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邊緣地屬性：當代美國族裔文學中跨文化 / 跨範疇現象

Borderland Identity: Trans-Cultures/Categories in Contemporary American Ethnic Literature

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一、中文摘要

本研究由當代美國族裔文學中選取 Gloria Anzaldua 所著 Borderlands/La Frontera (1987)、Sandra Cisneros 作品集 Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories (1991)，以及 David Mura 的兩部小說：Turning Japanese: Memoirs of a Sansei (1991) 和 Where the Body Meets Memory: An Odyssey of Race, Sexuality, and Identity (1996) 四個文本，企圖探討「邊緣地屬性」這個在後殖民及少數族裔文學研究中日受重視的議題。研究由 Anzaldua 視「邊界」為強加於個人、社群、歷史並使之受傷、分裂、斷續的論點出發，釐清「跨界」動作作為個人突破外界強加屬性認同之潛能及限制。首先，我討論 Anzaldua 將具有陰陽際會模稜特性的「邊緣地」視為孕育烏托邦色彩濃厚之「混血屬性」溫床的主張，並指出 Anzaldua 有將「邊緣地」革命潛能理想、唯心化的傾向。緊接著，透過對 Cisneros 的閱讀，我著眼於「邊緣地」——特別是對於女人——不只是機會之地更可能陷阱重重的事實。相對於 Borderlands/La Frontera—Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories 呈現出更為駁雜的「邊緣地」經驗，凸顯「邊緣地」屬性與社群重構政治之複雜及挑戰性。研究的第三部份則將重點轉至 Mura 的兩本小說，著眼點不只在於 Mura 旅日—有形地穿越日美國族與種族界限，更在於他如何在意識及心靈中跨越族裔、家族、與個人歷史的邊界，重新定義自我的身體及慾望。簡單說，Mura 的「邊緣地」屬性主要是建立於他對自己身體的重新認

識與改寫。呼應 Anzaldua 和 Cisneros，「身體書寫」成為 Mura 小說中「邊緣地」屬性政治的主戰場，「邊緣地」駁雜的語言及文化視野促成了個人身體及社群屬性開放定義的諸多可能。

關鍵詞：邊緣地，邊緣地屬性，Gloria Anzaldua—Sandra Cisneros—David Mura—當代美國族裔文學，Borderlands/La Frontera—Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories—Turning Japanese—Where the Body Meets Memory—越界，性別政治，身體書寫

Abstract

This research studies the complexities of borderland identity as presented in four contemporary American ethnic texts: Gloria Anzaldua's Borderlands/La Frontera (1987), Sandra Cisneros's Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories (1991), and David Mura's Turning Japanese: Memoirs of a Sansei (1991) and Where the Body Meets Memory: An Odyssey of Race, Sexuality, and Identity (1996). Starting with Anzaldua's theorization of border as a human enforced boundary which wounds self, splits community, and disconnects history, I explore the potential as well as limits of border-crossing (*travesia*) as an empowering act of self-(trans)formation. A *nepantla* space, borderlands/Borderlands is to Anzaldua a space of mental ambivalence from which arises her utopian vision of the new *mestiza*. Cisneros then problematizes

the utopian aspect of Anzaldúa's borderlands by shedding light on the violence, danger, and failure confronting especially women on Anglo-Mexican borders. The stories collected in Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories dramatize the spectrum of the Chicano/a experiences in self-definition and community-construction. The two novels by Mura—Turning Japanese about his physical crossing of the U.S.-Japan racial and national boundary and Where the Body Meets Memory about his psychic traverse of the Japanese American ethnic, family, and personal history—further features one's body as the battleground in borderland negotiation. Indeed, borderland experience is to Mura primarily an experience of re-writing his (minoritized and feminized) body and desire. Echoing Anzaldúa and Cisneros, Mura considers body the "crossroads" to differences and new territory. Obviously, be it in Anzaldúa, Cisneros, or Mura, the multiculturalizing and multilingualizing characteristic of one's borderland experiences confuse, complicate, yet at the same time open up multiple possibilities for, one's conception of self, body, and identity.

Keywords: borderlands, borderland identity, Gloria Anzaldúa, Sandra Cisneros, David Mura, contemporary American ethnic literature, Borderlands/La Frontera, Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories, Turning Japanese, Where the Body Meets Memory, border-crossing, gender politics, writing the body

二、緣由與目的

The research on borderlands/borderline and borderline identity politics has gained increasing attention in recent studies of postcolonial and minority literature. On the theoretical side, one of the most significant contributions Homi Bhabha made to contemporary cultural studies is his re-reading of borderline from being a place of sociopolitical disempowerment into a space of postcolonial initiation and emergence. In The Location of Culture,

Bhabha reiterates the essential role borderlands play in postcolonial cultural negotiation and identity construction. Another important figure in postcolonial study, Edward Said also pays considerable attention to borderland politics. This can be seen in his Culture and Imperialism, a book opening with a chapter entitled "Overlapping Territories, Intertwined Histories" and concluding with the section "Movements and Migration." Like Bhabha, Said seeks in the terrain of cultural and political contacts and crossings—particularly in the multicultural and multilingual terrain of migration and exile—a space that generates postcolonial agency.

On the literary side, the image of borderlands and the problematics of borderline identity have for years been essential in the discussion of Chicano/a and Latino literature. Important books such as Calderon and Saldivar, eds., Criticism in the Borderlands (1991), Gish's Beyond Bounds (1996), Horno-Delgado, et al., eds., Breaking Boundaries (1989), Luis's Dance Between Two Cultures (1997), and McKenna's Migrant Song (1997) all take borderlands as their central motif. Indebted to and continuing the existing studies on borderland identity in Chicano/a literature, I select Anzaldúa's and Cisneros's texts to clarify the complexities of borderland negotiation and borderline identity. A poet, woman, lesbian, and perpetual "outsider" to either American or Mexican culture, Anzaldúa writes about her experience as a *mestiza* in the Texas-Mexico border. Dealing with the contact and confrontation of the Chicano and Anglo-American cultures, Cisneros then writes not only from the viewpoint of an ethnic minority but from that of a woman—a Chicana—and effectively foregrounds the gender and sexual politics on borders. In a way of enlarging the study of borderland identity from Mexican American to Asian American literature, I then move to Mura's novels to investigate his physical crossing of the Japan-U.S. border and explore how border-crossing provides him a chance to re-write his body and desire. One goal of

this research is certainly to set up a dialogue between the theory of borderlands and the textual practices of the three writers, with intent to further our understanding of borderland identity. Moreover, given that essential to the experiences of Anzaldua, Cisneros, and Mura are the issues of ethnicity in relation to their gender roles and sexuality, this research focuses on the three authors' negotiation with their bodies through their border-crossing experiences. I would point out that it is their "bodies" that serve as the crossroads that lead to the renewal of their identities.

三、 結果與討論

One problem with this project is its huge scope as well as the various possible issues involved in my discussion of "borderland" identities. Therefore, while starting my project with a general analysis of borderlands (or in Anzaldua's word "Borderlands" as a metaphor rather than "borderlands" as a geographical location) and the significance of borderland identity, I then tighten up the scope of my discussion by focusing on the three authors' ethnic positions and sexual roles, in view of the fact that essential to the borderland experiences of Anzaldua, Cisneros, and Mura are the issues of ethnicity in relation to their sexuality. As Anzaldua points out, "Borderlands" is an undertermined place of which the true inhabitants are "the queer, the perverse, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulatto, the half-breed, the half dead" (Borderlands 3). Not only does Anzaldua herself choose "to be queer" (Borderlands 19) but she defines "Borderland" politics as a queer politics. Border negotiation is primarily a negotiation with one's ambiguous and contradictory desire.

Negotiating desires is also one of the main themes explored in Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories, a collection offering stories of different women trying various means to escape the stereotypes of suffering and self-confining womanhood. The multilingual and multicultural experiences on

the border render fluid the signifying systems. As different cultures and languages overlap, gender positions collide and cross. "Woman Hollering Creek," for example, delineates the process of a woman's breaking free from her heterosexual marital fantasy in her search for self-confirmation and a supportive community. "*Bien Pretty*," furthermore, is about an explorer Chicana artist's search for identity through an inversion of the male/female and indigenous Mexican/Chicana hierarchy.

While both Anzaldua and Cisneros utter women's voice on the Mexican-American border, Mura's case sheds light on the gender politics of borderlands from another viewpoint as Turning Japanese and Where the Body Meets Memory not only bring us to the Japan-U.S. border but attends us to a male voice. Having taken white body and desire as the norms to live up to through most of his life, Mura did not have the chance to re-signify himself until his sojourn in Japan. Shocked by the fact that he is surrounded by people looking like him, Mura realizes that whites are no longer in power when located in Japan. Indeed, the experience of "turning Japanese" opens Mura's understanding of his body to an experiment. Released from the masculinity (and/or Americanness) demand imposed upon him, Mura re-invents his Japanese American body.

In Where the Body Meets Memory, Mura further traverses the boundary of his personal, family, and ethnic history in an investigation into the racial and historical formation of Japanese American body and sexuality. As Mura well puts forth, "one's sexual desire lie at a deeper core of a person's identity" (Body Meets Memory 218). Central to his re-memory of history is his struggles with his appearance and desires: how does a little Japanese American boy grow into a man or does he? Why does the Asian American men remain "the missing third" in the black-white dichotomy of racial representation? Body bears the mark of human enforced categories and borders. It serves as the battlefield of one's negotiation

with identities. Mura seeks in “where the body meets memory” borderlands where his ethnic body is open to multiple and subversive definitions.

四、 成果自評

This research has achieved the following goals:

(A) It successfully correlates the three authors’ borderland experiences in relation to their identity formation. While arguing for the importance of borderlands as a motif in contemporary American ethnic literature, I also point to the complications and ambiguities involved in the postcolonial privileging of borderlands as an empowering space of self-transformation.

(B) The textual analysis brings insights into each text and contributes to our understanding of the three authors.

(C) Not only is this project built upon the existing scholarship done on Mexican American borderland politics but it draws attention to the borderland experiences of Asian Americans, experiences so far rarely touched upon among Asian American scholars. From the study of David Mura, the next project I may hope to undertake is about Asian Americans in diaspora, which, as I am conceiving, would deal with the experiences of “in-betweenness” confronting various Asian American writers in this more and more globalized earth village.

(D) This project also contributes to our understanding of body politics. The location, dis-location, and re-location of ethnic and racial bodies on borderlands testify to the idea that bodies are the products of signifying systems. Another important concept this project clarifies is the close connection between body-(re)writing and identity-(trans)formation.

Certainly, I also confronted some difficulties in the process of carrying out this project. First, my lack of Spanish makes my reading of Anzaldua and Cisneros—both bilingual (or multilingual) writers—difficult.

Secondly, it ended up being harder than I expected to gather complete references about Chicano/a literature as most of them were published by small publishers and had limited circulation in academia. In a sense, more time and efforts are needed for me to gather a more complete bibliography. As for my study of David Mura, a more thorough research on the existing studies of Asian American sexuality may help, despite the fact that sexuality remains one of the taboo topics in Asian American literary research. Given time of revision, I would expect this research to be publishable and make significant contribution to the current studies of contemporary American ethnic literature—both domestic and international.

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