

## Migrant Archives

### *New Routes in and out of American Studies*

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The history of the modern archive is inextricable from the establishment of nation-states. In various parts of the world, including France in 1790 and numerous countries in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the establishment of a "national archive" followed a revolutionary break from monarchy or colonialism. Archive and nation came together to grant each other authority and credibility: the archive contained documents and records that supposedly spoke to and about the state, while the nation granted a certain cachet to an archive, elevating it above its local and regional counterparts. The continuing influence of that institutional formation is evident in a statement produced by the International Council on Archives, a professional society for archivists and their institutions: "Archives constitute the memory of nations and of societies, shape their identity, and are a cornerstone of the information society."<sup>1</sup> The high stakes of such a claim begin to explain the sustained examination and critique of archives by theorists, most prominently Jacques Derrida, and by historians, librarians, and other scholars.<sup>2</sup> If archives do indeed "constitute" memory rather than just contain it or record it and if they are crucial in disseminating information, a variety of questions emerges: How do archives develop procedures for the inclusion and exclusion of materials, for the preservation and even inadvertent destruction of information? How do archives wield authority over what is considered important in public institutions and educational settings? Who has access to archives, and what types of identity claims are made by the people who control and disperse the information? Most pertinent to the goals of this essay, how can

we conceive of archives in new ways so that research agendas are no longer contained by the parameters of the archival frame?

The physical manifestation of archival parameters in the modern period has been a building, which literally housed the materials and served metaphorically to delimit the information. The records office or rare-book library provided safekeeping for documents and became a place where archivists could gather empirical evidence for their accounts of the past.<sup>3</sup> In the United States, the National Archives occupies both a modern research facility in College Park, Maryland, and a museum facing Constitution Avenue in Washington, D.C., not far from the Capitol. The latter location features copies of the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and the Bill of Rights.<sup>4</sup> This tourist attraction, resembling the Parthenon and featuring New Deal-era engravings on its facade, provides an image of the nation that is connected to a grand narrative of freedom stemming from 1776. The main chamber where the Declaration and other documents are displayed is known as the Rotunda for the Charters of Freedom. By contrast, the facility in College Park, opened in 1994, is a research center that holds many of the records of government agencies. Although some records are still in the Washington, D.C., location, the separation into buildings known as Archives I and Archives II in effect divides visitors into tourist and researcher.

But that division is breaking down as the archive building shares space with the archive Web page. With rare documents, including everything from nineteenth-century immigration records to seventeenth-century books, increasingly becoming available through online databases, archives are now accessible to someone in his or her house, a potential alternative (and more classical) site for archive construction. Visitors to the U.S. National Archives Web page can now "collect records to create your own archive of American history."<sup>5</sup> A personal archive has the potential to challenge the authority of the national building. And scholars who conceptualize archives in ways that displace the terms under which a singular archive is constructed can open new routes for research agendas.

For American studies, these new routes allow for a way to move in and out of the nation rather than privileging national study as the defining point of the field. It is my contention that these paths will lead us to what I call "migrant archives." Migrant archives reside in obscurity and are always at the edge of annihilation. They are the texts of the past that have not been written into the official spaces of archivization, even though they weave in and

out of the buildings that house documents. Migrant archives are oxymoronic because one of the functions of archival organization is storage in a specific (safe) place. Migration, by contrast, connotes a journey. And “migrant archives” call for a journey, if not on the part of the researcher, then certainly on the part of a text that will have to travel from one place to another. The contemporary association of migration with border crossings and movement of people in and out of nation-states at great personal risk emphasizes that migration is not safe. Certainly, it is at odds with a storage vault, which historically has been one of the constituting elements of an archive.

The move toward migrant archives calls for the ongoing examination of how memory is constituted, how history is written, and how research is connected to identity. In other words, control of the archive has epistemological and political ramifications. For American studies to move beyond the fixed archive of an Anglo-American nation, scholars will have to undertake more multilingual work in migrant archives. Writing in languages other than English can lead scholars to alternative ways of remembering the past, new ways of naming multiple nations and communities, and even the invention of new ontologies. The writing itself—in Spanish, for example—can constitute a different archive that calls attention to the political choices of writers and also implies that they were unable or unwilling to write in English. More than a record of social processes or a representation of experiences, the writing itself, whether in book form or scraps of paper, is a site where migrant conditions take material form. As writing moves to the de facto official language of a discipline or area, translation becomes a particularly important but unpredictable and vexing type of work. Translation can integrate marginalized and forgotten people into the authorized archive, even as it threatens to alter the content of a migrant archive and erase, however gently, language difference. Given the importance of translation, I begin my discussion by focusing on *Mis Memorias*, a book whose recent republication involved movement out of a migrant archive across decades and languages. I pair this with a return to Derrida's *Mal d'archive*, a fruitful critique of the archive that has inspired lively responses. I conclude with a consideration of how migrant archives emerged from the Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage project.

IN 1935 Luis G. Gómez published *Mis Memorias*, a Spanish-language memoir that recounted Gómez's experiences crossing the border from Mexico to the United States and working as an accountant and contractor in southeast Texas. For many years, the few known remaining copies of *Mis Memorias*

were kept by Gómez's descendants but were not circulated among the general public. In 1991 Gómez's grandson presented information about the book at a meeting of the Spanish American Genealogical Association in Corpus Christi, Texas. That presentation drew the attention of Thomas H. Kreneck, associate director for special collections and archives at Texas A&M University, Corpus Christi, who discovered that the book was not listed in library catalogs. Working with Gómez's family, Kreneck helped usher a translation of the memoir into publication. The result was *Crossing the Rio Grande*, a book out of a migrant archive that crossed decades, generations, and languages.<sup>6</sup>

*Mis Memorias* resided in a migrant archive because it not only was kept privately and faced the risk of being lost or destroyed but was written in a language other than English, another mark of migrancy in the U.S. context. The editors of the book attempt to counter the lack of attention to the Spanish language by undertaking two archival functions: the establishment of a lineage for the book (in this case one based on a family) and the storage of information in an official repository. In his introduction to the volume, Kreneck describes the process of translation and republication as a “labor of love and family devotion.” He characterizes the book as “truly a product of two men,” Gómez and his translator, Guadalupe Valdez, who was also Gómez's grandson. “By making these memoirs available to a wider audience, Valdez has done much not only for his grandfather's memory and for his family's heritage but for scholarship as well,” Kreneck writes.<sup>7</sup> Like Kreneck, Valdez emphasizes the importance of family lineage while explaining why and how he took on the project: “Because of my special relationship with my grandfather and because I am the last living member of his family who knew him personally, it has naturally fallen to me to translate his memoirs.”<sup>8</sup> In claiming a “natural” reason for undertaking such work, Valdez conflates academic labor and genealogical connections. That perspective celebrates the regenerative potential of family history even as it overlooks the responsibility of professional scholars to do such work. Why should professors not be engaged in that type of recuperative republication and translation? In placing familial ties at the center of the archival process, Kreneck and Valdez actually turn to a classical notion of the archive, one that links the archive to the archivist's house.

The family, connected to living quarters and offering a genealogical connection from the present to the past, is an important dimension of the archive. The etymology of the word “archive,” as Jacques Derrida notes, goes back to an association in ancient Greece between records and a house run by

a patriarch known as an archon. Derrida writes, "As is the case for the Latin *archivum* or *archivum* (a word that is used in the singular, as was the French *archive*, formerly employed as a masculine singular: *un archive*) the meaning of 'archive,' its only meaning, comes to it from the Greek *artheion*: initially a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrate, the *archons*, those who commanded."<sup>9</sup> *Arthe* can be translated as a commandment. By this account, the father's position in the house (and his commandment) was linked to the maintenance of records. In the modern period, the rise of the nation-state transfers the archon's authority to public institutions, and not just national archives but also regional historical societies and local records offices. The public repository continues to imply a common legacy, with the nation or local community taking the place of the family. Thus, it is no surprise that the editors of *Crossing the Rio Grande* are overt in communicating the relationship developed by Gómez's descendants with various archival establishments.

As *Crossing the Rio Grande's* introductory material makes clear, one of the goals of the publication is to situate the book in various types of archives. *Mis Memorias/Crossing* moves into a rare-book repository, a card catalog, and even a field of study. In conjunction with the new publication, the family bestows a copy of the Spanish-language edition on Texas A&M library, to the delight of Kreneck, the archivist. The English-language edition becomes part of another archive, the library catalog; libraries across the country take on the archival function of organizing and legitimating published material. The book enters a third archival space through the participation of a university press. Published by Texas A&M in an attractive hardcover edition, *Crossing the Rio Grande* has the potential to move into the archive created by disciplines and fields of study. The book can become part of the reading material of American studies, Texas history, labor studies, and Hispanic literary heritage, among others fields.

My usage of "archive" here is in keeping with a pronounced slippage in the meaning of the word in recent years. Once invoked in certain disciplines to distinguish repositories of rare documents from libraries, "archive" is now used in reference to a record of Web postings, historical memory, libraries, and even a set of readings with a theme. Scholars in American studies regularly now refer to an "alternative archive" that will help the field reconsider its assumptions and practices for selecting texts. Two related forces are at work here, writes Marlene Manoff: "One is the conflation of libraries, museums, and archives; and the other is the inflation of the term 'archive,' which

has become a kind of loose signifier for a disparate set of concepts."<sup>10</sup> The term is being used more widely, I would argue, because the physical archive is associated with authority and is a locus of power in research. Calling a selected group of readings "my archive" claims legitimacy but can also invoke the types of critiques that have been leveled at archive, the building. Perhaps writers use the term ironically. But does a site that recovers and collects texts for public use justifiably stake a more serious claim on the use of "archive" than individual researchers who use the word loosely? When I say that *Crossing the Rio Grande* enters several archives, it is to note that the library and university press can grant visibility in academic or other public discourse to what might otherwise remain a family heirloom.

*Crossing the Rio Grande* enters various archives because the new English edition has the potential to reach a reading audience that includes monolingual scholars. Translation becomes an important process in the recovery of migrant archives. Like migrancy, translation implies movement — literally, "to carry across." In the case of American studies, the movement in and out of migrant archives calls for the transferring of little-known documents into the more visible spaces of the field's debates and also for the carrying of those documents across languages. In the United States, archives hold a wealth of textual riches in languages other than English. A decade ago, Marc Shell and Werner Sollors attempted to "make visible the most glaring blind spot in American letters" by publishing *The Multilingual Anthology of American Literature*, which included selections in French, Navajo, and German, among other languages.<sup>11</sup> This anthology invoked literary history as a kind of memory that could intervene in contemporary debates about the United States' relationship to English-only movements. Multilingualism calls for an opposition to the national fixation on a single language and opens avenues for transnational connections.

Materials in languages other than English written in the past face the possibility of disappearance and annihilation because historically the United States has not established official channels for study and archivization. With the din of a call for English as an "official language" persistently in the background, the papers of multilingual America remain in the obscurity of archival vaults, if we can assume they have been gathered and kept. In addition, the demands of working in multiple languages means that relatively few scholars can approach the multilingual past; a project for a multilingual America would involve extensive collaboration. It is difficult enough to inspire bilingual approaches. Because many, if not most, practitioners of

American studies work predominantly or exclusively in English, documents require translation, which is always intertwined with interpretation, in order to enter the field. In other words, translation helps formulate a recognizable body of work that the field can share. As the case of *Crossing the Rio Grande* illustrates, translation also becomes part of the process of building archives (field of study and library holding).

But how does a field of study resemble a repository of documents? What exactly is the relationship between American studies and the U.S. National Archives? That question is an important dimension of Derrida's *Mal d'archive*, which seeks to posit a homology between the field of psychoanalysis and the archive proper. With a founding father (Freud) who bestows authority on the operations of interpretation, psychoanalysis offers an institutional narrative that is comparable to that of the national or local archive. Derrida argues that in both cases the archive posits an origin (a primal scene, the founding of the nation) and frames a narrative on the basis of that claim. As such, Derrida seeks to undo the ontology of the archive.

*MAL D'ARCHIVE* runs through a gamut of associations, connecting the archival setting with everything from politics to e-mail. Derrida's trail links the following: the aforementioned ancient Greek house as repository of archival material, the keeper of the archive as a kind of father or authority, the institution as a protector of the archival function, an academic and scientific field of study as an archival impression, and the storage of material as a process of violent exclusion. In turning to psychoanalysis, Derrida attempts to combat the privileging of origins and familial connections. At the same time, his broad strokes turn the archive into a question of memory, both personal and collective. The Derridean dispersal of the archive differs significantly from Michel Foucault's use of "archive." In *The Archeology of Knowledge*, Foucault presents the "archive" as a discursive system that permits certain things to be said.<sup>12</sup> By contrast, Derrida would grant no such presence to the "archive," and his critique helps us unpack the relationship (and distinction) between archive as a place with research materials and reading desks and archive as metonym for the organization of information.

To develop his critique of official sources of knowledge, Derrida turns to Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi's *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable* and thus intertwines history (Yerushalmi's discipline) with Judaism and psychoanalysis. Much of Derrida's discussion leads to a confrontation with Yerushalmi's question: is psychoanalysis a Jewish science? Descent and

legacy, to which I have already alluded in relation to *Mis Memorias/Crossing the Rio Grande*, would seem constitutive elements in both Judaism and psychoanalysis. One relies on biology and the other on the name of Freud as an intellectual father, but Derrida also calls attention to how the ethnos and father come together in a field of study and how that has ramifications for the construction of an ethnic archive. Challenging this association, Derrida writes,

But the structure of the theoretical, philosophical, scientific statement, and even when it concerns history, does not have, should not in principle have, an intrinsic and essential need for the archive, and for what binds the archive in all its forms to some proper name or to some body proper, to some (familial or national) filiation, to covenants, to secrets. It has no such need, in any case, in its relationship or in its claim to truth — in the classical sense of the term.<sup>13</sup>

The point here is that language, a statement linked to a proposition, does not need an archive to stake its claim on truth. In other words, a scientific or philosophical finding would not need Judaism or Freud for justification. For our purposes, we could say that the textual record, the scraps that might emerge from migrant archives, does not need "some body proper" (an author) or some place (a national archive) for the validation that we would associate with a claim to truth. More concretely, Luis G. Gómez should not need the archival setup established by his descendants. But is that actually the condition of scholarly work in the United States at this time? Does a book such as *Crossing the Rio Grande* actually need filiation in order for its claims to enter a public discussion? Does it need a home for that claim to be heard, and, if so, what type of archive?

Derrida would allow no such filiations. The stakes of his argument against the archive become clear when, deploying the language of psychoanalysis, he associates the archival function with the death drive. On the one hand, the drive to establish archives, archive fever, is related to a kind of conservation and preservation. But, according to Derrida, it also erases what came before. The effects of the death drive are not confined to the exclusionary effect of collecting some materials and not others in an archive. Rather, Derrida posits that the archival process releases a type of aggression; the archive is an impression that alters a previous impression. More than excluding something, the archive destroys the archive that preceded it. One need not go far here to come up with examples for Derrida's theoretical point. Surely, the

preservation of English as a kind of official language has led to the annihilation of American Indian languages that have been forgotten. With English as a language of America, the country or hemisphere's more ancient copy is subjected to erasure.

The association of archival construction with the death drive begins to explain Derrida's provocative line that "archive fever veiges on radical evil."<sup>14</sup> From a Kantian perspective, the notion of "radical evil" refers not to an incomprehensible or momentous example of evil but rather a kind of conduct that proceeds only from personal inclination or interest. Radical evil is not about committing atrocities, no matter how heinous. It is about acting in a way that discounts the possibility of a higher principle.<sup>15</sup> The Derridean critique, then, would appear to rest on a sense of the archivist as someone who conforms to the structure of the archive for some benefit, which could be personal but not necessarily imply malicious conduct. One might consider here the pleasure of hoarding books or the patriotic feeling of running a national repository as self-serving personal rewards that also create the boundaries of authoritative thinking. In effect, archive collections can inhibit avenues of research that might move closer to alternate truth claims.

The introduction of an ethical dimension calls attention to the different associations created when *Mal d'archive* (1995) was translated into the English *Archive Fever* (1996). The French *mal* not only connotes a kind of illness but also can be synonymous with "evil." As a connotative sign, it is more varied and rich than "fever." If anything, the translation of the title of Derrida's book into English ops for a satirical effect: "Archive fever" sounds like a kind of fad, perhaps a headline in a newsweekly; it is reminiscent of the 1970s song "Boogie Fever." The translated title emphasizes a critique of the archival turn as a form of empirical research and thus differs from the engagement of *mal* with European philosophy. With the focus on Yerushalmi, a historian, and the use of "fever," it is not surprising that Derrida inspired responses from researchers who are invested in archival work, namely, historians.

In her critique of Derrida, Carolyn Steedman calls attention to the material realities of labor (within and without the archive), at times connecting the physical experience of going to and working in the archive with the bodily effects of production. Running with Derrida's fever metaphor, Steedman notes that sometimes the dust in archives can make people sick. More important, dust is itself a metaphor for the residue of the laboring classes. Reading the historian Michèle alongside Derrida, Steedman calls attention to "the dust of the workers who made the papers and parchments; the dust

of the animals who provided the skins for their leather bindings."<sup>16</sup> Michèle, she notes, "inhaled the by-product of all the filthy trades that have, by circuitous routes, deposited their end-products in the archives."<sup>17</sup> As one who actually goes to archives, Steedman shifts the focus away from the Derridean concern with the archive as a locus of authority in language. In other words, the archive can also contain information about those who do not have authority and even those whose authority has been forgotten. Yet Steedman's critique does not negate Derrida's point that the archive does claim an authority, usually on a foundation stemming from a nation, a locality, an institution, or a person. This locus of authority becomes the familiar point that frames the archival holding, including the migrant archives that might be contained within.

Making a book familiar is one of the goals of *Crossing the Rio Grande*. In moving the family book into the public space of libraries and doing so in standard English, Gómez's descendants desire to move an ancestral authority into an official archive. The translation of the book's title is important and, in some ways, more radical than the change from "*mal*" to "fever." "*Mis Memorias*" emphasizes the subjective and very personal claim made by its author. A literal translation, "my memories," does not have the right intonation, but other possibilities, "a memoir" or "my experiences," would have retained the generic and personal emphasis. The title *Crossing the Rio Grande*, by contrast, chooses a common trope that describes the passage from Mexico to the United States and thus situates the book in a public discussion of immigration and the experiences of those who make the trek across that angry river. Here we see the importance of translation to the archival function because the title helps situate the book in the archive of immigration. But the change also prompts a question about how translation might be the type of act that Derrida calls "radical evil." I emphasize that evil here is not about heinous acts. But if Derrida's use of "radical evil" speaks to an automatic following of the norm, that which is accepted, then displacing the Spanish original with a translation into the official language does negate the presence of the Spanish language in U.S. publication history.

Perhaps that new impression, with its potential to obliterate, is an inevitable effect of translation, a point that has inspired lengthy discussion in translation studies. Lawrence Venuti, for example, has written, "Translators are very much aware that any sense of authorial presence in a translation is an illusion, an effect of transparent discourse, comparable to a 'stunt,' but they nonetheless assert that they participate in a 'psychological' relationship with

the author in which they repress their own 'personality.'<sup>18</sup> Gómez's translator takes that relationship to a grand Oedipal degree, simultaneously asserting a blood connection to the author, a claim to the author's presence (without an acknowledgment of illusion), and a foregrounding of his own presence as descendant-translator. The translator-grandson thus carries across the book from migrant archives to a singular archive that demands a standard language. That integration of language difference into a norm (English) is one reason why scholars of hemispheric American studies have increasingly called for attention to translation studies and sought new ways to conceive of the transformation created by translation, including "adaptation."<sup>19</sup>

Despite the effects of the impression created by the new English version of *Mis Memorias*, something is also gained by bringing this document out of migrant archives. Given the anti-immigrant sentiments that surface repeatedly in U.S. history, the translation and public dissemination of the Gómez memoir is a necessary evil. In other words, the evil is idiomatic more than ethical. The necessity here is about political participation in U.S. society. In a footnote early in his book Derrida gestures to an important claim that he does not follow. He writes, "There is no political power without control of the archive, if not memory."<sup>20</sup> Here Derrida reminds us that archives are also part of a political arena in which people vie for power and recognition. If we take this statement as a reference to the archive as a repository of historical documents (although the usage there is more diffuse), questions emerge about the relationship between research emphasis and the exercising of power in a contemporary liberal society. Derrida's point would then be that political power derives in part from such a national institution because the archivist interprets meanings and associations. In some ways, the archive defines the nation, and participation in the archive is one gauge of democratization.

Still, Derrida's sentence raises an additional problem, that of memory. "Nul pouvoir politique sans contrôle de l'archive, sinon de la mémoire."<sup>21</sup> The phrase "if not memory," not quite conditional and almost an afterthought, adds a complication. Is it national memory? Personal memory? Your memory? Given the subjective thrust of memory, the point would be that political power rests on the control of the memories of others. When *Mis Memorias* is translated into *Crossing the Rio Grande*, Gómez's account becomes part of a different archive, one that is in dialogue with the recent resurgence of anti-immigrant discourse. It is not surprising that *Crossing the Rio Grande's* editors emphasize the importance of immigrant labor, and thus

the book's subtitle, *An Immigrant's Life in the 1880s*. This type of book is a necessity in a society that routinely seeks to forget its immigrant past and its multilingual background.

And yet the archive of immigration, with its monument at Ellis Island and reading lists of immigrant novels, would seem to bind some of the energy of *Mis Memorias*. An "immigrant life" has traditionally implied integration or even assimilation into a national panorama. The translation integrates Gómez's book into an archive rather than emphasizing the multiple locations of the book's publication history and its content. *Mis Memorias's* episodes recount movement within Texas and note that returning to Mexico is an important consideration for the author and his friends. The change into an immigrant life deemphasizes what may be its most interesting dimension of the book's social panorama: the importance of a Spanish-speaking workforce that is not easily assimilated into Texas society in the late nineteenth century.

THE CHALLENGE not just for American studies but also for many scholarly efforts that recover texts from the past is how to bring forth historical and linguistic differences without allowing the present discourse to dominate. The archival claim, meaning the terms under which an archive is constructed, always threatens to become hegemonic, but some texts may contain a difference emphatic enough to prompt a reconsideration of the archive's limits. Let me be more specific by looking at the case of a very important archive developed in the past fifteen years: the Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage project.

The "recovery project" is an example of an archive that collects, houses, and circulates a variety of documents under the rubric of ethnic identity. The project is authoritative, in the sense that Derrida uses the term, because it gains legitimacy from describing its object of study as the textual record left behind by people of Hispanic descent. Although the project is capacious in its definition of "Hispanic" and is also sensitive to the variety of populations that might be part of that group historically, the claim to heritage retroactively organizes the project's texts under the rubric of a contemporary identity formation. One of the salutary effects of such an archive construction is that the recovery project has brought into circulation materials that were previously available only in the rarest of library stacks. It was the recovery project that published in the 1990s María Amparo Ruiz de Burton's novels *Who Would Have Thought It?* (1872) and *The Squatter and the Don*

(1885), as well as the anonymous *Jacotínal* (1826). Housed at the University of Houston, the recovery project now holds originals, photocopies, and microfilms of a thousands of documents, thus functioning both as a repository of rare materials and as an institutional home.<sup>22</sup>

The goal in establishing the recovery project was not only to identify the Hispanic past but also to restore it, presumably as an important component of the nation, if not memory. This was, like so much of American literary revision in the 1980s and 1990s, an attempt to broaden the texts that made up a literary past. In the introduction to the first volume of the recovery series, Ramón A. Gutiérrez and Genaro M. Padilla write, "The long forgotten editorials these men and women wrote, their manifestoes for better wages and better working conditions, their private thoughts and emotions committed to diaries, their moral tales disguised as comedies and farces, their tersely measured lyrical poems, and their pauses and silence in the textual record are the collective object of our study." This expansion into beyond-literary genres and the public sphere of newspapers and pamphlets moved interdisciplinary scholarship into "privates thoughts and emotions," the terrain of memory and lived experiences. In some cases the "literary" would give way to Hispanic heritage, defined as the cultural background of "these men and women." In working against the "long forgotten," the memory lapses and the destruction, the recovery project could simultaneously make visible a documentary history of a people.

Despite what we might call the archival threat of this scholarly effort, the project was a great necessity in that it promoted a type of research that was not being carried out on a large scale. More than a century before the recovery project, Walt Whitman had articulated, on commemorating the 333rd anniversary of the settlement of Santa Fe, New Mexico, a need to consider the Hispanic past: "We Americans have yet to really learn our own antecedents, and sort them, to unify them."<sup>23</sup> Calling on the nation to move beyond its Anglocentrism, Whitman argued, "To that composite American identity of the future, Spanish character will supply some of the most needed parts."<sup>24</sup> Whitman's statement calls attention to the ongoing need for recovery projects of various sorts and also poses one of the problems of an authoritative archive. In the Whitmanian schema, the search for a Hispanic antecedent would recover parts of a "composite" U.S. identity; the goal would be unification into what we might call a multicultural nation. By contrast, the work done by scholars points to numerous identities that also intersect with national, regional, and local influences outside of the United States.

The counterclaim to national hegemony was also contained in Gutiérrez and Padilla's statement explaining the research project: "Our mission and goal is nothing less than to recover the Hispanic literary heritage of the United States, to document its regional and national diversity; to view from various perspectives and angles the matrix of power in which it was created, and to celebrate its hybridity, its intertextuality and its polyvocality."<sup>25</sup> That diversity would point toward difference that moved in other directions, away from the U.S. nation. The gesture toward intertextual connections and polyvocal productions paved the way for considering how certain writers and print culture formations did not respect national boundaries. In actuality, some of this Hispanic textual heritage would point simultaneously to two or more sites (Mexico, Cuba, and other countries), bringing forward transnational print culture formations and traveling writers. In addition, efforts to associate the texts from the past with post-1960s archival claims to liberation projects came under scrutiny as scholars unearthed complicated political alliances and positions in other centuries, most evident in the debates over María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, whose position in Chicano literary history clashes with her flirtations with the Confederacy.

Migrant archives began to emerge in the differences of the past. Experiences, writings, and contexts from other centuries did not always fit the paradigm, and not only because these writers may have invented other national or hemispheric American affiliations but also because they participated in intellectual traditions and political alliances that could not be classified within the dynamics of contemporary Hispanic cultural and political dimensions. Newspapers, an additional migrant element, often printed anonymous articles, making it difficult to connect a piece of writing to an author, complicating the very idea of Hispanic literary heritage, and calling attention to the ease with which Hispanic could become Hispanophone U.S. literary heritage. Rather than see the emphasis on language difference as a disciplinary boundary, many of the scholars associated with the recovery project took the opportunity to seek out multiple avenues of research. We are still moving, I would argue, into migrant archives that will ultimately displace the subjectivity that sustains the project.

What emerged was a tension between the necessary evil of the archive, the building that houses the materials, and the challenge of migrant archives. The recovery project gathered authority from something that is commodifiable and commonly commodified: the Hispanic subject of the United States as conceived after the 1960s. Would it have been possible to bring the materials

of the recovery project into national circulation without this archive? Could the documents have staked a claim to truth without the edifice of the project, which has been supported by prestigious foundations and the influence in U.S. society of a growing Latino population? Like the nation and the national archive, an ethnicity and an ethnic archive validate and sustain each other.<sup>26</sup>

Although the phrase "U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage" claims an association with national literature, it was clear from the beginning that we would need to move outside the boundaries of the nation-state to do recovery work. The project held that door open from the beginning because both temporally and spatially the Hispanic heritage of the United States has connections to other countries. Those connections sometimes are evident in the content of a text but are also in the print culture conditions or even in the biographies of writers. The recovery project has always moved in an interdisciplinary and even indeterminate field, into and beyond American studies, Latin American studies, Spanish-language literature, American literature, and literature of the Americas. In other words, an ethnic subject is a heuristic for a textual reality that is much more complicated. The "Hispanic" in Hispanic literary heritage is like the museum-on-the-Mall version of National Archives: an edifice that stands in for the intricacies of the many archives held in other locations. The museum is not necessarily an impediment. Actually, it could be a door into migrant archives.

MIGRANT ARCHIVES are not widely available, nor is their existence known by a large number of people. They are sometimes in someone's garage or held by a descendant of the person who produced the document. These documents contain stories, experiences, and languages that are not part of easily recognized narratives of institutions. They break out of standard language and official stories. But that is not to say they are completely outside of the physical archive. They move in and out of repositories of rare documents and other libraries. The Beinecke library contains migrant archives. So does the Library of Congress. At the Library Company of Philadelphia, founded by Benjamin Franklin in 1731, a collection of German-language documents from the colonial and early republican period are part of a migrant collection. It is migrant because it complicates the common understanding of Philadelphia and of the corpus of myths and stories associated with Benjamin Franklin. It also moves a conception of the early United States outside of the local geography and into a dialogue with the Germanic antecedents of the local print culture.

The documents of migrant archives do not need to be discovered; discovery implies that they are not known and located. Some documents are already cataloged and part of official collections, even though migrant archives do not have their own catalogs. The point is that their presence might not be readily apparent within the existing discourses of academic or political inquiry. In that sense, they differ from new documents by or about well-known historical figures. In the 1980s, for example, a stash of Melville family documents was found in a barn and became part of the lore of research on Melville. Unlike the stuff of migrant archives, these documents had a home in an existing academic field, Melville studies and, more generally, American literature.<sup>27</sup> While fields of study provide insight into the interests and commitments of those who practice within them, who defend them eagerly and/or viciously, migrant archives can contain the writings and visual cultures of those who are dismissed and overlooked by the keepers of the archive. In some cases, the writers are migrants, literally speaking. But they might also be members of elite groups who travel first class but whose texts also open a variety of views of the past. Sometimes the routes of migrant archives will lead to new understandings of who and what is excluded from the archive.

The physical archive (the national archive, the official archive) provides many opportunities. As a rare institution, an archive stipulates who can enter. Some archives require registration, others ask for letters of reference. To locate the dusty texts of migrant archives you might have to pass through the door and sign yourself in as a reader at the archive run by the city or the state. The old archive persists. Derrida's injunction against the archive per se calls for a necessary move away from something that might be unavoidable. (The legal problems that arose in relation to the "Derrida archive" are a reminder of the archive's presence.)<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, as the case of the Hispanic literary heritage project shows, some groups do not have the luxury of ignoring or dismissing the importance of archives, nor would it be politically astute to do so.

Migrant archives are calling for the work of those who would go into them and do the careful reading and contextualization that the finest research requires. As pressure builds on national or ethnic archives to account for transnational, exile, and diasporic influences, scholars will have to follow migrant routes rather than revert to the inclusion of a text into a preexisting model. That work is not the primary purview of relatives and descendants of the producers from other decades and centuries but of scholars who seek to fan the flames of the past so as to create light for the present. Because



migrant archives do not have buildings devoted to them, it is up to committed Americanists to locate their contents, read them carefully, and provide contexts for their emergence.

## NOTES

1. International Council on Archives, <http://www.ica.org/>.
2. In this article I discuss Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). For an overview of debates about the archive, see Marlene Manoff, "Theories of the Archive from across the Disciplines," *Portal: Libraries and the Academy* 4 (2004): 9–25.
3. Thomas Osborne has argued that the physical reality of an archive, in tension with the abstract conception of what it implies, grants credibility to certain archival configurations and even disciplines. See Osborne, "The Ordinarity of the Archive," *History of the Human Sciences* 12 (May 1999): 51–55. That physical credibility is one factor behind what some have called an archival turn in literary and cultural studies. While historicist methodologies and the decentering of the literary text have also contributed to this archival turn, the lack of a consensus as to what constitutes literary studies has led to a privileging of the recovery of texts and contexts that have not been considered in the recent past. Jane Gallop has criticized this historical turn by establishing a dichotomy between close reading and "archival work." Actually, the best historical work would deploy close-reading techniques on documents that might otherwise be taken as factual evidence for historical narratives. See Gallop, "The Historicization of Literary Studies and the Fate of Close Reading," *Profession* 2007 (New York: MLA, 2007), 181–86.
4. The National Archives also has connections to regional archives and presidential libraries. The United States offers a curious case of archive construction. Unlike other nations, the United States did not establish the institution called National Archives until more than a century after the country's founding. Individual government agencies had been in charge of their own records before Congress created the National Archives and Records Administration in 1934. (<http://www.archives.gov/about/history/>). I would argue that the first U.S. "national archive" was the Library of Congress, founded in 1800 when the capital was transferred from Philadelphia to Washington, D.C. Originally intended to house books for use by the government, the Library of Congress became a national library that was to provide information on all subjects, meaning all subjects would be of interest to the nation. For an account of the founding of the Library of Congress, see John Y. Cole, *Jefferson's Legacy: A Brief History of the Library of Congress* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1993).
5. <http://www.digitalvaults.org/>.
6. Thomas H. Kraneck, preface to *Crossing the Rio Grande: An Immigrant's Life in the 1880s* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2007), ix–xii.
7. *Ibid.*, x.
8. Guadalupe Valdez Jr., "Memories of My Grandfather: Luis G. Gómez," in *Crossing the Rio Grande*, 14.

9. Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 2.
10. Manoff, "Theories of the Archive," 10.
11. Marc Shell and Werner Sollors, *The Multilingual Ambiguity of American Literature* (New York: New York University Press, 2000). See also Werner Sollors, ed., *Multilingual America: Transnationalism, Ethnicity, and the Languages of American Literature* (New York: New York University Press, 1998).
12. "By this term [archive], Foucault writes, "I do not mean the sum of all the texts that a culture has kept upon its person as documents attesting to its own past, or as evidence of a continuing identity; nor do I mean the institutions, which, in a given society, make it possible to record and preserve those discourses that one wishes to remember and keep in circulation." Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon, 1972), 128–29. Instead, Foucault would focus on the historical discursive system (assumptions, connections, relationships) that permits a particular statement. Libraries and academic disciplines or fields are the product of the archive but are not the archive themselves. If a national archive implies continuity and tradition, Foucault's "archive" functions in a particular context. Rather than focusing on the content of an archive or the person who inaugurates or promotes it, Foucault seeks to understand how the archive delimits what and how something can be said.
13. Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 45.
14. *Ibid.*, 20.
15. For a discussion of "radical evil" in various strains of philosophy, see Richard J. Bernstein, *Radical Evil: A Philosophical Investigation* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002). For a brief explanation of Kant's concepts in relation to other uses of "evil," see Christoph Cox, "On Evil: An Interview of Alenka Zupancic," *Cabaret* 5 (Winter 2001–2), (<http://cabaretmagazine.org/issues/5/alenkazupancic/>).
16. Carolyn Steedman, *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 27.
17. *Ibid.*, 27.
18. Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 7.
19. Kirsten Silva Gruesz calls for overcoming a "lack of interest in questions of language difference and translation in most Americanist work at present." See "Translation: A Key (word) into the Language of America(n)ists," *American Literary History* 16 (2004): 90. In developing an approach toward hemispheric studies, Susan Gillman argues that *adaptation* rather than translation may be a more fruitful way to think about texts that are incommensurable and affected not only by different literary histories but also by uneven economic and social conditions in the Americas. See Gillman, "Otra Vez Caliban/Encore Caliban: Adaptation," *Translation, Americas Studies, American Literary History* 20 (Spring–Summer 2008): 187–209.
20. Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 4–5.
21. Jacques Derrida, *Mal d'archive: The Impression freudienne* (Paris: Galilée, 1995), 15–16.
22. The project has also awarded many fellowships for research and sponsored a bi-annual conference that has become a central gathering place for many scholars interested

in the Hispanic past. The conferences, in turn, have led to a series of volumes of critical articles.

23. Walt Whitman, "The Spanish Element in Our Nationality," in *Poetry and Prose* (New York: Library of America, 1996), 1146.

24. *Ibid.*, 1147.

25. Ramon A. Gutiérrez and Genaro M. Padilla, introduction to *Recovering the US Hispanic Literary Heritage* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1993), 21.

26. A similar process is evident in the racial authorization of African American studies, although not without its own debates. As Xiomara Santamarina has noted, a methodological paradox emerges in that field when scholars develop an archive presumably about a racial group at the same time that certain practitioners deconstruct the racial particularity that propels such a search. "[T]he field encompasses reprinting and reinterpreting long-out-of-print and forgotten texts, in combination with textual and contextual analyses that recover the instability and contingency of racial discourses across space and time." In that response, Santamarina argues for the ongoing recuperation of archival materials that call attention and speak to the need for specific analyses—in this case, historicizing practices that place discourses on race in the particular conditions faced by the writers. But one has to wonder whether in African American studies race remains as the category that sustains the archival process. By contrast, migrant archives move away from racial formations. See Santamarina, "Are We There Yet?": Archives, History, and Specificity in African American Literary Studies," *American Literary History* 20 (Spring–Summer 2008): 304.

27. Hershel Parker opens the first volume of his monumental biography of Melville by emphasizing the importance of that discovery. See *Herman Melville: A Biography*, vol. 1 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), xi.

28. The competing claims on Derrida's papers and Derrida's response to institutional injunctions show just how important and even scandalous archives continue to be. For a newspaper account of these troubles, see Thomas Bartlett, "Archive Fever," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 20 July 2007, A8.

## Toxicity and the Consuming Subject

NAN ENSTAD

In October 2006, *National Geographic Magazine* featured an article and photographic spread entitled "Pollution Within." Reporter David Ewing Duncan had himself tested for 320 toxic chemicals and found that 165 of them lurked within his body, including PCBs, DDT, dioxin, mercury, and PBBs (polybrominated diphenyl ethers) found in flame retardants. In fact, Duncan's level of one particularly toxic PBBE was ten times the estimated average in U.S. citizens, and two hundred times the estimated average in Sweden, where the chemical is banned. PBBEs are found in, among other things, "mattresses, carpets, the plastic casing of televisions, electronic circuit boards, automobiles," and the "plastic and fabric interiors" of airplanes. While it is common knowledge that we all have a body burden of numerous chemicals that come to us through air, water, and the commodities we utilize daily, only recently have a few laboratories developed sophisticated testing apparatuses that can ascertain the presence or absence of so many different compounds in trace amounts, generating detailed new knowledge about the self.

*National Geographic Magazine's* shifting attention signals a broad-based new anxiety about globalization and its perils, one that holds multiple political and scholarly possibilities for rethinking self and society. From the magazine's historic emphasis on the exotic natural environment and customs of imperialism's "other," *National Geographic* turns its gaze to the toxic debris that has migrated to and is deposited in a U.S. citizen's body from transnationally circulating commodities. U.S. readers of *National Geographic* no longer imagine the global "out there," but, disturbingly, the global "within us." This shift in scale redefines the geoscape, not only including the United States—a move *National Geographic* made some time ago—but replacing