

ETHNOLINGUISTIC NARRATIVES OF LATINIDAD: RADICAL LANGUAGE-MIXING, NOSTALGIA, AND HYBRIDITY IN CHÁVEZ SILVERMAN'S *KILLER CRÓNICAS*

NARRATIVAS ETNOLINGÜÍSTICAS DE LATINIDAD: NOSTALGIA, HIBRIDEZ Y MEZCLA LINGÜÍSTICA RADICAL EN *KILLER CRÓNICAS* DE CHÁVEZ SILVERMAN

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Abstract:

*Spanish-English bilingual texts are mainly written in English and include some Spanish words to reference Hispanic culture and language. More recently, however, authors like Susana Chávez Silverman have been using a more sustained type of language mixing to narrate their multilingual, multi-geographical stories. In fact, Chávez Silverman to date is the only U.S. Hispanic author to publish a fully bilingual text, which uses sustained Spanish-English code-switching in the entire manuscript. In this context, the present article examines entries from *Killer Crónicas* (2004) with an interest in the nostalgic recall of Chávez Silverman. In order to carry out this study, we first conceptualize the notion of nostalgia using Boym's (2001) framework to define this phenomenon as a syndrome of globalization and a catalyst that encourages Chávez Silverman to reevaluate her diverse multicultural experiences and evolving Latina identity through the implementation of geographical, cultural, literary as well as linguistic spaces. Further, we show how Chávez Silverman uses a hybrid mixture of Spanish and English to connect to scents, places and languages. This paper seeks to expand critical and analytical frontiers of understanding the Latino/a migratory experience and hybrid identity formation. Thus, in this regard, nostalgia emerges as a catalyst and analytic tool progressing from socio-geographical and linguistic reconfigurations, as well as modernization.*

Keywords: *Nostalgia, Code-switching, Spanish in the USA, Crónica, Susana Chávez Silverman*

Resumen:

*Los textos latinos y bilingües de los Estados Unidos típicamente se escriben en inglés e incluyen algunos términos en español para referirse a la cultura y el lenguaje de los hispano-estadounidenses. Recientemente, autores como Susana Chávez Silverman han empezado a utilizar estrategias más radicales para mezclar los dos idiomas. Ello con la intención de narrar sus multi-geográficas y multilingües historias. De hecho, Chávez Silverman, hasta ahora, es la única latina-estadounidense que ha publicado un manuscrito que usa el cambio de código español-inglés a lo largo del texto. Por lo tanto, este artículo analiza corpus de *Killer**

Crónicas (2004) con interés en la memoria nostálgica de Chávez Silverman. Para realizar este estudio, primero, conceptualizamos la noción de nostalgia utilizando la teoría de Boym (2001) para definir este fenómeno como un síndrome de la globalización, así como un catalizador que anima a Chávez Silverman a reevaluar sus diversas y multiculturales experiencias y su identidad latina. Una identidad en constante evolución por medio de los espacios geográficos, culturales, literarios y lingüísticos. Además, hacemos énfasis en cómo Chávez Silverman usa una mezcla híbrida del español e inglés para conectarse con los olores, lugares y lenguajes. Este artículo intenta ampliar las fronteras críticas y analíticas del entendimiento de la experiencia migratoria de los latinos y la formación de una identidad híbrida. En este contexto, la nostalgia funciona como un catalizador y un instrumento de análisis que surge de las reconfiguraciones socio-geográficas y lingüísticas, así como de la modernización.

Palabras Clave: *la nostalgia, el cambio de código, el español estadounidense, la crónica, Susana Chávez Silverman.*

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Introduction

Many modern day U.S. bilingual Latinos often face a constant struggle when deciding between Spanish and English in social contexts. Instead of choosing one language over the other, some use Spanish-English code-switching in conversation or writing.¹ In an interview with Derrick (2015) when contemporary author Susana Chávez Silverman was asked about her daily use of Spanish-English code-switching she commented:

And something I really love about L.A. is that I can, in fact, code-switch on a daily basis, *casi 24/7*. With whom? *Prácticamente con todo el mundo*. With my family, my friends, *mis* students y *mis colegas*, people in shops and other businesses, *restaurantes, en la calle*. It's a daily practice. (Derrick 2015)²

As a protest to having to select one language over another, many U.S. Latino authors, like Chávez Silverman have constructed their own creative works, which illustrate their talent in a language that is most natural to them. Interestingly, as seen from the excerpt above, the author chooses to answer the interview questions in a mixed code, even though the questions were posed in monolingual English. Thus, Chávez Silverman's language choice appears to make up part of her social and linguistic identity. Not only is her linguistic preference noted in

¹ Code-switching is the use of two or more languages or linguistic varieties in the same sentence or utterance.

² Spanish will appear italicized throughout the manuscript.

interview format, it is also prevalent in her text, *Killer Crónicas* (KC2004). This notion is further affirmed by Gumperz and Cook who comment, “social identity and ethnicity are in large part established and maintained through language” (7). In fact, historically, most U.S. Latino texts are written in English and include some Spanish words (usually in the form of simple insertions) to reference the Hispanic experience. However, more recently, authors like Chávez Silverman are beginning to use Spanish in their texts in a way that is less transparent and accessible to American monolingual readers who are assumed as their principal audience. Example (1) highlights Chávez Silverman’s use of Spanish-English code-switching in *KC*:

- (1) Trish, oh Howard, Miss Zooloo, Tina and *la* Pamela Williams, a double Remy Martin (*un* double whammy, *máh bien*) in Rosebud’s in Union Square, *esperando que* Helen and Pamela *terminen su shift para ir a cenar o bailar*. (KC133)

This illustration shows the type of sustained code-switching prevalent in the text. As such, a text that mixes Spanish and English to this degree would only be intelligible to Spanish-English bilinguals.

Beyond the language mixing strategies that these bilingual Hispanic authors utilize in their narratives, their contemporary autobiographical works increasingly move across geographical frontiers and socio-cultural spaces which reappear as uncertainties inspired by shifting borders, languages, discontinuities and progress.³ Thus, the Hispanic diasporic text is no longer only interested in two topographical latitudes, but rather a globetrotter experience, which can span continents. As a result, in many U.S. Latino texts, nostalgia penetrates the discourse in variable degrees and progresses from bilateral geographies, cultural and historical experiences. In this regard, the current paper analyzes Chávez Silverman’s *KC* (2004) with an interest in the author’s bilingual nostalgic recall, which we believe is a response to globalization. Therefore, nostalgia as a catalyst, inspires the author to connect to her past and present experiences through languages, sounds, scents and places, which allows for a reexamination of her diverse global experiences, pan-Latina identity and preference for linguistic hybridity.

To organize the present article, we first introduce *KC* and its multilingual and multidialectal nature. We point out that Chávez Silverman’s diverse and multi-ethnic experiences seem to influence her writing, thus illuminating the relevance for studying her

³A list of relevant texts appear within the “nostalgia” section of the paper.

work under the lens of nostalgia. In order to clarify how we conceptualize nostalgia, we trace a brief history of the term to present day and then introduce Boym's (2001) framework of nostalgia. In this regard, our work proposes an analysis of nostalgia as a metaphor of globalization and as a literary approach to analyze U.S. Latino memoirs and autobiographical works, such as Chávez Silverman's bilingual memoir. These works are of relevance, as they often include themes of globetrotter experiences, nostalgia, loss and estrangement. The discussion will explore nostalgia as primary catalyst that encourages Chávez Silverman to reconstruct her globetrotter experiences, hybrid identity and homeland (s) through available mnemonic symbols, urban and geographical spaces as well as languages. To show how this phenomenon materializes, we illustrate a variety of examples from the *crónicas* with evidence highlighting topographical references, languages, scents and sounds. Following the analysis, we discuss hybrid identity formation and the way it interacts with Boym's theory of nostalgia. We conclude by suggesting areas of further study.

Ethnographic Narratives of Latinidad: Texts

As mentioned above, Chávez Silverman's *crónicas* are written in a fused bilingual and multidialectal discourse. They illustrate the groundbreaking impact on the multilingual and multicultural Latino community that traverses distant frontiers, agglomerates and lives in the United States, while also taking into account the significant amount of longing progressing from those modalities. *KC* started as a series of vignettes, brief reflective pieces mostly autobiographical, poetic and lyrical in scope, originating from letters and e-mail correspondences to friends, lovers and muses from around the world. Many of the *crónicas* showcase bitter-sweet reflections from the past and transition across socio-cultural spaces in different locales. The stories offer ample intertextual and cartographical references, which at times appear as streams of consciousness. *KC* is filled with personal confessions which emerge from the author's journeys through Latin-American countries (Chile, Mexico and Argentina), Spain, South Africa and the United States.

Chávez Silverman delivers a vivid testimony of the global and pan-Latina experience. She takes readers across geographical, cultural and linguistic borders unveiling the perspective of a U.S. Latina and her complex linguistic and cultural hybrid identity, which emerge from the latitudes of self-writing and borderland experiences. *KC* frames the author's coming-of-age

experiences in California and Spain, as well as her adulthood and experiences in Buenos Aires, South Africa, Mexico and the United States. The *crónicas* highlight the author's challenges, longing, loneliness, dislocation in Johannesburg South Africa and desire to experience Argentine culture as an Argentine, but instead she faces challenges due to her status as a U.S. Latina.

The predominant feature of Chávez Silverman's *crónicas* is code-switching and within, one encounters switches not only between English and Spanish, but also phonetic adaptations of Castilian, Argentine and Chicano variants of Spanish. These peculiar features convert her *crónicas* into a written performance fueled by her complex trajectory, literary vocation and representations of her multilingual and multicultural life experiences in a globalized world where language variations coexist and regularly intermix.

Nostalgia

What Svetlana Boym articulated over a decade ago, in her groundbreaking work, *The Future of Nostalgia* (2001) is particularly relevant to the ethnographic portrayal of the migratory experience in the age of globalization. Boym comments about nostalgia that, “[t]he disease of this millennium will be called chronophobia or speedomania, and its treatment will be embarrassingly old-fashioned [Nostalgia]” (8). In other words, voluntarily dislocated people in general, and immigrants specifically, yearn to recover not a lost place, but lost moments in time. In this regard, due to dynamics of our modern day societies, contemporary nostalgia appears as a critical response to the pace of modernization, geographical and social dislocation and a vastly changing world. From these variables, a syndrome of modern age emerges – nostalgia.

Individuals who cross numerous frontiers in order to recover their home contemplate diverse geographical, socio-cultural and linguistic modalities rooted in their homeland and in distant locales, but instead of finding coherence, they may encounter a crossroad of nostalgia, modernity and estrangement. When it comes to this specific crossroad, U.S. Latino memoirs and autobiographical novels are particularly noteworthy as they many times include some language mixing and globetrotter experiences. However, to date, analyses of bilingual literary representations considering nostalgia as a syndrome of the modern age have been relatively underexplored academically. For a person that has been dislocated geographically, culturally or

linguistically, meditation with the past might enable them to generate unified narratives about their lives. As a result, nostalgia as response to the experience of loss in contemporary times can be an essential tool to analyze the past from an individual standpoint and when considering ethnographic global experiences.

Although nostalgia can be traced to Homeric epic tales of Odysseus and played an important role during the Romantic period, a Swiss doctoral student, Johannes Hofer (1669-1752), officially coined the term in a medical context. In his *Medical Dissertation on Nostalgia* (1688:1934), Hofer utilized the Greek compound word *-nostos* (return to native land) and *-algos* (grief or suffering) in order to diagnose the emerging epidemic of homesickness, observed among dislocated Swiss mercenaries and students. Hofer transformed homesickness into the medical field as he considered that this *new* condition was evoked by “vibrations of animal spirits through fibers of the middle brain in which impressed traces of ideas of the Fatherland still cling” (Hofer 384). Due to Hofer’s thesis gaining standing in the discursive landscapes of the 17th and 18th centuries, nostalgia was closely paired with homesickness and correlated with pathological, anatomical, physiological and mental theories.

Fred Davis, in *Yearning for Yesterday* (1978), not only turned the direction of nostalgia from the field of pathology to sociology, but also proposed the identity discontinuity hypothesis along with a cognitive methodology to employ nostalgia on the individual level. He postulated that nostalgia marks a certain kind of loss of social living and structure related to feeling and belonging. Davis’s sociological approach suggests that individuals make selective usage of their past. As a result, nostalgia progresses as a reaction to events and social reconfigurations, and may serve as a depository reaction designated to repair discontinuity in one’s life by fusing the individual’s current and previous identities and stages (e.g. individual or collective).⁴ His sociological study and discontinuity hypothesis inspired a proliferation of research directions ranging from consumer research and media (Holbrook and Schindler 1991) as well as an interest in its psychological functions (Wildschut et al. 2006, 2015). Overall, nostalgia is triggered by sensory responses such as music, smells, and scents (Heeper et al. 2012). It also occurs in social interactions with friends, partners, family members and during monumental events like weddings and anniversaries (Sedekides et al. 2008). Nonetheless, the

⁴Davis proposed three ascending orders of nostalgia as analytical categories employed to establish and maintain a sense of personal identity (Davis 28-35).

peculiar form of recollection sparked by a changing perception of time and modernity is a topic of particular interest in analyzing Chávez Silverman's bilingual *crónicas*.

Svetlana Boym (1966-2015), the Curt Hugo Reisinger Professor of Slavic and Comparative Literatures at Harvard, in her innovative work, *The Future of Nostalgia* (2001), approaches longing from an interdisciplinary perspective. She provides a myriad of examples and studies the latitudes of longing in literature, pop culture, art, architecture, film, music as well as historical and political manifestations from collective and individual standpoints.

Although in the 17th century, nostalgia was considered by Hoffer a curable disease by opium and leeches, Boym indicates that by the end of the 20th century “[a] provincial ailment, *maladie du pays*, turned into a disease of the modern age, *mal du siècle*” (Boym 7). With the temporal reaction to capture the fleeting human life, love or lost cause, in a fast-progressing world, yearning once a provincial symptom, has turned into an inescapable condition of modern societies. Contemporary nostalgia is thus, a response to an impossibility of return to a world with clear borders and values. Both nostalgia and globalization are profound social phenomena. In this context, we view globalization as an enduring process that includes consistent spatial and temporal changes in cultural, social and economic domains of society, fueled by expanding human activity and their integration across regions and continents. On one hand, globalization affects borders and national-cultural distinctions, causing dislocation and change in time and space, which result in the loss of an individual's singular cultural identity, ethnicity and language usage. On the other hand, it causes stronger local attachments and fosters a sentimental desire for a community with a communal memory. From this perspective, Boym views nostalgia as “a social context that one could export into diaspora” (Boym 12). It is to say, nostalgia and diaspora are mutually inclusive phenomena; the later foreshadows dislocation while the other embraces it as a primal component. In diaspora the separation turns into a desire to recover a lost place, or rather lost moments in time from the mainland perspective (Pawelek 2015). In sum, nostalgia emerges as response to modernity; increased global movements, ethnic and cultural pressures, and national self-questioning. These create a widespread need to redefine the self in the face of ongoing change. Therefore, one's cultural heritage and their consciousness regarding their place of origin and current place of residence inspires many Latino/a writers to document stories of their homeland(s) (Butler 2001).

In this paper, we take into consideration Boym's (2001) typology of nostalgia to analyze Chávez Silverman's *KC*. The use of Boym's framework allows for a better understanding of displaced individuals and the ways they reconstruct homeland, culture, hybrid identity and linguistic preference in the context of global experiences through the implementation of scents and sounds, geographical and urban spaces, as well as evocation of languages and accents. In particular, we employ the notion of "diasporic intimacy," "reflective nostalgia" and an "off-modern" strain of critical thinking as vehicles to examine the literary representation of nostalgia in urban chronicles. We argue that the essence of Chávez Silverman's *crónicas* is a product of her global experiences pertaining to diverse urban, geographical and linguistic encounters, sustained by a prevalent notion of longing and forms a predominant feature within the chronicles. In this light, nostalgia becomes a catalyst and an analytic tool progressing from socio-geographical and linguistic reconfigurations, as well as modernization.

Dislocated individuals often contemplate geographical, cultural, national or linguistic modalities in order to recollect the past and to generate unified narratives about their dispraised lives. Nostalgia as a response to the experience of widespread loss in the contemporary age can be vital for an individual's examination of the past as it attains an active cross-temporal presence. Landscapes of nostalgia, dislocation and estrangement are leitmotifs within U.S. Latino literature. As a result, diasporic texts in this context are mainly written by the so-called 1.5 generation and U.S. Latino/a authors: *House on the Mango Street* (Cisneros 1991), *How the García Sisters Lost their Accent* (Álvarez 1992), *Dreaming in Cuban* (García 1994), *No se lo trajo la tierra* (Rivera 1995), *Soledad* (Cruz 2001) *Exiled Memories* (Medina 1990), *Next Year in Cuba* (Pérez-Firmat 1995), *Cuando era Puertorriqueña* (Santiago 1996) as well as in Díaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (Díaz 2007), among others.⁵In modern times, the nostalgic itch has developed and sustained our fascination with autobiographies and memoirs, as well as with autobiographical and fictional novels. However, with the exception of Díaz and Chávez Silverman, rarely do we see U.S. Latino authors incorporate untranslated Spanish and English bilingual discourse in their texts without any quotations, font differences or references.

⁵The 1.5 generation immigrants are individuals who were born in one country but came as children or adolescent to the United States or other countries. This term is elaborated in Pérez Firmat's memoirs *Next Year in Cuba* (1995) and the *Life on The Hyphen* (1994)

The Crónica

The chronicle (or *crónica*) originated during the Middle Ages and was proliferated in the 16th and 17th centuries during the conquest and colonization of the New World. It served as an essential source of understanding of the Spanish conquest and presence in Hispaniola. However, Chávez Silverman's epistolary memoirs, instilled with the fragmentary character of urban life, cultures, languages and traditions resonate the contemporary character of chronicles. Rossana Regulio (2002) illuminates the ethnographic tone of the genre as follows:

The chronicle attempts to understand movement, constant flux as characteristics of the age: movements of people, goods and discourses that only reconfigure the spatial horizon of our societies, but point out, above all, the steady migrations of meaning. Meaning in flight that escape the traditional locales that poke holes in "legitimate" narratives that heighten the debate over their guiding representations. (53-54)

In other words, urban chronicles form a narrative genre as they document and examine the spatial reconfigurations of cultures and traditions, as well as city-life in transition. They depict an increasingly more fragmentary and contradictory environment of metropolitan diversity. The elemental character is comprised of those fleeting moments and transitions of urban life while culture and its orality are the predominant attributes. Chávez Silverman's epistolary writing style cultivates a historical connection to the New World with a contemporary, experimental twist, where geography, ethnography, language and literature infiltrate her written discourse. As a result, in her *crónicas* new hybridized forms of expressions are able to flourish.

Geographical connections

Chávez Silverman's interview with Daniel Olivás from labloga.blogspot.com appears to connect the concept of geographical locales, languages and yearning through what Walter Mignolo refers to as "bi-lingual love" (Mignolo 2000). She explains, "I use Spanish and English together—as well as their in-between!—to connect with memories, with a sense of wonder and yearning, and with a bunch of important people in my life. [...] Also, to connect with other spaces, in a geographical and temporal sense" (Olivás 2010). Inherent characteristics of her work are geographic reproductions of accents embedded in the structure

or topography of the language that are connected or catalyzed by a substantial degree of wonderment and yearning. Due to this geo-cultural and linguistic complexity, Chávez Silverman opens her first memoir with “Glossary Crónica.” Here, she explains her linguistic choices and the nature of her work. Instead of creating a monolingual memoir, the author consciously defies linguistic borders:

I began to transcribe an “h” where the “s” is just a breath, down there. *Ehto Queréh? Ehplicar O ponía la “sh” o “zh” instead of y or “ll” [...]* “*me salen algunos markers de mi niñez Guadalajara, or sabes qué. Y siempre mis signs de mi daily Latinidad, mi chicana, code-switching life, right here en la cuenca de Los Angeles, Simón, mano. Califas. Orale Vato. Carnal, you now? (KCxx).*

To clarify, in these instances, the author presents readers with non-standard use of spelling to reflect certain regionalized pronunciations. This highlights her bilingual and multicultural experience through travels in the U.S. and abroad. For example, below, we have illustrated the unique way that she represents Argentine Spanish in writing. To do this, she uses two hallmark characteristics of this linguistic variation: *rehilamiento* and aspiration of [s]. With *rehilamiento* the letters “ll” and “y” are pronounced as [ʃ] or [ʒ], similar to English words “fusion” and “treasure.” This results in words like “pollo” ‘chicken’ in Spanish being pronounced as *po-sho* and “playa” ‘beach’ as *pla-sha*. Additionally, there are textual examples where Chávez Silverman aspirates the [s]. This is a well-known feature visible in many Latin American countries where the [s] is eliminated at the end of a syllable. So in this case, a word like “mosca” ‘fly’ is pronounced as *moh-ka*. Examples of this phenomenon using monolingual Spanish examples from *KCare* are found below in (2)-(6).

- (2) *Shego al Colegio me siento como una niña, como una colegiala. (KC 28)*
- (3) *me SACA de onda que me humishen, Joey sabe ehto . . .(KC 27)*
- (4) *Los pasos de mí mihma, también. (KC 82)*
- (5) *Te extraño Silbana, y sé que tenéh razón. (KC 123)*
- (6) *Y yo, ob-vio que no, y . . . ¿te podemos ashudar en algo? (KC 129)*

Such linguistic and geographical *mélange* echoes urban vernacular that not only moves between Spanish and English, but also incorporates regionalisms and phonetic adaptations of

linguistic varieties in order to evoke the author's urban experiences. This is further exemplified by her lived experiences in Madrid, Buenos Aires, Los Angeles and Guadalajara:

- (7) So, *en Buenos Aires*, I often wrote *la* “th” for the final Castillian “d”: fond remnants (reliquias?) *de mi infancia en Madrith*. (KCxx)
- (8) *Y especialmente considerando que yo era una single mother, A.B.D. Simón...* So close, *pero soooooo far, todavía, del finish line. Con que* I knew this job was a once-in-a lifetime *chollo* and *chingao*, girl, you better take it and be grateful. (KC9)
- (9) “*Bueno, soy chicana, y llevo 6 meses viviendo en Buenos Aires. Añoro el acento mexicano* (bullshit! I never dug it all that much when I was growing up in Guadalajara, did I?), *las palabras, la comida mexicana* (this part was true, *al menos*), *los colores, los ruidos, TODO*. (KC46)

These features encourage bilingual readers to feel as if they are experiencing the author's memoirs orally. In addition to the use of sustained Spanish-English code-switching, the author sporadically incorporates words from Zulu, Portuguese, Afrikaans and Nahuatl to feature her “transcultural *ortografía*” or her “hybrid” method of life writing (KCxix). An example from each language is highlighted below:

- (10) Amandlha, Wimmie (KC119) ‘Power’
- (11) *Estou procurAndo uma colOnia brasilEira* (KC133) ‘I am searching for Brazilian perfume’
- (12) Remember, Wim. *Onthou jy?* (KC119) ‘do you remember you’
- (13) —*Son axolotl, le digo. Ajolotes, les dicen en México*. (KC102) ‘They are salamander...’

Chávez Silverman's transcultural experiences, multilingual encounters and globetrotter journeys appear to open new venues for a literary analysis of the pan-Latina experience in the age of globalization while factoring in nostalgia as a catalyst.

Language: Latitudes of Bilingual Memory

Furthermore, in an interview with linguist, Roshawnda Derrick, Chávez Silverman remarked on the emergence of her preferred linguistic variety, “I was lucky enough to grow up in a bilingual family, and to be raised intercultural (I grew up between the U.S., Spain and

Mexico). I've also chosen (or been chosen by!) bi- or multilingual *amigos y amantes*” (Derrick 2015). The profound interest and sensitivity to linguistic varieties derives from the author's active engagement and contact with family members, friends from graduate school, lovers and muses from all over the world. From those closely lived intercultural and multilingual encounters as well as long-distance interactions, e-mail or letter correspondences, the *Killer* essentially materialized. Chávez Silverman remarks “these *crónicas* began as letters: *cartas a amigos extrañados*, love letters to cities, smells, people, voices and geographies [she] missed” (KCxxi). The polyvocal character of her work charts a worldwide map of readers connected by urban encounters, ethnolinguistic experiences and a substantial degree of yearning. In other words, languages, geographies and nostalgia meet and form a subtle interplay. In the epistles, the proliferation of expressions, “Vos,” “tú,” and “you” mark cartographical destinies dedicated to specific peoples from global cities: Buenos Aires, Johannesburg, Los Angeles, Pretoria or Madrid.

Correspondingly, by voicing regional variations of Argentine, Peninsular or Chicano Spanish, Chávez Silverman forges her own “[*la*] *realidad fonética*” (KCxix). This phonetic reality of the text is constantly reproducing itself within the range of meaning and forms. Esperanca Bielsa, investigates Latino urban chronicles and underlines the fact that the “*crónica* is not fixed and non-fixable genre, [but] a genre in movement, which lives in a perpetual renewal of forms and contents” (Bielsa 37). Similarly, in Chávez Silverman's text the empirical connection to geography and language becomes her own genre in movement as well as an artistic expression, which reflects the author's globalized perspective of language and a borderless world-view itself. Throughout *KC* we see an array of hybrid noun phrases composed of Spanish and English which describe events during her travels. Interestingly, she often uses word play to engage her bilingual audience as seen in (14)-(18):

- (14) our *alterna*-guidebook (KC16)
- (15) *el gitano*-looking *mozo* (KC20)
- (16) *Chino*-certified price(KC25)
- (17) *chilean entraña*-smelling *mercados* (KC47)
- (18) my hyper-*reconocimiento* (KC79)

Further, we found that geographical references and elicitation of toponyms are a thriving feature of the memoir and reflect a fluid space that feeds on the author's temporal excitement and dislocation. In the examples below, we point out evidence of Chávez Silverman's descriptive memories of moving to or living in a new city, along with the ways that these new locales affect her writing:

- (19) *Escribí no obstante o— digámoslo claro de una puta vez—* precisely because of *esa constante, opresiva humedad porteña*. (KC10)
- (20) *Renuncié la boludez de mi northern California snobbery cuando me mudé al Evil (OK, it's the Inland) Empire, the easternmost edge de Los Angeles County*. (KC8)
- (21) *Pero not to worry: lamento (o celebro) confirmar que Buenos Aires, de por sí, is one of the most anxious, neurotic latitudes en el mundo*. (KC9)
- (22) Besides, I am beginning to discover, *desde que estoy de regreso, here, in my Califaztlán: I can write anywhere*. (KC51)

Another compelling point is in (22) where Chávez Silverman uses the term Califaztlán. This is particularly novel as it evokes the mythical geography and historical dimension of Mexico's origins while factoring in the author's reflection of the ongoing cultural transitions of Latinos between the modern borderlands of Califas and Aztlán.⁶

In addition to the author having nostalgic recall of her experiences moving through different geographical locales, we also found that when places and sentimental memories resurface, oftentimes they were remembered in a different language and accent. This is exemplified referencing both Spanish and English throughout Chávez Silverman's *crónicas*:

- (23) *Hasta pueden pronunciar algunas palabritas en inglés, they will proudly tell you*. (KC 23)
- (24) They're speaking a high, singsong, too-70s ENGLISH! (KC 98)
- (25) *Entro y veo a la Rectora, una cool beige-y bottle blonde (of course), still con ese semi-incongruente (sha es invierno, no jodas!) hideous orange y bronceado que usan tantas porteñas y me besa y veo al Juvenil and my heart is in my throat y se ve un poquitín*

⁶ Aztlán is the legendary place of origin of the Aztecs. The term has a complex functionality in Mexican and Chicano culture. Many Chicanos view Aztlán as having a geographical connection Southwestern borderlands, as a point of socio-political solidarity as well as a point of ethnic reaffirmation. For many it serves as a romanticized connection to the mythical homeland of the past.

alicaído eso sí, e intenta susurrarme en inglés let me tell you what happened, OK, mama? (KC 28)

It appears that the author's growing sensitivity to languages and diverse variations of the same languages, becomes an inherent feature of life writing that echoes her globetrotter journey in a vastly changing world. Chávez Silverman's bilingual discourse increasingly incorporates a growing number of remembered accents and the connections to those spaces and experiences are oftentimes evoked by sentimental memories.

Tracing Home: Nostalgic Sounds and Scents

Aside from geographic locales and languages, Chávez Silverman employs sensory agents such as sounds and scents to activate nostalgic recall in her memories. In the opening epistle of *KC* after watching a boring movie, Chávez Silverman takes a night stroll on California's Venice Beach. Suddenly, she is captivated by a familiar scent, “[d]e repente, un olor que no había sentido en más de un año rises en la costal breeze and hits me, no it STROKES me... Ah, oh, it's the (North) American Southwest –ah, *salvia* –tan green and subtle gorgeous!” (KC3). Like a tidal wave, a familiar fragrance awakens colorful memories rooted in distanced borderlands (North) American Southwest, places both enchanting and soothing. While the intimate scents from her past evoke far-away locales, Chávez Silverman recreates a mental map of missed geographies. Boym affirms that nostalgia materializes as an ailment, an ache that comprises the joys and sorrows of temporal and spatial dislocation and is both bitter and sweet (44). Yet, for Chávez Silverman the flow of the ocean breeze charts distant geographies, and takes her back to the “Mississippi” river or the “camel-colored *Río de la Plata*,” and later on to “Madrith” and to “Pretoria” (KC4). Interestingly, a singular sensory catalyst (the ocean breeze) evokes multiple locales, thusly indicating a proliferation of missed geographies rather than singularity.

Moreover, Chávez Silverman explains her thriving affection with the Argentine accent, “*El olfato me sheva y me trae por vida dehde siempre* – the full-throttle charge of it, immediate and Nostalgic *a la vez*” (KC4). Although nostalgia cultivates lasting affection and seems to awaken a romance with her own fantasy, Chávez Silverman's desire to find a fragrance is therefore emblematic for other searches and entails her quest for *argentinidad* in Buenos

Aires. It also urges her to discern a better understanding of Argentine culture and literature, bitter-sweet memoirs of her fading love and life in Pretoria, South Africa, coming-of-age in Califas (or California), and a search for the Mexico of her childhood which was westernized and altered by U.S. influence. Finally, it encourages the vital search, for the language to elucidate this complex trajectory.

Nostalgic incrimination of sounds and scents appear as an element of foreshadowing and as a powerful catalyst. As a rhetorical apparatus, it allows the author to detach herself from the present, reflect upon the past, to connect the dispraised fragments of her memory and to patch the gaps. Chávez Silverman during her night stroll contemplates the exemplary connection to scents and concludes her *crónica* in an a typical fashion “I’m back. Here. Home. Without you all. *Poetas. Amigas. Poetas/Amigas* What’s the difference. Ay, where am I?”(KC,4). The outburst of joy is followed by a sense of defamiliarization and fosters a developmental question that many migrants face: where is home and how much has one changed?⁷Once the sentimental scent wears off, dislocated individuals who are captivated by wistful life-longings, face estrangement. Other examples of nostalgic recall through scents are exemplified from KC below in (26)-(29):

- (26) *Cuando me fui para South Africa, and I lived my first spring in Pretoria, allí por octubre, viví como insólito regalo el florecimiento de los jacarandas. (KC5)*
- (27) *Porque el olor a eucalipto me vuelve, inevitablemente, a los wild summer rides en la moto del motero del barrio, Bob Salter, the summer after we returned from our calvario— 18 months viviendo en España [...]. (KC5)*
- (28) *En Sudáfrica, llegué a creer que la vida era eso, precisely: the otherworldly, ephemeral beauty de los jacarandaes and, in equal measure, the clawing loneliness of having just three people en todo el continente africano. (KC6)*
- (29) [E]ra –es– “7e Sens.” I never forget a scent. Imprinted. Indelible. *Indescriptiblemente nohtálgico de los early 80s in the Bay Area. (KC133)*

These examples illuminate the powerful nostalgic recall of Chávez Silverman experiences through aromas. These scents awake diverse geographies and timeframes as well

⁷Boym views defamiliarization as a form of estrangement (252).Defamiliarization does not refer to Shklovsk’s essay “Art as Device” or to the 20th century concept in art and theory.

as denote her former or lost homes to which she cannot return physically, but through the imaginary. Boym declares that the power of reminiscence feeds on the components of nostalgia, *-algia*, dwells on the instabilities of human longing and belonging while *-nostos* is the inspiration to patch the gap of memory of a lost or unattainable home (Boym41). Boym's theory accounts for this type of reasoning as a critical means for recollection: "[r]eflective nostalgics are aware of the gap between identity and resemblance" (Boym 50). Central, to understanding Chávez Silverman's memoir and her hybrid identity is the act of writing itself, while taking into account the latitudes of longing and belonging, which were lived in different locales and languages. Boym clarifies that what drives the dislocated to voice their story is so-called *diasporic intimacy* –tactics of finding a feeling to substitute for *home*. According to Boym, diasporic intimacy is not opposed to defamiliarization, or uprootedness, but rather it is empowered by them (Boym 252). Chávez Silverman's journey across Latin American and other continents, her literary voyage and diverse perspectives are inspired by such ambivalence.

This line of thought is relevant to Chávez Silverman life journey, which she explains in her second memoir, *Scenes from la cuenca de Los Angeles* (2010): "*Más bien directamente emblemática del ars combinatoria, del shuttle movement back and forth, in between, que constituyen mis travels. Mis vivencias. Mi escritura. My life*"(Chávez Silverman *Scenes*12). From Boym's standpoint the cultural and geographical detachment, estrangement, the confusing notion of home and sense of direction are contributing elements creating diasporic intimacy (Boym 252).

From the first chronicle in *KC*, the notion of home and homecoming for Chávez Silverman is an unstable much rather fluid space connected to the last place she *dropped an anchor* (*KCxix*). Accordingly, Boym's diasporic intimacy is functional in this regard: "It is spoken of in a foreign language that reveals the inadequacies of translation [...] it is rooted in the suspicion of single home, in shared longing" (Boym 252). Diasporic intimacy invites Chávez Silverman to contemplate the time she spent with her friends and family within distanced geographies and languages. In this vein, the author seeks to comprehend the dichotomy created by the temporal and geographical shuttle movements, and her travels or *vivencias*. Apparently, this urge to redraft her memories is inspired by the uncertain singularity of home, the notion of shared longing and a need for bilingual discourse to adequately depict

her dilemmas and experiences in modern times. In *KC*, Chávez Silverman utilizes the word “home” in various locales all over the world, as highlighted below:

- (30) Being back *en el* inadequately air-conditioned former luxury apartment *en* Palermo we call home. (*KC20*)
- (31) *Le hablo* about how when we get home, *que el* re-entry into a *gringo* high school. (*KC31*)
- (32) So here I am, *gente, dizque* back home, just north of Route 66– *la* Foothill Blvd. (*KC51*)
- (33) *Me abrazo* on the densely overcast and wet Recoleta winter streets, walking back home *bajo* los now-blossomless *jacarandas* and fancy *cheto balcones de la Avenida del Libertador*. (*KC111*)

This also occurs with the word “casa” in Spanish:

- (34) *Y ahora* rehearsing my speech *de madre* concerned, calm, NORMAL (I’m worried about being “normal,” living in “Villa Freud”?), *ante la Rectora eh ah, soy ehcritora como Ud. sabe, trabajo en casa, perdone mi tardanza, ni siquiera ehtuve vehtida . . .* Oh god. (*KC28*)
- (35) *Anygüey*, I wanted to go over and visit you since we weren’t that far from Rancho Park, *pero* ultimately decided it was too hot and I was in too depressed and gummy a mood, so *volvimos a casa*. (*KC69*)
- (36) Free from the trappings of my former self (*digo* life, *en mi casa en* Califas) *y le conté que* I’d been happier this year than for many many years, *y cuánto había escrito, pero cosas diferentes, “nada que ver” con lo académico sensus strictu, quizás*. (*KC109-110*)

In these instances, we see that not only is Chávez Silverman’s language use hybrid and in constant change between the two languages, but her life experiences are also in ongoing transition in the *crónicas*. The notion of *home*, alike becomes a movable space in which she feels comfortable and herself despite being in diverse multi-geographical locales like Los Angeles, Madrid, South Africa or Buenos Aires.

We believe that with the search for understanding of the author’s multicultural adventures comes the urge to redraft her life motivated by her complex experiences, as well as literary, linguistic and global encounters. Therefore, the waves of life longings originating from sounds, smells, searching for home, and voices from her past bear both forthcoming and retrospective consequences as they restore past experiences and impact her memoir. After all,

Chávez Silverman confesses, her *crónicas* “began as letters: *cartas a amigos extrañados*, love letters to cities, smells, people, voices and geographies I missed” (KCxxi). As mentioned before, hybrid functionality is specifically related to language and the idea of “writing home.” Fundamental in this regard are lasting manifestations of aromas, sounds and semantic perceptions of geographies that awake latitudes of bilingual memory. In this context, longing emerges as a response as well as a powerful catalyst that traverses timeframes, geographies and instills languages. Hence, the author’s collective cartographical reference to specific friends and muses from her past not only creates a globalized readership network, but also provides an undertone to the narrative that highlights the complex process of hybridity and intercultural development across diverse contemporary societies.

Hybrid Identity

Chávez Silverman’s writing and her lifestyle highlight a multilingual and multicultural pan-Latina who writes and re-writes her experiences in an idiosyncratic way, merging and contrasting linguistic and geographic spaces. In fact, the essence of her writing speaks of her global experiences that occur in different spaces and languages. Whether she uses letter or e-mail exchanges, she breaches borders and creates new spaces of belonging-- or what she calls her “weird cyber-geografía” (KC 82). For this very reason, it seems, the author chooses not to write solely in English or Spanish, but by mixing the two. This hybridized form of language mixing is not a new phenomenon, however, the sustained nature of its use in Chávez Silverman’s text make her writing unique. Gloria Anzaldúa remarks about Spanish-English code-switching (or what she refers to as Chicano Spanish) that:

| Chicano Spanish is a border tongue which developed naturally. Change, evolución, enriquecimiento de palabras nuevas por invención o adopción have created variants of Chicano Spanish, un nuevo lenguaje. Un lenguaje que corresponde a un modo de vivir. Chicano Spanish is not incorrect, it is a living language. [...] A language which they can connect their identity to, one capable of communicating the realities and values true to themselves—a language with terms that are neither *español ni inglés*, but both. We speak a patois, a forked tongue, a variation of two languages. (Anzaldúa 77)

Similar to Anzaldúa, Chávez Silverman appears to align her *crónicas* in an analogue manner by defending her hybrid linguistic identity, which is not only American or Hispanic,

but also both. Within this process, one can distinguish at least two cultural identities in her writing: Chicana and *Porteña*. The former is a transcendent product of her living in Guadalajara and growing up in Los Angeles, California. The later emerges during her voyage through Argentina.

“*Tecolote Crónica*,” dedicated in memoriam to the author’s loving mother, is an intimate search for the Mexican cities of Chávez Silverman’s childhood, which she revisits after twenty years hoping to find the thriving memories she experienced with her parents. The author firstly details pastoral and urban memories, “The México with smashed *guayabas*,” “*tierra colorida*.” “[*México*] de los roadside fields and empty lots” and “*indio*-filled markets” with “*chiles de todo tipo, secos y frescos, aguas de melon, atole [...]*”(KC46). The vivid recall of undeveloped outskirts and Libertad market, Guadalajara marks an urban form of belonging and comprises idyllic memories of growing up while playing with her friends in the undeveloped Mexico of 1977. After the sentimental recollection of the country dweller, Chávez Silverman encounters a sobering transition sparked by progress and new understanding of time: “*ese México ya no existe en mi Zapopan[...]*. I always thought we lived way out in the country all that time, growing up. *Pero cuando volví en el ‘97*, it had stretched and morphed into just another Guadalajara suburb, *con su Blockbuster y todo*” (KC46). Ironically, the Mexico of her youth is overshadowed by progress and Western influences.

In this fashion, nostalgia is fostered due to a new comprehension of space and time, born on the edge of modernity, modern nostalgia charts certain patterns from the pastoral to urban locales. According to Boym, dislocated individuals “...follow the course of nostalgia from pastoral scene of romantic nationalism to the urban ruins of modernity” (Boym xviii). It is to say, the modulation of nostalgia, geography and estrangement subsequently awaken bucolic memories and move from marginal scenery to an urban labyrinth created by the expansion of western capitalism. Thereupon, urban structures over time indeed turn into crossroads of nostalgia and modernity. Although the former state is overshadowed by progress, ironically nostalgia may recover the preexisting pastoral memories. Nonetheless, Chávez Silverman’s voyage in Argentina is a cluster of literary, geographical and socio-cultural experiences pertaining to her adulthood.

In Buenos Aires, Chávez Silverman embraces “the *porteño* experience...living there, *digo* here [in the] *mero corazón de Cortazar* and *Borges-landia*,” her quest is to unveil “*qué*

representa la idiosincrasia misma de Buenos Aires according to the porteños...los jacarandas” (KC9). The author is captivated by a subtle interplay of literary and life experience that merge and re-emerge in different locales and forms. The overpowering first-hand experience in Argentina, the delicate connection to the scents of jacarandas, is followed by the peculiar, the craving to experience the literary world crafted by Argentinian canonical authors. Chávez Silverman’s eternal quest is to comprehend the *porteña* experience and her growing existential in-betweenness “living there, *digo* here,” make sense of life longings and her own literary vocation. Within this context, the writing itself becomes a metatext filled with existential questions that manifest themselves during her writing retreat in Argentina.

El ansia que me impulsa a escribir en Buenos Aires... It was something elemental, and somehow much more unsettling: wonderment crossed with an oddly seamless destined belonging, y el miedo and pre-regret of its loss. Una enfermedad, Melancholia before the fact. Antes de la pérdida. Escribir es la necesidad de captar, de contar eso. (KC12)

La ansia, an excessive desire, feelings of belonging and loss are apparently mutually inclusive. Longing transpires as a hybrid creation, a force that feeds on the affection and progressive separation. Nostalgia emerges as an ailment, which encompasses both the aches and pleasures of temporal agitation and spatial dislocation. It is both bitter and sweet, a quest for belonging is inspired by shifting borders, continuities and breaks, yet the ambivalence in reflection prevails. Boym refers to a strain of critical thinking which she calls “off-modern,” where “reflection and longing, estrangement and affection go together” (Boym xvii). Furthermore, this term can be functional, Boym claims, to people like Chávez Silverman who come from: “eccentric positions, (i.e. those often considered marginal or provincial with respect to the cultural mainstream, from Eastern Europe to Latin America)” (Boym xvii). In fact, Chávez Silverman’s family ancestry reaches back to Spanish-Jewish and Mexican roots, while her childhood and adulthood is a cluster of multilingual and cultural encounters across geographical spaces and timeframes.

Similarly, Chávez Silverman in an off-modern spirit alternates the threads of affection, nostalgia and estrangement. Her discourse increasingly turns into an eccentric text written from a wider, pan-Latina and ethnic perspective, while her ventures mark this quest and thus lead to the process of her becoming a Latina, Chicana as well as *Porteña*. Her desire to experience the peculiar constantly lies in analyzing and capturing life’s fleeting moments.

Captivated by the modalities of Argentinian reality, the author gradually reaches the depths of her awareness: “*En Buenos Aires, yo poseía, una* heighten sense of awareness, the poignancy of imminent loss ... *En Buenos Aires, habitaba un espacio* in-between. Elsewhere *Pero quizás por esto mismo* I claimed it so fiercely mine. Or maybe it claimed me” (KC12). The evolution of being unveils many facets of Chávez Silverman’s life and self-writing, and the personal pronouns in Spanish and English: “yo” and “I” convey rendering cartographies. The distance is like a cupid, it seduces rather than satisfies, at the same time awakens “diasporic intimacy,” a desire to re-draft and re-interpret oneself translates to pathos and in turn, leads to an unexpected growth of her *Porteña* identity.

As a Latina migrant, Chávez Silverman demonstrates an amplified compassion and sense of awareness to the predicaments of life and to the moral autonomy granted by her voyages. Her memoirs are a blend of her socio-cultural, mental trajectory and literary experiences. The dislocation and her impulse to relive the adventures captured in the canonical literary works of Borges or Echavarría resurface as her compass. The epistle reemerges from her globetrotter experiences, partially composed in Buenos Aires and redrafted in California. The author appeals to the authority of writing and firsthand experience to assert ownership of hybrid linguistic and cultural identity evolving from literary, urban, and global spaces juxtaposed with her own ample recollection.

Discussion and Conclusions

From the outset, KC sets in question hybrid forms of belonging factoring in multilingual and cultural life experiences. Empowered by a nostalgic revival of the past, the complex trajectory underscores the author’s *diasporic intimacy* or life longings to rediscover herself through different languages, literary and geographical spaces from her past. Therefore, *Porteña* and Chicana identities are products of estrangement and affection, as well as her complex journey across geographical, literary, social and linguistic locales. All of these contribute to this eloquent hybrid creation of pan-Latina identity. Chávez Silverman’s writing comprises a mixture of transcultural and borderland experiences shedding light on migration of the diaspora, which no longer is a two-way highway but rather a cross-frontier, and multicultural experience.

As a result, *KC* appears to transcend bilingualism and move towards a new hybrid and dynamic mode of communication, which goes beyond language barriers and creates a linguistically hybridized text. This new linguistic variety allows Chávez Silverman to connect most genuinely with herself as well as her bilingual audience and neighbors, and to express her linguistic identity with pride. Chávez Silverman's *crónicas* account for an exemplary postmodern complex pan-Latino experience as well as a poetic and linguistic performance. Her work exemplifies a groundbreaking impact on the U.S. Latino/a literary community traversing diverse borders, agglomerating and living in the United States while remaining connected through a worldwide network of readers via her epistles. Chávez Silverman's literary discourse breaches geographical, cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and literary borders, and highlight a world that is increasingly more globalized yet progressively less familiar.

In conclusion, we have examined Chávez Silverman's *KC* (2004) under the lens of Boym's (2001) framework of nostalgia. Our analysis has highlighted how nostalgia functions as a syndrome of globalization and a catalyst, which illuminates Chávez Silverman's multilingual and multiethnic encounters, as well as her pan-Latina identity. We have also pointed out how the author uses a hybrid mixture of Spanish and English to navigate her multicultural experiences. This linguistic hybridity allows her to connect to an array of scents, places and languages. Areas of further study could explore the role of nostalgic recall in other U.S. bilingual Latino texts with a particular interest in the globetrotter experience. They might also examine how memories are recreated through the implementation of various catalysts and symbols to connect to a variety of locales, with an interest in the way these modalities affect the evolving pan-Latino identity

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