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Araştırma makalesi/Research article

The Devil's Highway: The U.S. - Mexico Border Crossing, Global Influences and Politics*

The Devil's Highway: Meksika-Amerika Sınırını Geçiş, Global Etkiler ve Politikalar

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Abstract

Beginning with the 1846 Mexican-American War and expanding to the post-9/11 era, the U.S.-Mexico border has become the embodiment of crises, conflicts, and reconciliation. The border crossing has occupied the headlines with strict border control policies and high death tolls along the border. A Pulitzer Prize finalist for the nonfiction category in 2005, Luis A. Urrea's *The Devil's Highway* (2004) gives voice to marginalized Mexican border crossers in his personal-political border writing. This article poses a major question about Mexicans crossing the border:

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why do they embark on a fatal journey across the border? As a response, the article explores the historical, cultural, economic, and political repercussions of Mexican border crossing through *The Devil's Highway*. Mexicans' sense of displacement and search for a place in American society and economy relate their border crossing to the concepts of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, keyed by Deleuze and Guattari. In addition to Arjun Appadurai's intersectional global dynamics and John Tomlinson's overwhelming mass media and communication networks, Mexican migrants' broadened entrapment in a cycle of global deterritorialization and reterritorialization is noted. With the failure of border militarism and prevalent xenophobic responses, Urrea's political narrative calls for collaboration between the United States and Mexico on diplomatic, legal, and humanitarian terms. Therefore, the analysis of Urrea's pro-life narrative and his call for border policy reform provide a new dimension to the politics of border control, border and immigration studies, and human rights struggle along the border. As an interdisciplinary border narrative, *The Devil's Highway* highlights the predominance of Mexican history, geopolitical and regional dynamics, and globalization in the experience of undocumented Mexican migrants.

Keywords: *The Devil's Highway, deterritorialization, reterritorialization, the U.S.-Mexico border*

Öz

Meksika-Amerika Savaşıyla (1846) başlayıp 11 Eylül sonrası döneme kadar gelen süreçte ABD-Meksika sınırı kriz, anlaşmazlıklar ve uzlaşmanın temsili oldu. ABD-Meksika sınırını geçiş, sert sınır koruma politikaları ve sınır bölgesindeki yüksek ölüm oranlarıyla medyada geniş yer buldu. 2005 Pulitzer Ödüllerinde kurgusal olmayan anlatılar dalında finale kalan, Urrea'nın *The Devil's Highway* (2004) eseri göz ardı edilen Meksikalı göçmenlere kendi kişisel-politik sınır anlatısında kendilerini ifade etme şansı vermektedir. Bu makale, sınırı geçmeye çalışan Meksikalı göçmenlerle ilgili temel bir soru sormaktadır: neden sınırı geçmek için bu ölümcül yolculuğa çıkıyorlar? Bu soruya cevap olarak, makale ABD-Meksika sınırını geçmeye çalışan göçmenlerin tecrübelerinde tarihi, kültürel, ekonomik ve politik yansımaları *The Devil's Highway* eseri üzerinden incelemektedir. Meksikalıları göç etmeye ve Amerikan toplumu ve ekonomisinde bir yer aramaya iten sınırı geçme mücadelesi Deleuze ve Guattari'nin yersizyurtsuzlaşma ve yeniden-yerliyurtlulaşma kavramlarıyla bağlantılıdır. Arjun Appadurai'nin bahsettiği birbiriyle kesişen küresel dinamikler ve John Tomlinson'nın bahsettiği karşı konulmaz kitlesel medya ve iletişim ağları, Meksikalı göçmenleri yersizyurtsuzlaştıran ve yeniden-yerliyurtlulaştıran küreselleşme döngüsü içinde hapsolmalarını daha da ileriye taşımaktadır. Sınır militarizminin başarısızlığı ve yaygınlaşan yabancı düşmanlığı sebebiyle, Urrea'nın bu politik anlatısı Meksika ve ABD arasında diplomatik, hukuki ve insani açıdan bir iş birliğine çağrı yapmaktadır. Dolayısıyla, Urrea'nın yaşam yanlısı anlatısı ve sınır politikalarında reform çağrısı, sınır kontrol politikaları, sınır ve göç çalışmaları ve sınır hattında insan hakları mücadelesine yeni bir boyut kazandırmaktadır. Disiplinler arası bir sınır anlatısı olarak, *The Devil's Highway*

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Meksikalı kaçak göçmenlerin tecrübelerinde Meksika tarihinin, jeopolitik ve bölgesel dinamiklerin ve küreselleşmenin baskınlığına ışık tutmaktadır.

Anahtar sözcükler: *The Devil's Highway, yersizyurtsuzla*şma, yeniden-*yerliyurtlulaşma, ABD-Meksika sınırı*

Introduction

Between the years of the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo[1] and the 1929 Stock Market Crash, no major border dispute was manifested in the U.S-Mexico border history. As Tony Payan conveys, Mexicans could pass without papers as citizens during that time (2006: 54). Until the 1929 Immigration Act, Payan notes that Asian immigrants were primarily targeted with anti-immigration policies; however, this act seriously hindered Mexican border crossing and an "open immigration" policy due to economic problems of the time (2006: 55). In the 1940s, Mexicans turned into "economic refugees" in the United States and began to live in border towns after their terms ended, which gradually amounted to approximately four million Mexicans working under the Bracero Program until 1964 (Payan, 2006: 55).[2] The end of the Bracero Program in 1964 represents a major turn to today's undocumented border crossing problem. Due to unemployment, urbanization, and population growth in Mexico, Mexicans sought employment in American farms and industries "without a guest worker visa" (Payan, 2006: 55). According to Payan, the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act addressed undocumented labor issues, particularly the Mexicans living in the United States (2006: 56).[3] Payan indicates that the U.S. Congress' military assistance to the Border Patrol provided "more people, more resources, and more vehicles" without directly confronting employers of undocumented workers or "increasing economic integration in North America" as a solution (2006: 56). Since the 9/11 attacks, the border policy of war on immigration and drugs merged with the war on terror agenda of Homeland Security: "trade, trucks, vehicles, student and tourist visa holders, cross-border workers, etc.—all border crossers—became suspect" (Payan, 2006: xiii). The view of (un)documented Mexican immigration has drastically changed over the years for policy makers; nevertheless, the crisis at the U.S.-Mexico border has remained as an unresolved problem.

The U.S.-Mexico border has evoked different representations with various interpretations of the border conflict.[4] Studies on the border have referred to it as a barrier and underlined its geopolitical and socioeconomic outcomes. However, Chicano studies predominantly viewed the border as a "metaphor for the creation of other identities" (Vilanova, 2002: 78). In that, the borderlands have sustained diversity in identity and resisted hegemonic domination of the United States, leading to an "abstraction of the border," affirmation of cross-cultural connections, and the emergence of "new critical approaches" in literature (Vilanova, 2002: 78). Mexican border writers, however, have not internalized the border as a concept or creative force behind cultural hybridity since "the border does not cross their identity or their existence" (Vilanova, 2002: 78). Northern Mexican literature does not have the quintessential Mexican American approach to the border or border crossing experience with bicultural and bilingual shifts in narratives because the border remained as a "physical space" without "internal and emotional" attributes (Vilanova, 2002: 78).

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In *Borderlands*, Anzaldúa (1987) explores the meaning of the U.S.-Mexico border and the borderlands with their impacts on identity and consciousness. As Anzaldúa indicates, borders create barriers that manage national and cultural politics through narratives of difference and (in)security between border crossers and citizens,

> Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them*. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. (1987: 3)

Borderlands presents a counterargument to traumatizing border experience and culture with Anzaldúa's redefinition of the U.S.-Mexico border: a place of liberation from political and cultural conflicts over the history of colonization, American imperialism, identity struggle, and immigration. Anzaldúa views Mexican border crossing under their "tradition of migration, a tradition of long walks" that signifies "the return odyssey to the historical/mythological Aztlán" (1987: 11). Within this historico-cultural context, Mexicans crossing the border valorize their ancestors of "Indians from the interior of Mexico" and the "*mestizos* that came with the *conquistadores* in the 1500s" as laborers of farms and railroads, residents of the borderlands and the U.S. citizens (Anzaldúa, 1987: 11). The *new mestiza consciousness* nurtured by the borderlands creates "a tolerance for contradictions" as Anzaldúa suggests, "She learns to be an Indian in Mexican culture, to be Mexican from an Anglo point of view. She learns to juggle cultures" (1987: 79). Thus, Mexicans and Mexican Americans crossing geographical borders and borders between intersecting cultures maintain multiple alliances, voices, and identities. Yarbro-Bejarano regards the borderlands positionality and consciousness of Anzaldúa as "the third space, the in-between, border, or interstice" that embraces "*mestizaje* or hybridity" (1994: 11). As a Chicana theorist and writer, Anzaldúa forges alliances among people against oppression and suffering: "Through our literature, art, *corridos*, and folktales we must share our history with them so ... they won't turn people away because of their racial fears and ignorances" (1987: 85). In that sense, Anzaldúa and Urrea are border crossers with their unique interpretations of the U.S.-Mexico border and the borderland. They reconstruct historical, cultural, political, and linguistic borders and border crossing as they bring their people from margins to the center for collaboration and change in views, manners and politics.

A renowned Mexican American writer, Luis Alberto Urrea explores the U.S.-Mexico border, Mexican history and heritage, and identity issues in his works. Urrea's dedicated work with relief organizations along the border provided quintessential material to the publication of *Across the Wire: Life and Hard Times on the Mexican Border* (1993). Likewise, *By the Lake of Sleeping Children: The Secret Life of the Mexican Border* (1996) exemplifies his "docu-journalistic" style in border writing (Aldama, 2006: 261). Aldama states that *Nobody's Son: Notes From an American Life* (1998) is another example of his testimonial writing and gift in storytelling as Urrea sheds light to marginalized people's struggles in his works of poetry, his novel *In Search of Snow* (1994), and "ethnocritical naturalist" books (2006: 262). In his interview with Frederick L. Aldama, Urrea emphasizes the politico-cultural mission of his writing with Rudy Anaya's words, "'The personal is political. If you can make a rich, white

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American read about your little grandmother and feel as though she were their grandmother, then you have committed a prime political act in humanizing us as people to each other'" (Aldama, 2006: 267). Urrea published *Across the Wire* in order to "humanize" people from the Tijuana dump without sentimentalizing or ennobling their poverty and harsh circumstances (Aldama, 2006: 267) as he depicts several stories from the *colonias*, undeveloped borderland communities. As Mendoza suggests, Urrea's realistic portrayals help people "comprehend" the daily life on the border with "poverty, squalor, starvation, and dehumanizing demands of border survival" (1994: 126).

Urrea's personal-political agenda of *humanizing* marginalized people across the U.S.-Mexico border provides an insight into the stories of undocumented migrants. As a finalist for the 2005 Pulitzer Prize for nonfiction, *The Devil's Highway* (2004) portrays fatal border crossing experiences of a group of Mexican men, known as Yuma 14 or Wellton 26, who risked their lives during their deadly passage of the Devil's Highway in May of 2001. Urrea states that these men were frightened by a spotlight in a mountain pass on their way from Sonoyta to Ajo, Arizona, and lost their way (Aldama, 2006: 272). Thus, many of them died in agony and their "coyote," human smuggler-guide, left them behind, leading to "the largest manhunt in border patrol history," says Urrea (Aldama, 2006: 272). In his portrayal of human smuggling across the U.S-Mexico border, Urrea reflects undocumented migrants' dreams, despair and betrayal by border policies, uncompromising immigration politics, and enchanting promises of human trafficking under global influences. His narrative reflects historical, cultural and political conflicts in the region triggered by European imperialism (the conquistadores and Catholic missions), American expansion politics, and criminal borderland activities. This article thus addresses historical, cultural and capitalist driven deterritorialization of Mexican border crossers in *The Devil's Highway* and their pursuit of reterritorializations in the light of globalization, human smuggling, border policy conflicts and immigration politics. Urrea's pro-life narrative provides a border narrative to countless unnamed Mexican migrants who struggle to survive fatal border crossing on their own in their entanglement with violence, dehydration and exposure, and globalization's luring promises of a better future. Assuming the role of a companion and bard, Urrea chronicles undocumented Mexican migrants' stories and reasons for having dangerous desert crossings to get into the United States, which people have overlooked with egocentric political, economic and cultural concerns.

Mexican border crossing and the Devil's Highway

The U.S.-Mexico border encompasses an area of 2000 miles, including four border states on the U.S. side and six border states on the Mexican side and thus witnessing to shifting migration movements of a growing border population in search of employment and opportunities (de Cosío & Boadella, 1999: 1). The borderland represents economic fluctuations and interdependency despite the fact that both countries have maintained clearly distinctive socioeconomic structures and border policies (de Cosío & Boadella, 1999: 1-2). As a result, the borderland forces policy makers to negotiate their shared problems and

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concerns about undocumented border crossing, especially drug and human trafficking, and generate certain measures. In this light, Urrea's *The Devil's Highway*, named after the harsh desert area along the U.S-Mexico border, portrays a haunted cemetery for the victims of human and drug trafficking, rape and murder, vigilante violence, border patrol, and deadly desert climate. Human smugglers pass through this dreadful, arid region to avoid border patrol officers and procedures of detention and deportation.[5] Furthermore, Urrea depicts the region as a character, an entity itself, instead of a mere setting. In that sense, the Sonoran desert has mystical aspects and diabolic characterizations as if demanding sacrifices from undocumented border crossers.

Cabeza de Vaca's *Naufragios* (1548) presents one of the earliest textual references to the U.S.-Mexico border experience as it chronicles a voyage through the southern and southwestern territories of today's United States (Bruce-Novoa, 1995: 34). According to Bruce-Novoa, Cabeza de Vaca's geographical location between the Native American lands of today's southwestern United States and the Spanish Empire in today's northern Mexico forged a new multidimensional borderland identity through his encounters with different cultures, beliefs and ideas, resulting in "a syncretic form of cultural mestizaje" (1995: 34). The new identity could not be categorized as European or Native American due to his experience of "border alterity" but created "mediating, fluid, hybrid" voices by means of lived experience and narratives on the U.S.-Mexico borderland (Bruce-Novoa, 1995: 35). In *The Devil's Highway*, Urrea likewise juxtaposes border history, contemporary political relations and the voices of Wellton 26 in digressions. Urrea depicts Mexican migrants' struggle with hypothermia, hallucinations, loss of memory and sanity, and dreams of returning home: "They were drunk from having their brains baked in the pan, they were seeing God and devils, and they were dizzy from drinking their own urine, the poisons clogging their systems" (2004/2005: 3). Through the story of Wellton 26, Urrea highlights the plight of Mexican undocumented border crossers on their way to the United States. Although Wellton 26 caused a media sensation as a tragic story of deadly border crossing, Urrea's realistic narration establishes this as the story of undocumented and unacknowledged Mexican lives. Urrea portrays an arid and desolate region, almost a wasteland during the journey of border crossers: "They came down out of the screaming sun and broke onto the rough plains of the Cabeza Prieta[6] wilderness. ... Cutting through this region, and lending its name to the terrible landscape, was the Devil's Highway, more death, another desert" (2004/2005: 4). The U.S.-Mexico borderland has been defined as a "desert, a scar, a scab, a wasteland, a laboratory of the human condition, a war zone, a tortilla curtain, and a geopolitical wound" (Mendoza, 1994: 120). As Mendoza points out, the metaphorical representations of the borderland symbolize wanton suffering, violence and abuse, criminal activities of human and drug trafficking, and undocumented migrants' journey in an uncharted wilderness (1994: 120).

The Devil's Highway explores challenging contemporary repercussions of economic, political and cultural conflicts plaguing the border region for centuries, which has gained further impetus through globalization. The history of Mexico reflected the exploitation of the region and the abuse of the native population by greed, cruelty and European conception of civilization.

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European imperialism disrupted nature and indigenous communities in the name of progress, church order, and expansion policies. Eventually, Sonoita became a "stopping point" of the conquistadores, explorers, criminals and vagrants because "[t]he Spaniards weren't planning on settling—spread the cross around, throw up a mission, and hit the road in search of better things" (Urrea, 2004/2005: 9). The Spanish explorers and missions set the foundations of a border between the *foreign other* and the *civilized* as they managed cultural, political and class based reconstruction of Mexico with wars, acculturation and the promise of wealth.

As the historical hub of criminals, travelers and transient figures, the Sonoran desert has gradually turned out to be an inn or refuge for various rootless people and newcomers. Urrea indicates the dynamic population of the borderland, "If it weren't the illegals, or smugglers, or narco mules, they were trespassing on the military base in some Ed Abbey desert fantasy, or they were cactus thieves. ... And the OTMs -Other Than Mexicans- were so hapless and weird that you'd just laugh" (2004/2005: 15). Such a peculiar place and its illegal visitors created "Border Patrol lingo," which defines border crossers as "bodies," "wets" and "tonks" (Urrea, 2004/2005: 16) who are found dead or unconscious by border patrol officers after losing their way in the desert. Androff and Tavassoli further elaborate undocumented migrants' trials in the Sonoran desert on their way to the United States, "Death by exposure is slow and agonizing; physical deterioration and organ failure are accompanied by confusion and disorientation. In addition to the common risks of snakebites and getting lost, criminal gangs prey on migrants, robbing, raping, and killing them" (2012: 168). The strict border enforcement policies have endangered border crossers' lives across the U.S.-Mexico border because they have risked their lives in order to avoid border patrol under these life threatening conditions. As Jimenez states, the number of undocumented migrants who lost their lives across the border tremendously increased between 1994 and 2009 due to restrictive immigration and border policies such as "Border National Strategic Plan for 1994 and Beyond" (2011: 183). The sensational media stories about human smuggling and high death toll reveal the clash of politics, economy, and humanity across the border as the case of Wellton 26 exemplifies in *The Devil's Highway*.

Deterritorialization and global flows: Mexican migrant's reterritorialization

Throughout the history of civilization, capitalism has maintained its implicit access to mediums of production and consumption patterns. Deleuze and Guattari indicate that capitalism's control over the masses has perpetuated cycles of deterritorialization and reterritorialization of the displaced labor force. In that, Deleuze and Guattari underline the manipulative flow of capital and worker-consumer role through social, economic and cultural instruments unsuspectedly working behind the scenes, which "reduces all the decoded flows to production, in a 'production for production's sake' ... on condition ... that they be linked to capital and to the new deterritorialized full body, the true consumer" (1972/2000: 224-225). Thus, Deleuze and Guattari evoke *Capital* in which Marx describes the "encounter" between "deterritorialized worker" with his "labor capacity" to offer and "decoded money" with its purchasing power, leading to the worker's displacement and repositioning in the process of

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the privatization of land, mechanization, industrialization and mass production along with diverse flows of capital and production processes (1972/2000: 225).[7]

Deterritorializing poverty, lack of opportunity, and low paying jobs in Mexico have prompted undocumented border crossing and labor migration to the United States. Thus, Mexican border crossers search for a passage to the North, gambling their lives with smugglers, border patrol policies, and harsh desert climate. The time of deadly border crossing of Wellton 26 is significant since those people were looking for seasonal jobs, if not permanent residence, in the United States. Urrea claims that it is "harvest season—May through July" and also "death season" for Mexican workers who die crossing the border,

> It is then that lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers, oranges, strawberries are all ready to be picked. Arkansas chickens are ready to be plucked. Cows are waiting in Iowa and Nebraska to be ground into hamburger, and grills are ready in McDonald's and Burger King and Wendy's and Taco Bell. ... KFC is waiting for its Mexican-plucked, Mexican slaughtered chickens to be fried by Mexicans. And the western desert is waiting, too—its temperatures soaring, a fryer in its own right. (2004/2005: 34)

In Mexico, local inhabitants endure malnutrition, unsanitary living conditions, lack of medical aid and a high percentage of infant and child mortality. Urrea adds that "[p]rices kept rising, and all families, mestizos and Indian, Mexican and illegal, Protestant, Catholic, or heathen, were able to afford less and less. Food was harder to come by: forget about telephones, clothes, cars, furniture" (2004/2005: 44). As Kossoudji suggests, migration is directly related to economic conditions of people, who live across an almost 2000 mile border, leading to a "cat-and-mouse struggle between the INS [Immigration and Naturalization Service] and the undocumented Mexican migrant" across the border (1992: 160). Despite political initiatives, Cockcroft states that the construction of a "tall and sturdy fence" along the U.S.-Mexico border only underestimates border crossers' ingenuity without offering any practical solution to the crisis at the border (1986: 14). Cockcroft also notes the historical amnesia about Mexican migrants' contributions to nation building and economic developments in the United States as they have worked in harvests, railroad constructions, and industries on the other side of "the tortilla curtain" for years (1986: 14).

The historical, economic and political displacements of Mexicans and their attempts to accomplish multidimensional re-positioning(s) with border crossing to be workers in the United States reflect the arguments of Deleuze and Guattari on deterritorializing and reterritorializing powers of capitalism and consumerism. Economic deprivation, governmental failure in supervising decent living standards (healthcare, education, housing, wages and investments) and smuggling (human and drug trafficking) instigate Mexican labor's displacement and re-positioning in the U.S. agriculture and industries as migrant laborers. The global economic and cultural flows further trigger labor migration with luring images of American life and Mexican cultural narratives about the frontier and border crossing, addressing border conflicts and nostalgia for American sanctioned Mexican territories. Thus, the deterritorialized undocumented Mexican laborer is reterritorialized by American cultural propaganda and capital on the American side of the border.

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In the context of global commerce, communications and media, Appadurai identifies certain deterritorializing transnational and intersectional flows: "(a) ethnoscapes; (b) mediascapes; (c) technoscapes; (d) finanscapes; and (e) ideoscapes" (1990: 296). Appadurai particularly underlines the role of historical, political and linguistic discourses and the positionality of countries, communities, groups and movements in perceiving multidimensional roles and relations of the instruments above (1990: 296). These "perspectival" landscapes set the foundations of people's "imagined 'worlds'" (Appadurai, 1990: 297) with constant mobility of people, media stories and images, technological developments, capital and investments, and ideas or ideologies. Mexican border crossing is heavily influenced by all of the interactive landscapes set forth by Appadurai. Mexican undocumented workers observe the connection between migration and class mobility through communal popularity and circulation of border crossing rags-to riches stories. The role of ethnoscapes also indicates the impacts of shifting immigration policies, depending on the need for laborers and world affairs. Moreover, opportunities and employment in the United States (technoscapes and finanscapes collaborate with ethnoscapes in that) create an impetus for migration together with historical associations of the United States with entrepreneurship, prosperity and materialism, and consumer culture. Mediascapes and ideoscapes rekindle Mexican historical memory and cultural narratives about the U.S.-Mexico relations, countercultural movement and popular culture (icons and celebrity figures from TV and Hollywood). With global circulation of images, ideas and capital, Mexican migrants' heavily influenced imagined worlds encourage border crossing with deterritorialization under demoralizing conditions in Mexico. Globalization induced imagined worlds with discontent and poverty assist Mexican migrants' reterritorialization through border crossing, employment, and the promise of a new beginning in the United States.

Mexican traders' business connections with the United States publicize American promises of prosperity and abundance. They sell affordable American products in Mexican markets with low payments as they promote the American dream through their successful businesses and fortune: "People would spend months' worth of savings on a small used television or Christmas bike, selling for cheaper than the new stuff in the unapproachable Mexican department stores" (Urrea, 2004/2005: 46). With his "big American car" and "American cigarettes," Urrea depicts Don Moi García's inspirational escape from poverty, regarded as a "walking ad for the good life" (2004/2005: 47). As "the godfather of kids, the compadre of their parents, a *tio*" (Urrea, 2004/2005: 47), Don Moi uses his well-respected communal position in business with human smugglers. He finds potential walkers, undocumented workers and immigrants, in search of American dream and success. As Urrea suggests, the American West is home to "the cowboys, the Indians, the frontier, the wild lands ... gold mines and vast ranches" (2004/2005: 48); however, Mexican narratives glorify the North as the land of prosperity and freedom:

> The Mayas pushed north, and the Aztecs pushed north once they'd formed an empire. Later, the Spaniards pushed north. The wide open spaces lay northward. The cowboys and Indians, the great Panco Villa outlaws, the frontier, lay north, not west. That's why norteño people are the cowboys of Mexico—not westerners. The Spanish word for "border" is, after all, *frontera*. The frontier. (2004/2005: 48)

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Considering the border patrol, Wellton 26 make plans to pass the Devil's Highway region with Don Moi's organization and loans for crossing the U.S.-Mexico border. With the account of Isauro Reyes, who several times passed the U.S.-Mexico border as a bracero and undocumented migrant, Cockcroft reveals the long established system of human smuggling across the border. Reyes recalls bracero contract centers on the Mexican side in the mid-1940s, which introduced the "coyoteada" system with the presence of "paid guides for migrants entering the United States" (Cockcroft, 1986: 19). Thus, these guides from the contract office headed bracero workers, who paid hundreds of pesos to "coyote padres" for their northern passage (Cockcroft, 1986: 19-20).

John Tomlinson views deterritorialization in the pervasive presence of global media and its manipulative power over people. Global flows of political and economic decisions, instability and conflicts directly influence people's lives, plans and consciousness as they surpass national borders and geographical distances. In this regard, Tomlinson indicates "globalizing media technologies" that reach people with penetrating images, messages and narratives of cultural globalization, which further instigate phases of deterritorialization through their growing determinism in daily life because "mediated experience becomes imbricated with 'immediate' experience" (1999: 115). These aspects of media access and communication with the world outside denationalize and delocalize people such as Mexican migrants who cross the border, documented or undocumented.

Mass media forms, particularly films, magazines and commercials, distribute instruments of cultural imperialism such as Hollywood films, imbedded with American life and commodities. Concerning one of the several aspects of deterritorialization, Tomlinson refers to the contested shift from "banal nationalism" to "banal globalism" with Michael Billing's critical discussion on postmodern transition from "nation-state" given identity codes and affirmation to a global interactive mobile phase (1999: 119-20). Tomlinson conveys that national/local and global/deterritorializing instruments challenge individuals with a similar impetus and frequency in daily encounters as they provide "familiarity" with the local and the distant in the process of "identity-formation" and "imagined belonging" (1999: 120). Thus, global deterritorializing flows induce "imaginary identification" as a flight from "constructed boundaries of locality" (Tomlinson, 1999: 120). This sort of deterritorialization brings out the new *familiar* and willed *belonging* to a global community, which manifests itself with the transgressions of home spaces with imaginary (media and consumption based) interactions and national borders through border crossing across the U.S.-Mexico border. Urban growth, industrial production, and mass media delocalize people who then seek out ways of reterritorializations such as (un)documented Mexican laborers entering American industries and service sectors. Furthermore, Tomlinson views the creation of hybrid cultures and identities in globalization's deterritorializing powers over people (1999: 141). The emergence of border culture along the U.S.-Mexico border and Mexican migrant laborers in American industries prove the deterritorializing and reterritorializing aspects of global mobility and economy, and production of hybrid cultures. Communication and mass media instruments serve as vehicles for people's socio-

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cultural, economic and ideological displacement(s) in local territories and transition to global community through imagined alliances, global consciousness and labor-migration patterns.

Border militarism and refiguring American dream

Due to border patrol, undocumented Mexican migrants are willing to take more unlikely and untraceable routes in the wilderness. Urrea portrays the typical "nightly people-hunting" of border patrol, "monstrous Dodge trucks speeding into and out of the landscape; uniformed men patrolling with flashlights, guns, and dogs ... lines of people hurried onto buses by armed guards; and the endless clatter of helicopters with their harsh white beams" (1993: 11). The push factors of poverty, violence, and politics bring deterritorialized undocumented migrants to the U.S.-Mexico border under severe heat, guidance of human smugglers and militarized border monitoring. The border crossing experience represents an ulterior motive of escapism from the problems of developing countries and regional conflicts. With global indoctrinations, the U.S.-Mexico border emerges as a gate to progress and opportunities. The act of crossing the border represents a pathway to culture and media induced reterritorializations in the United States. Aguirre and Simmers view the U.S.-Mexico borderland as a dynamic and multi-faceted space of social and cultural expressions and productions, which juxtapose identities and representations of borderland residents and border crossers through hybridity. Thus, Aguirre and Simmers criticize the construction of a border wall in a "transcultural social space" against Mexicans who "use the border as a vehicle for their representation" in the borderland (2008: 104). The border wall challenges hybrid identity formations of Mexican border crossers and their means of reterritorializations at a transcultural borderland.

Regarding the U.S.-Mexico border, the militarization of the border patrol has long been criticized by human rights groups; however, the evolution of border policy has actually contributed to that shift, beginning from the late 1980s (Eichstaedt, 2014: 21). During the administration of President George H. W. Bush, Eichstaedt indicates that the Joint Task Force Six was established against the drug trafficking across the southwestern border in collaboration with local, state, and federal agencies (2014: 21-22). In 1993, Operation Hold-the-Line dealt with border control problems in the El Paso area, which were followed by Operation Gatekeeper to prevent Mexican border crossing across San Diego, California in 1994, and Operation Rio Grande in southern Texas in 1997 (Eichstaedt, 2014: 22). Joint Task Force North's fight against drug trafficking integrated the United States and its territories into its agenda, which accelerated the involvement of U.S. Army in defense of national security and border militarization in 2000s (Eichstaedt, 2014: 22).

The post-9/11 agenda of national security transformed the U.S. border patrol policy in conjunction with migration and immigration politics. The Border Security Enforcement Act of 2011 introduced the integration of military forces into the Border Protection agency as an extension of Operation Jump Start of President George W. Bush, his 2006

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decision of launching National Guardsmen in the border area, and Operation Phalanx of President Obama in 2010 (Eichstaedt, 2014: 22). Even if the 2011 bill did not pass, it still promoted border patrol policy's transition to homeland security agenda of post-9/11 War on Terror. As Eichstaedt conveys, the Senator John McCain sponsored 2011 bill advocated Operation Streamline in dealing with undocumented migrants under the criminal justice and detention policy along with its support for Operation Stone Garden's funding for local border enforcement projects such as "permanent highway checkpoints" and "completion of the seven hundred miles of border fence" (2014: 22-23). Intense political scene and debates prepared American society to strict border control and further militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border.

Immigration policies and government action against border crossing have differed in Mexico and the United States. However, Urrea emphasizes border patrol officers' "simmering hatred for the human smugglers, the gangsters who call themselves Coyotes" on both sides of the border (2004/2005: 54). As border militarism and warnings failed to restrain undocumented border crossing, Mexican officials distributed "survival kits" to walkers, which Americans denounced as an "invitation to invade and complimentary picnic basket" with concerns about "welfare babies" (Urrea, 2004/2005: 56), American cultural domination, and economic stability. As Massey indicates, the U.S.-Mexico border evokes a "symbolic" value and imminent danger, which prompts strict border enforcement considering "citizens' safety and security in a hostile world" (2016: 160). Thus, the federal government's border policy takes into account potential threats associated with "alien invaders" in public consciousness such as "communists, criminals, narcotics traffickers, rapists, terrorists, even microbes" (Massey, 2016: 160).

The notorious collaboration among smugglers, officers and border residents disregards border patrol policies and undocumented migrants' survival. As Slack and Whiteford state, "major illicit activities in this region, run by bajadores, coyotes, and narcos through the use of drug mules known as burreros" across the border (2011: 16). The vast range of borderland, smugglers' knowledge about different routes, and organized crime activities deepen fear and suspicions of the American society. Therefore, inconsistent immigration policies directly result in the crisis at the borderland, which Heyman recognizes as the symbolic "fear of penetration through the Mexican border" (2009: 83). Heyman points out individual, communal and national borders that differentiate the cherished familiar from *imagined* foreign other(s): "Elements that cross borders are particularly dangerous and dramatic. They put at risk the neat order of things" (2009: 83). The border wall has emerged as the unequivocal manifestation of symbolic fear from "many decades of interpenetration between the two countries," which has sacrificed myriad lives under the desert sun (Heyman, 2009: 83).

In Mexican popular culture, coyote/human smuggler and drug dealer images are associated with the characteristics of courage, heroism and *machismo*. From cultural perspective, northern border crossing and return to Mexico honor their Aztec ancestors. Urrea notes that Aztlan, the homeland of Aztecs, is assumed to be the American Southwest

ISSN 1300-7491 e-ISSN 2791-6057 https://www.folkloredebiyat.org

and the Devil's Highway represents a symbolic passage from Mexico City to Aztlan in this respect (2004/2005: 77). Mexican border crossers and criminal organizations symbolically reconquer their native homeland in an effort to reterritorialize their identity and position in the region. The folk songs identify border crossing as a crusade and counter-action against the United States in their cultural and political glorification of the image of "coyote" as the defender of the underdog: "[I]t was quite attractive to be a Coyote. You could tell yourself you were a kind of civil rights activist, a young Zapata liberator of the poor and the downtrodden. In short, a revolutionary. Coyote-as-Che" (Urrea, 2004/2005: 77). Being a coyote is a significant adulthood rite for Mexican men who imitate the symbolic journey of frontiersman with rugged individualism, go getterism, heroism and entrepreneurship. To this end, Kossoudji notes that smugglers use "rubber rafts, drainage pipes, and their knowledge of the desert" for transferring undocumented migrants across the border, having the role of "an insurance salesman" (1992: 162). In turn, Mexican "Migra" symbolizes a class of "Turncoats. Traitors," who "hunted down their own people" heading to "the loneliest valleys" of the borderland (Urrea, 2004/2005: 82).

The testimonial narratives of Wellton 26 necessitated further investigation and some speculation on the details of their border crossing experience. Survivors' accounts have gaps about crucial details such as names, places and dates due to dehydration that weakens vision, memory and judgments in the Sonoran desert. Nahum Landa, one of the survivors, strikingly describes their deadly border crossing in a poetic statement of facts:

> Some of them just died of desperation.
> Some of them went insane.
> Some of them lost their minds.
> You could hear them screaming.
> Some fell all alone. (Urrea, 2004/2005: 168)

The survivors from Wellton 26 remained as key witnesses of the border crossing experience. Their testimonial narratives provided a new position with medical care, media attention, and visibility in the United States besides diplomatic communication across the border as Urrea indicates, "The survivors were suddenly paid professional narrators. … As long as they stayed, they had a chance to stay longer. Soon, they would surely earn money. It was the new millennium's edition of the American Dream" (2004/2005: 187-188). Hence, border crossing narratives reterritorialize marginalized undocumented migrants and immigrants in American politics and public consciousness through their occupation of a new position and alternative space among noncitizen residents. As Auchter states, Mexican immigration to formerly occupied Mexican territories of today's American Southwest signifies the return of "the one which was ejected from California forcefully, precisely the one who was once part of the state but was expelled from it for non-compliance" (2013: 296). Auchter concludes that Mexican migrant's arrival intimidates the state with its embodiment of forced "abjection" (2013: 296) and tests the "founding myth" of the nation of immigrants (2013: 297) and American promises.

ISSN 1300-7491 e-ISSN 2791-6057 https://www.folkloredebiyat.org

Undocumented Mexican migrants turn into expendable investments of smugglers and instruments of border politics in the absence of lifesaving regulations along the border. Low paying jobs in Mexico encourage border crossing of undocumented workers and immigrants as Urrea argues, "those who survive the northern passage can earn in an hour what it took a long day's work in radioactive chemical Mexican sludge to earn before" (2004/2005: 206). After Wellton 26, undocumented border crossers are still victims of criminals because "[t]he Yuma 14 changed nothing, and they changed everything" (Urrea, 2004/2005: 211). Help towers for migrants were built with the initiatives of the border patrol despite public concerns about conservation, taxation, and border politics (Urrea, 2004/2005: 213-214). The crisis across the borderland has been historically associated with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which induced land disputes, violence and the disempowerment of Mexican population in the annexed U.S. territories (Heyman, 2009: 79). Despite such political efforts, Mexicans living and working in the United States have maintained a cross cultural bond. Moreover, globalization has stimulated socioeconomic and political dynamics behind the northern migration, trade relations and media attention to the border crisis. Heyman regards the U.S. investment to border enforcement as "efforts to artificially separate a dynamically engaged region," adding that the U.S. policy have failed to avert undocumented border crossing and drug trafficking in the region (2009: 79).

In his preface to *Across the Wire*, Urrea conveys his purpose of giving voice, visibility and individuality to Mexican border crossers and borderland residents from the Tijuana dumps beyond stereotypical portrayals in media and politics. Urrea thus adopts a sense of communal duty and political stance in his border writing: "I trust this book will put a face on the 'huddled masses' who are invading our borders. I want you to know why they're coming" (1993: 4). In her review of *Across the Wire*, Kelly underlines the "plight" of undocumented immigrants and the result of public "inaction" out of ignorance or prejudice as Urrea's "lesson" to readers: "'Learning about their poverty also teaches us about the nature of our wealth'" (1996: 95). Urrea's personal-political border writing triggers such a reader's response with an awareness and call for change about border and immigration policies. *The Devil's Highway*, his pro-life border narrative, does not simply villainize coyotes or undocumented migrants because he underlines Mexican border crossers' entrapment in a vicious circle of deterritorializing and reterritorializing poverty, history and culture bound memory, global advertisement of American promises and betrayal by uncompromising politics. As Deleuze and Guattari state, capitalism systematically enforces forms of displacement that seemingly legitimize resulting re-placements with its manipulative hold on human nature, needs, and desires: "Capitalism is constructed on the ruins of the territorial and the despotic, the mythic and the tragic representations, but it re-establishes them in its own service and in another form, as images of capital" (1972/2000: 303). The discussions of Appadurai and Tomlinson further emphasize global mobility of economy, media and communication networks, and ideological agendas. These capitalist instruments in disguise manage the reterritorializations of deterritorialized Mexicans through border crossing, labor migration, and immigration.

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The Devil's Highway interprets the fatal border crossing experience of Wellton 26 in light of capitalist deterritorializing forces and resulting reterritorializing motivations that rework Mexican historical experience, cultural border narratives, and political conflicts in the region. To this end, global flows and influences relocate distressed Mexicans on American soil through mass media and communication networks. Reflecting on experiences and disillusionment of Mexican border crossers, *The Devil's Highway* calls for negotiation and cooperation between Mexico and the United States for life-saving border regulations, stability in the region, and reform in the politics of border control and immigration.

Endnotes

1 The 1848 Treaty officially ended the Mexican-American War (1846-1848) and secured most of the present-day U.S.-Mexico border and the southwestern U.S. states.

2 During WWII, the United States welcomed Mexican labor migration in order to keep up with high wartime production levels and signed a labor agreement with Mexican government on August 4, 1942, leading to the Bracero Program (Hernandez, 2009: 26). As Hernandez conveys, Mexican contracted laborers mostly worked in the southwestern and northwestern industrial farms and contributed to the growth of the U.S. agribusinesses, seeing the labor program's extension to the postwar economy (2009: 26).

3 With a grant of amnesty to almost 3 million undocumented migrants, the 1986 Act imposed regulations about migrant laborers in the U.S., strict border patrol, and punishment for the employers of undocumented workers (Payan, 2006: 56).

4 The U.S.-Mexico border conflicts and the existence of *la frontera/the border* shaped Mexican American historical experience, cultural responses and works of literature on symbolic levels and in daily encounters. García views that Mexicans in the American Southwest were left with the reality of the border and necessity to find ways of living under American domination after the mid-nineteenth century U.S. conquest of northern Mexico (1985: 195). Mexican Americans searched for coping mechanisms to maintain their bilingual and bicultural identity without severing their connections to Mexico and the U.S. (García, 1985: 195-196). Each generations' responses and views of the border indicated a parallelism to ethnic, nationalist, class-given or cultural consciousness in their politics and historical period (García, 1985: 196).

5 The establishment of the first U.S.-Mexico Border Patrol in 1904 signified a major turn towards the politics of border control; nevertheless, the border remained as a "barbed-wired fence for cattle or a cable" for years (Lybecker, 2008: 339). Although the Immigration Act of 1924 created border stations for upcoming Mexican laborers, their employment in the American Southwest, frequency of border crossings, and strong communal links across the border prevented concerns about the U.S. border patrol policy, which maintained "cyclical shifts" on the basis of labor demand (Lybecker, 2008: 340). In the 1990s, the U.S.-Mexico border gained a different meaning in terms of economic, political and social relations and exchanges through globalization, which resulted in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994 among Canada, the United States and Mexico (Lybecker, 2008: 340). The subsequent flow of industries, goods and people, particularly from Mexico, to the borderland and eventually into the United States evoked strict border enforcement through "sensors and miles of stronger fencing" and border patrols in order to discourage undocumented border crossing and illegal activities (Lybecker, 2008: 340-341).

6 Once a "desolate travel corridor," Cabeza Prieta turned into a "nationally-designated wilderness" in the twentieth century after having served to travelers for centuries, including the earliest North American settlers almost 12,000 years ago (Meierotto, 2014: 642). Later, undocumented border crossers, agents of human and drug trafficking, and border patrol officers replaced Spanish missionaries and gold seekers as the modern-day visitors of the desert wilderness, which necessitated "legal and political" redefinition of the land by the U.S. for the conservation of natural wildlife resources and the border militarization (Meierotto, 2014: 642).

7 Deterritorialization and reterritorialization of Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus*, stemmed from Lacanian psychoanalysis, incorporate Marx and Freud into the reconceptualization of libido and labor force (Holland, 1991: 57). Deterritorialization relieves "schizophrenic" libido from "pre-established" connections such as the Oedipus complex whereas it liberates mass labor force from any production system such as feudal land grants

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and mechanized industrial capitalism that transferred deterritorialized laborers on the land as reterritorialized industrial workers for mass production (Holland, 1991: 57). Overall, beginning with the libidinal energy, schizoanalysis encompasses "the investment of human energy of any kind" including "perceptual and physical, cognitive and productive, desire and work" via territorialization concepts (Holland, 1991: 57). As Holland suggests, the quintessential characteristic of deterritorializing forces is their embodiment of power and influence in controlling "desire and production" for the capitalist, the despot or another authority in society (1991: 57-58). The deterritorializing and reterritorializing capitalist society determine production processes and consumption patterns through science, technology and media: "specific labor skills are valorized here and now, only to become worthless a few years later; consumer taste is programmed to suit the commodities of one production cycle, then de-programmed and re-programmed for the next" (Holland, 1991: 58).

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