only more recently has there been an attempt to move away from the experience of exile and toward cultural forms that express a hyphenated Latino Canadian identity. As Alberto Gomez explains of a young generation of Latino artists:

Often the sons and daughters of political refugees fleeing dictatorships in the southern cone, bitter wars in Central America, or economic impoverishment, they did not choose to settle here. Yet their formation of language and identity is also shaped by experiences of growing up in Canada. Caught between history and place, memories of political conflict clash with the pull of consumer culture. Living between languages and dreams, they sense they are "aliens" in the society in which they exist and from which they come. In Latin America they are identified as "different" for the way they speak Spanish and for their North American acculturation; in Canada, they are immigrants, newcomers, hyphenated citizens.¹³

Unable to identify completely with either Canada or particular Latin American homelands, this second generation seeks modes of belonging that are not tied to the nation-state. Declaring themselves members of *la raza*, they recognize connections to Latinos from many different parts of the American hemisphere. At the same time that they are determined to stay in Canada, they challenge the myth of the nation as a harmonious, multicultural mosaic by speaking out about their encounters with injustice and racial prejudice.

Verdecchia announces himself as a part of this new sensibility when he proclaims at the end of *Fronteras Americanas*: "I am a hyphenated person but I

am not falling apart, I am putting together. I am building a house on the border."¹⁴ With this statement, he declares his intention to make a home where he is, rejecting both the exile's longing for an unattainable point of origin and the traveler's belief that constant movement can solve his problems. Such sentiments are thematized in *Citizen Suarez* and *Fronteras Americanas*, his most autobiographical works. From a variety of different perspectives, they portray his boyhood experiences as an Argentinian immigrant, and his subsequent efforts to build a career as a well-respected member of Toronto's theatrical and literary communities. In their choice of genre, both works manifest a commitment to the representation of collective experience. *Citizen Suarez* uses the short story form to encompass many different geographic locations and points of view. *Fronteras Americanas* gives voice to two characters from distinct economic and social backgrounds who suggest the diversity of Latino Canadian populations. Verdecchia's work thus provides multiple examples of the contemporary phenomena that tie Latin America and Canada together, painting a revised portrait of the American hemisphere in which Canada plays an integral role.

"Have We Crossed a Border?": The Hemispheric Americas of *Citizen Suarez*

Verdecchia's short story collection *Citizen Suarez* exports "the borderlands" from its expected location along the U.S.-Mexico border to multiple settings in Canada, the United States, and Latin America. This collection treats borderlands not as a specific region, but as the many places where multiple cultures encounter, fuse, and clash with one another. Some stories deal with the literal crossing of national borders: the difficult adjustments of the eponymous Suarez family after moving to Canada from an unspecified Latin American country; a troubled Canadian traveling through northwest Argentina; a Mexican Canadian who drives to California and then continues south to his father's birthplace in Morelos, Mexico. Others are scattered with evidence of the more diffuse effects of human and cultural migration throughout the hemisphere: a store selling Peruvian goods in downtown Toronto; Spanish-language TV in Anglo-American homes; a Latin American general who tortures a suspected political dissident using techniques learned at the U.S. sponsored School of the Americas. In a paradigmatic scene from the story "Letter from Tucuman," the unnamed protagonist writes:

The bus stops. In the middle of nothing. We are all asked to get out and proceed to the little shack on the side of the road. Have we crossed a border? Not that I know of [. . .]. But here are a bunch of soldiers looking very bored in rumpled uniforms checking our passports and chain smoking cigarettes. No explanation is offered. Nothing exciting happens; no questions are asked. We all troop back onto the bus. (78)

On the one hand, this passage identifies the protagonist as a traveler who observes, but remains untouched by, the potentially "exciting" disruptions endured by those living under an oppressive military regime. Although the soldiers seem ineffectual, their presence is a reminder of the militarization of many American borders. On the other, this scene might serve as an allegory for a collection that understands American borders as far more dispersed and inchoate than the literal boundary lines between neighboring nations. "Have we crossed a border?" could thus serve as a refrain for virtually every story in the collection.

In *Citizen Suarez*, Latin America is a source of nostalgia and literary inspiration, as well as an appealing travel destination. But it is also torn by political crises and economic instability that make permanent residence there untenable. With the exception of two stories that take place in Argentina, references to Latin America are vague, suggesting that the problems depicted in individual stories could apply to any number of national contexts. For example, the collection opens with a dark satire about the unwitting martyrdom of a university student named Oscar. His problems begin when he wears a necktie that violates the code of mourning imposed by the state after the death of "La Señora," a thinly fictionalized Eva Peron. The breach of sartorial protocol that begins as a joke is soon taken up by various opposition groups, setting off widespread rebellion and prompting harsh retaliatory measures by the ruling military dictatorship. In the end, Oscar is tortured and shot, and "his body, along with several others, [is] heaved into a pit in a garbage dump" (22). So arbitrary and seemingly commonplace is Oscar's death, the story suggests, that he is treated as household garbage, his tie blown away by the wind. The violence and repression of an unnamed Latin American country are similarly depicted in a story called "Winter Comes to the Edge of the World," which is narrated through the flashbacks of a political dissident who has sought refuge in Canada. There, she thinks obsessively of her disappeared comrades, detention camps, "Falcons cruising the street" (122), and her rape by government soldiers. In the title story, "The Several Lives of Citizen Suarez," Octavio Suarez is a math professor who leaves his homeland after struggling against censorship and anti-intellectualism in his university position. The collection ends with a story that is harshly critical of the elite citizens of a fictional Latin American nation named Ixturria. Living in gated compounds, surrounded by imported luxuries, the characters are oblivious to the class warfare and political turmoil taking place around them. After a friend affiliated with the political resistance is murdered, the protagonist completes his retreat from reality by marrying a member of his close-knit social circle. These stories provide a rationale for the Latino Canadian diaspora by showing that, whatever the difficulties of life in the new country, returning to the place of origins is not a viable option.

Despite the fact that it offers a refuge from the crises plaguing many Latin American countries, Canada, in these stories, is hardly a panacea. In "Citizen

Suarez," the prosperous Toronto suburbs are banal and colorless. The protagonist of "Winter Comes" appreciates that Canada provides her refuge from political repression, but also feels that she is "exiled to the edge of the world" in an "empty white and grey place" (123). Here, the rather clichéd reference to Canada's coldness and whiteness takes on added resonance when it is used to describe racial intolerance, as well as the weather. The story "Money in the Bank" further develops the portrait of Canadian racial insensitivity in its depiction of a Latino actor struggling for professional legitimacy. On the set of a TV movie-of-the-week, the makeup artist paints his face brown, prompting him to reflect incredulously, "I have nothing against brown but if they wanted brown they could have hired a brown actor, no? I ask Make-up why she's going so dark with the face and she says 'You're the Cook aren't you? The Latino Cook?'" (87). Her questions equate Latinidad with dark skin and manual labor, underscoring the racial biases that persist despite Canada's official rhetoric about being a mosaic of different ethnic groups. The protagonist is caught in a vicious cycle: although he is trained to be a serious actor, his livelihood relies on broadcast television, where the one-dimensional roles he is forced to play will be seen by thousands of Canadian viewers, thereby reinforcing the stereotypes that limit his acting opportunities. "Money in the Bank" thus takes us beyond the new immigrant's feelings of isolation and exclusion to depict the more abiding prejudices faced by non-Anglo Canadians.

These dilemmas are crystallized in the struggles of Fernando Suarez, the ambivalent "citizen" of the title story, who seeks to maintain his position on the border, uncomfortably straddling multiple cultures. Although disillusioned with life in Canada, his parents are determined to assimilate by becoming Canadian citizens. By contrast, the teenaged Fernando longs to remain poised between two worlds. He resists claiming membership in any one national community, attempting to preserve the parts of his identity—and the special forms of knowledge—that have come through the experience of a transformative move from one place to another. When his parents inform him that the entire family will become citizens, he fears that he will lose "his position as a foreigner and his knowledge of the double or perhaps multiple lives he has lived [which] was for him a recondite and marvelous wound" (46). Unable to stop them from completing the process, he feels a deep sense of loss at the possibilities he has given up. Fernando is representative of many characters in Verdecchia's fiction who affirm the perspective that comes through being "a hyphenated person" who does not fit easily into any one place. At the same time, his story underscores the fact that such ambivalence can only be appreciated from the relative safety and comfort of Canada, where one does not have to worry about being beaten, shot, or imprisoned for failing to fit in.

In its multiple portraits of the encounter between Anglo and Latin America, *Citizen Suarez* compellingly illustrates the portability of the borderlands, showing why this concept has become an organizing paradigm for recent

comparative work in American, Canadian, and Mexican Studies.¹⁵ But it also raises the kinds of questions that have been asked by Chicano/a critics about whether something gets lost when a specific locale—and the populations, history and culture associated with it—is translated into a more general figure for cultural and geographical crossings of all kinds.¹⁶ The borderlands, as influentially described by Anzaldúa and others, refers to the “third country” along the 2,000 mile border between the United States and Mexico. Border culture emerged out of the rich fusion of the many different ethnic and national groups that passed through and settled in an area where daily life was influenced by conflicts over land, repressive immigration policies, the exploitation of migrant workers, and racial intolerance. For a critic like Anzaldúa, the borderlands is both an actual place and a state of mind that comes from bearing “the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary.”¹⁷ Although the stories in *Citizen Suarez* are narrated from many different points of view, the collection tends to focus primarily on well-educated, middle-class migrants and travelers, meaning that the struggles of the most marginalized border crossers are muted. Chicano/a literature often seeks to give voice to populations that have been denied representation, telling the stories of colonization of land, perilous border crossings, and constant fear of *la migra*. Many of the stories in *Citizen Suarez* are also about an underrepresented population of Latin Americans in Canada. But these characters travel across national boundaries with relative ease. The friction they experience comes more from the psychological effects of cultural dislocation than from encounters with the law, dire poverty, or intolerable working conditions. Latin American migrants travel by plane rather than crossing dangerous rivers and deserts by foot. They come to a place with relatively generous immigration policies, particularly toward those who are white and middle class, and who have the resources to arrange their arrival in advance. They must work for a living, but they are professors, actors, and writers rather than manual laborers. Thus, they may feel the same emotional frisson that Anzaldúa describes, while being spared the material suffering associated with U.S.-Mexico border crossings.

When issues of class friction arise in *Citizen Suarez*, they surface as unexpected eruptions, rather than being the center of narrative attention. For example, in “The Several Lives,” Fernando remembers an encounter that took place before the move to Canada, when a lunch at a restaurant with his father was interrupted by a boy begging for food. Fernando “believed he was related to the boy in some way [. . .]. The boy was Fernando in some way, the boy Fernando might have become if they hadn’t emigrated perhaps” (45). The confrontation might have taught Fernando an enduring lesson about inequality and the potential of empathy to reach others across class lines. But there is no evidence that Fernando’s fantasy of identification is reciprocated, or that the meeting has any marked influence on the subsequent course of his life. The story suggests that, with Canadian citizenship, he will be freed from

the prospect of such economic want. Poverty and starvation are relegated to the margins of a narrative that is filtered through the perceptions of relatively privileged middle-class characters. So, too, in “Letter from Tucuman,” a Canadian traveler turns down an offer by his taxi driver to tour an Argentinian city. Later he realizes that the driver needed the money to buy a birthday present for his daughter. Instead of doing anything to rectify the situation, he sinks into depression, “incapacitated, by all the sadness ever: the lonely dead no one ever mourned; the hundreds of thousands of lost souls, hurled into salty darkness in the bottom of a man-made lake or a cold stinking cell. I am sad for all those whose turn will never come, those who wait and wait and wait” (81). This is not a productive response, but the melodramatic and self-indulgent sadness of a traveler who has enough of life’s basic comforts that he can wallow in his own emotional pain without translating it into any meaningful effort to help others. “Letter from Tucuman” is representative of a more general pattern in *Citizen Suarez*, in which the kind of racial and economic tensions that arise in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands surface at the margins of stories concerned with more middle-class problems. Moments of narrative friction remind us that such inequities exist, but they are not the central concern of any of these stories. With *Fronteras Americanas* Verdecchia confronts these issues more directly as they surface beyond the U.S.-Mexico border, while also exploring the potential of theater to serve as its own kind of borderland, where Canada and the Americas meet up with one another.

Fronteras Americanas: A Hemispheric View of the Borderlands

First performed in 1993, Guillermo Verdecchia’s one-person play *Fronteras Americanas: (American Borders)* coincided with the signing of the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). With its focus on trade and investment, NAFTA did not legislate matters of culture, nor did it make provisions for the many North Americans whose lives relied on the regular crossing of national borders. *Fronteras Americanas* is about the human consequences of regional integration. At one point in the play, a slide projected onto the stage quotes Carlos Fuentes: “Every North American, before this century is over, will find that he or she has a personal frontier with Latin America” (54). Fuentes’s pronouncement suggests that “American borders” can no longer be understood to refer exclusively to the particular region around the U.S.-Mexico border, since the entire continent has become a contact zone where Anglo- and Latin America meet up, clash, and interpenetrate. As a character named Verdecchia explains to the audience, “when I say AMERICA I don’t mean the country, I mean the continent. Somos todos Americanos. We are all Americans” (20). His assertion echoes Latin American thinkers from Simon Bolivar to Jose Martí, who argued for the importance of regional solidarity under the banner of a collective American identity. But what makes it new is that Verdecchia speaks

as a Latin American in Canada; his reference to the continent positions Canadian themes and settings within a broader American framework. This agenda is underscored when he delivers a monologue called "An Idiosyncratic History of America" that lists the War of 1812, the establishment of the Dominion of Canada in 1867, and the Montreal Canadiens' winning of the Stanley Cup for hockey in 1969 alongside important moments in United States and Latin American history (29–32). The inclusion of these events carves out a role for Canada in historical narratives that have traditionally focused on other parts of the Americas.

These more explicitly pedagogical revisions of continental history are interspersed with the monologues of two individuals living in Canada, whose experiences form a bridge between Anglo- and Latin America. One is Verdecchia, an anxiety-ridden, middle-class character who laments that he feels lost, although he can locate himself quite specifically "in Toronto, at 30 Bridgman Avenue" (20). As the play continues, he delivers a series of confessional speeches that describe his family's departure from Argentina, childhood encounters with cultural intolerance as a Latino immigrant in Kitchener, Ontario, and his eventual return to the place of his birth. "I Am Going Home—all will be resolved, dissolved, revealed" (36), he tells himself as he plans to visit Argentina for the first time as an adult. But there is reason to believe that his quest will be unsuccessful, since he discloses that his knowledge of "home" has come largely through travel guides, Spanish classes, friends, and three screenings of the film *Missing*.

It is not surprising, then, that Verdecchia's fantasy of homecoming is shattered, since his goal of recovering an authentic point of origin is an impossibility. In Buenos Aires, his foreignness is manifest in a bout of food poisoning. His vomiting is a literal symptom of his inability to digest Argentinian culture, regardless of how fervently he believes that it should be familiar and palatable. The experience of childhood dislocation followed by many years of identification with a lost homeland have left him in a state of uncomfortable liminality. When he announces, "All sides of the border have claimed and rejected me" (51), he suggests that the border is less a specific location than a powerful metaphor for those who understand themselves as belonging to more than one culture, and thus unable to feel at home in any one geographical place. He finds this realization painful, but by the end of the play he claims to have translated his angst into something more productive: "I am learning to live the border. I have called off the Border Patrol. I am a hyphenated person but I am not falling apart, I am putting together. I am building a house on the border." He then turns to the audience with a direct challenge: "And you? Did you change your name somewhere along the way? Does a part of you live hundreds or thousands of kilometres away? Do you have two countries, two memories? Do you have a border zone?" (78). Verdecchia's confessional narrative ends when he ruptures the divide between performer and spectator, his questions

implicating the viewer by suggesting that living on a "border zone" of some kind has become a virtually universal American condition.

To understand what is happening when Verdecchia breaks through the fourth wall, it is useful to follow Diana Taylor's distinction between the archive and the repertoire. She describes the archive as a storehouse where documents and other types of material evidence are preserved for posterity. The alternative is the repertoire, a repository of living, "embodied memory," such as "performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing," forms of expression that are considered to be "ephemeral, nonreproducible knowledge."¹⁸ Describing such inter-American repertoires as Spanish *pastorelas* (shepherds' plays) and mock battles between *moros y cristianos* (Moors and Christians), Taylor argues that "the repertoire allows for an alternative perspective on historical processes of transnational contact and invites a remapping of the Americas, this time following the traditions of embodied practice."¹⁹ In contrast to the static artifacts of the archive, the contents of the repertoire can evolve in response to different historical contexts and geographic locations. *Fronteras Americanas* foregrounds these forms of embodied knowledge when it becomes a collaboration between actor and spectators, who must continually reenact the discovery of borders named by its title. As Verdecchia explains in the preface, "*Fronteras Americanas* is part of a process, part of a much larger attempt to understand and invent. As such, it is provisional, atado con alambre [strung together with wire]. In performance, changes were made nightly depending on my mood, the public, our location, the arrangement of the planets" (13). Relinquishing control over the production of his work, Verdecchia writes, "I hope that anyone choosing to perform this text will consider the possibilities of making (respectful) changes and leaving room for personal and more current responses" (13). Framing the play in such terms ensures that it will function as a repertoire of collective experience, evolving over time and in reaction to current events.

Fronteras Americanas is less a narrative than a collage of voices and "found objects" such as quotations, video and film clips, and sounds and images lifted from other sources. What holds these disparate materials together are monologues delivered by Verdecchia and his alter ego, a Chicano character named Wideload. Both parts are played by the same actor, a device that gestures to a *latinidad* that transcends national borders. This decision is significant for Verdecchia, an actor whose elite training has allowed him to escape the kind of ethnic typecasting that he encountered during his early career.²⁰ But instead of passing as part of the cultural mainstream, Verdecchia outs himself through his identification with an unmistakably Latino character. His deployment of stereotypes about Chicanos is strategic. As Michelle Habell-Pallán explains, Chicano popular culture has been appropriated by a new generation of Latino Canadians, who have seized on its association with militant oppositionality to articulate an ethnic identity that resists the cozy version of cultural pluralism promulgated by the state.²¹ If Verdecchia represents the internal conflicts of

the assimilated, middle-class Latino Canadian, Wideload is his unruly, irrepressible double and the two cannot be disentangled. Through the presence of this abrasive, working class character, *Fronteras Americanas* offers a more heterogeneous representation of Canadian borderlands than *Citizen Suarez*.

Although his dialect is clichéd, Wideload's speeches challenge Anglo stereotypes about Mexicans by claiming aggressively that south of the border "dere's no pinche Taco Bell for thousands of miles" (22), critiquing representations of Latinos in American popular culture, and debunking propaganda surrounding the War on Drugs. While many aspects of this character are unsurprising, what makes the Chicano Wideload remarkable is that he lives in Canada and that Canadian culture is central to his subjectivity as an occupant of the borderlands. When he says that he lives "in the border," he explains "for you people from outa town" that he means "Queen and Lansdowne," an ethnically and economically mixed Toronto neighborhood. Here, he speaks to audiences beyond his own local community, challenging them to confront entrenched racial assumptions, but also serving as a guide who can introduce them to unfamiliar geographies. His character is thus a testament to the Chicanos' growing geographic dispersal, as well as the diversity of Latinos in Canada. Chicanos can no longer be described by reference to a single region, since they have come to inhabit many different parts of the American continent. In doing so, they have expanded the perimeters of the borderlands and its varied cultures.

Together, the monologues of Wideload and Verdecchia attest to the diversity of Latin American experiences in Canada and to the growing significance of Canada to a broader understanding of American history and culture. The dense network of inter-American relations traced out by *Fronteras Americanas* makes a convincing case for the inclusion of Canada within any comprehensive portrait of America's border cultures. While it shares the conclusions drawn by *Citizen Suarez*, the disparities between its two central characters, as well as its use of live performance, make the play the more compelling of the two works. Because Wideload and Verdecchia are so different in class and cultural capital, the play ultimately offers a more varied portrait of the Latino/a presence than the short story collection, with its nearly exclusive focus on well-educated, middle-class characters. And because it is meant to be performed, *Fronteras Americanas* can change to incorporate the experiences of audiences from different geographic and cultural backgrounds, enacting—as well as explaining—the transformation of the hemispheric map by redrawing the line dividing North and South America so that points of encounter could occur virtually anywhere.

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For certain audiences, Verdecchia's endeavor to translate "the borderlands" from a single geographic region into a flexible metaphor for the increasing

interpenetration of north and south might be controversial. Some critics have protested that the ubiquity of border studies at once overlooks and enacts a kind of "violence" against those who struggle with harsh conditions along the U.S.-Mexico border. Yet (in its own version of U.S. exceptionalism) this argument ignores the prolific scholarship on international borders in many other parts of the world, as well as the fact that North America is divided by two borders that are best understood in relation to one another. In my reading of *Citizen Suarez* I have noted Verdecchia's tendency to marginalize the problems of poverty and exploitation that are so central to representations of the U.S.-Mexico border. Read alone, this collection might seem to have little to say to readers of Chicano/a literature. However, it becomes more meaningful when read alongside *Fronteras Americanas* so that the two works together offer a varied portrait of Latino diaspora. Verdecchia's more recent play about the Gulf War, *A Line in the Sand* (with Marcus Youssef, 1997), examines borders in a more global context through the story of a Canadian soldier and a Palestinian teenager who meet on a line in the Qatari desert.²² Together, these works depict Canada's increasing involvement in international affairs, suggesting that its status as a border nation is not only relevant to its relations with the United States, but with the rest of the world.

As I have suggested, Verdecchia's deterritorialization of the borderlands may be explained, at least in part, as the product of his experience as a Latino living in Canada, rather than the United States, where the border with Mexico has become virtually synonymous with the very notion of borderlands. His comparative approach to the borderlands allows him to imagine the need for solidarities among Canadian Latinos, U.S. Chicanos, and other Latin Americans that might be less apparent in a place dominated by a larger and more singular Latino presence. His work is also an example of how Latino Canadian culture complicates the U.S.-centric view that "the border" refers exclusively to the place where the United States and Mexico meet. Drawing on the oppositional connotations of U.S.-Mexican border culture, it unmoors the borderlands from their particular location to show how the hemisphere itself has become a crucible for the complex intermixture of Anglo- and Latin Americas. It does so without losing sight of the nation, which has the power to enable liberating forms of movement, to force the desperate flight of its citizens, and to constrict routes of freedom and economic opportunity. By introducing Canadian characters and settings, Verdecchia's work makes a strong case for the inclusion of Canada within our study of the American hemisphere, giving new meaning to "the North" while at the same time disrupting the binary between north and south with a necessary third term.

NOTES

1. Carmen Aguirre, *¿Que Pasa with La Raza, eh?*, in *Along Human Lines: Dramas from Refugee Lives* (Winnipeg: Blizzard, 2000).

2. Michelle Habell-Pallán, "Don't Call Us Hispanic": Popular Latino Theater in Vancouver," in *Latino/a Popular Culture*, ed. Michelle Habell-Pallán and Mary Romero (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 174–175.
3. This set is an allusion to the original upside-down map of the Americas, drawn by the Uruguyan modernist Joaquín Torres-García in 1943.
4. See for example, Kirsten Silva Gruez, *Ambassadors of Culture: The Transamerican Origins of Latino Writing* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Gretchen Murphy, *Hemispheric Imaginings: The Monroe Doctrine and Narratives of U.S. Empire* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005); George B. Handley, *Postslavery Literatures in the Americas: Family Portraits in Black and White* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2000); Anna Brickhouse, *Transamerican Literary Relations and the Nineteenth Century Public Sphere* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Gustavo Pérez-Firmat, ed., *Do the Americas Have a Common Literature?* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1990); José David Saldívar, *Border Matters: Remapping American Cultural Studies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).
Some notable exceptions that incorporate the more inclusive model of the hemisphere I am imagining are Earl Fitz, *Rediscovering the New World: Inter-American Literature in a Comparative Context* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1991); Claudia Sadowski-Smith, "Border Fictions: Transnational Writing from U.S. Borders, Globalization, and Inter-American Studies" (unpublished ms.); Claudia Sadowski-Smith, *Border Fictions: Globalization, Empire, and Writing at the Boundaries of the United States* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008); Sarah Casteel, *Second Arrivals: Landscape and Belonging in Contemporary Writing of the Americas* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007); and the special issue of *Comparative American Studies* on "Canada and the Americas," edited by Rachel Adams and Sarah Casteel (3:1 [March 2005]).
5. Bryce Traister, "Risking Nationalism: NAFTA and the Limits of the New American Studies," *Canadian Review of American Studies/Revue canadienne d'études américaines* 27:3 (1997): 191–204.
6. Roger Gibbins, "Meaning and Significance of the Canadian-American Border," *Borders and Border Politics in a Globalizing World*, ed. Paul Ganster and David E. Lorey (Oxford: SR Books, 2005), 153.
7. Gibbins, "Meaning and Significance," 157.
8. Online at <http://pewhispanic.org/files/factsheets/2.pdf> (accessed 14 June 2006).
9. Online at http://migration.ucdavis.edu/MN/more.php?id=3071_o_2_o (accessed 14 June 2006).
10. Thomas C. Wright and Rody Oñate, *Flight from Chile: Voices of Exile* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998).
11. Hugh Hazleton, "Quebec Hispanico: Themes of Exile and Integration in the Writing of Latin Americans Living in Quebec," *Canadian Literature* no. 142–143 (Autumn–Winter 1994); and Andrew Machalski, *Hispanic Writers in Canada: A Preliminary Survey of the Activities of Spanish and Latin-American Writers in Canada*, ed. Michael S. Batts (Ottawa: Department of the Secretary of State of Canada, 1988).
12. Habell-Pallán, "Don't Call Us Hispanic," 175; Alberto Gomez, "Where the South and the North Meet: Latino Identity and Cultural Heterogeneity," *a-r-c* 2 (November 2000) http://a-r-c.gold.ac.uk/a-r-c_Three, 33 (accessed 22 June 2006).
13. Gomez, "Where the South and the North Meet," 3.

14. Guillermo Verdecchia, *Fronteras Americanas: (American Borders)* (Toronto: Coach House Press, 1993), 77. All subsequent references are cited parenthetically in text.
15. See, for example, Frank Bonilla, ed., *Borderless Borders: U.S. Latinos, Latin Americans, and the Paradox of Interdependence* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998); W. H. New, *Land/Sliding: Imagining Space, Presence, and Power in Canadian Writing* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997); Deborah Castillo and Maria Socorro Tabuenca Cordoba, *Border Women: Writing from La Frontera* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002); Marc S. Rodriguez, ed., *Repositioning North American Migration History: New Directions in Modern Continental Migration, Citizenship, and Community* (Rochester, N.Y.: University of Rochester Press, 2004).
16. See, for example, Mary Pat Brady, "The Fungibility of Borders," *Nepantla: Views from the South* 1 (2000): 171–190; Claire Fox, *The Fence and the River: Culture and Politics at the U.S.-Mexico Border* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); and Castillo and Tabuenca Cordoba, *Border Women*.
17. Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute books, 1999), 25.
18. Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005), 20.
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Canadian Theatre Encyclopedia* <http://www.canadiantheatre.com/dict.pl?term=Verdecchia%2C%20Guillermo> (accessed 21 May 2007).
21. Habell-Pallán, "Don't Call Us Hispanic."
22. Marcus Youssef and Guillermo Verdecchia, *A Line in the Sand* (Burnaby, Canada: Talonbooks, 1997).