

# REMEMBER THE CROSSERS: U.S.- MEXICAN IMMIGRATION AND THE CONTEMPORARY CORRIDO TRADITION\*

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## *Abstract*

The border between the United States and Mexico is today and, since the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, a place of passage of people and ideas. Immigration (legal and illegal) is, no doubt, an essential issue of the reality of this space. This event is definitely marking the relationship between the two countries as well as the identity of the inhabitants of this territory. Moreover, the border has become a culturally hybrid and permeable space, where very interesting artistic manifestations are being developed.

The border *corrido*, in particular, which emerged in the nineteenth century and has evolved both in terms of form and content to the present, is a clear example. The aim of this essay is to observe the way in which the migratory movement that occurs at the U.S-Mexico border is exposed in the artistic production of *Los Tigres del Norte*, one of the most influential contemporary *corrido* bands. Their songs reflect the expectations of immigrants, their suffering, etc., and eventually become the voice of the crossers, because, according Teodoro Bello, member of the band, *corridos* are “los hechos reales del pueblo.”

## *Resumen*

La frontera entre Estados Unidos y Méjico es, hoy en día y desde la firma del Tratado de Guadalupe Hidalgo en 1848, un lugar de tránsito de personas y de ideas. La inmigración (tanto legal como ilegal) es, sin duda alguna, parte de la realidad de este espacio y está marcando las relaciones entre ambos países, así como la identidad de los habitantes de este territorio. Por otro lado, la frontera se ha convertido en un espacio cultural híbrido y permeable del que surgen manifestaciones artísticas muy interesantes.

El *corrido* de la frontera, en concreto, que surge en el siglo XIX y ha evolucionado en cuanto a forma y contenido hasta la actualidad, es un claro ejemplo de este fenómeno. El objetivo de este trabajo es el de observar el modo en el que el movimiento migratorio que ocurre en esta frontera se refleja en la producción artística de *Los Tigres del Norte*, una de las bandas de *corridos* más influyentes de la actualidad. Sus *corridos* reflejan las expectativas de los inmigrantes, su sufrimiento, etc., y se convierten en definitiva, en su voz, ya que, que según Teodoro Bello, integrante de la banda, los *corridos* “son los hechos reales del pueblo.”

*Keywords:* U.S.-Mexican border, immigration, *corridos*, *Los Tigres del Norte*. *Palabras clave:* Frontera Mejicano-americana, inmigración, *corridos*, *Los Tigres del Norte*

The reality of those living on both sides of the United States and Mexico, especially those who have grown up believing that the other side is the good side, has been conditioned by three factors: the geographical division of the border along the Rio Grande; the formation and reinforcement of the idea of the *frontera* provoked by the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 at the end of the U.S.-Mexican War; and the beginning of the enormous fracture between the South and the North, the poor and the rich, the migrant country and the host country. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo clearly signified the beginning of a new era and the establishment of a new model of relationships between the two countries. The agreement was clear about the division of the land:

The boundary line between the two republics shall commence in the Gulf of Mexico, three leagues from land, opposite the mouth of the Rio Grande, otherwise called Rio Bravo del Norte, or opposite the mouth of its deepest branch, if it should have more than one branch emptying directly into the sea; from thence up the middle of that river, following the deepest channel, where it has more than one, to the point where it strikes the southern boundary of New Mexico; thence, westwardly, along the whole southern boundary of New Mexico (which runs north of the town called *Paso*) to its western termination; thence, northward, along the western line of New Mexico, until it intersects the first branch of the River Gila; [...] thence down the middle of the said branch and of the said river, until it empties into the Rio Colorado; thence across the Rio Colorado, following the division line between Upper and lower California, to the Pacific Ocean. (*Treaty*, Article V, 926)

Once the border was delineated, both countries agreed that “the boundary line shall be religiously respected by each of the two republics, and no change shall ever be made therein, except by the express and free consent of both nations, [...]” (*Treaty*, Article V, 927). Ever since its conception, the border between the U.S. and Mexico, the *frontera*, has turned into a hybrid space, where people, ideas and goods flow and cross continuously. Today, human migration from and through Mexico towards the United States (which does not always occur within the conditions established by the (U.S.) Law) is, undoubtedly, the phenomenon that most defines the essence of the borderland and its inhabitants, as well as the contemporary relationships between the two countries. The Migration Policy Institute states that:

Since claiming the top spot among all immigrant groups in the 1980 census, the Mexican immigrant population in the United States has continued to outsize other immigrant groups. In 2008, there were 11.4 million Mexican immigrants in the United States, accounting for 30.1 percent of all U.S. immigrants and 10 percent

of all Mexicans. Over half of all Mexican immigrants reside in the United States illegally. (Terrazas 2010)

The history of migration from Mexico to the United States dates back to the mid-19th century, when Mexican labor was needed first on the growing Texan ranches and then for the construction of the U.S. railroad system. The Mexican Revolution and War World I intensified migration to the United States, which was subsequently regulated in an attempt to guarantee decent working conditions for the immigrants. The creation of the Border Patrol in 1924 drastically changed both the conception of the migration movement and the persona of the migrant worker, who started to be persecuted and criminalized. In 1942, the Bracero Program was launched to regulate the migration of farm workers to the United States and imported nearly 4 million workers from 1942 to 1964. The end of the program provided the grounds for the growth of illegal immigration, as well as for its criminalization. Today, this migratory movement is considered a felonious act, both by U.S. institutions and by the general public, who “xenophobically fear that an influx of Hispanic migrants will undermine their employment opportunities or have an otherwise negative impact on the quality of their lives” (Dwyer 1994:116). Ironically, human beings are stopped from crossing the border, but goods flow freely after the signing of the NAFTA Agreement in the year 1994 between Canada, the USA and Mexico. This treaty aims, among its many objectives, to “eliminate barriers to trade in, and facilitate the cross-border movement of, goods and services between the territories of the Parties” (1994).

From a more theoretical, conceptual standpoint, this constant flow of people and ideas has resulted in the formation of a border terrain that represents not only the dividing line between two cultures and socioeconomic realities but also a metaphysical space where, in the eyes of those in power, “los *atravesados* live here; the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato, the half-breed, the half dead; in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go to the confines of the ‘normal’” (Anzaldúa 1987: 3). Conversely, in contemporary Chicano thought, the border zone represents a hybrid *mestizo* space that possesses a tremendously rich and heterogeneous creative power and gives voice to the intrinsic amalgamated nature of Chicano identity. This zone, described by Chicana scholar Gloria Anzaldúa as a third space, which in Homi Bhabha’s words, provides “the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood-singular or communal-that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself” (1994:1-2) is today the source of much of the contemporary artistic, literary, and cultural production of the Chicano community.

Popular culture, in its various manifestations, has portrayed and described the reality of the *frontera* and the enormous migration movements from and through it, amongst other issues related to life in the border. Popular legends and songs talk and sing about the adventures and misadventures of people crossing the border, the

coyotes who purportedly help the crossers, the pressures exerted upon them by the Border Patrol, their dreams and hopes, and more. The *corrido* genre, in particular, represents an important source of documentation of the movement north, providing the crossers with a protagonism and a voice they lack in institutional files that treat them as mere numbers.

The *corrido* is a short, sung oral narrative with origins in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that deals with everyday issues, such as love, war, revolutions, heroes, fugitives, and history. In anthropologist Mark Cameron Edberg's words, "*corridos* as a whole have included other themes as well, such as immigration; migrant labour; working conditions on the railroads, in the fields and under the *bracero* program; love lost when migration to the United States; and other issues" (2004:31). Immigration, as a very present daily issue in the life in the border, has become a central theme in the lyrics of the present-day *corridos*, which according to Teodoro Bello, member of the *corrido* band *Los Tigres del Norte*, "*son los hechos reales de nuestro pueblo*" (are our people's real facts) (qtd. in Valenzuela 2006). The presence and relevance of *corridos* for the account of these *real facts*, is obvious ever since the delineation of the borderline. The "border conflict" (Paredes 1958) became one of the most significant themes in the *corrido* production at the border. The *corrido* of the Lower Border (Paredes 1958) turned into a heroic piece of popular song, as "there was a generally favorable disposition toward the individual who disregarded customs and immigration laws, especially the laws of the United States" (Paredes 1993:27).

Today, the border conflict has acquired more complex connotations, as the economic gap between the North and the South is manifest, and the numbers of people who cross the line has increased enormously. As a consequence, the border has turned into a highly militarized, violent space. The *corrido* as a genre has also evolved since its conception. *Corridos* are now produced and transmitted through other means, and as José Limón explains, they "are also transmitted through the printed page, films, records and oral recitation without music" (1992:15). In this context, the main aim of this essay is to describe the portrayal of contemporary immigration in this popular musical form in order to prove the significance of popular culture in portraying diverse social issues. As explained by Chicana critic and author Maria Herrera-Sobek,

Music objectifies the immigrant's experiences through the singing of songs that articulate their concerns, anxieties, and fears; historicize the events of migration to fit them into familiar patterns; and contemporize these events so as to make them relevant to ongoing immigrant experiences. (1993:191)

For these purposes, this essay examines some works by *Los Tigres del Norte*, one of the most prolific and well-known contemporary *corrido* bands. This analysis takes into account that as an originally Mexican band that settled in the United States, *Los Tigres del Norte* possesses a global, complex, and realistic vision of life in both countries. The band, therefore, presents an interesting phenomenon whose

clear bridging, binational, bilingual, bicultural essence can be analyzed. The hybrid identity of the band, moreover, represents a factual blurring of the border and its nature, as they embody its permeability (in cultural terms, for instance), as opposed to its strict and untrespassable inherent essence. In this sense, they very clearly epitomize a counterexample of what Alejandro Grimson writes for the introduction of the Spanish version of Scott Michaelsen and David Johnson's *Border Theory: The Limits of Cultural Politics*: "Cuando las fronteras son pensadas exclusivamente desde experiencias de extrema desigualdad, puede producirse un deslizamiento: abordar la frontera necesariamente como un sitio de encuentro entre una cultura dominante y una subalterna, e identificar a esas culturas con nacionalidades o etnicidades que la frontera marcaría" (2003:14). *Los Tigres del Norte*, who may be considered to be coming from the South also, show that the border, and those who cross it, is a (cultural) space that can be crossed and trespassed, a space where two (or more) cultures cohabit, and oftentimes, collide and crash, but where new voices, new blood emerges from the hemorrhage (Anzaldúa 1987).

As for the real data, many people cross the U.S.-Mexico border every day with the aim of finding a better life. According to the overtly and highly patriotic U.S. webpage Global Security (devoted to security, military, and defense issues),

by one estimate each year between 400,000 and 1 million undocumented migrants try to slip across the rivers and deserts on the 2,000-mile (3,200-km) U.S.-Mexico border. In 2005 over 1.2 million illegal immigrants were apprehended by the Border Patrol. By one estimate the Border Patrol catches 1 out of every 4 illegal border crossers, and this is typically the estimate public officials use in discussing the problem. Official Border Patrol statistics are that 1 in 5 illegal aliens are apprehended and arrested.

According to the official Border Patrol statistics, "in FY (Fiscal Year) 2012, Border Patrol agents made over 364,000 arrests of people illegally entering the country" (Department of Homeland Security). Similarly, the consequence of the crossings account for the fact that:

[...] the number of unauthorized residents originating from Mexico is more than 10 times larger than the number of unauthorized residents from any other country. Between 1999 and 2009, Mexican men aged 15 to 50 years old accounted for three-fourths of all apprehensions at the U.S.-Mexico border, and Mexican women aged 15 to 50 years old accounted for an additional one-seventh of apprehensions. The remaining apprehensions are distributed among juvenile Mexican nationals, senior Mexican nationals, and migrants from other countries. (Carriquiry & Majmudar 2013:16)

In this context, many *corridos* and popular songs unequivocally portray immigration as a matter of everyday life, a phenomenon inherent to life on the border and, by extension, to the lives of its inhabitants. The following lyrics by *Los Tigres del Norte* picture in a few lines versions of the relationship between the

United States and Mexico and of the migratory movement between the two countries which differ widely from the official one.

### Somos más Americanos

Ya me gritaron mil veces  
que me regrese a mi tierra,  
Porque aquí no quepo yo  
Quiero recordarle al gringo:  
Yo no crucé la frontera,  
la frontera me cruzó.  
América nació libre, el hombre la dividió.

Ellos pintaron la raya,  
Para que yo la brincara y me llaman  
invasor  
es un error bien marcado  
nos quitaron ocho estados  
quién es aquí el invasor.  
Soy extranjero en mi tierra,  
y no vengo a darles guerra,  
soy hombre trabajador.

Y si no miente la historia,  
aquí se asentó en la gloria  
la poderosa nación  
entre guerreros valientes,  
indios de dos continentes,

mezclados con español.  
Y si a los siglos nos vamos:  
somos más americanos,  
somos más americanos  
que el hijo del anglo-saxon.

Nos compraron sin dinero  
las aguas del Río Bravo.

Y nos quitaron a  
Texas, Nuevo México, Arizona y  
Colorado.  
También voló California y  
Nevada con Utah no se llenaron,  
el estado de Wyoming,  
también nos lo arrebataron.  
Yo soy la sangre del indio  
Soy latino soy mestizo  
Somos de todos colores  
Y de todos los oficios  
Y si contamos los siglos  
Aunque le duela al vecino  
Somos más americanos  
Que todititos los gringos

This *corrido*, with its simple and direct language, portrays a version of the birth of the physical and physic border that places the United States of America in an absolutely different position than the official one. According to the *corrido*, the United States migrated to Mexico after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. This historical account is, in fact, the one that the Chicano Movement and continuous trends of Chicano activism have defended. The song starts by portraying the contemporary daily life of most of the Mexican population, both legal and illegal, in the United States, where they are mistreated, looked down upon, and invited to leave a country they consider their own. The first-person voice of the *corrido* endows it with a universality that includes all immigrants and Mexicans living in the United States and thus becomes a political manifesto for every individual discriminated against in the United States. Although the *corrido* uses strong, ideological words such as “invader,” it expresses quite a conciliatory tone. It seeks to remind *gringos* of the true nature of the U.S.-Mexico association. Moreover, the

lyrics comment on a controversial issue: the legitimacy of the Anglo possession of the lands that form the United States of America today. Following the non-Anglo version of U.S. history, the *corrido* states that those who are not Anglo are more American than Anglos (who call themselves by the generic term “American”). In a very simple but direct way, *Los Tigres del Norte* explains that Anglos settled in territories once the lands of large communities of Indians and Spaniards, thus becoming the real invaders. Several anthropological and historical studies have pointed out the migratory nature of the ancestors of the Mexicans, as well as the “crossability” of the contemporary U.S.-Mexico border. The first, Aztec communities, which lived in the today mythical land of Aztlan, already migrated to the Valley of Mexico in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, as it was accounted for in the first chronicles by Spaniard friar Diego Durán in 1581, or by jesuit Francisco Javier Clavijero, in 1780, among others. Migration (both northward and southward), thus, is an experience that has marked the essence of the relationship between the two territories, and therefore, has been present in the artistic production of these lands.

In this context and continuing with the idea of the geopolitical dividing line between the two countries, the *corrido* “*El muro*” from *Detalles y emociones* clearly illustrates the band’s political and ideological position. They directly address the president of the United States and encourage him to tear down the material manifestation of the divide between the countries: a 1,952-mile wall built after passage of the Secure Fence Act of 2006, a wall (the “Tortilla Curtain” (Anzaldúa 1987)) that in chicana critic’s words is a “1,950 mile-long open wound dividing *a pueblo*, a culture running down the length of my body/staking fence rods in my flesh/splits me/splits me/ *me raja/me raja*” (1987: 151).

### El muro

Oiga señor presidente  
Mejor construya un puente  
que somos aquí mucha gente  
Y gente inteligente

Así como nos ve en el campo  
También nos ve en las oficinas  
Y usted sabe que nos necesita  
En su equipo y hasta en la cocina

O hágale como en España  
que han puesto una telaraña  
Asiendo entrar en melilla  
Lo deciden en la orilla

Pero a veces en camilla  
qué horror qué pesadilla

El muro (el muro, el muro, que duro)  
que duro (lo brinca solo el canguro)  
Lo brinca solo el canguro

Pay attention  
El muro (el muro, el muro que duro)  
que duro (lo brinca solo el canguro)  
Lo brinca solo el canguro

que quite a sus soldados  
que acabo que estos eran nuestros estados  
que quite a sus soldados  
Por el mundo dispersado

Ya vimos que en irak  
 muchos se están muriendo  
 Y los que regresan,  
 regresan destrozados  
 Al norte de correa en israel y en palestina  
 Los niños ya no juegan ya no salen ni a la  
 esquina

Y qué me dicen del continente africano  
 Los ríos se están secando  
 ya no queda ni un pantano  
 Los pueblos se mueren de hambre  
 en papera se van al mar  
 Pero muchos se están ahogando  
 naufragan en alta mar

A todos los jefes de estados  
 Les enviamos este urgente recado  
 que eduquen a sus pueblos  
 Para que mejoren sus sueldos

que quiten todos los muros  
 que se abran las fronteras  
 que podamos conocernos  
 Y cambiar nuestras ideas  
 que cada quien le rece a su diosito  
 Pa que pelearse si hay tantas religiones  
 que cada quien elija su devociones

Respetemos y abramos los corazones  
 que los muros de la mente  
 son el peligro inminente

El muro (el muro, el muro que duro)  
 que duro (lo brinca solo el canguro)  
 Lo brinca solo el canguro

Yo no quiero muro

These lyrics are full of strong ideological content and assert that the free global flow of ideas and people and the elimination of all physical and conceptual borders are the only means of achieving a balanced, just development of all countries. The ironically festive tone of the chorus ensures that the message the song wants to transmit is easily learned and reproduced by the audience. Similarly, the direct exhortation to the president of the United States and to all presidents worldwide lends the *corrido* a highly triumphant tone. The lyrics, which resemble a political hymn, could easily create a sense of communal implications and thus political demand when sung by large audiences such as those of *Los Tigres*. Finally, the address of the denunciation to several presidents and the condemnation of the situation in various countries give the *corrido* a universality that once again reinforces its manifesto-like nature.

On the other hand, the act of crossing, or the concrete materialization of the concept of immigration, is one of the most recurrent themes in the *corridos*. The harshness of the terrain where crossing is performed, combined with the fierce control of the Border Patrol, make the journey from one country to another difficult. Time and time again, immigrants are cheated and abandoned by the *coyotes* hired to help them cross the border.



**José Pérez León**

El era un hombre de campo  
oriundo de Nuevo León  
tenía apenas 19 años  
su nombre: José Pérez León.

Tenía un primo lejano  
que de mojado se fue  
al poco tiempo le envió un telegrama  
diciendo ven pronto José.

Pues un trabajo le habían encontrando  
piscando algodón como él.

Y se fue, y se fue  
ahogando en llanto en el adiós  
con su mujer  
se fue, sin saber  
que de ese viaje ya jamás iba a volver  
pobre José.

Cuando llegó a la frontera  
con Willy se entrevistó  
era el pollero mas afamado  
y astuto de la región  
Le dijo Pepe hoy estas de suerte  
mañana te cruzo yo...

La madrugada de un viernes  
en una vieja estación  
20 inocentes pagaban su cuota  
entre ellos José Pérez León  
y sin dudarle a todos subieron  
en el interior de un vagón.

El tren cruzó al otro lado  
casi 7 horas después  
fue cuando el aire empezó a terminarse  
y ya nada pudieron hacer  
nadie escuchó aquellos gritos de auxilio  
y la puerta no quiso ceder.

Uno por uno se fueron cayendo  
y así falleció el buen José.

Y se fue, y se fue  
a cruzar el cielo con sus ansias de crecer  
se fue, sin saber  
que ya su esposa un hijo suyo iba a tener  
pobre José.

Así termina la historia, no queda más que  
contar  
de otro paisano que arriesga la vida  
y que muere como ilegal  
de aquel José que mil sueños tenía y que  
a casa  
jamás volverá...

The *corrido* of José Pérez León is a clear example of the risks and roughness of crossing the border, which is an illegal and thus perilous act. The *coyotes*, as portrayed in the song, take advantage of immigrants who find themselves in a vulnerable position and many times are doomed to death.

Simultaneously, this *corrido* demonstrates another typical characteristic of the *corrido* form: a high degree of melodrama and passion. Take, for example, the lines that describe José's separation from his wife and the closing which reveals that he had ignored that his wife was expecting a baby. The drama of José's death becomes more shocking and illustrates the enormous gap between the dream that immigrants pursue and the reality of immigration, which is cruel and ruthless. The lyrics imply that crossing the border entails an enormous amount of suffering, which as described by Mexican journalist and novelist Maria Luisa de la Garza is an

essential theme of *corridos* dealing with migration (2005). Additionally, as clearly described in the *corrido* of José Pérez León, many immigrants die along the way. In fact, according to the website of the Migration Policy Institute, “in 2005, there were a record-breaking 473 migrant deaths at the border; over 260 were on the Arizona border” (2006). In this sense, the harshness of the crossing and the endurance of the crossers have somehow turned the hero of the *corrido* genre into a less heroic one. In Chicano sociologist Charles Tatum’s words, in fact, “This hero is replaced in later *corridos* by a relatively weak character who is portrayed as a more-or-less helpless victim” (2001:20).

All migratory movement involves leaving one’s home and going to a different place which generally does not easily become home. In the case of Mexican immigrants and the *corridos* that accompany them and describe their journey, Mexico becomes the lost mother country which they love but must abandon in search of a better life and future. Many *corridos*, like José López’s, thus describe the sadness immigrants experience when leaving their country, homes, and families. The songs almost always portray that, once settled in the United States, the immigrants experience a high degree of dissatisfaction in their dreamt-of paradise and desire to return to their home country. This is the case of the following *corrido* that describes the feelings of entrapment and lack of freedom many immigrants experience in the United States.

### **La jaula de oro**

Aquí estoy establecido,  
en los Estados Unidos,  
diez años pasaron ya,  
en que crucé de mojado,  
papeles no he arreglado,  
sigo siendo un ilegal,

Tengo mi esposa y mis hijos,  
que me los traje muy chicos,  
y se han olvidado ya,  
de mi MEXICO querido,  
del que yo nunca me olvido,  
y no puedo regresar,

De qué me sirve el dinero,  
si estoy como prisionero,  
dentro de esta gran nación,  
cuando me acuerdo hasta lloro,  
aunque la jaula sea de oro,  
no deja de ser prisión,

‘ y escúchame hijo,  
te gustaría que regresáramos a vivir a  
México,’  
what’s talkin about dad,  
i don’t wanna go back to mexico,  
no way dad,

Mis hijos no hablan conmigo,  
otro idioma han aprendido,  
y olvidado el español,  
piensan como americanos,  
niegan que son mexicanos  
aunque tengan mi color,

De mi trabajo a mi casa,  
no sé lo que me pasa,  
que aunque soy hombre de hogar,  
casi no salgo a la calle,  
pues tengo miedo que me hallen,  
y me pueden deportar,

De qué me sirve el dinero,  
si estoy como prisionero,  
dentro de esta gran nación,

cuando me acuerdo hasta lloro,  
aunque la jaula sea de oro,  
no deja de ser prisión,

The golden cage becomes a highly significant metaphor of the social reality of many Mexican citizens who cross to the United States in search of a better life and instead find spite, rejection, and a lack of humanity and acceptance. Broadly speaking, globalization and the reinforcement of the gap between rich and poor countries construct an ideal of life in the North in the imagination of those who live in more underprivileged countries. The contrary reality is perfectly portrayed in the previous *corrido*, which exposes the difficulties that newly arrived immigrants generally encounter in assimilating in their new home that rarely offers social or human recognition. In this sense, other *corridos* such as “*El mojado acaudalado*” also reveal that the main desire of many immigrants is to return home once they make enough money to provide their children and families with a better life.

The harsh life of immigrants in the United States and the dual existence that immigration itself creates serve as the themes in the lyrics of “*Mis dos patrias*” from the album *Jefe de Jefes*. This song portrays the difficulty of adapting to a new life, new ways of understanding social and human relationships, and the harshness of reconciling the desire to become part of the host country’s social modes and to not forget one’s origins. The immigrant has a heart torn by love of both countries and needs to justify abandoning the home country in search of an easier future.

### **Mis dos patrias**

Raise your right hand  
and repeat after me:

‘I pledge allegiance to the flag,  
of the united states of america,  
and to the republic  
for which it stands,  
one nation under god,  
indivisible, with  
liberty and justice for all.’

congratulations, you are now all  
american citizens.

Para quien dice que yo soy

un malinchista  
y que traiciono a mi bandera  
y mi nación  
para que rompa con mi canto  
las fronteras  
les voy abrir de par en par  
mi corazón  
dejé las tumbas de mis padres,  
mis abuelos  
llegue llorando a tierra  
de anglosajón.

yo trabajaba, mis hijos  
iban creciendo  
todos nacieron bajo de esta  
gran nación  
y mis derechos los han ido pisoteando

van formulando leyes  
de constitución  
que haré ya viejo si me quitan mi dinero  
yo solo quiero mi seguro de pensión  
pero que importa si soy nuevo ciudadano  
sigo siendo mexicano como  
el pulque y el nopal  
y mis hermanos centro  
y sudamericanos, caribeños  
o cubanos traen la sangre  
tropical para k respeten los  
derechos de mi raza  
cabén dos patrias en el mismo corazón.

HABLADO....

El juez se paro en la corte  
la tarde del juramento

de mi corazón brotaba una  
lágrima salada que me quemaba por  
dentro.

2 banderas me turbaban  
una verde, blanca y roja con  
el águila estampada  
la otra con su azul lleno  
de estrellas, con sus rayas rojas y  
blancas grabadas, la bandera  
de mis hijos que  
alegres me contemplaban  
no me llamen traicionero  
que a mis 2 patrias las quiero  
en la mía deje a mis muertos  
aquí, aquí mis hijos nacieron  
por defender mis derechos  
no puedo ser traicionero.

The feeling of living in two realities but not being an active social participant in either gives the immigrant a sense of non-belonging. Chicano scholars such as Gloria Anzaldúa described this feeling among individuals living in border situations. Considered second-class citizens in the United States and traitors in their home country of Mexico, the immigrants feel no identification or recognition with either country. Their children, as related by the *corridos*, feel no attachment for Mexico. These immigrants thus constitute an often defenseless, voiceless country, settlers in the very ethno-homogenic *barrios* that provide an enormous, silent workforce essential to the economic development of the host country. Regardless of this difficult context, the data prove that many Mexican citizens dream of crossing into the United States, no matter the adversities they will find along the way or the extremely hostile reality that awaits them in their dreamed-of country. According to *Los Tigres del Norte*, all immigrants can do is pray that the Lord looks after them along their journey to paradise, reproducing the hero-victim role that Tatum describes.

### **El santo de los mojados**

En el nombre del Padre y del Hijo  
en nombre de tu Espíritu Santo  
me des la protección de tu manto.

Concédenos señor yo te pido  
llegar a los estados unidos  
no dejes que regrese al infierno  
que a mi país convierte el gobierno.

Que tu sombra ciegue  
a los que nos persiguen  
que tratan de impedirnos llegar  
pero no lo consiguen.

Manda tu refulgencia señor  
por mares y desiertos  
para que ya ni el frío ni el calor  
dejen mas muertos.

Estamos en peligro  
de perder la vida  
y aquí no nos podemos quedar no queda  
otra salida

San Pedro eres en santo patrón  
de todos los mojados  
concede la legalización al indocumentado.

Pero si en mi hora desastrada  
tirado quedo yo en el camino  
si ya no vuelvo besar a mi madre  
y no regrese ya con mis niños.

Señor San Pedro a ti me encomiendo  
dame tu bendición y consuelo  
y a los que como yo van muriendo  
les abras tu las puertas del cielo.

La sombra de San Pedro divino  
nos ha de cuidar en el camino  
te pido paz por que el invocarte  
tu protección esté de mi parte.

Protégenos de los asaltantes  
contrabandistas y otros maleantes  
permítenos brincar el alambre  
pues nuestros hijos se mueren de hambre.

This *corrido* serves as a concluding example of the difficulties of those who choose to cross, driven by an urgent need to find a better life and escape hunger and misery. Similar to the other songs, these lyrics show a high degree of denunciation, which given the enormous masses that the *corridos* of *Los Tigres del Norte* reach, becomes almost a political manifesto that gives visibility and protagonism to those who cross the border and, many times, die along the way.

In conclusion, these few examples demonstrate that this band, commonly regarded as dealing with more trivial subjects such as love and even *narcocorridos*, uses its enormous influence to make its audiences aware of the large problem of massive migration movements between the two countries, along the ruthlessness of the Border Patrol, and the horrible circumstances of migrants both in their home country which they decide to leave and in their purported host country. *Los Tigres del Norte's* concern for illegal immigrants is so strong that they have been invited to participate in projects, such as *The Sound Strike* in which they and the hard-rock band Rage Against the Machine protested against anti-immigration laws in Arizona. In this sense, the band's lyrics are aimed, not only at protecting and denouncing the circumstances of the immigrants, but also at discouraging crossers from going to el Norte. In sum, the band's national and international influence, binational nature, and bridging essence make *Los Tigres del Norte* a great thermometer of the pulse of the border and its inhabitants, crossers, and potential dwellers because, all in all, *corridos* are "*los hechos reales del pueblo.*"

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\* This essay is part of a project financed by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness (code: FFI2011-23598) and the European Regional Fund (ERDF). It was also completed under the auspices of the research group REWEST funded by the Basque Government (Grupo Consolidado IT608-13) and the University of the Basque Country, UPV/EHU (UFI 11/06).

*How to cite this article:*

Ibarraran Bigalondo, Amaia. "Remember the Crossers: U.S.-Mexican Immigration and the Contemporary Corrido Tradition." *ES. Revista de Filología Inglesa* 35 (2014): 113-127.

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