

Counter-mapping by second generation migrant authors:

Susana Chávez Silverman's Bilingual memories (2004)

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1. Introduction

«Places make us», states William Saroyan (1972 2). Second generation migrant authors often have strong ties with more than one country. Their identities «are configured in relationship to more than one nation-state» and can be considered as transnational, because their «daily lives depend on multiple and constant interconnections across international borders» (Schiller *et al* 1995 48). It is on the basis of the correlation between places and (transnational) self-construal that I turn, in my research, my attention to the function and construction of spaces in autobiographical texts by second generation migrant authors.

In this paper, I think about the relationship between places and identity in autobiographical texts in geopoetic terms (White 1987, 1994). Second generation migrant authors' hybrid, cross-border identities do not fit in systems of national classification (Houvenaghel 2014, 2015, 2017, 2018). I propose that second generation migrant authors, in reaction to this marginalization, draw, in their autobiographical writings, an alternative map. Therefore, I put forward the concept of “counter-mapping” (Said 1996), which refers to the practices of marginalized groups to produce their own, more inclusive, maps, as a form of “art of resistance” or “counter-strategy” (Said 1996). The concept emerged in the 1990's in the framework of the need to produce more nuanced geographies that insist on the divergent spatiality of minority groups. It refers to the practice of subaltern social groups and communities to make their own maps via their cultural production as a form of resistance or answer to the political maps, in which their identities cannot be located. Concretely, in the case of second generation migrants, I argue that this counter-strategy articulates maps in which simultaneity of spaces and spatial coexistence enable the migrant descendants to define the self beyond the lines and subdivisions between national territories drawn by the political map.

2. Susana Chávez Silverman, the multiple self, and the simultaneity of spaces

The cultural identity of the Judeo-Mexican-American writer Susana Chávez Silverman, descendant of migrants, is multilayered and her linguistic identity is a patchwork of languages (Spanish, English, Italian, South African, French, Brazilian Portuguese) and accents (Argentinian Spanish, Peninsular Spanish, Mexican Spanish).¹ This multiple cultural and linguistic identity puzzles the critics. Spyra (2011 199), for example, stresses how confusing and difficult it is to localize the centre of Chávez Silverman's identity: «Her linguistic experiments and the confusion inherent in mapping their location, make Chávez-Silverman difficult to pinpoint in terms of national identification». The critics also have difficulties in defining the language and genre of Chávez Silverman's texts: «Through evoking her multiple national and linguistic alliances, she creates a text interstitial in both language and genre ».

¹ We start from a dynamic conception of cultural identity, which can be changed and can evolve through time under the influence of external factors. Olga Molano (Molano 2007) highlights the dynamic character of cultural identity: «la identidad no es un concepto fijo, sino que se recrea individual y colectivamente y se alimenta de forma continua de la influencia exterior.» (Molano 2007 73). Bákula also refers to the dynamism of cultural identity, and underscores that people recognize constantly their cultural heritage, they enrich, expand and complement it: «el patrimonio y la identidad cultural no son elementos estáticos, sino entidades sujetas a permanentes cambios, están condicionados por factores externos y por la continua retroalimentación entre ambos.» (Bákula 2000 169)

(Spyra 2011 199) All three issues highlighted by Spyra –identity, language, genre– are worthy of reflection and further study.

The issue of the “interstitial language” created by Chávez Silverman has been most often addressed by the critics (Derrick 2014; Enghels 2018; Lee 2018).² As for the genre issue (Spyra 2011)³, Chávez Silverman’s composed literary genre merging of letters, chronicles, memories, travel diaries, and autobiographical essays merits, without any doubt, further attention. In this study, however, I want to focus on the identity issue (Pawelek and Derrick 2018)⁴ in relation to space.

In the autobiographical texts written by Chávez Silverman⁵, the identity construction of the self is based on places and communities significant to the life trajectory of the author: California (the place of her birth and youth), Mexico (her mother’s home country, whose parents are from Guadalajara), Spain and the Jewish community (her father’s roots), Argentina and Chile (her study stays), and South Africa (her work stays as teacher in her career of literature teacher). The self-construal is partially based on each of the places mentioned and seems to build Chávez Silverman’s identity upon the association between those locations.

Consequently, the memoir volume can be considered as an alternative map or a counter-map which represents, as Chávez Silverman states, her own “weird geography” (2004 82) and is characterized not only by combinations of places very distant from each other geographically but also by combinations of periods of time very distant from each other temporally. The autobiographical self rarely situates herself in one single place or one single moment, but is constantly connected to different times and spaces. In his foreword to *Bilingual Memories*, Paul Allatson emphasizes the simultaneity and multiplicity of the spatiotemporal framework when he describes the memoir volume as «the author’s spatialization of herself in multiple places and times» (Foreword, XIII) and as «an astutely and movingly inscribed record of the author’s shift between divers locales» (Foreword XIII).

The autobiographical self is the one to problematize, in *Bilingual Memories*, her own incapacity to be in one single place at a specific moment. The essayist herself notices the characteristic, changing construction of the spatiotemporal frame of her memories. She highlights the characteristic impossibility of being in one single space, of being limited to one single space. She becomes aware of her constant way of connecting distant times and different places and calls into question this involuntary, inevitable tendency that characterizes her way of being. She asks herself about the place she is in when she is writing ¿«Ay, Where am I »? (BM 13) or she makes a mistake and self-corrects «Heme aquí. I mean allí. » (BM 13) «Living there. Digo, here. » (BM 9). The confusion between spaces highlighted by the autobiographical self signals up to which point the spaces associated with different times overlap and come together in Chávez Silverman’s experience of space. The autobiographical self stresses how she does not feel situated in one space and moves to another spatiotemporal experience, characterized by its multiplicity. She experiences the lack of a basis, a centre: «no centre, suddenly, like on that Boardwalk ride cuando el centrifugal force smashes and holds you flat against the metal walls y de repente the floor falls out» (BM 82). The experience shocks and confuses the autobiographical self, who questions herself critically regarding this mania of connecting different times and spaces: «Qué es este tu afán de siempre y siempre comparar? Why can’t you just BE? Live in the minute? Siempre este intento de asimilar, de que esto se parezca a aquesho⁶, ¡pesada! » (BM 131)

² Derrick (2014) analyzes Chávez Silverman’s texts from the perspective of radical bilingualism and shows that Chávez Silverman’s bilingual texts lack a base language. For Derrick, Chávez Silverman’s texts exemplify «language fusion, which occurs as Spanish and English fuse together» (2014 366). Enghels (2018) demonstrates that the use of bilingual pragmatic markers in Chávez Silverman’s texts is very similar to the use of these markers in spoken discourse; her study leads to the outcome that Chávez Silverman’s written texts, due to their high degree of orality, «can be considered as a complementary source for the study of code-switching in spoken language». Lee (2018) considers the radical code-switching applied by Chávez Silverman as a tool to approach reality in a self-reflective way without succumbing to a hierarchical view of the world. The contributions put forward by the critics to get an insight in Chávez Silverman’s linguistic expression are highly valuable; however, the use of other languages than Spanish and English and the representation of accents and pronunciation in the texts deserve further reflection.

³ Spyra (2011 199-201) highlights that the mixed genre created by Chávez Silverman oscillates between past and present. Her study reflects on the combination of historical and contemporary forms in *Bilingual Memories*: the traditional travel narrative is written in a modern blog form, the epistolary form is originated in the essayist’s E-mails, the chronicle is not only a reference to the colonial *Crónicas de Indias*, but also to the contemporary journalistic genre.

⁴ Pawelek and Derrick (2018) study Chávez Silverman’s hybrid identity under the lens of nostalgia, arguing that nostalgia is a metaphor of globalization.

⁵ Author of *Killer Crónicas: Bilingual Memories* (UWP 2004), *Scenes from la cuenca de los Angeles y otros Natural Disasters* (UWP 2010).

⁶ The author usually resorts, in specific sections of her memories located in Argentina, to a writing that imitates Argentinian pronunciation of Spanish.

In this study, I will try to answer the questions the essayist poses to herself in *Bilingual Memories*. Therefore, I focus on the spatial frame of *Bilingual Memories*, and I am in search of the logic or the mechanism behind this frame that seems to force the autobiographical self to shift and combine spaces and hereby draw an alternative map.

As a hypothesis, I propose that the senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch) play a fundamental role in the construction of space in *Bilingual Memories*. Said sensory experiences evoke memories and carry the autobiographical self to different sites at the same time. In line with our hypothesis, the creation of a spatial frame characterized by simultaneity and proximity between distant spaces takes place under the impulse of sensory experiences. Thus, the logic behind the counter-map of Chávez Silverman's *Bilingual Memories* is, in my view, close to the "involuntary memory" through sensory stimuli, described by Marcel Proust. Proust's theory includes the concept of the "multiplicity" or "discontinuity of the self". Both concepts, sensory experiences and multiplicity of the self will be key in my approach to understanding the relation between the construction of space and self-construal in Chávez Silverman's *Memories*.

3. Marcel Proust, "involuntary memory", and the coexistence of spaces

Marcel Proust (1871-1922) is famous for his analysis of the mechanisms of memory. His most influential series of novels, *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* (1913-1922, *In Search of Lost Time*), is built on his own memories and reflections on memory. Proust expresses the view that memory is «essential both for inspiration and for providing access to the material that can give content to a work of art» (Gross 47). For this artistic purpose, the *mémoire volontaire* or willful memory, related to the conscious and logical mind, is not of much value. Proust places emphasis on another type of memory, the *mémoire involontaire* or involuntary memory:

For Proust, an involuntary memory comes unsolicited, often with explosive force, to unsettle the individual in the present. When an involuntary memory appears, it takes the form of an ek-stasis of the past in the present. Since the conscious mind plays little or no role in drawing it out, nothing in ordinary awareness is able to meliorate the shock effect of the memory. Paradoxically, the disturbing power of an involuntary memory rests on the fact that it has been completely forgotten, whereas voluntary memories, for Proust and for Bergson too, can always build upon established ties of contiguity, similarity, and logical association between the mind that remembers and the material that is remembered. This is another reason why, when involuntary memories occur, they bring with them jarring differences and discontinuities unlike anything known to voluntary memory. (Gross 47-48)

This type of memory cannot be activated by the conscious mind, ruled by the laws of logic. According to Proust, the senses are key in launching the process of involuntary memory. In Proust's series of novels, the senses act as catalysts for the involuntary memory: the taste of the madeleine dipped in the tea, the sounds of water running through pipes, or the sensation of imbalance on unevenly laid cobblestones. All these sensory cues activate the involuntary memory and lead the person reminiscing to relive the original emotions linked to a specific experience from the past, so intensely and vividly «that a *then* becomes a *now*» (Polianowsky Salaman 1982 52). Unexpected sensory perceptions transport the individual in time. Moreover, these sensory perceptions also bring back spatial contexts related to the past: the person remembering is carried to a lost world, to a different spatial framework.

Proust's vision of involuntary memory is related to his concept of identity, which is characterized by multiplicity, «founded on the notion that we are not continuous but altogether discontinuous selves » (Gross 2000 49). By stressing the discontinuity and multiplicity of the self, involuntary memories «overwhelm, confound, and disorient » the person remembering (Gross 2000 49).

The person we happen to be now, [...] is entirely discrepant from the one we were years ago. In reality we are composed of numerous successive selves, in fact a multiplicity of selves spread over time, each one apparently excluding the self, preceding it, and each in turn virtually lost to the one that follows. This being the case, when an involuntary memory occurs it brings in its train a revived awareness of one of the previous selves we had formerly been. (Gross 2000 49)

For Proust, however, the involuntary memory, more than confusing the person remembering, invites him or her to convert these relived moments into a work of art. By narrating these memories, the narrator is able to give the reader an insight into the many facets of his or her multiple self. The involuntary memories included in the literary work offer, indeed, different viewpoints on the discontinuous identity of the narrator. The reader gradually becomes aware of the narrator's multiple dimensions and is able to

form a picture of the narrator's complexity. The artwork based on involuntary memories takes the reader to different times, places and selves of the narrator, and serves, thus, as a map to the multiplicity of the narrator's self. In this way, Proust «illustrates in his novels how the concept of a person as an unchanging entity is false and stresses that our personalities are fragmented, made up of a multiplicity of different selves» (Harvey 1994 13).

To sum up, involuntary or Proustian memories are triggered by the senses. On a superficial level, these memories produce a disorienting effect of discontinuity. On a deeper level, they offer the opportunity to get access to the continuity and coherence of the multiple self.

4. Simultaneous spaces as a strategy of self-construal in *Bilingual Memories*

All of the autobiographical essays included in *Bilingual Memories* revolve around sensorial experiences: «Whiffing samples of perfume with her partner at the Beverly Center mall in Los Angeles, or alone with merely a jacaranda to call a friend in South Africa, Chavez-Silverman inhabits each chronicle with all of her senses and a strong sense of the self. » (De la Tierra 2005: 38)

Smell is, undoubtedly, the predominant sensory experience in the volume of memories that we are concerned with. In various chronicles, the essayist introduces the reader in her rich spectrum of scents, fragrances and perfumes from different timeframes and different places (BM 5, 47, 67-68, 84, 113, 133, 147). Even if the scent is an omnipresent sensorial experience in this volume of memories, it is evident that it is often combined with other senses, especially sound and taste, but also sight and touch.

4.1. *The Smell of Sage and the Sound of Waves*

Significantly, the first autobiographical essay (“Mini-Playera Re-entry Crónica BM 3-4) is built around memories evoked by smell. The place in which the autobiographical self is in at the moment is specified: she is in Los Angeles, in the famous Venice Beach Street, close to the sea «Walking down a dimly lit Venice Beach Street late at night. » Given the title (Re-Entry Crónica) which makes a reference to an arrival or a return home –«I’m back» (BM 4)– after a stay in Argentina, and given the words she addressed to her interlocutors –”without you all» (BM 4)–, the autobiographical self is located both far (in a traditional geographical sense) and close (in communication, in writing) of the poets and friends she met in Argentina.

The autobiographical self is walking around at night in Venice Beach Street in Los Angeles; however, the sense smell takes her beyond present time into another place, into a situation of all times «de toda la vida», «desde siempre», to a place of her own, eternal of belonging. The suddenness of the memory, and the strong emotions attached to it remind the Proust effect:

De repente, un olor que no había sentido en más de un año rises en la coastal breeze and hits me, no, it STROKES me, full en la cara: sage. Aho, oh, it’s the (North) American Southwest –ah, salvia– tan Green and subtle and gorgeous! (BM 3) [...] El olfato me sheva y me trae por la vida de siempre the full-throttle charge of it, immediate and nostalgic a la vez. (BM 4)

This smell brings back and contains, as proposes Proust, the essence of a period in Chávez Silverman's life.

Still, the strong emotion caused by the smell of sage goes deeper than just the memory of a period in her life. The multiple self refers simultaneously to a series of diachronic selves, in different times and places, and to the continuity across these selves. The strong emotion provokes the following reflection of the autobiographical self regarding her true identity: «Eyes Smart with tears and I wince. Sigh. I should be prepared para estas overpowering waves of emotion. Siempre he sido así». (BM 3-4). The emotion leads her to the memory of her childhood while emphasizing her true self: «You're too sensitive, me decían de niña, so impresionable, me dicen siempre» (BM 3-4).

The autobiographical self connects the smell of sage and the reflection about her identity with the memory of the two natal charts⁷ two astrologers made for her, both in Argentina (one in Belgrano and

⁷ The natal chart, also called astral birth chart, natal map, radix, nativity, or horoscope, is a diagram used by astrologers that represents, from a geocentric perspective, the planetary positions in signs and the astrological houses they occupied at a specific place (latitude and longitude) and time (sidereal time).

another in La Recoleta, in Buenos Aires). Both astrologers, as the autobiographical self remembers, describe her identity in line with what sage reveals: immediate and nostalgic at the same time.

At the same Venice Beach Street in Los Angeles, the same night, another smell comes to the author. This smell has the same effect of bringing her closer to the truth of her identity: «Un poquito después del sage llega otro olor dulzón, casi empalagoso: Chilean night-blooming jasmine. Oh, esos delicate, innocuous pale-pink blooms que de día no huelen a nada ahora overpower me, casi jaqueca-strong.» (BM 4).

This second smell is combined with the sense of hearing, and with a sound that, just as the smell of sage and jasmine, also defines her identity:

Y luego, still later, esa shoosh...shoosh. Son las olas. Waves significant to her identity: “De ellas no podré –nunca– vivir lejos mucho tiempo. (BM 4)

The autobiographical self elaborates on why the sea and the waves define her identity, reflection that leads her to make a comparison with other significant places for her identity: Madrid, Pretoria, Argentina:

Me vuelvo loca, in a way en el “INTERIOR”! Even if I’m by a river, that huge, camel colored Río de la Plata, or my beloved Mississippi, or the icy Charles. Y válgame Dios if it’s a really high and dry place, sin río siquiera. Tipo Madrith. Or Pretoria. El interior. Me vuelvo un stir crazy. Pero even a big river is just not the same as this shoosh...shoosh of my Pacific and that marine damp [...] (BM 4).

This fragment exemplifies how multiplicity and unity go hand in hand in the essayist’s mobile and changing self. The multiplicity of her successive experiences in different places with and without rivers, lakes or seas does not oppose unity, on the contrary, it is the affirmation of unity.

In this first chronicle, then, the autobiographical self defines herself based on the smell of sage, of jasmine, and the sound of the waves and the touch of marine damp. But this self-definition, far from being limited to her native Los Angeles, leads her to think of differences, of other significant places, of other times. As Proust suggests, the one and the many come together the writing. Consequently, the autobiographical self closes the chronicle problematizing her own geographical situation: «Ay, where am I?» (BM 4) is the sentence with which—significantly—the Chronicle concludes. The place of writing is located between spaces and times, between Pretoria, Argentina, Madrid and Venice Beach Street in Los Angeles. And it is in this multiple spatiotemporal framework that the essayist self is able to get closer to her unique identity.

4.2. *The sight of the jacaranda*

The second autobiographical essay (“Flora y Fauna Crónica” 5-14), written in Los Angeles, starts, in a very similar way to the first chronicle, from sensory experiences –mainly sight, but also, to a lesser degree, smell– that evoke memories of other times and places. Specifically, the sense of sight allows her to overlap or connect three important spaces of her life, Pretoria, Pomona (in California), and Buenos Aires. Again, the creation of a multiple spatiotemporal framework, located in-between spaces and times, generates the conditions by which the autobiographical self can find her own self and can describe herself, she can give shape to multiplicity, and build her identity.

The memory of the sight of the jacaranda, in Pretoria, is the starting point of the Chronicle: «Cuando me fui para South Africa, and I lived my first spring in Pretoria, allí por octubre, viví como insólito regalo el florecimiento de los jacarandaes» (BM 5). The “Proust effect” of this sight is multiple.

First, the blooming of the jacaranda tree immediately takes her to her sensory experiences (smell, hearing, sight) in another place, California. The essayist remembers her life as a «northern Califas girl»: «el océano», «los redwoods», «deep purple blossoms», «dust-scented mimosa» (BM 5). Second, it connects with the eucalyptus, which causes another “Proustian effect”. The eucalyptus brings another memory to her mind: «And eucalyptus, medicinal and faintly erotic a la vez. Porque el olor a eucalipto me vuelve, inevitablemente, a los wild summer rides en la moto del motero del barrio, Bob Salter, the summer after we returned from our calvario -18 months viviendo en España- [...] that summer I would cling cual ventosa, aterrada, to Bob’s sweat-dampened, skintight T-shirted, bronze, surfer-boy espalda [...] as he took those Eastside Santa Cruz curves fast, waaay too fast, crunching and scattering los eucalyptus buttons mientras nos adentrábamos a ese wild forest [...]». (BM 6)

After this double “Proust effect” or comparative link established between the sensory experience of the spectacular nature of California, and the South African jacaranda tree, the autobiographical self interrupts her remembrance of Bob’s motorcycle and goes back to the jacaranda of South Africa:

Anyway, no me acuerdo haber visto, antes de Sudáfrica, un jacarandá. Sultry yet somehow insouciant too, durante el resto del año, con esas dark Green, frilly leaves [...] y sus weird flat walnut-colored pods. Not exactly nondescript, pero definitely nothing to write home about. Pero luego, for the too-short, two months + of their bloom, shocking surtidores de unscented pétalos –wouldn’t it be demasiado, over the top si encima de todo tuvieran perfume too?– cascading, drifting, amontonándose, machacados bajo pies y ruedas. (BM 7)

In the following fragments, according to Proust’s thought, multiplicity of the self becomes unity. The description of how the jacaranda looks, takes the essayist to the essence of South Africa, and beyond, to the essence of her self.

«Pretoria se jacta de ser la Jakarandastad, *ciudad de los jacarandáes*, and I believed it and was properly awed and grateful, each spring, por esa breve explosión de dusty periwinkle. Sí, ese es el color, exactamente. Como el *periwinkle* crayón en la giant sized box de Crayolas». The color and the beauty, «the otherworldly, ephemeral beauty de los jacarandáes» are connected to the loneliness she lived in South Africa. The image of the jacaranda, its color, especially, becomes a summarizing image «mi vida y mi writing, the two were inseparable, -were enabled, somehow, por esa breve nube de jacarandá, which seemed to shimmer and float sólo para mí, justo below my 7th floor balcony window» (BM 8). Moreover, the meaning of the jacaranda goes beyond the summary and the very essence of her period in South Africa.

«Solo luego», the autobiographical self explains, «vendría a reconocer, a entender the special, secret bond between the jaracandas and me. Una necesidad. Un destino cartográfico. De geografía, latitudes» (BM 8). Indeed, the jacaranda is also present in other places and in other times. The jacaranda is, thus, a piece that reveals unity in the essayist’s multiple self. When the essayist moves to «the easternmost edge de Los Angeles county» in order to work in Pomona, and, even if she has doubts about the location before moving, when looking for a house, it is the sight of a jacaranda what makes her change her mind: «vi, in the central island that divided a wide, four-lane suburban avenue a stand of mature, baroquely blooming jaracandas, as far as my eye could see. Y te juro que right then and there, como que decidí que it was gonna be OK. Living there. Digo, here» (BM 8).

In this way, as suggests Proust, we can see how the essayist’s self changes from moment to moment, depending on the place, and the time. The central, unifying element in this succession of selves is the continuity in the subjective memory of the jacaranda.

To Los Angeles and South Africa, the essayist adds a third space: Buenos Aires. All these places, and, simultaneously, all these different facets of the self, are united by the sight of the jacaranda. «Bueno, y just guess qué es lo que abunda, qué representa la idiosincrasia misma de Buenos Aires, according to the porteños? You got it: los jacarandáes» (BM 9). The autobiographical self compares the view she has from the window of her balcony with the jacaranda in Buenos Aires and with the view of the jacaranda from her balcony in Pretoria. «Heme aquí. I mean, allí: facing out these humedad warped, wavy-glass paned double doors that open onto el minúsculo balcón, just three floors up this time, en vez de siete, como en Pretoria, pero con una vista shockingly similar.» (BM 13) The view of the jacaranda links, thus, different spaces, memories, facets of the selves, and the present time: «mis sentidos engullen [...] en esta] jacaranda-petal strewn Street» (BM 13).

The plural and boundary-crossing method of image creation related to the jacaranda-moment recalls the rich plurality of Proust’s image construction related to the Madeleine-moment. The jacaranda-moment shows that there is an essence that underlies the multiple selves, a permanent aspect related to the jacaranda that is always present in all the mutable selves, that has not changed across times and places. Proust stresses that the subjectivity of the experience related to involuntary memory allows to discover the true self, the invariable essence of the self. This involuntary memory «indicates the existence of, and affords access to, a unique and diachronically stable self» (Landy).

4.3. *The smell of tuberose and the gaze of the tecolote*

One autobiographical essay (“Tecolote Chronicle” BM 45-50) is written in Mexico for her mother, who is of Mexican descent. First, the autobiographical self remembers how she searched, in Guadalajara, twenty years ago, for her mother’s Mexico. «[...] yo buscaba en Guadalajara el México que tú y daddy

me habían dado, Mom» (BM 45-46). This Mexico is described, mainly, around smells and tastes: «The México with smashed guayabas releasing that rubber-sweet, acrid scent into the pale ochre dirt. [...] The Mexico of dim-indio filled Markets –like my favorites of all time, el Libertad en downtown Guadalajara– sudor, huarache-leather and Wood-burning tool smells, masa harina before, during and after cooking, chiles de todo tipo, secos y frescos, aguas de melón, atole, hanging open animals guts everywhere, and strange, pale, slimy, hacekd open frutas we used to sneak huge, liquid gulping bites [...]» (BM 46).

The writer did not find her mother's Mexico in Guadalajara, but in another Mexican city, Oaxaca. There she could find the same smells and tastes that evoke the memory of her mother's Guadalajara: «Porque tu México sí lo encontré: en Oaxaca. Hot, chapopote-scented roads as you ride into the city center del tiny aeropuerto. Burros ambulantes y green mayates galore. Those enormous, dissying, masa-, rope-, chile- and entraña-smelling mercados you only used to let us go to once in a blue moon, donde nos llevaba Juana Delgado a veces. Y nos traía greasy churros she bought there, en el Libertad, once a week: hot, sugared, fat.» (BM 47).

It is the smell of tuberoses that leads to another strong Madeleine-moment. The simple smell produces an immediate effect: «At noon, precisamente, (las 10, Califas time), en el Mercado Central de Abastos, el olor a nardos me arrebató de mí misma. I felt no center, suddenly, like on that Boardwalk ride cuando el centrifugal force smashes and holds you flat against the metal walls y de repente the floor falls out, cual si flotara nomás among those dim market stalls, aware only of the overpowering, lyrical, death-pronóstico scent [...]» (BM 47).

The essayist recounts how the smell brings back an echo of the past and allows to link the past with the present. The smell overpowers the present moment and brings the essayist to reflect on another experience related to the smell's origin:

[...] spikenard, le dicen en la Biblia. It's tuberose. Mi perfume predilecto. One of my students looked it up for me en el Internido, cuando apareció la referencia a nardos in that Lorca poem, *La aurora*. La Magdalena anointed Christ's feet with it, fíjate. (BM 47)

The smell of tuberoses causes thus an overpowering plural madeleine-type experience. It brings her time with her mother back, and simultaneously brings her teaching in California back. It allows the essayist to connect the different selves from past and present. The smell is combined with another sensorial experience that also brings back the memory of the essayist's mother:

Suddenly, todos los tecolotes me estaban mirando. Huge, hammered tin, mirror owls. Teensy, chillón, carved and painted, copal-wood alebrije owls. [...] Todos me clavaban con una cierta mirada, y era tu mirada. (BM 47)

This combination between the smell of tuberoses and the sight of tecolotes brings the essayist closer to the essence of her mother's self: «la coincidencia, la absolute symmetry between you and your favorite bird», el tecolote, «inescrutable, reticente, mysterious and unknowable» (BM 48). The sensory experiences of the smell of the tuberoses and the gaze of the tecolotes lead the autobiographical self to a more essential connection that goes beyond the geographical and temporal distances: «Al volver del mercado, “Descansó su mamá a las 10” reads the message on a little scrap of paper que me dieron en la Recepción del Hotel Las Golondrinas. Así supe. Pero porque te presentí tan fuerte en los owl- and nardo-signs- tu presentia ghostly yet oddly comforting- like the long shadow cast just after dusk, by a barn owl in flight over the abandoned farm buildings [...] - puedo entender, puedo hasta aceptar que yo esté aquí en México, I am here in your Mexico once again, y tú tan del otro lado, ahora para siempre. » (BM 49)

5. Conclusions

The relation between places and self-construal in autobiographical writings by second generation migrant authors was the starting point of this reflection. As a case study, I focused on the memories by second generation migrant author Susana Chávez Silverman. More concretely, I intended to answer the questions the writer poses to herself regarding the impossibility to fit in the traditional political map by being in one single space. Clearly, I argued, geographical borders and distances don't play a significant role in the constructing of the alternative map contained in her autobiographical text.

The internal consistency of Chávez Silverman's counter-map is created by a different element: the senses. The senses trigger experiences that break chronological and geographical rules. Indeed, the

senses have the power to make the autobiographical self travel freely in time and space, beyond barriers. The sensory stimuli make the autobiographical self relive spontaneously forgotten experiences from other spaces without leaving the space of the present. Past experiences are resurrected and become the present; two or more different places become a single one. Indeed, sensorial stimuli cause the identification of two or more similar sensations separated by time and space and function, thus, in a multiple context in which spaces and times overlap. I conclude that the sensorial stimuli are predominant in Silverman's *Memories*. As a consequence, the memory map the author traces is more a sensory map than a geopolitical map. Sensorial experiences, such as the scent of sage, the sight of the jacaranda, the sound of the waves construct relations between spaces in the *Memories*.

The sensorial frame makes it possible to trace an alternative map of the writer's multiple and fragmented and yet unique self, in which Argentinian, Mexican, Spanish, Hebrew, South-African, and more fragments are brought together. The involuntary memory shows that there is an essential point of continuity between the different selves. The scent of sage is the unifying bond between the autobiographical self of Los Angeles and the autobiographical self of Buenos Aires; the view of the jacaranda unites the autobiographical selves of Pretoria, Buenos Aires and California. In this way, the sensory experience opens the possibility for the writer to unite the multiple and fragmented self. This uniting force is essential to Proust's idea on involuntary memory: what the madeleine brings back, is not only the past but, more importantly, an invariable part of the self, a part that has not changed over time.

The connection between different and distance spaces in the autobiographical text makes it possible to draw, via the writing, a map which enables Susana Chávez Silverman to represent her own "weird geography" (BM 82). Thus, the volume of memories uses the combined logic of memory and senses to trace an alternative map, or counter-map, in which Chávez Silverman's second generation migrant's identity fits.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the understanding of the relation between representation of space and self-construal in autobiographical texts by migrant descendant authors. Migrant descendant writers typically live in one place while their roots are in one or more other places. Consequently, their autobiographical works construct the self through the combination of different places. The imaginary map that fuses different places determines the identity of this second generation migrant descendants. It is the connection of places which tends to define them and provides them with a map to which they feel they belong. Therefore, second generation migrants draw on different bridging strategies to bring distant places together. In earlier studies on self-construal by second generation migrant authors, I have concluded that one of these bridging strategies to connect spaces beyond national borderlines is the "staging" of an intellectual dialogue that establishes alliances and oppositions between international interlocutors (Houvenaghel 2014). Other of my studies on second generation migrant autobiographical writing have shown that the representation in autobiographical texts of spatial ways to connect different national territories (such as a middle-ground, tunnels, passageways, open doors, windows, balconies, or ladders) create symbolic bridges and enable the author to create merged spaces in which different national territories coexist (Houvenaghel 2015, 2017, 2018). By foregrounding the experiences of the senses, by representing the dynamics of dialogical interaction, and by introducing spatial symbols, second generation migrant writers draw a counter-map. I interpret the "counter-mapping" by these writers as a means of showing that, for them, self-construal in the traditional geographical context is hardly possible without marginalizing the self or without forcing the self in restrictive national categories. The way the map is redrawn in these autobiographical texts creates combinations of territories, fusions between countries, and invites us to understand second generation migrant authors' need for another, more inclusive map in which geographical distances and borders lose their predominance while transnational and hybrid spaces occupy a central position.

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