

Toribio Romo, el Padre Pollero

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ABSTRACT: *This essay focuses on the folklore surrounding Toribio Romo, a young priest from Jalostotitlán, Mexico, who was killed during the Cristero War in 1928 and canonized in 2000. Recognized as the patron saint of migrants and popularly known as el Padre Pollero, or the Holy Coyote, Santo Toribio has evolved into a popular or folk saint who appears mysteriously in the desert and helps immigrants cross the border safely into the United States. The folklore surrounding el Padre Pollero is consistent with that associated with various Mexican virgins and saints but is unique in that el Padre Toribio is a transnational figure who appears at the international border rather than in a particular locale in Mexico. Transcending conventional borders and nation-states, he embodies the “practical spirituality” or cultural spiritual economy that migrants have constructed to help them deal not only with suffering and adversity during their migration but with the inequities they face in the United States.*

Much media attention has focused on public attitudes toward undocumented workers and on state and local laws, such as Arizona’s SB 1070, aimed at deterring illegal immigration and denying benefits and services to those who have entered the country without inspection. Nonetheless, there has been surprisingly little interest in the *indocumentados* themselves or in how they cope with the many adversities they encounter. What narratives, folk beliefs, and mythologies do migrants construct in order to endure the hardships of crossing the border illegally and the oppression and subordination they suffer while seeking a better life in the United States?¹

This essay explores these questions by examining the folk beliefs surrounding el Padre Toribio Romo, a young priest who was assassinated by Mexican government troops during the Cristero War in the 1920s and is today revered by thousands of undocumented workers who cross the border into the United States. Popularly recognized as the patron saint of migrants, Father Toribio is known as “el Padre Pollero,” or the Holy Coyote, because he reportedly smuggles people across the border. He is venerated

not only by the residents of Jalostotitlán, his hometown in the Los Altos de Jalisco region of Mexico, but also by Mexicans throughout the border region. Numerous stories circulate along the immigrant trail of a mysterious dark-clad stranger who appears miraculously, gives people food, water, or money, and guides them safely through the desert into the United States.²

This essay derives from a larger study of transnational migration and identity that examines circular migration between Jalostotitlán (“Jalos”) and Turlock, California. These two similarly sized agricultural communities have a long history of migration and exchange. Virtually every family in Jalos has one or more relatives who have migrated north. The study sought to isolate factors that facilitate the integration of Jalos migrants into the United States, focusing on transnational identity and on how *los ausentes*—the “absent ones,” who either left Jalos for the United States or were born in the United States to migrants from Jalos—retain an intense, almost primordial identification with their community of origin. Whether first-, second-, or third-generation US residents, and regardless of their birthplace or how immersed they become in American culture, *los ausentes* retain strong ties and allegiance to Jalos.

Many migrants pay visits to the shrine of Santo Toribio in Santa Ana de Guadalupe, the small village just outside Jalos where Toribio was born. Some go seeking Padre Toribio’s blessing and support before embarking on their difficult journey to “el Norte.” Others, who have successfully migrated to the United States and are making a return visit to Mexico, go to the Santa Ana shrine (also called a *santuario*, or sanctuary) to thank Padre Toribio for guiding them safely across the border. The shrine includes the home where Toribio was born, a chapel, and a museum. A display of photographs of Santo Toribio includes grisly images of his bullet-riddled body, taken shortly after his assassination in 1928. Santa Ana also has the Calzada de los Cristeros, a cobblestone avenue that includes busts of priests who were killed by the government during the Cristero War (Baca 2010;

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Thompson 2002). Photographs of Padre Toribio are prominently displayed in shops and homes, especially in Jalos, and many people, myself included, carry wallet-size religious cards with his picture and prayer. Toribio is also the patron saint of travelers, and many bus and truck drivers display his image prominently in their vehicles.

In order to explain the significance of el Santo Toribio and the pilgrimages that are made to Jalos in his honor, I first provide a brief historical overview of the Cristero movement and war. After examining Toribio Romo's life and death within this context, I turn to an analysis of the significance of el Padre Pollero for undocumented immigrants today. A basic thesis is that undocumented immigrants have constructed a "practical spirituality," or cultural spiritual economy, that facilitates their integration into a hostile environment and allows them to deal with the pain and anguish they encounter on their journey and the inequities they face in the United States.

La Guerra Cristera

The first Cristero War, also known as la Cristiada, was an armed struggle between the Mexican government and the Catholic Church that took place between 1926 and 1929 and cost approximately a quarter-million lives.³ Its roots can be traced to the Spanish Conquest, as the Cristiada came in response to attempts by the government to limit the power of the Church, which had been almost unlimited under the Castilian monarchs (Meyer 1976, 1). The constitution of 1917 drafted after Francisco Madero's death was profoundly anticlerical and systematically excluded the Church from the legal life of Mexico. It forbade the Church to own property, including religious temples, which became the property of the state (article 27). The Church was also prohibited from sponsoring schools or teaching religion (article 3) (Mendoza Delgado 2005, 16). Priests were denied the right to vote, and monastic orders and convents were forbidden (article 5). Article 130 gave states the authority to decide the number of priests and spiritual requirements of each locality, a provision that played a critical role in the 1926 crisis, and outlawed any political party having a religious affiliation (Meyer 1976, 14).

These constitutional provisions were enforced through the Calles Law of 1926. On July 24, the Episcopal Committee, presided over by the archbishop of Mexico and including the archbishops of Morelia, Guadalajara, and Puebla (Bailey 1974, 68), recommended that public religious services

be suspended as soon as the Calles Law went into effect on July 31. Public worship was accordingly banned as of August 1, 1926 (Bailey 1974, 82; Meyer 1976, 48).

After a period of nonviolent resistance, skirmishes broke out. A formal rebellion began on January 1, 1927, with rebels calling themselves *Cristeros* and declaring that they were fighting for Christ himself. In the state of Jalisco, Governor José Guadalupe Zuno continued his attack against the Church initiated in 1924. Catholics prepared for a long struggle under the leadership of Anacleto González Flores, who founded the *Unión Popular*, a Catholic organization, and provided the philosophical and organizational basis for the movement (Meyer 2002, 47; Tuck 1982, 17–27).⁴ By year's end in Jalisco, some 20 of 118 municipalities were in a state of insurrection despite admonishments by the archbishop, who forbade the *Unión Popular* from engaging in armed rebellion. People took up the battle cry “Long live Christ the King! Long live the Virgin of Guadalupe!” (Meyer 1976, 49). The *Cristero* flag was heavy with symbolism, depicting la *Virgen de Guadalupe* and the national symbol—an eagle on a cactus eating a serpent—on the green, white, and red Mexican flag (fig. 1).

Between October and December 1926 there were reports from the municipal presidents in several communities that members of the *Unión Popular* and others were supporting the boycott against the government and local businesses. Parents were refusing to let their children attend government schools.⁵ These reports also named priests who were aiding and abetting the boycott. The response from the secretary general in



Figure 1. The *Cristero* flag.

Guadalajara to the municipal president of Tepatitlán was that, per an executive order of the state of Jalisco,

If any municipal presidency suspects that priests mentioned in your note are disrupting the public order, you should proceed immediately to apprehend them and send them to the state Capital.⁶

Despite a lack of arms and munitions, the Cristeros were successful in resisting for a time. In the end, however, the Mexican army overwhelmed them. It was supported by the United States, which provided the federal army with arms and munitions, including 10,000 Enfield rifles and 10 million rounds of ammunition (Bailey 1974, 245). The conflict was finally resolved through negotiations led by US ambassador Dwight Morrow. A diplomatic agreement was reached on June 21, 1929 (284, 311). Within two days, there was a public announcement that public worship would recommence, and by September the Cristeros had laid down their arms (Meyer 1976, 59).

Despite the involvement of a few priests, the clergy played a relatively insignificant role in the Cristero movement. Many did not opt to accompany the Cristeros but merely continued their clerical life under the rebels' protection. Of some 3,600 priests in Mexico, 100 were actively hostile to the Cristeros, 65 were neutral (helping the Cristeros with alms), and 40 were actively favorable. Five were combatants, 2 of whom reached the rank of general: Fathers Aristeo Pedroza and José Reyes. The remaining 3,390 priests either abandoned their rural parishes or lived in big towns or cities and were thus physically removed from the war, which was fought mostly in rural areas. A total of 90 priests were executed in the course of the rebellion: 35 in Jalisco, 18 in Guanajuato, 7 in Colima, 6 in Zacatecas, and 24 elsewhere (Meyer 1976, 74–75). One of the best known of these Cristero martyrs was Father Toribio Romo (fig. 2).



Figure 2. Father Toribio Romo.

Toribio Romo: Cristero Martyr and Patron Saint of Migrants

Toribio Romo González, son of Patricio Romo Pérez and Juana González Romo, was born on April 16, 1900, at the Santa Ana de Guadalupe ranchería, about two kilometers outside of Jalos. He was baptized at the

parish of la Virgen de la Asunción in Jalos the day after his birth (Murphy 2007, 14). Toribio grew up in a small town of devout and humble people and developed a great devotion to Jesus and la Virgen de Guadalupe at an early age. Serving as an altar boy, he was recognized for his devotion and the conscientious way that he carried out his duties. His sister María (“Quica”) was a jealous guardian of his education.

At age twelve he entered the auxiliary seminary in San Juan de los Lagos, where he was reportedly a playful and happy seminarian who loved to joke (19). Toribio was so interested in the rights of workers that he and his fellow seminarians organized classes for them. He was also concerned with migrants. In 1920, while still a seminarian, he wrote a play called *Vámonos al Norte*, according to the priest who now oversees the shrine at Santa Ana. At age twenty-one Toribio was ordained as a deacon and the same year ordained a priest (20). Toribio celebrated his first mass at his parish church in Jalos, the same church where he had dedicated himself as a seminarian to la Virgen de Guadalupe.

Father Toribio had five assignments in his brief five-year tenure as a priest, beginning in Sayula, where he launched his work, organized the parish, and was soon running a catechism program with more than 200 children.⁷ He also continued to organize workers. Toribio only lasted one year in Sayula because the parish priest, ironically the same priest who had baptized him twenty-three years earlier, did not like him (27). His next assignment was in Tuxpan and his third was in Yahualica, where he lasted only a few months. This was the most painful, as he was ordered to stay in his house and was prohibited from saying the rosary in public or celebrating mass (28).

It is not clear why Father Toribio had trouble in his first three assignments, but it is likely that the more conservative priests felt that the young priest was too progressive. This may have stemmed from his interest in the encyclical *Rerum novarum*, a progressive letter published by Pope Leo XIII on the right of workers to unionize and demand a living wage (28). Toribio’s fourth assignment was a happier experience: he worked under the direction of Father Orona in Cuquío, where he not only undertook the catechism work he loved so much but set up study groups for workers on the teachings of Pope Leo XIII. He also worked closely with the Unión Popular, which had recently been founded in Guadalajara. After a mass uprising broke out in July 1926 against the government of Plutarco Calles, Father Toribio and Father Orona helped organize a large outdoor mass that drew 15,000 people in defiance of the government (29). During

the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, parishioners, including Father Toribio and Father Orona, pledged to defend the faith, with their lives if necessary. The following year defiance intensified as 300 Cristeros took over the city hall in Cuquío and held it for several months. Although Fathers Toribio and Orona were not directly involved in the takeover, they became marked men (30).

El Padre Toribio was then transferred to Tequila, a parish that many priests had refused because it was embroiled in political turmoil. Becoming a parish priest in Tequila was like signing one's own death warrant, since this was an area where the government and army most hated priests. Acceptance of the assignment set Toribio on a path that would lead to his eventual martyrdom. Because of the political situation he was forced to conduct his activities in an abandoned tequila factory near a ranch known as Agua Caliente, close to ravines thick with vegetation. Father Toribio and his brother and sister lived in an abandoned warehouse outside Tequila. When the troops were in the area he celebrated mass and other sacraments in hidden locations concealed by heavy brush. It was here in the ravines that he baptized hundreds of children and united many couples in marriage. He also traveled in secrecy to Tequila to minister to the sick (42).

On Friday, February 24, 1928, he spent the day organizing the parish registry and finished around 4:00 a.m. He lay down to sleep and was awakened by government soldiers. When they opened the door to the bedroom, Father Toribio pulled back his arm from his face and the commander yelled, "That's the priest; kill him!" Toribio awakened immediately and responded, "Yes, I am the priest, but please don't kill me." Before he could finish the sentence, he was peppered with bullets amid insults. His sister ran to take him in her arms and in a strong voice exclaimed, "Courage Father Toribio . . . Merciful Jesus, receive him! Viva Cristo Rey!" (44).

The main church in Tequila was dedicated to Father Toribio, and a shrine was erected in his honor in Santa Ana de Guadalupe. Today el Padre Toribio is popularly recognized as the patron saint of migrants, "a figure who, legend has it, has led to safety many who have braved the hazards of border crossings" (Corchado 2006). In reported sightings, el Padre Pollero typically takes the form of a young stranger in black who appears miraculously in the desert, sometimes dressed as a priest or even as an American (Garcia Gutiérrez 2002). Gene D. Matlock reports that since around 1970, "a real honest-to-goodness ghost has been helping thousands of undocumented Mexicans cross over to this country." In many cases, it is said, the ghost transports the aliens across the border in an old

car or pickup truck, gives them money, food, and water, and even tells them where they will find work.

All this help is conditional, as the stranger gives his beneficiaries his name and address in Mexico and asks that they show their appreciation by visiting him during return trips to their homeland. As a result, “he has been bombarded by grateful visitors” (Matlock 2002). Santo Toribio’s hometown of Santa Ana has become a thriving destination for tourists and religious pilgrims. The town attracts thousands of visitors each year, many of them *ausentes* living in the United States who return to visit and pay homage to the saint. Santa Ana has a travel agency and three restaurants that cater to the tourist trade, and businesses sell religious cards, wall clocks, key chains, books, coloring books, and other items.⁸

Testimonios from El Norte

I sat down with Father Mauricio, a priest from Colombia who had been at Turlock’s Sacred Heart Catholic Church for a year, to talk about the community and Father Toribio. The parish at Sacred Heart, known to the local Latino community as *Sagrado Corazón*, is made up mostly of migrants from Jalos. Father Mauricio commented that the people from Jalos are very hardworking, successful, and united, and that the parish at *Sagrado Corazón* is one of the most active he has seen. In 2011 a statue of el Padre Toribio toured Turlock and other communities in and around the San Francisco Bay Area and was reportedly seen by more than 50,000 people (Rubenstein 2011). The Committee for the *Virgen de la Asunción*, made up of people from Jalos, was responsible for organizing this very successful visit.

Father Mauricio explained el Padre Toribio’s popularity by noting that Mexicans are *un pueblo migrante* and that people were drawn to Toribio because he had performed so many miracles for them as they sought to cross the border and, in some cases, after they had crossed. He related the testimonio of a parishioner at *Sagrado Corazón* who confided that Padre Toribio had appeared to him as he was trying unsuccessfully to cross the border. As he was sitting down, desolate and dejected, a good-looking young man dressed like an American appeared, said hello, and asked if he needed help. The young man took him across the border to a house where people took him in. The parishioner was extremely grateful and asked how he could repay the stranger for his generosity. The young stranger told the parishioner that he could repay him by visiting him at his home in Mexico,

and he gave him an address. When the migrant went to Mexico to thank the stranger, he was told that the man had been dead for many years.

Although most sightings of el Padre Toribio have occurred at the border, he remains an important source of inspiration and guidance for many people even after they migrate to the United States. When he helps migrants who have settled in the United States, he often does so without making an apparition. This is reflected in personal testimonios from several residents of Turlock regarding the importance of el Padre Toribio in their daily lives.

LUPITA ROMERO: NIECE OF PADRE TORIBIO

Lupita and her husband Geraldo live in a quiet, manicured, middle-class residential neighborhood of Turlock near the university.⁹ She was born in a small rancherito near Santa Ana de Guadalupe and moved to Santa Ana at the age of seven, where she studied catechism and made her first communion. She said that she was from Santa Ana Bajo, which is below Santa Ana Arriba, which is where the sanctuary is. It is a very hilly area, which explains the designations of Santa Ana Bajo and Arriba.

I asked how old the *santuario* is, and she said it must be a hundred years old, which I doubted because Padre Toribio was assassinated in 1928. Geraldo mentioned that the frenzy over Padre Toribio started when a man from Jalos, Jaime Muñoz, who is very religious, went to Rome and asked whether he could go to Televisa and tell the story of Father Toribio, a Cristero martyr. The pope gave his assent, a program on Toribio aired on the network, and since then everybody goes to the *santuario*. Before that, very few people lived in Santa Ana and it was very quiet. Now there can be as many as a thousand buses there, so you have to go during the week or there is no room, Lupita said.

Lupita was born in 1938, ten years after Padre Toribio's death. She talked about how Padre Toribio's *restos* (remains) are in Santa Ana, including the shirt he was wearing when they shot him. When I asked whether people talked about him when she was a little girl, she said,

Bueno decían, “El Padre Toribio, el Padre Toribio, que triste, lo mataron en Tequila, que triste, que triste,” decían así. Y fueron por los restos de Padre Toribio. Que bárbaro, que gentío cuando fueron por los restos.

[Well, they would say, “Father Toribio, Father Toribio, how sad, they killed him in Tequila, how sad,” they would say. And they went for the remains of Padre Toribio. It was crazy, they had a mass of people when they went to recover his remains.]

She is related to Padre Toribio through her mother. Her maternal grandfather was *primo hermano* (first cousin) to Padre Toribio and was a Romo. Her grandfather and Padre Toribio grew up together and used to play as children. There was a man who would come and give them classes, since there was no school. Father Toribio subsequently went off to the seminary to study but they would talk about him all the time. “Bueno, mi madre siempre decía, ‘y mí tío y mí tío.’” (Well, my mother would always say, “my uncle this and my uncle that.”)

They would also talk about Padre Toribio’s brother, el Padre Román, who was also a priest in San Juan Busto. The Romo family was very poor, and their mother “*hacía atole para vender*” (would make *atole* to sell). There is a picture of Padre Toribio’s family in the chapel at the *santuario* in Santa Ana, she said. Lupita has not personally been a follower of or believer in el Padre Toribio, but she is aware of how devoted people are to him. I asked half jokingly whether she had ever been interviewed by Univision or Televisa about her famous uncle and she laughed and said no.

THE LOPEZ FAMILY: BLESSED BY PADRE TORIBIO

Mr. and Mrs. López are longtime residents of Turlock with a large family of eleven children. They are firm believers in el Padre Toribio. Both mentioned that Padre Toribio has always guided and protected their family, especially when they were trying to cross the border. On one visit Mr. López gave me a religious card of Father Toribio for good luck and protection, which I carry in my wallet.

They related one instance in particular when *la migra*, the immigration authorities, came to the small motel where the family was living, intending to take the children who were without papers from their home. Mr. López resisted and said that he wasn’t going to let them split up his family. *La migra* left, promising to return, but miraculously they never did. Though there was no apparition, the family saw this as an example of Padre Toribio’s intervention.

Mr. López also recalled that one of his nephews had had a special experience. He drove into a power plant and was stranded inside when el Padre Toribio suddenly appeared and told him not to worry, he would help him get out; he then led the nephew to safety.

JENNY RIVERA: WITNESS TO A MIRACLE

Jenny Rivera, owner of a successful business in downtown Turlock, commented on the importance of Padre Toribio in her life. Jenny's son, Jaime, was born with an unusual immune deficiency disease: he could not digest regular food, was on medication, and was growing very slowly. At age twelve, he was the size of a seven-year-old. She had consulted a number of specialists and would take Jaime to Stanford every other week for treatment. They had even enrolled her in some classes to prepare the family for her son's eventual death. Finally, her father contacted an excellent specialist in Guadalajara, who performed tests and told her that he could treat her son but could not cure him. His disease was not curable and would be fatal.

After a trip to Jalos, her hometown, Jenny stopped by to see el Padre Toribio at Santa Ana. She told him her situation and asked for his help. When she returned to Turlock, she tried to give her son his special food, but he wouldn't take it; instead he asked for a regular meal. He also refused his medicine. From then on Jaime started eating regularly, and after a while they noticed that he started growing. She took her son to Guadalajara, where the doctor was dumfounded and asked what she had done differently. Jenny said that the only thing she did was to go see el Padre Toribio. The specialist said that in all his years of practice he had never seen anything quite like this. It was truly remarkable, a miracle!

At the conclusion of our interview, Jenny showed me a wallet-size image of Santo Toribio with two school pictures of her son on the back. The growth in one year was astonishing. Jenny's son is now twenty-two and about to graduate from California State University, Fresno, with a degree in agronomy.

From this testimonio and others I learned that the impact of el Padre Toribio is not limited to helping people who are trying to cross the border. He also helps those with illnesses and other problems after they arrive in the United States.

MARÍA RINCÓN: "GOD PUT PADRE TORIBIO IN OUR PATH"

María Rincón is not from Jalos but from Zamora, Michoacán. She is friendly with many Sacred Heart parishioners from Jalos, however, and has been "adopted" by the local Jalos community in Turlock. She is also a firm believer in el Padre Toribio.

María has been in the United States for fourteen years and in Turlock for ten. Her husband, Carlos, is from a small town near Zamora. The family

attends Sagrado Corazón, where everyone speaks Spanish, everyone knows everyone else, and the atmosphere is congenial. Most of the congregation is from Jalos, she noted. “I didn’t even know where Jalos was, and so it was through my *comadre* that I got to meet Jenny [Rivera] and other people from Jalos.”

María became a believer in Padre Toribio when she took a trip home to Zamora. Her father, a diabetic, was going to have a kidney transplant and she wanted to be present for the operation. “We were very worried,” she said. While her father stood to gain more years of life, María was also worried about her brother, Pedro, who was the donor. She confided her fears to Jenny, who had an image of Santo Toribio in her office. Jenny told María, “He performed a miracle for me with my son. I recommend him to you. He is going perform a miracle for you.”

At the time, María didn’t take it seriously. Although a religious believer, she didn’t know anything about Padre Toribio. She left on the trip with Jenny’s parting words. Her father’s transplant was performed at the Medical Center in Guadalajara. On the day of the transplant, they took her father in first, and she was allowed to stay with her brother while they waited for his turn.

Suddenly she noticed a religious card of Santo Toribio there in the hospital room, at the head of her brother’s bed. She asked, “Pedro, who gave that to you?” She told him it was Santo Toribio: “People told me that he is a saint who grants many miracles, and God has put him in our path. Look at him—there he is behind you.” Her brother laughed and said he thought she was joking; he thought she had put the card there, but she had not. He said, “We have to put our faith in him, then, Sister.”

María also related events of the preceding evening. Pedro’s roommate was a man who was recovering from cancer and was about to be released. As he was leaving, he told the brother, “Look, young man, you are very young and you are going to recover. Take this card so that it can accompany you.” It was a religious card with an image of Santo Toribio.

Before a transplant, the hospital provides psychological counseling for the donor. When the psychologist came to talk to Pedro the evening before the surgery, she congratulated him and told him he was a hero. She gave him a present—a medal of Santo Toribio. María added, “That’s how it was. That’s how we came to know Santo Toribio. He essentially granted us that miracle, because my father and brother both recovered completely.” They came out fine, and “we attribute it to Santo Toribio.”

María returned to Turlock in April and then made another visit to Mexico again in June, after her children were out of school. She spoke to Jenny, and they said, “Let’s go find Santo Toribio. We are going to thank him because we are here.” And so Jenny, María, and María’s brother went to see Santo Toribio. Her brother was deeply moved by the visit. “He felt something very special once he entered the church. He cried. He didn’t have words to explain the feeling.”

Her father, too, started to believe in Santo Toribio. The father had a very serious and difficult illness and many surgeries. “When they amputated one of his legs, he would say, ‘Don’t worry, Santo Toribio, you are my advocate.’” He said of Toribio, “He has let me live.” When he died, he left this world with a religious card of Santo Toribio in his hand.

Since that time, María and her brother made a promise (*manda*) that they would go to visit Santo Toribio in Jalos each year to thank him for the miracle that he performed.

The Church View of Santo Toribio: Father Antonio

I traveled to Santa Ana to interview el Padre Antonio, the priest in charge of the *santuario* to Padre Toribio. Padre Antonio shared a number of testimonios that he has heard in the confessional, but in talking to him it was clear that I was getting the official Church view rather than the popular view of Toribio Romo. I asked Father Antonio why el Padre Toribio is so popular. He said that the sanctuary at Santa Ana is a place where people can come to find peace and tranquility at a time when we so much need it. Second, a problem that has been very important for some time now is migration, and God manifests his will and love for migrants through el Padre Toribio. “But we are dealing with an area that cannot be proved humanly, statistically, or sociologically, because it deals with the spiritual,” he noted.

El Padre Toribio was killed in Tequila, and his remains stayed there for twenty years until they were taken to the *santuario* in 1948. Toribio’s popularity grew after 2000, when he was canonized, but there was already quite a bit of interest in him by 1997, when Father Antonio took charge of this community. In 1998, with the cooperation of the bishop, Father Antonio was able to relocate Toribio’s remains to a space beneath the altar. Previously they had been in the wall of the chapel, because a *beato* or *santo* cannot be venerated until the Catholic Church recognizes him as such. Father Antonio added that January 5, 1998, when the remains were relocated, was the seventy-fifth anniversary of the date when Padre Toribio came to

Santa Ana to celebrate his first mass. When the remains were moved, it was a solemn and emotional occasion because there were six *ancianos* who had celebrated their first communion on that day, and they joined in the celebration and in placing Padre Toribio's remains under the altar.

I asked about Father Toribio's archives, and Father Antonio responded that they were in Guadalajara but not accessible to the public. "The process of canonization is handled very carefully by the Church," he said. I got a sense that Padre Antonio was protective of the items and not eager to share them with me or the public. There are no archives at the *santuario* in Santa Ana, but when people come and offer testimonios, their statement is recorded and then transcribed. They are then shown the statement to make sure that it represents what they intended to say.

I asked whether Father Antonio could share any examples of testimonios that he had heard regarding el Padre Toribio, and he related several. He said that it pains him greatly when people come "a encomendarse de Padre Toribio" (to seek Padre Toribio's blessing). They tell him, "Father, I need a lot. I don't have a job and I have three, four children. I have to go [migrate]. I have to work. Right?" As a priest, he gives them his blessing, gives them a religious card with Padre Toribio's image and a prayer for the migrant, and tells them to take it and pray. Here are three testimonies as recounted by Father Antonio.

TESTIMONIO #1

Recently a young man came from Ojuelos, Jalisco, with a boy about five years old to give thanks to Padre Toribio for his help. After his wife gave birth to their son, she nearly died. The man told Father Antonio,

I had to spend a lot of money on hospitals, medical bills. I was in debt and so I had to go work in the United States. I came and asked for Padre Toribio's blessing and then I left. When I arrived at the border I contracted a coyote and when he was taking us across the border, there were two Border Patrol vehicles. So the coyote ran and I was left behind. I lost track of them but when I started running I fell down. The Border Patrol vans approached near where I had fallen. Then the Border Patrol came near where I was and shined their lights in my direction. This went on for about twenty minutes but the lights did not reach me. I always asked Padre Toribio to help me, told him that I had come, that I had faith in him.

The man had brought an offering, one hundred dollars. He said he brought it as an offering to thank Padre Toribio.

TESTIMONIO #2

Another person recounted the story of two young men from San Ignacio Cerro Gordo, a nearby town, who had gone to the United States. This was ten years ago, more or less. Someone had told their mother to ask el Padre Toribio for his blessing, and so she came to the sanctuary and took an image of el Padre Toribio with her. The young men did not know Padre Toribio or what he looked like, nor had she heard of him before.

The brothers were at the border for two weeks and were not able to cross, so they returned home. When they arrived, after greeting family members, they saw a photograph of el Padre Toribio and asked, "Why do you have that man's image up there?" The family members replied, "He is a saint and we went to ask him to help and protect you." Then the brothers embraced and started crying. And the family asked, "What happened? What happened?" The brothers responded, "It's that he gave us money at the border and said we would not be able to cross, and he told us, 'Go back to your family because they are very worried about you.'"

TESTIMONIO #3

A man came to the confessional and he was crying. He said it had been seventeen years since he had given his last confession. His only son had wanted to go to the United States. "I told him not to go," the man said. Then he said, "Look. Look, Father Antonio," and he showed his telephone. "There is no cellular signal here." (At that time, there was no cellular signal, though they have since built a tower and there is now a clear signal.) The man explained,

My son left five days ago and I had no word from him. And so people told me to go and ask Father Toribio for his help and blessing, and they gave me a religious card with his image. I came, and as I got to the door of the temple, my cell phone rang. It was my son, who said, "Father, I just crossed the border. I just crossed." I made the trip here to ask Padre Toribio for something and now he is asking something of me. I want to give my confession.

Padre Antonio added that testimonios are just that, people's personal experiences as they understand and relate them. How can you prove them? "People share them with us. This man was crying," Father Antonio said. "I could see that he was very moved and I could see that he was crying."

Santo Toribio in Context: Iconic Figures in Mexican and Mexican American Folklore

LA VIRGEN DE GUADALUPE: MEXICAN NATIONAL SYMBOL

A number of iconic religious and folkloric figures, ranging from virgins and saints to devils, are associated with Mexican culture. By far the most notable is la Virgen de Guadalupe. Father Toribio himself was a devotee of la Virgen. She is referred to as la Virgen Morena—the Brown Virgin—and is believed to be a uniquely Mexican (as opposed to generically Catholic) symbol. Her apparition before a poor Mexican Indian, Juan Diego, in 1531, only ten years after the Conquest, demonstrated that the Indians were not only human but worthy of salvation. She addressed Juan Diego in his native tongue of Náhuatl, which confirms her place as the patron saint of a conquered race. Significantly, she appeared at the site of a shrine to the Indian goddess Tonantzín; the striking similarity between Guadalupe and her Indian predecessor allowed Indian followers to merge the two deities into one figure, Guadalupe-Tonantzín. La Virgen de Guadalupe presented herself to Juan Diego as the protectress of the Mexican people, and today she is seen as the patron saint of Mexico and as a national patriotic symbol.

La Virgen has provided warmth and succor for people of Mexican descent on both sides of the border. She has evolved into much more than a religious figure, becoming a symbol of Mexican peoplehood.¹⁰ According to Carlos Monsiváis, “*Guadalupismo* is the most embodied form of nationalism, signifying belonging and continuity” (1997, 37).

Virgilio Elizondo maintains that the apparition of la Virgen de Guadalupe was a precious gift to the people of the Americas that would begin the healing of our pain. He sees la Virgen not only as a religious icon but as a cultural symbol that represents the birth of a new mestizo race from the violent encounter between Europe and indigenous America. He concludes, “If Our Lady of Guadalupe had not appeared, the collective struggles of the Mexican people to find meaning in their chaotic existence would have created her” (Elizondo 2000, 118). Chicana feminist Gloria Anzaldúa similarly maintains that la Virgen de Guadalupe continues to be “the single most potent religious, political, and cultural image of the Chicano/mexicano” (1987, 30).

It is appropriate that la Virgen de Guadalupe would also emerge as an inspirational symbol for the insurgents who revolted against Spanish rule in 1810 and that a century later the followers of Zapata, who were poor campesinos, would march again under her banner. She was also a major

symbol for the Cristero movement. More recently, la Virgen de Guadalupe was an important symbol for César Chávez and the United Farm Workers (Mirandé 1985, 138).

THE APPEARANCE OF THE DEVIL IN MEXICAN SOUTH TEXAS FOLKLORE

At the other extreme from la Virgen de Guadalupe, one also finds various manifestations of the devil in Mexican American folklore. Writing about cultural practices in a South Texas town he calls “Limonada,” José Limón notes that the devil takes many forms in response to the varying race, class, and gender needs of the population. He writes, “As more drugs, alcohol, opportunistic sexuality, and violence begin to mark the dance scene as a site of cultural contradiction, the devil also enters the dance to mark this contradiction” (Limón 1994, 180).

To examine the Mexican folkloric experience in South Texas, especially the belief in devils, Limón critically applies Frederic Jameson’s model for understanding social narratives. Jameson proposes three levels of analysis to demonstrate the meaning of a narrative in increasingly wide social contexts (Jameson 1981, 75). Limón notes:

I choose to begin with Jameson’s third and widest, ultimate horizon of reading, where he invokes the Marxist concept of modes of production. A narrative read at this wider horizon may express, though in a deeply disguised and quite indirect way, the conflict between wholly different cultural periods or modes of production. (Limón 1994, 181)

The narrative may thus evince “that moment in which the coexistence of various modes of production becomes visibly antagonistic, their contradictions moving to the very center of political, social, and historical life” (Jameson 1981, 95). At this third level of analysis, form becomes the focus of interpretation (99).

Limón suggests that it is only the elders who are apt to interpret “the devil” in this way, for it is only they who seem concerned with form (1994, 181). The narrative for the elders encompasses what they see from a folk perspective as changes and overlaps in the modes of production. Even though the elders have experienced discrimination, segregation, and low wages, when they speak of the “old days,” or *nuestros tiempos*, they invent a tradition, “for amidst intense domination they developed a moral economy based on a number of moral principles and an etiquette, both of which were in evident display at the dances they remember” (181–82). Despite all of

the hardship, “life was lovely” back then, and the dance was always used to illustrate the point. Today the elders believe that this moral economy is rejected by the younger generation, who are viewed as having taken the worst from the gringos.

A second interpretive level is termed the “social,” and it comes into play “only at the moment in which the organizing categories of analysis become those of social class,” specifically the antagonistic relationship between a dominant class and a laboring class (182). Limón notes that because men experience only race and class oppression (and not that of gender), “men have the privilege, as it were, of interpreting the devil narrative in terms of race and class relations” (183). This is manifested by their resentment and anger toward the well-dressed stranger (who may in some cases be an Anglo man) who dares come into the dance hall, “that most intense, protected scene of *mexicano* life” (183).

The folkloric response of the women, on the other hand, is more complex and is conditioned not only by their race and class but also by their gender. This closely approximates Jameson’s first level of interpretation, “where the narrative symbolic act registers the literal events of lived experience and is understood as such” (Limón 1994, 183). In literal terms, women told Limón that they were at the dance to meet a very special kind of man, the kind of man they were otherwise unlikely to encounter in Limonada, and to escape the tedium of female working-class life.

Into this void of hope unfulfilled, walks the devil—good-looking, good dancer, good money (you can tell by his clothes)—and, in this version of Jameson’s first horizon of reading, the women produce and read a text not as a moral conflict of modes of production, not as an allegory of race and class forces, but as a text with a very proximate relationship to the Real of their lived historical experience. (184)

Toward a Transnational Theory of el Padre Pollero

The Mexican devotion to la Virgen de Guadalupe and her indigenous precursor, Tonantzín, and the veneration of numerous virgins and saints such as Padre Toribio are part of Mexican popular religion. Although religion continues to play a central role in the life of Jalos migrants to Turlock, it has served more as a mechanism for maintaining people’s identity with Mexico and the Los Altos region, and especially with their ancestral hometown of Jalos, than as a means of assimilation into the United States. This identity maintenance has occurred not through the Catholic Church

and its associated institutions so much as through a popular Catholicism that connects the community's religious life to *la vida cotidiana*, the daily lives of Jalos migrants.

In reassessing the role of popular religion in the adaptation of Mexican immigrants in the United States, one must make two important distinctions. First, rather than conflating church and religion, it is important to distinguish between the role that the Catholic Church as an institution has played in the integration, adaptation, and success of Mexican immigrants, on the one hand, and the role of religious beliefs, on the other. Second, one must distinguish between formal and popular Catholicism.

David López (2008) argues that the Catholic Church as an institution has done little to promote the integration of Mexicans and other Latinos in the United States.¹¹ In fact, in both Mexico and the United States, there is a common perception that the Church from the time of the Spanish Conquest to the present has been a source of oppression and exploitation. Religion, particularly popular religion, on the other hand, has often been a source of inspiration and liberation in both Latin America and the United States. "Although religion has typically worked to facilitate oppression and exploitation, it has occasionally worked for freedom and liberation of people of Mexican descent" (Mirandé 1985, 114).

According to Orlando Espín, culture is primarily the way that people construct and reveal themselves to others and to themselves as meaningful human beings: thus, "nothing human is acultural" (2006, 4). The existence of popular Catholicism is now an unquestioned fact, and popular Catholic religion "embodies and epistemologically connects these daily relationships and symbolically expresses their connections to/with the broader social networks—including the sacred networks—through the rites, beliefs, and experiences of the people's religion" (6).

María Pilar Aquino has identified three factors that justify the centrality of popular Catholicism in Latina/o theology. First, "popular Catholicism is the most distinguishing, most pervasive, and omnipresent reality in the religious life of Catholic Latino/a and Latin American communities." Second, as Espín has noted, popular Catholicism is itself a religion, the religion of "those treated as subaltern by both society and Church in the United States." Finally, Virgilio Elizondo maintains that these popular expressions "are the ultimate foundation of the people's innermost being and the common expression of the collective soul of the people" (Aquino 1999, 34).

Within this context, Santo Toribio is significant not only because of the lore surrounding his apparitions and good deeds, especially after

his canonization in 2000, but also because he is not limited by time and place. He is truly a transnational icon, consistent with the transnational experience and identity of people from Jalos and other Mexican locales. It is significant that he generally appears to undocumented immigrants (García Gutiérrez 2002), people who are a discrete and insular minority and the object of much hostility in the United States.¹²

As noted above, the folklore regarding el Padre Toribio appears to most closely approximate Jameson's third and broadest level of analysis, reflecting in a deeply disguised and indirect way "the conflict between wholly different cultural periods or modes of production" (Limón 1994, 181)—in this case the conflict between advanced capitalism and feudalism. It is at this third level that form becomes important, because it is here that form becomes content. Yet, while Jameson's levels of analysis and Limón's theoretical extension and critique of Jameson's model are useful for understanding the appearance of the devil in Mexican American South Texas, the folklore surrounding el Padre Toribio cries out for a more global theory that is consistent with the transnational experience and identity of Mexican transmigrants. Such a transnational theory would attend to what David Gutiérrez terms the "Third Space," which lies outside the grasp of the nation-state and both the host and home societies (1996, xix).

The folklore surrounding el Padre Toribio is distinguished by a number of characteristics. To begin with, he helps Mexican undocumented people and not other groups. He often appears at or near the US-Mexican border to Mexican migrants who are attempting to cross and are suffering from hunger, thirst, and dehydration; he appears when people are desperate and losing hope that they will survive the ordeal. Although it is most often women who pray for his guidance and protection, he typically appears to men, usually in an old car or pickup truck. He guides migrants across the border and gives them food, water, and money and sometimes tells them where they can find work in the United States; it is in this sense that he is truly the "Holy Coyote." But el Padre Toribio's help is always conditional, as he asks those whom he assists to agree to visit him at a future date in Santa Ana, after they have gotten a job and saved some money.

There are other saints that are associated with immigrants, but they tend to be popular or folk saints that are not part of the Catholic Church. According to Frank Graziano, "folk saints are deceased people, some of entirely constructed identity, who are widely regarded as miraculous and receive the devotion of a substantial cult, but who are not canonized or officially recognized by the Catholic Church" (2007, vii). Like canonized

saints, folk saints are part of a pantheon of deities with different specializations and duties, something also reminiscent of indigenous and Roman pagan deities. The existence of multiple deities with diverse functions “provides a versatile, otherworldly alliance for remedy of the world’s diverse problems” (13). Perhaps the best known of the Mexican popular saints is Juan Soldado (Juan Castillo Morales), a poor soldier who was killed by government troops in 1938 after being wrongfully accused of the rape and murder of a young woman in Tijuana. Today Soldado continues to perform many miracles for soldiers and is also known locally in Tijuana as the patron saint of immigrants trying to cross the border (125). Unlike *el Padre Toribio*, he is not recognized by the Catholic Church, and his influence is limited to Tijuana and does not extend across the 2,000-mile border separating Mexico and the United States.

When I spoke to *el Padre Antonio* at the *santuario* at Santa Ana it was clear that he embraced the formal Church view of *el Padre Toribio*, namely that he was a Cristero martyr who had been formally canonized by the Church. However, *Padre Toribio* is both an official saint, recognized by Pope John Paul II along with other Cristero martyrs, and a popular saint, invested with miraculous powers by the Mexican people. As such, he is truly a border crosser and subversive figure in the sense that he crosses the borders between the official Church hierarchy and the Mexican people.

The folklore surrounding *Santo Toribio* is an extension of the Mexican popular Catholic tradition of worshiping *vírgenes*, *santos*, y *cristos* (virgins, saints, and images of Christ) in various regions of the country. In fact, yearly throughout Mexico, thousand of *ausentes*, including people from Jalos, return to their place of origin to honor the sanctuary of their devotion, turning Mexico into *una nación peregrina*—a nation of pilgrims (Shadow and Rodríguez 1994, 15). Thousands of people from Jalos, for example, make yearly pilgrimages in August back to their hometown to honor the town’s patron saint, *la Virgen de la Asunción*.

While *la Virgen de Guadalupe* embodies Mexico’s national identity, there are a number of virgins and saints that serve to maintain local and regional identities. Jalisco, for example, has three primary virgins: Zapopan, San Juan de los Lagos, and Talpa, each representing the distinct culture, history, and identity of a particular region (Gálvez and Luque Brazán 2008). During the colonial period, each of these virgins served to unify conquered territories. *La Virgen de Zapopan*, for example, is the patron saint of the city of Guadalajara. She is recognized as “*la Pacificadora*” for reportedly pacifying the Cascanes in 1540 and leading them to surrender before her during

la Guerra del Mixtón, which marked the end of Indian armed resistance to Spanish colonization (Gálvez and Luque Brazán 2008). La Virgen de Zapopan also was elevated to the rank of general for representing the cause of *los independientes* during the Mexican War of Independence.

The three *jalisciense* religious icons have been described as *las vírgenes viajeras*, or the traveling virgins, because they travel to meet their constituents (Gálvez and Luque Brazán, 2008). Given that people today are mobile and are not always able to return to the sanctuary during the pilgrimage, each of the virgins now tours the various parishes throughout the diocese. La Virgen de Zapopan, for example, visits all 172 parishes in the city of Guadalajara and in May even travels to Los Angeles. The people of Turlock have also obtained an exact replica of la Virgen de la Asunción and they now hold the fiesta for la Virgen in Turlock on August 15 for people who are unable to make the yearly pilgrimage to Jalos.

El Padre Toribio is similarly *un santo viajero*, a traveling saint, as evidenced by the very successful visit of the saint's statue to Turlock and other communities. However, while *vírgenes viajeras* are associated with different regions of Mexico and la Virgen de Guadalupe is a national symbol, el Padre Toribio is a transnational icon who transcends conventional regional identities, borders, and nation-states. As such, he is consistent with the lived experiences of contemporary transmigrant communities. While he generally appears at the border, he asks that the people that he has helped return to visit him at his sanctuary in Mexico. As related in the personal testimonies, Padre Toribio also helps and performs miracles for Mexican migrants once they have settled in the United States, as he did for Jenny Rivera and María Rincón. Although Padre Toribio is from Jalos, he is truly a transnational icon, without borders or limits.

Verónica Maza Bustamante (2000) suggests that Father Toribio and other saints like him are only committed to helping Mexican "illegals" cross into the United States. She notes that "the new Mexican saints are giving a different 'twist' to the phrase, 'crossing the border'" (translated and quoted in Matlock 2002). Rather than helping true believers on the brink of death, they are in fact literally helping undocumented workers cross into the United States. When Pope Paul II canonized Father Toribio and twenty-five other Cristero martyrs in 2000, including the first Mexican nun to be canonized, no one knew at the time that "these saints were destined to become the consolation of those countrymen crossing the border into the United States [and also] smugglers themselves" (Matlock 2002).

Against this backdrop, one can begin to reinterpret the theoretical significance of the folklore surrounding el Padre Pollero. Just as the elders in Limonada experienced “a more virulent and intense racial and class domination in Mexico and in Texas” in the form of extreme racial segregation and subordination (Limón 1994, 181), so do undocumented persons today suffer extreme class, racial, and social oppression and exploitation, leading a marginalized existence on both sides of the border. They are often victimized on the border, not only by the Border Patrol but also by coyotes, bandits, border vigilantes, and gang members. Once in the United States, they become the object of racial animus and xenophobia and are often denied medical and social services because they are undocumented and/or otherwise lack insurance. The undocumented must overcome not only the many obstacles and dangers they face when crossing the border but also a great deal of hostility and rejection once they arrive in this country. Many Americans use them as scapegoats, blaming “illegal aliens” for increasing crime and other social and economic woes in the United States. They are accused of taking jobs away from native workers, draining the economy, even posing a nuisance and public health hazard to American citizens.

Despite this oppression and exploitation, like the elders in Limonada who were able to construct a moral economy that enabled them to conclude “que era la vida bonita en nuestros tiempos” (life was beautiful in our day), so have undocumented immigrants constructed a moral economy and folk narrative in which they are protected, helped, aided, and supported by el Padre Toribio. This mysterious stranger provides them with food and water, gives them money, leads them safely across the border, and even tells them where they can find work in the United States. Because undocumented people are also often denied medical services and care, he also helps them in combating difficult illnesses and other personal crises and maladies.

Although el Padre Toribio would probably help anyone in distress, in the stories that have circulated on the migrant trail he only helps undocumented Mexicans who are trying to cross the border or migrants who have crossed the border and need his help. Perhaps this is not surprising, given that many of the masses in Mexico believe that “God” and la Virgen de Guadalupe favor Mexico over the United States and other nations. According to Monsiváis, Mexicans tell la Virgen de Guadalupe, “you favoured no other nation like ours” (1997, 37). Matlock goes so far as to allege that there are people in Mexico who are convincing the country’s highly religious masses that “God” favors them over the United States, giving these

hordes a steely resolve to keep pouring over the border in ever-increasing numbers (Matlock 2002).

Limón notes that in Jameson's class-based analysis "the individual utterance or text is grasped as a symbolic move in an essentially polemic and strategic ideological confrontation between the classes" (Jameson 1981, 85). But it is essentially an uneven confrontation from the standpoint of global power, because given the class nature and authority of writing, "the cultural monuments and masterworks that have survived tend necessarily to perpetuate only a single voice in this class dialogue, the voice of the hegemonic class" (85). What is necessary then is a reinterpretation and reconstruction of the voice of the subordinate class and race. It is within this framework that the reinterpretation of popular culture and folklore occurs.

The reconstruction of so-called popular cultures must properly take place—most notably, from the fragments of essentially peasant cultures: folksongs, fairy tales, popular festivals, occult or oppositional systems of belief such as magic and witchcraft. . . . Only an ultimate rewriting of these utterances in terms of their essentially polemic and subversive strategies restores them to their proper place in the dialogic system of social class. (85–86)

Within this framework one can understand the folklore surrounding el Padre Toribio not as a belief in ghosts, phantoms, and fantasies but as a polemic and subversive strategy that challenges the dominant master narrative, which depicts undocumented workers as criminals who enter the United States illegally, take jobs away from US citizens, and drain social, medical, governmental, and educational services. This folklore thus transforms the undocumented from a group depicted as the "wretched of the earth" by the hegemonic class to one that reinterprets the lives of migrants as heroic and as a group that not only is worthy of protection, guidance, and salvation but in fact is favored by el Padre Pollero and other religious icons.

Notes

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1. Although mythology and folklore are related concepts, they have different connotations. Mythology deals with the origins of a people, is shaped by elites,

and reflects the values and worldviews of the myth makers, whereas folklore refers to socially constructed experiential popular knowledge. José Limón (1994, 11) is critical of the emerging field of cultural studies because it has neglected folklore in favor of written literature and mass media cultural production. On the other hand, this essay, like Limón's work, is concerned with popular folklore and is informed by Gramsci's (1988, 362) observation that folklore is not to be considered an oddity or eccentricity but is something to be taken seriously.

2. A number of journalistic accounts have reported on the phenomenon of Toribio sightings at the border. See, for example, articles by Kus (2010), Corchado (2006), and Matlock (2002).

3. On the Cristero War, see Bailey (1974), De Anda (1937), del Llano Ibáñez and de León Granados (2007), Meyer (1976, 2002), González (2001), González Navarro (2000), Gutiérrez Gutiérrez (1991), Mendoza Delgado (2005), and Tuck (1982).

4. The Unión Popular, inspired by the German Volksverein, sought to become a civic and political organization based on the masses (Meyer 1976, 33). Its objective was "Catholic unity and education—to infuse into the Mexican masses an awareness of the need for Catholic action at every level of public life" (Bailey 1974, 42).

5. Letter from municipal president of Tepatitlán to general secretary of the state of Jalisco, October 2, 1926, Archivo Histórico del Estado de Jalisco, 9019, #13, Universidad de Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico.

6. Letter from general secretary of the state of Jalisco to municipal president of Tepatitlán, October 18, 1926, Archivo Histórico del Estado de Jalisco, 7923, #15, Universidad de Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico.

7. My mother might have been one of these children: she is from Sayula and was a child in the 1920s, so she most likely knew Father Toribio.

8. There is even a cross-training shoe that has appeared on the feet of illegal border crossers in Southern California. "The boots are outfitted with a rough map on a removable sole, a flashlight and a compass on the laces and an image of Saint Toribio Romo, the patron saint of migrants" (Garcia 2005).

9. I had a great deal of difficulty locating Padre Toribio's niece. Distracted in looking for her street, I was cited for going through a stop sign. Then, after locating the street, I could not find the house because I had written down the wrong house number. After searching for half an hour I gave up, but as I was driving away I saw a young woman and stopped to ask if she knew Lupita Romero. She smiled and said, "Oh, that's my mom." After the interview, I complained to the Romeros about the ticket, asking kiddingly why I had not been protected by Father Toribio. Mr. Romero said that el Padre Toribio can help us but that he wasn't driving the car and we all laughed. On the other hand, I was fortunate to have found Lupita, and the story had a happy ending because I never received a summons to appear in court. To my way of thinking that really was a miracle!

10. However, the image of la Virgen de Guadalupe as a symbol of motherhood and womanhood has been problematized by a number of Chicana feminist scholars such as Norma Alarcón (1990), Gloria Anzaldúa (1987), Ana Castillo (1997), and Carla Trujillo (1998).

11. This statement reflects an earlier historiography that takes a static perspective on the role of the Church in Latino communities. A recent text by Timothy Matovina (2012) represents an emerging perspective, that “U.S. Catholicism is being shaped by the rise of a largely working-class Latino population” that has helped transform the Catholic Church.

12. The concept of a “discrete and insular minority” was introduced by Justice Harlan Stone in footnote 4 of *United States v. Carolene Products*, 304 U.S. 144 (1938), designating a group that has been the object of animus because of some immutable characteristic and has been excluded from the political process and denied basic civil rights. Such groups, therefore, require special protection from the Court.

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