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Mockumentary as Post-nationalism: National Identity in "A Day without a Mexican" by Sergio Arau.

> "As the nation-state enters a terminal crisis—if my prognostications prove to be correct—we can certainly expect that the materials for a post-national imaginary must be around us already. Here, I think we need to pay special attention to the relation between mass mediation and migration, the two facts that underpin my sense of the cultural politics of the global modern. In particular, we need to look closely at the variety of what have emerged as diasporic public spheres." Arjundt Appadurai.[i]

Predictions concerning the end of the nation state may have been too hasty: in between the global and the local, the national continues to be surprisingly resilient. I believe, however, that Appadurai was basically correct about mass mediation and migration constituting the materials for a possible post-national imaginary—co-existing with, if not necessarily replacing, forms of national belonging. It is this imaginary and its relationship to mockumentary as a form of representation that is the main concern of this chapter, in the specific case of Mexican—but yet, post-national—identity in *A Day Without a Mexican* by Sergio Arau (1998 and 2004). Both the short and the feature film versions of this mockumentary are constructed around a simple but effective plot: the sudden and inexplicable disappearance of all Latino immigrants from the state of California, which brings economic and social life there into a standstill, the consequences of which are dealt with in the mockumentary. Set within the present

context of a growing Chicano population in the United States and ongoing migration there, the stated aim of *A Day* is to advance a social agenda, arguing the case for immigrant labor and for Mexican presence in the US more generally.[ii] In this respect, the seriousness of a documentary would seem to have been a better fit than the excess and parody of mockumentary. However, as I intend to show here, in Arau's *A Day Without a Mexican*, form and content match thoroughly. Given the link between cinema and modernity and the relevance of cinema as an alternative public sphere for the nation, this chapter analyses the implications of choosing mockumentary, taken to be a paradigmatic postmodern and hybrid form, to discuss national identity under "globalization."

So let us begin with the links between modernity, cinema and nation. Although an often contested term in academic discourse, modernity is here to be understood mainly as "the network of large-scale social, economic, technological and philosophical changes wrought by the Enlightenment," the industrial revolution and concomitant processes of urbanization, and in this sense it is a term closely bound to the nation state.[iii] Indeed, if we are to believe the so-called "modernist" theorists of the nation, such as Ernest Gellner, Eric Hobsbawm or Benedict Anderson, the misnamed nation states we presently inhabit are themselves the polities that resulted from modernization, entailing the development of capitalism, the formation of vernacular languages, the downward-spreading of a "high" culture and vice versa, and the various elites and intelligentsias engaging in nation and state-building through a variety of institutions, not least the nascent media, including newspapers, novels, and more recently of course cinema.[iv] In fact, the specificity of cinema as a distinctively modern medium and thus one closely bound to the nation has been well documented in the literature as regards

technology and perception, image and narrative. Each one of these is briefly outlined below.

Let us begin with technology. With its mechanical reproduction of images, cinema was itself a product of the industrial revolution, and movie theatres accompanied urbanization processes. Urbanization in turn also allowed a conceptualization of modernity as a specific form of perception, as theorized by, for example, Sigfrid Karakauer and famously Walter Benjamin. "Amid the unprecedented turbulence of the big city's traffic, noise, billboards, street signs, jostling crowds, window displays and advertisements … modernity [was experienced as] … shocks and jolts" in a manner not dissimilar from cinema's means of expression, in the form of montage and editing techniques.[v] Further, the industrial features of cinema contributed to the cultural homogenization of its mass audience—often comprising either internal or external migrants—in a variety of ways. These ranged from the progressive standardization of the mode of reception in the search for efficiency and economic return, to the creation of an alternative public sphere. In order to bring respectability to their establishments, the argument goes, theatre owners encouraged the more self-disciplined, restrained, even passive behavior in contrast to the high audience participation that was a feature of the vaudeville, eventually leading to movie theatres being deemed 'safe' for women and welcoming for the working classes. The result was more (initial) inclusiveness of class and gender difference than had been the case in other earlier forms of leisure.[vi]

Visually too, the kind of images cinema allowed to reproduce are quintessentially modern, for while as Janet Harbord has pointed out, if the chemical processes involved in the filming and development of the image could be construed as

belonging to the realm of alchemy, if not outright magic, they could just as easily be regarded as belonging into science, and the indexicality of the filmed image made it easy to construe cinema—and particularly documentary—as such from early on, partaking into the ethos of the Enlightenment.[vii] Indeed, many view in cinema the continuation of a Western ideological project that would have started in painting with the invention of perspective and the vanishing point—and its creation, following Althusser, of a discursive position for "the individual"—since "in perspective painting, image as a sign effaces itself so that what is represented appears as unmediated reality … what is concealed … is therefore the fact that reality itself is an effect of signification or that reality is invented by a particular semiotic disposition."[viii] In this line of argument, photography would have perfected the fidelity of the image, while cinema would have, crucially, introduced time. Thus, the privileging of "the individual" in the individual/community dichotomy that was also part and parcel of modernity—and thus construed as inherently "Western"—would be inseparable from processes of visual representation in which cinema was central.

Regarding narrative, Mary Anne Doane has persuasively argued that if cinema became narrative at all it may well have been in an attempt to "tame" technology, that is, to impart meaning on the "moving reality" the invention of the camera suddenly allowed to record.[ix] Moreover, cinema did inherit the narrative features of the nineteenth century novel that Anderson theorized were crucial for the formation of national identity, namely the rendering of homogeneous, empty time and the chronotope through parallel editing, while in addition allowing illiterate masses to partake into the national community. Discursively, it was cinema's narrative capabilities that made it truly fundamental for the fostering of national identifications: if national identities are mostly

narratives of belonging to a community of history and destiny people subscribe, or in other words, discourses that forge a "we" that can only exist as long as some "they" remain outside, what better way of putting forward and disseminating representations of such "we" than on film? In this respect cinema quickly became a key arena for the contestation and negotiation of identity, and either in documentary or in fiction film, realism the preferred mode of representation to convey a supposedly national reality.

Let us now flesh out all these general assertions about modernity, cinema and nation with the particular case of Mexico. Although not quite feudal during the Porfirio Diaz regime (1876-1880 and 1884-1911) there is broad agreement that by the time cinema first came to the country on 6 August 1896 Mexico was certainly modernizing in the sense described above. Its mostly rural population of about 10 million was beginning to migrate to urban centers where movie theatres eventually sprawled and images of the revolution that began in 1910 also gave birth to a documentary tradition that captured much of the action as it happened, in the cameras of the Alva brothers, who followed Madero, Jesus H. Habitia, who traveled with the *División del Norte*, and Salvador Toscano, Enrique Rosas and the Stahl brothers. In a way, a distinctively modern project such as a revolution, with its aims of achieving social justice and emancipation, found its cultural—visual—expression so to speak, in the documentary form, the main aims of which were also to represent reality in order to change it, to raise awareness of social problems to find solutions.[x]

Upon the triumph of the revolution, the role of cinema was again paramount in its contribution to the consolidation of the so-called revolutionary nationalism discourse that became the hegemonic narrative of belonging, and therefore the main source of national identification, both through documentary and fiction films. A particularly

interesting example for our purposes here is *Memorias de un Mexicano* (Toscano, 1950) by Salvador Toscano's daughter Carmen. In a rare instance of what has been termed a purportedly Mexican genre, namely "revolutionary melodrama" or docu-drama, the film tells the contemporary history of Mexico by means of a soundtrack narrator, telling in turn the story of his family before those turbulent years, during the revolution and until the (then) present time (1950). Family and nation are thus seamlessly fused here into each other. The film takes the viewer from contemplation of photos in the narrator's family album taken during the Diaz period—i.e., "the past", in the form of still images—through scenes of the revolution filmed by Salvador Toscano—that is, the passage to modernity: the moving image—to shots of the wide avenues and tall buildings that marked Mexico City as a modern metropolis, presented in a series of multiple exposures.[xi] In short, in *Memorias* "modernity is registered in terms of the shifts that have occurred in modes of experiencing the world visually. Modernity … [here] is not so much about *what* one sees as *how* one sees."[xii]

As regards narratives of belonging, fiction film would be a prime site for their articulation, as in the works of directors such as Fernando de Fuentes, Emilio Fernández, Ismael Rodríguez and Roberto Gavaldón, on whom there is abundant literature.[xiii] These narratives involved posing hybridity—*mestizaje*—at the heart of the identity, albeit in a re-valorized fashion that defined the hybrid, following theories from biology, as the stronger, healthier product of the mixing of a pool of genes, as opposed to the pre-revolutionary discourse that constructed it negatively, in terms of the "half breed."[xiv] In addition, the Spanish dialects spoken in Mexico and the syncretic Catholicism embraced by the vast majority of the population, together with the white, Protestant, English-speaking northern neighbor helped to clearly establish the limits,

physical as well as symbolic, of the nation.[xv] Therefore, immigrants to the United States and their descendents were deeply problematic for revolutionary nationalism, for in their crossing the boundaries—physical as well as cultural—that circumscribed the identity and thus allowed the national being to exist, they questioned the fit between the political and the territorial unit that nationalism seeks to naturalize. Their representations in Mexican cinema were thus few and overwhelmingly negative. [xvi]

From the late 1980s and especially during the 1990s however, deep changes began to take place in world politics and related hegemonic discourses, especially those on nations and national identity. The Soviet Union collapsed and, in Latin America, discourses of globalization and neo-liberalism began to replace the former mercantilism, with its aspirations to achieve development through state intervention, import substitution and temporary protection or "level playground" for local industries. Around the world, political approaches to governance were replaced by managerial approaches, and the subject-position of citizens increasingly became that of consumers. Emancipation quests were all but abandoned as the ideas of the Enlightenment reached a crisis point.

In Mexico, the revolutionary nationalism discourse that anchored the political system and had more or less successfully answered the question "who are we" since the revolution, began to lose ground. It was replaced by a discourse that sought to find a new meaning for the identity in a supra-national arrangement involving economic integration with the United States, a discourse I term, following Derrida, of supplementarity.[xvii] The new discourse involved the reframing of all key issues in this very complex bilateral relationship, namely the external debt, drug trafficking and crucially migration, into narratives of partnership and complementarity. Thus

dependence for trade on the United States, formerly narrated as an obstacle to be overcome to achieve development, was instead presented as access to the American market, a unique opportunity for Mexico to grow via membership in the North American Free Trade Area NAFTA. Migration also stopped being presented as a problem in which the United States was a passive victim, but rather as the result of push-pull factors in the world economy that drew the labor force where jobs were available, for the mutual benefit of both countries and ultimately the world, a situation that would otherwise correct itself as Mexican economy improved.[xviii] In short, if according to Foucault "the successes of history belong to those who are capable of seizing [the] rules … to … invert their meaning" the re-grafting of some of the key signifiers that had under the revolutionary nationalism discourse given meaning to Mexicanity into new discourses of supplementarity was indeed a success of the younger generation of the political and business elite in those days.[xix]

And again, the discourse of supplementarity found expression on film, especially after the large-scale privatization that took place during the Carlos Salinas and Ernesto Zedillo administrations (1988-1994 and 1995-2000 respectively), in what is now called the New Mexican Cinema. It was of course Alfonso Arau's very successful *Like Water for Chocolate* that inaugurated the trend, and in 1997 it would be his son Sergio that would put the new version on migration on film, through a twenty five-minute mockumentary called *A Day without a Mexican*, and through a less accomplished although commercially very successful version of it that he also made into a false documentary feature in 2004. Since the aim is to explicitly deal with a political subject while encouraging, like documentary, action from its audience, *A Day* could be classified as belonging to the second "degree" of mock-documentary in Jane Roscoe

and Craig Hight's typology of the genre, namely the critical mockumentary.[xx] The idea, the director said, came from "A Day Without Art" held in 1994, when museums and galleries in New York were closed for a day to pay homage to artists who had died victims of AIDS. In his words, he was trying to "turn into something visible that which is invisible by removing it," that is, to call attention to it by putting it, again after Derrida, under erasure.[xxi] Although both films share the anecdote, it is the former that I discuss in this chapter.

As mentioned in the introduction, the plot revolves around the sudden and unexplainable disappearance of all immigrants—for whom "Mexicans" stands metonymically as shorthand—from the state of California and the damaging consequences this has on the economy and society of the state. Using a docu-soap style as a basis for the mockumentary, voice is given to a number of American characters that comment on the situation and sometimes put forward theories of what might have caused the disappearance. In this way, "Americans" become a diverse collection of people, ranging from the good-natured through the cynical to the plain bigots, and "the Mexicans" they conjure in their interventions also vary accordingly. Among the first group, there is a working class mother and daughter shown in the opening scene, longing for respect from their employers, thus equating their plight with that of the Mexican immigrants; the wife of a Mexican musician who has also vanished; a television presenter; a baseball coach; a scientist; and the driver of a wealthy Hispanic investor. Significantly, among these good-natured Americans there are also other second or third generation immigrants, as for instance a University of California Professor with an Arabic name, an actor who identifies himself as Israeli and an Asian shopkeeper, all of whom appear as "American" as the Anglo-Saxon Americans in the

film. It is mostly this group that calls attention to those citizens of Hispanic origin in the liberal professions who are now missing, such as television presenters, university lecturers, scientists, sportsmen, doctors, politicians and businessmen. A UFO expert also reminds the audience of the historical claim Mexicans have to that land, since California, as he says, "used to be Mexico." Whenever they intervene, these Americans emphasize the broad nature of the immigrants' contribution to their host society, and underscore their human values and qualities, describing them as trusted colleagues, loyal employees and family members. When offering explanations as to why they may have disappeared, one of the ideas put forward is that their governments sought to stop the brain drain and wanted their investment back. These Mexicans however were gone from the feature film.

Then there are the cynical interviewees, those directly related with economic activities that depend on cheap labor such as farmers, workshop owners, and people in the service sector—restaurants, car wash businesses, petrol stations and so on—all of whom were enthusiastic supporters of NAFTA when it was being negotiated. Also the upper classes who rely on the work of gardeners, cooks and maids for child and home care bemoan the loss of Mexicans, since, as put by a character who presents herself as the anonymous wife of an anti-immigration politician, "if you want family values, you hire a housekeeper." Mexicans who are missing in this segment of the mockumentary are the vast majority of those currently living the United States, including the 6 million illegal ones, namely peasants, mechanics, technicians and cleaners, and what is constantly emphasized in this case is their vital role in allowing the American dream to happen, or in other words, to what extent these immigrants are already part of North America. Ironically, on the prospect of losing their jobs, even the border patrol misses

illegal Mexicans. Fun is also poked at those who look for ways to exploit the disaster: a couple of Hollywood producers, planning to make a film where "*Independence Day* meets *Like Water for Chocolate*"—in an instance of self-reflexivity, supposedly characteristic of the subversive nature of the genre—, a writer trying to get a bestseller and a salesman planning the "Disappearance Day Sale." Finally, the outright bigots are a decided minority, found in a secretary, an actress and the wife of a plastic surgeon, all of whom react with glee to the news. The film ends with a plea from a variety of people for Mexicans to come back, and a thank you note to Governor Pete Wilson, whose sponsoring of Proposition 187 is credited with inspiring the mockumentary.[xxii]

Many regard the main reason for this and the longer film to have been made into false documentaries to be simply an extremely tight budget, and attribute the choice of plot to the ad-hoc nature of the project, aiming quite simply at making money out of the Chicano market, comprising approximately 28 million US citizens of Mexican ancestry and 11 million Mexican citizens living there, pandering to the lowest common denominator.[xxiii] In fact, former Mexican ambassador to the United Nations, the late Adolfo Aguilar Zinser, described the longer film as the "immigrants' fantasy," [xxiv] and script writer Yareli Arizmendi stated one of her aims had been "to bequeath a touch of identity [sic] to those Mexicans who were born on this side" although she also said the mockumentary was chosen in order not to alienate a possible Anglo-American audience, who presumably would think "it's only a joke." [xxv]

Other interpretations attribute the mockumentary format to an honest desire to intervene in the current debate on migration, the parody being a necessary means to challenge and critique. Indeed, some view the sort of realism documentary strives for as inherently suspicious, in that when it comes to "documenting" the Other, it has often

been employed in a colonialist fashion, and celebrate the supposedly equally inherently liberatory potential of the mockumentary mode in dealing with issues of cultural difference. That mockumentary presents itself as the obvious choice for filmmakers on a tight budget is not viewed negatively either, as it is regarded as part of the "democratization" of access to the media of representation that digital imaging allows. Amidst the current generalized loss of trust in institutions, mockumentaries lend themselves well to grassroots activism. Moreover, mockumentary, it is argued, speaks to a "knowing audience," as it requires the recognition of the original being parodied or satirized to make sense and thus relies on constructing a highly active role for the viewer to a marked degree. For Jane Roscoe and Craig Hight, "the mock-docness of a text is [to be found in] the extent to which it encourages audiences to acknowledge the reflexivity inherent to any appropriation of the documentary form," that is, to receive it as such.[xxvi] In this way, qua mock, *A Day* would be contributing to fostering (sub)group —and post-national— membership in the same way the media foster community belonging. It was in fact the case that in many cinemas where the mockumentary was shown, attending audiences were reportedly highly participatory, in ways reminiscent of the early cinema period described by theorists of cinema as an alternative public sphere, and the film was also quoted—not necessarily approvingly—in debates on migration in the quality press in Mexico.[xxvii]

Without denying that these interpretations may well be accurate, I would like to propose here an alternative version as to why in *A Day Without a Mexican* form and content match perfectly. It is not only the fact that to represent hybridity or the remaking of a hybrid—Mexican/American—identity, a hybrid form of fiction film was chosen. Neither is it only the fact that the border crossing of national boundaries

depicted on this film also mirrors the border crossing between genres that the mockumentary implied. It is also, I argue, to be traced back to the retreat of the left that followed the Soviet collapse I mentioned above, since this was but a symptom of the decline of the Enlightenment more generally, and with it, of polities of modernity such as national states.[xxviii] Disbelief towards meta-narratives, as put by Lyotard already in 1984, now permeates even formerly cornerstone nationalisms such as Mexico's, where the narrative of national identity was crucial in almost every aspect of everyday life.[xxix]

Adding to the postmodernity of the experience is the fact that on 1 May 2006 reality became a performance of the film, since a number of Latino organizations took the idea of the film as a banner and staged *A Day Without a Mexican*, calling for immigrants to boycott economic activities in places where they work to draw attention to the value of their labor. It is estimated nearly 500,000 attended the demonstrations in Chicago—many were held elsewhere—and 5 million people participated in the boycott. Losses were calculated at USD$250 million in Los Angeles alone.[xxx] Whereas traditional documentary, with its aim of representing reality in order to intervene in social debate and its faith in the possibility of emancipation and human progress was the cinematic form of expression in Mexico during and shortly after the revolution, mockumentary, with its irreverence, pastiche, parody and drive to trivialization is the equivalent form of cinematic expression during the conservative Mexican administrations of the twenty first century, currently presiding over, above all, skepticism and cynicism in equal measures.

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[i] Arjundt Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 21.

[ii] Mexican migration to the United States is a complex phenomenon with a long history, but it has generally intensified since the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement, NAFTA. In the period between 2000 and 2005, 7.9 million immigrants entered the US, and 59 percent of them were Mexican. Israel Rodríguez, "México,

Campeón de la Migración: Once Millones de Expulsados a Estados Unidos." *La Jornada*, February13, 2007, Front Page.

[iii] Murray Smith, "Modernism and the Avant-gardes," in *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies,* ed. John Hill and Pamela Church-Gibson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 397.

[iv] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, (1991 [1983]); Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983); Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

[v] Benjamin Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 35.

[vi] Miriam Hansen, "Chameleon and Catalyst: the Cinema as an Alternative Public Sphere," in *The Film Cultures Reader*, ed. Graeme Turner (London: Routledge, 2002), 394.

[vii] Janet Harbord, *The Evolution of Film: Rethinking Film Studies* (Cambridge: Polity 2007), 4. In fact this may be viewed as part of the larger debate between those seeking to secure a place for cinema as "art," thus stressing its capabilities to break free from the constraints of "reality," and those seeking to link it to the Enlightenment's project of progress and emancipation through science and technology, who emphasised instead cinema's "vocation for realism." Robert Stam and Toby Miller, *Film and Theory* (Oxford: Balckwell, 2000), 224.

[viii] Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto, "Real Virtuality," in *Global/Local*, ed. Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), 109-110.

[ix] Mary Anne Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2002), 14-15.

[x] Although Andrea Noble has argued, following Bill Nichols, that since "an emphasis on the rhetoric of social persuasion" is missing during this period—and in fact absent until the 1920s—filmed footage of the revolution cannot be regarded as documentary proper, I contend that inasmuch as it intended to "capture reality" and was received as "fact" by audiences it fulfilled the same role. (Bill Nichols quoted in Andrea Noble, *Mexican National Cinema* (London: Routledge, 2005), 60).

[xi] Noble 2005, 58-69.

[xii] Noble 2005, 68, emphasis in original.

[xiii] See for instance Paulo Antonio Paraguaná, *Mexican Cinema* (London: British Film Institute, 1995); Joanne Hershfield and David Maciel, eds. *Mexico's Cinema: a Century of Film and Filmmakers* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resource Books, 1999); Charles Ramírez -Berg, *A Cinema of Solitude : a Critical Study of Mexican Films, 1967-1983* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999).

[xiv] Alexandra Minna-Stern, "From Mestizophilia to Biotypology: Racialization and Science in Mexico, 1920-1960," in *Race and Nation in Modern Latin America*, ed. Thomas Holt et al. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina**,** 2003), 190.

[xv] Thus as many have observed, hybridity and syncretism were part of the process of industrialization and urbanization—and therefore, in a sense, modernization—in Latin America throughout the twentieth century, especially in Brazil and Mexico. It is for this reason that Néstor García Canclini among others contends it is more accurate to think of modernity and postmodernity in Latin America as simultaneous rather than successive phases. While this may well be the case, hybridity in Mexican discourses of national identity none the less performed a role similar to that of purportedly "pure" identities in other nationalisms, namely to account for origins and lay historical claims to the

(home)land. And inasmuch as *all* identities are always already hybrid—the "Spaniards" and the "Indians" being categories that in fact subsume a cultural and ethnic diversity at least as vast as that of the "mestizos"—what is important arguably is the discursive role performed by a category. Néstor García-Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).

[xvi] David Maciel, "Pochos and Other Extremes in Mexican Cinema, or El Cine Mexicano se va de Bracero, 1922-1963," in *Chicanos and Film, Representation and Resistance,* ed. Chon Noriega (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 94-113.

[xvii] The supplement is, discursively, at the same time external to and part of a unit which it helps to complete. Jacques Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy," in *A Derrida Reader Between the Blinds*, ed. Peggy Kamuf (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1991), 112-139.

[xviii] Kitty Calavita, "The Immigration Policy Debate: Critical Analysis and Future Options," in *Mexican Migration to the United States: Origins, Consequences and Policy Options*, ed. Wayne A. Cornelius and Jorge A. Bustamante (La Jolla, California: Centre for US-Mexican Studies, University of California San Diego, 1989), 151-177.

[xix] Michel Foucault, "Nietzche, Genealogy, History," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin, 1991), 86.

[xx] The first degree in their typology is "parody," as in those mockumentaries that appropriate documentary aesthetics without highlighting the reflexivity involved, often denoting nostalgia and ultimately reinforcing those cultural aspects they originally set out to parody, while the third and last degree are openly deconstructive mocks. Jane

Roscoe and Craig Hight, *Faking It: Mock Documentary and the Subversion of Factuality* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 73.

[xxi] Segio Arau in Elizabeth Coll, "El Día sin Mexicanos También se Sufre en Nueva York," *La Jornada,* 4 July 2004, my translation. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).

[xxii] Proposition 187 sought to deny education, healthcare and other basic services to illegal immigrants and their children in 1994. It was none the less eventually pronounced unconstitutional and not passed.

[xxiii] The feature film was first shown in New York and Los Angeles, and then in those cities with a large Chicano population, namely Chicago, San Antonio, Austin, Miami, Denver, Phoenix, Las Vegas, Houston, Dallas and El Paso as well as in Mexico, where it was the highest grossing national film that year. Rodríguez, 2007.

[xxiv] Adolfo Aguilar Zinser and Yareli Arizmendi in Juan José Olivares, "Un Día sin Mexicanos tiene una Intención Social y Política: Arau," *La Jornada,* 5 August, 2004.

[xxv] *"… [T]ratamos de obsequiar con un toque de identidad a los mexicanos que nacieron acá, de este lado, porque sí. Su acta de nacimiento podrá decir que son estadunidenses, pero gracias a la herencia de su cultura, su corazón es mexicano."* Yareli Arizmendi in Ana Lilia Cortés, "Impresionante Respuesta a 'Un Día sin Mexicanos' en California," *La Jornada,* 27 May 2004, Espectáculos. [We tried to bequeath a bit of identity to those Mexicans who were born on this side, by chance. Their birth certificate may say they are American, but their heart is Mexican thanks to their cultural Heritage. My translation.]

[xxvi] Roscoe and High, 2001: 67.

[xxvii] See Laura Alicia Garza Galindo, "Un Día Sin Mexicanos," *La Jornada*, 23 April, 2006, Politics; and Humberto Hernández Haddad, "Un Día sin Mexicanos," *El Universal*, 13 April 2006.

[xxviii] Further, as digital imaging is not indexical and thus it does not privilege the past — i.e. a referent whose traces are seen—, a time essential for most narratives of national belonging with their focus on origins, it is possible to regard 'A Day' as post-national in this sense as well.

[xxix] Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Post-modern Condition: a Report on Knowledge* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984).

[xxx] José Carreño et al., "Millones se Suman al Boicot," *El Universal,* 2 May 2006, El Mundo; Arturo Cruz Bárcenas, "Apoyaremos a los Inmigrantes hasta el Final: Los Tigres del Norte,"*La Jornada*, 8 May 2006, espectáculos.