

Identification: A Surrealist Voyage Between Memory and the Imagination.

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ABSTRACT

Identification: a Surrealist Voyage between Memory and the Imagination.

Christian Bernadotte Johnson

This thesis explores the process of identification as a continuous articulation of culturally constructed choices, influenced by memory, the mass media, social relations and the imagination. Identification is shown to serve as a mechanism of social accommodation within transforming cultural environments.

To shed light on how cultural identification functions as a process of social cohesion and separation, I conducted a self-involved multi-site and multidimensional research focused on several 'traditional' cultural practices among Ecuadorian migrants in several locations, including Queens, New Jersey, Montreal and Ecuador.

Through its supporting observations, this thesis highlights: the engagement with tradition, as a continuous creative process; the choices that individuals and groups make in order to become culturally visible or invisible during the process of migration; the consumption of symbolic products associated with embodied memories; and the construction of modern houses in rural areas back home as representations of personal achievement and as part of a process of social transformation, among migrants who have become physically displaced from their original social milieu.

Dedication

Quite different to what would seem usual, the ‘dedication’ is the first read and last written segment of a thesis. This is a positive affair because for a brief spell we are allowed to break away from the linearity of ‘logical’ thought. In a sense, it makes us realize that ongoing affairs not necessarily begin or end at will.

Maybe this is why, even though I have temporarily concluded, that this thesis is not yet finished. It is not finished because it never really started, or at least not in the classroom. Probably it really began when I was six-years-old and told my father that I wanted to be an archaeologist, a situation, which though entertaining was not what he hoped for me. Maybe the financial profitability of a career in business or economics would have seemed more appropriate to him. So, instead of following his advice, I went into the world ‘inventing’ my road as I advanced.

In January 1999, when I returned to Canada to sit by his side as his flame dwindled, I decided to retake my undergraduate studies at Concordia University. Sensing my burning enthusiasm after I read one of my first papers to him, he said, “Don’t give up Anthropology, I like what it brings out in you.” That phrase was enough; it became a revelation to each other and provided fuel for this exploration .

He died in March that same year. I am quite sure his satisfaction would have been immense if he had been able to read this thesis. Nevertheless, I am at ease with this situation because many times in the late night hours while I wrote, deleted and rewrote one page at a time, I felt his energy guiding my ‘quill,’ as he would have said. So I guess he must have been having glances through the window.

The endless hours writing this work has been a cathartic experience; it has helped me make sense out of the bits and pieces stored in my memories and sensations sometimes forgotten.

It has also been a shared experience with all my teachers who did not hesitate to encourage me as I dealt with volumes of knowledge and methods of study, especially with my supervisor, Dr. David Howes, who strongly encouraged the approach and the subject of this investigation. Additionally, my gratitude goes to Dr. Dominique Legros and Dr. Valerie de Courville Nichols, who helped me consolidate all the components of this thesis.

This endeavour would have been impossible without the people who shared their life experiences with me all along the way during our endless conversations, particularly Rafael Camino and Edgar Chocho, who did not hesitate to open all doors to allow me a better understanding of their cultural essence as we advanced in this shared experience.

I want to express my appreciation to all my family and friends who animated and supported me with their sincere concern and stimulating advice. Especially my wife Tatiana, who dealt with all my emotional and intellectual downhills and upsurges with tranquility, stimulating my concerns for the topic of study as I commented and compared my field observations with her.

At the time of initiating this research my son Bernadotte was two-years-old. For him a thesis was something that kept his father buried in books behind a computer screen for weeks at a time, robbing him of moments of shared growth. He had been silently looking for a conclusion of my work long before I realized the

quality of the companionship and affection I was depriving him of. Now, he is more pleased because we were finally able to make it to the amusement park today.

I also wish to acknowledge the distant presence of my children, Christian Alexander, Patrick, Sebastian, Christiane, Arianne and John Emil, who have felt the hurting consequences of my absence these last years.

And finally, my mother who has waited so long for this moment and who will be in the audience on graduation day letting every body know, “He is my son.”

However, the trip has not ended nor the thesis is over yet; this is just a formality. We have just briefly stopped at a station to re-chart a new course on a journey into a dimension, where a better understanding of the human condition is possible.

Table of contents

List of figures.....	ix
Introduction	1
1.1 Initial Outlines	
1.2 Preliminary Considerations.....	3
1.3 ‘Identification’ versus ‘identity: Action for stasis	
1.4 Imagination: The place where dragons fly.....	4
1.5 The Paradox of identification: Cohesion and separation.....	5
1.6 Memories: More than remembrance.....	6
1.7 Methodology.....	8
Chapter 1	
Where the Hell Am I From Anyway?.....	10
1.1 Emerging Concepts	
1.2 Early Reasons for my Concerns on Identification.....	13
1.3 Conclusions.....	15
Chapter 2	
Ballet <i>Jacchigua</i> : Engagement with Tradition.....	17
1.1 Introduction	
1.2 Main Concepts.....	18
1.3 Further Theoretical Concerns.....	18
1.4 Definition of Folk: The contradiction of authenticity.....	21
1.5 <i>Jacchigua</i> : The guilty ensemble.....	24
1.6 My First Encounter with Rafael Camino.....	24
1.7 Memories of Things Before: The phoenix in the grave.....	26
1.8 A Second Encounter: Dealing with change.....	27
1.9 The Tourist Connection: Representation as choice	31
1.10 A Third Encounter: A dozen years after.....	32
1.11 <i>Jacchigua</i> : The Performance.....	34
1.12 The choreographies: Let the show begin.....	40
1.13 Music: The sounds of the Andes.....	47
1.14 Printed Programs: The construction of texts.....	54
1.15 Change as Tradition: The discursive defence.....	59
1.16 Conclusion.....	67
Chapter 3	
Now You See Me, Now You Don’t: To be, or not be visible.....	72
1.1 Introduction	
1.2 Objects that Resists Globalization	
1.3. Back in the Big City.....	74
1.4 Presence by Absence.....	75
1.5 The Media and social interrelations: A mirror of recognition.....	76
1.6 To be Visible or Not: Without a choice.....	78

1.7 Secret Identities: Journeys across the unknown.....	88
1.8 Invisibility: The two sides of the mirror.....	93
1.9 Independence Day: Now you see me again.....	94
1.10 Edgar Chocho: A soul in exchange for one ticket into hell.....	97
1.11 Poverty: A living experience.....	100
1.12 Embodied Memories and the Taste of Distance.....	101
 Chapter 4	
Products and Nostalgia: Memories of consumption.....	109
1.1 Introduction	
1.2 Consuming Memories: Understanding symbolic consumption.....	111
1.3 Memories, Material Culture and the Senses.....	112
1.4 Guinea Pigs: More than food.....	113
1.5 Memories of Home: Guinea pigs in diaspora.....	116
1.6 Roasted, Fried, Baked or Boiled: More than taste a matter of attachment...	118
1.7 <i>Zhumir</i> : A drink from the past.....	120
1.8 <i>Zhumir</i> : A toast to sameness.....	122
1.9 Legality and Contraband: Memories without a visa.....	124
1.10 Whisky versus <i>Zhumir</i> : Public and private domains.....	131
1.11 Religious Icons: Virgins and patron saints	
1.12 The Virgin of Guadalupe as Identification: An anthropological perspective.....	139
1.13 Last Observations: Chocho's transformation and reflections on myself....	141
1.14 Conclusion.....	142
 Chapter 5	
Domus et Persona:	
Houses as places of personal transformation and personal rebirth.....	150
1.1 Introduction	
1.2 Mud Houses that Grew on the Land: Historic aspects of rural dwellings....	151
1.3 Houses as Masks: People behind the place.....	153
1.4 Who are These People?	157
1.5 Migration: Tales of human tolls.....	158
1.6 Every Migrant to a Home: The impossible dream.....	163
1.7 Houses as Headstones: A living experience	
1.8 Stories Behind the Masks: Imagining houses.....	175
1.9 Conclusion.....	180
 Chapter 6	
Final Statements	182
Bibliography.....	195
Glossary of Terms.....	203

List of Figures

Figure 1. Jacchigua Ballets performs the Choreography of Corpus Christy... ..	28
Figure 2. Dancers with ‘traditional’ dress recovered by Rafael Camino.....	29
Figure 3. Choreography of the <i>Pase del Niño</i> performed on the streets of Quito.....	30
Figure 4. Dancer dressed as Natives from Cuenca.....	37
Figure 5. The celebration of the <i>Pase del Niño</i> continues amid a shower of petals..	38
Figure 6. The Christmas celebration of <i>The Pase del Niño</i> on the streets of Quito...	39
Figure 7. Jacchigua’s musicians perform live on the streets of Quito.....	53
Figure 8. Jacchigua’s performers dressed as <i>Saraguro</i> Native Women	62
Figure 9. Jacchigua’s performers dressed as <i>Otavaleño</i> Native women.....	63
Figure 10. Jacchigua’s children dancers as <i>Otavaleño</i> Natives with banners.....	64
Figure 11. Jacchigua’s children performers take to the streets of Quito.....	65
Figure 12. Jacchigua’s dancers dressed as <i>Salasaca</i> Natives.....	66
Figure 13. Jacchigua’s performers during the <i>Hunt of the Doe</i> choreography	70
Figure 14. Hunters take away hunted doe.....	71
Figure 15. Poster advertising the delivery of household appliances to Ecuador.....	82
Figure 16. In the city of Cuenca a couple of peasants receive a refrigerator.....	83
Figure 17. On mother’s day, it is not unusual to receive an appliance from abroad..	84
Figure 18. The process of migration has placed a great load on Ecuadorian	85
Figure 19. In a similar fashion, migrant’s families on the Ecuadorian coast	86
Figure 20. Inside a house still under construction in Deleg in the Andes.....	87
Figure 21. Migrants carry <i>Virgin of the Cloud</i> to the stage on Independence Day..	103

Figure 22. The <i>Virgin of the Cloud</i> taken to the stage.....	104
Figure 23. On an early rainy day on August 10, 2003, Catholic priests.....	105
Figure 24. The <i>Virgin of the Cloud</i> on Stage during the opening ceremony.....	106
Figure 25. According to police accounts over 100,000 Ecuadorian migrants.....	107
Figure 26. Yellow, red and blue colours of the Ecuadorian flag are visible.....	108
Figure 27. A <i>cuy</i> in the hand...roasted guinea pigs for sale in Flushing.....	127
Figure 28. Roasted pigs, corn cobs and potatoes.....	128
Figure 29. An Ecuadorian migrant roasts guinea pigs in Flushing.....	129
Figure 30. Ecuadorian migrants dressed in the colours of the national soccer.....	130
Figure 31. The skinning and the smaller size of these guinea pigs.....	144
Figure 32. Migrants in Flushing Park walk along the paths.....	145
Figure 33. Families work together to provide food for migrants.....	146
Figure 34. Two migrants from the southern Ecuadorian Andes.....	147
Figure 35. The <i>Virgin of the Cloud</i> during a special mass in New York.....	148
Figure 36. Closer view of the <i>Virgin of the Cloud</i> on an altar.....	149
Figure 37. Houses along the road leading towards the villages	160
Figure 38. Contrast between modern houses and ‘traditional’ mud houses.....	161
Figure 39. Many houses are never completed.....	162
Figure 40. On the road between the provincial capital of Cuenca and Deleg.....	169
Figure 41. Many of these mansion-type houses have long been furnished.....	170
Figure 42. The old wooden columns from an older house frames the view.....	171
Figure 43. No hill is too far to place a dream house.....	172
Figure 44. Because of this migratory process most local men have left.....	178

Figure 45. Older houses and buildings have given way to modern constructions...	179
Figure 46. A poster thanking migrants from Deleg who live in New York.....	184
Figure 47. The Brooklyn choruses invite the public to the coronation.....	185
Figure 48. Icon card with the image of the <i>Virgin of the Swan</i>	186
Figure 49. Other side of the Virgin of the Cloud postcard with a prayer.....	187
Figure 50. Invitation for a special New Year's mass.....	188
Figure 51. This poster is an invitation to a celebration.....	189
Figure 52. CD cover, which portrays the Ecuadorian national soccer team.....	190
Figure 53. The Ecuadorian coat of arms used in a publicity campaign.....	191
Figure 54. English label for <i>Zhumir</i> drink.....	192
Figure 55. Spanish version of label, which is preferred by many.....	193
Figure 56. Details from my birth certificate.....	194

“As people travel beyond the frontiers of man, their baggage is made up of meshes bound together with the smells of home, the touch of the land and the emotions of families left behind. Their spaces are portable like the wind in a suitcase, They leave with the hope of never having gone.”

- Christian Johnson

Introduction

1.1 Initial Outlines

The ethnographic descriptions obtained from the research for this thesis and presented in the following chapters, attempt to comprehend ‘identification’ as a creative process, which reflects constant cultural transformation articulated between memory and imagination, affected by social interrelations and the mass media within a continuum of social action, as a means of cultural survival and adaptation.

The introductory chapter: *Where The Hell Am I From, anyway?* explains the reasons for my subjective approach and my involved participation in the investigation. It exposes the historical and social circumstances that have helped shaped my personal cultural characteristics, which inspired my concerns for ‘identification’ as a topic of research.

Chapter two: *Ballet Jacchigua: Engagement with tradition*, offers an analysis on Rafael Camino’s work, as choreographer and director of an Ecuadorian folkloric dance troupe, who inspired by his childhood memories has become confrontationally involved with ancestral cultural practices, by undertaking the tasks of recovering almost forgotten traditions and historic events and recreating them as public performances. Because of his personalized interpretations of historic and cultural events rendered in his choreographies, Camino finds himself caught amid a sense of censorship from certain local scholars and family members.

Chapter three, *Now You See me, Now You Don't: To be, or not be visible*, concentrates on the search for certain objects of consumption associated to past social action among migrants who travel tortuous routes through Central America and Mexico in a journey between Ecuador and the United states. The presence or absence of certain material objects associated to past social action reveals the choices migrants make to become culturally visible or invisible, by choosing to remove all exterior evidence of attachment to their ancestral cultural bedrock offers better alternatives of survival in unfamiliar cultural environments.

Chapter four, *Products of Nostalgia: Memories of Consumption*, is an analysis on how embodied memories associated to cultural uniqueness among migrants from the rural regions of the Ecuadorian Andes are expressed through the consumption of symbolic commodities, such as guinea pigs, religious icons and cane alcohol. These cultural expressions contain ancestral practices transferred from generation to generation during continuous circumstances of social action.

Chapter five, *Domus et Persona: Houses as places of social transformation and personal rebirth*, addresses the process by which human dwellings become representational commodities, 'consumed' within spaces of social action. To achieve its purpose, this chapter explores the circumstances by which houses transcend their functionality to become expressions of personal achievement. Subsequently, it concentrates on how migrants transform their social status back in their communities by building conspicuous homes to communicate to other members of society their personal achievements and material success while still working abroad.

And to conclude, chapter six, *Final Statements*, reflects on the fundamental concerns about 'identification' exposed in the four case studies that support this investigation.

1.2 Preliminary Considerations

"The first step on our long journey"

Before reviewing the ethnographic data pertaining to this research, it is necessary to review several concepts that are fundamental in establishing the framework of analysis that guides this investigation. In terms of the process of identification it becomes necessary to leave an open door between anthropology, as a discipline, which attempts to comprehend identification as a consequence of human social, and other branches of knowledge that understand this circumstance as a psychosocial phenomena, influenced both by cultural processes and the inherent functioning of the human mind. This approach offers an expanded perspective on the analysis of the process of identification more in tune with the 'reality' of the human social condition; an inclusive, rather than an exclusive approach to 'identification.'

1.3 Identification versus identity: Action rather than stasis.

To say what is meant

One of the main purposes of this thesis is to better understand the circumstance of cultural uniqueness and distinctiveness, which characterises individuals and human social groups, as an ongoing process. To better achieve this purpose, I have used the term 'identification' in substitution for 'identity,' because the former is an expression, which better defines the situation by which individuals and collectives construct their cultural singularity, as a continuous creative process open to the potential of permanent transformation.

The most accepted definitions of the concept of 'identity' seem to suggest that it is condition that once achieved, is immutable, a kind of 'fait accompli;' a cultural homeostasis; a situation of being the same or exactly alike something else; a circumstance 'de facto' achieved. Quite to the contrary, if we consider its Latin roots, *idem* (the same), and *ficatio* (to make), the term 'identification' comprehends the concept of shared cultural uniqueness, as both a 'transformative' and transforming condition.

1.4 Imagination: The place where Dragons Fly

"A hall of mirrors along the way."

At this point, an early caveat must be drawn, regarding the potential of understanding identification and imagination as equivalent concepts. Even though the imagination as a mental endowment articulates cultural elements within the process of identification, these quite distinct concepts should not be conflated. The imagination is a mental capability that allows the conjugation of several cultural aspects related to human social action within a socially active arena of accommodation. It has to do with the construction of internal representations motivated in order to adjust to a changing cultural environment.

The imagination, as a representational process, is the conjugation of mental possibilities, which serves the process of identification in its potential of becoming rather than 'being.' This understanding of 'identification' as a 'transformative' process, better fits the circumstance by which several cultural components articulate to produce a sense of a metamorphosing uniqueness; a realization, which not only implies cultural change and social transformation, but also entails the many choices available to people by which they can voluntarily (and involuntarily) construct their cultural designation at any particular time and place. A situation similar to completing a credit application by which only the

most convenient elements are brought to the arena of social action and cultural exclamation; in other terms, 'identification,' quite the contrary to 'identity,' leaves space for understanding cultural uniqueness as a social phenomenon open to permanent contraction and expansion.

The performative process by which individuals or collectives utilize their imagination to reinvent themselves as a representational process within a cultural environment is well documented; because of its pervasiveness as a social fact, the imagination is a general social practise and a key component of the new global identification and all forms of human expression.

The imagination is the master-tool of cultural invention, the meeting ground where all social experiences converge and are consciously and unconsciously articulated as part of an up-dated, re-created and re-interpreted to make sense of the world as we know it. Through the process of 'identification,' the imagination transforms past elements of cultural expressions and re-inserts them within a present context of social interrelations.

1.5 Paradox of Identification: Cohesion and separation

"A dog tied to his master's voice"

The concept of 'identification' as a statement of cultural distinction among diasporic populations implies a dynamic articulation between cultural fragments, dispersed geographies and simultaneous space-time dimensions, enveloped by a complexity of social relations within organized structures of power. To better understand the cohesiveness of this process not only implies the analysis of what makes members of a social group similar, but also what makes them different from others; shared

circumstances of cultural uniqueness among groups also establishes difference with others who do not share distinctive characteristics.

This understanding of the process of 'identification,' which challenges the premise of the modern nation state as the ultimate bastion of social consolidation questions the conjugation of imposed cultural bounds, committed to specific geographical milieus, as mechanisms of human cohesion; an impossible cultural construct, a mere political convenience regulated by uneven relations of power.

Furthermore, the understanding of 'identification' as a dialectical situation, which comprehends the juxtaposition of individuals and collectives to elements of continuous cultural transformation within shared geographies, nullifies the need for the concept of 'hybridity' as a static referential construct. 'Hybridity,' understood as an achieved cultural circumstance, attained by the mere encounter between peoples with particular and distinct conditions of uniqueness, is a concept, which also lends itself to misinterpretation; it is a term, which presupposes the encounter of cultural 'purities,' which become adulterated, mixed and mongrelized, a situation which begs the question of when and where are cultures pure.

And finally, the choices made by the accommodating circumstances of identification not imply cultural elements of 'sameness' among individuals and groups, but also characteristics of distinction and separation from 'others.'

1.6 Memories: More that remembrance

"All I can remember is that I forgot everything"

Far from fixed entities trapped in a mental vacuum in the mind, memories are embodied sensorial imprints that are continuously developing and growing, similar to the way stratified layers of sand blown by the desert wind grow over each other on the sides

of a road winding into the distance. Memories are sensorial imprints in a state of catharsis, like a transforming anamnesis. Sometimes memory conceals its original sensorial source rooted in the past, from present voluntary recollection; we must understand memories as an ongoing psychosocial phenomenon, a continuum between remembrance of experience and perception of the present (Guidens, 1984: 45, 46).

Understood as multidimensional components of 'identification,' memories, unbound by space and time, play an active role of storing, retrieving and transforming sensorial and emotional experience (Bergson, 1911). They are part of all aspects of human cultural activity, making sense of present and past sensorial experiences. Memories liberate themselves from time and space to fall prey to the hidden intentions of the individual who voluntarily or involuntarily accesses past recollections as active elements within the process of identification.

Memories are determinant for the structuring of the individual within his social environment (Tremblay, 1995: 255). Memories of taste, images, smells, touch and sounds connect individual and the collective beyond time and space. Selective memory allows the choice of recreating the past according to the necessities of the future mediated through an instant in the present; they are hierarchized choices socialized into the memory (Du Berger, 1996: 43) that articulate with other factors within the process of 'identification.'

Memories are like a game that the brain plays on itself, reacting to constant stimuli fed to it through the sensory perceptions of the body, which multiply and divide themselves into a time of their own, setting guidelines for emotional organization and for the reception of new sensorial experiences. Because of memory, individuals are able to

relive the emotional time-space context in which a particular event happened, recreating themselves to the conveniences of new situations encountered.

1.7 Methodology

The investigation and writings for this thesis follows a rather sui-generis mode. Not only did I make several visits to the areas of research over a five year period, establishing a 'snowballing' referential method of encountering dozens of informants, but also guided my concerns on the subject of 'identification' using my previous experience as a television documentary producer in several regions of the Andes, among peoples who share similar cultural traits, but who also reflect particular cultural characteristics as an outcome of their local social necessities.

This work done over a period of twenty years provided a previous 'on location' basis of analysis, which I was able to use as a mechanism for generating questions to orient my search on this matter. As it becomes evident through the writings, this preceding exposure to these cultures and the circumstance and having been raised speaking English and Spanish simultaneously, facilitated the communicative process. This alleviated the physical circumstance of a researcher with an apparently 'North American European' phenotype communicating with Latin American Native and more ethnically diverse informants.

Because of my previous work in Ecuador as a television producer and host, I was able to avoid unnecessary explanations regarding my sincere intentions of conducting an investigation on their more intimate cultural practices and their responses within a transforming cultural milieu; In other words, in most cases my previous contact with

Ecuadorians, helped me gain their immediate trust, a situation which is also reflected in the responses to my questions.

I also followed the suggested guidelines offered in the *Culture & Consumption Field Research Handbook* (Mac Dougall and Howes, 2001), which suggested the approach to follow and possible questions regarding consumptions practices among informants.

Lastly, I have introduced a parallel poetic discourse in several parts of my writings, which advance alongside the main body of this work, passionately allowing an alternate emotional response with the intention of complementing the more formal aspects and style of academic writings required for these purposes. These brief non-literal images included along the text, act as an exclamation of the subliminal emotional circumstances, which were triggered-off during my shared exposure to the cultural richness and human condition of my interviewees.

Chapter 1

Where the Hell Am I From, Anyway: An involved approach

“Bent over his own chips, stones, and common plants, the anthropologist broods, too, upon the true and insignificant, glimpsing in it, or so he thinks, fleetingly and insecurely, the disturbing, changeful image of himself”

- Clifford Geertz -

1.1 Emerging Concepts

It is now widely accepted that the changes that anthropology has undergone in its “language of analysis” presuppose a more informal involvement of the researcher in his or her ethnographic descriptions. “The once dominant ideal of a detached observer using neutral language to explain the ‘raw’ data has been displaced by an alternative project that attempts to understand human conduct as it unfolds through time and in relation to its meaning for the actors” (Rosaldo, 1989:37). This method approximates both the subject and the object of study within the confinements of the research.

In many ways, this thesis is a journey of self-exploration that exposes my ongoing personal engagement with anthropology, attempting to elucidate the predicaments of my own human dilemma while peering into other peoples’ lives.

It was during my undergraduate studies in anthropology that I first became interested in the object of ‘identification’ motivated by my own cultural ‘distinctiveness.’ Having been born in one place, grownup in several others, and possessing multiple cultural roots, I often conjectured about the geographical space and social environment to which I felt the strongest sense of belonging and attachment. Some years ago, when my then 10-year-old daughter, Christiane, called me from France after receiving a copy of my birth certificate, which she required to formalize her student papers in that country,

this personal situation was further exacerbated. She said to me over the phone that the fact that her father had been born in a place called hell astonished the school's principal.

Baffled by the remark I asked her, what did she mean? She prompted me to read aloud a copy of my birth certificate. After I did, I realized that in the space reserved for place of birth was written-in by hand, "Born in the district of L'Enfer." Never before had I realized that the translation of this word from French into English meant just that, hell. It was not until then that I realized that I was actually born in a place called hell.

According to this document, I was born in a staff-house in an oil field located on the southwestern tip of the Caribbean nation of Trinidad and Tobago, specifically, in the *Bay of Guapo, District of L' Enfer*, in the region close to the world-renowned *La Brea* pitch-lake. These peculiar geographic names evidence the cultural influence exerted by the first French and Spanish colonizers who extensively explored this region long before the English took possession in 1797. This birth certificate issued by the then "Registrar General of the Colony of Trinidad and Tobago" not only confirmed my place and date of birth, it also evidenced my ethnic and cultural roots, which stretched across space and time, all the way back to Sweden, France, Venezuela and Portugal.

Regarding the reason why this place had been called 'hell,' I can only speculate that perhaps the first Frenchmen who visited this island situated under the very hot tropical sun, probably dressed in the most inappropriate attire and unaccustomed to such extremes temperatures, must have found this specific place under the tropical sun extremely hot and sticky and decided to call it by a name that would best describe its extreme environmental characteristics and its eerie appearance.

Ever since ancient times, travellers came to this region to obtain pitch, which they extracted from an enormous natural pitch lake, named *La Brea* (pitch in Spanish). During colonial times, pirates and sailors, who waterproofed their ships with the tar from this lake, which must have been a mysterious and enigmatic place for the native population, transformed this area into one of America and Europe's first cultural meeting places.

1.2 Early reasons for my concerns with identification.

"Looking for myself in someone else's reflection."

During my childhood and up to my late teens I had lived and studied within two distinct cultural systems: a British colonial education system in Trinidad and Tobago, and a Spanish post-colonial school system in Venezuela. While growing-up, my ethnic identity was always a reason for confusion. I spoke English with my father and Spanish with my mother.

I can vividly remember, as a boy, shunning questions from my schools peers in Venezuela related to my place of birth; some friends and class mates could not understand why I was blond and fair skinned having been born on an island populated mostly by people of African descent. This was a recurring motive of fun-making at my expense among my childhood friends. Paradoxically, while living in Trinidad my peers teased me, because of my skin complexion and considered me Venezuelan.

Later in life, together with the rest of my family, I moved to Canada where I resided for eight years. After naturalization as a Canadian, I moved back to Venezuela and subsequently migrated to Ecuador, where I lived for twenty years. During this time, working as a TV documentary producer, I had the opportunity of exploring other aspects of my cultural identity. Even though Ecuador and Venezuela, as Latin American countries, share certain common cultural characteristics such as language and historical

heritage, I identified with a mixture of Venezuelan-Caribbean influenced by my more recent exposures to a Canadian-European blend of cultures. While living in Ecuador, I consciously rejected certain cultural aspects, such as linguistic expressions and particular culinary habits, because I believed that they ‘weakened’ what I considered my sense of ‘Venezuelaness’; in other words, standing between two worlds, I chose from each the signs and markers of my identification.

Recently, while discussing the object of ‘identification,’ one of my professors at Concordia University, defined me as a ‘cultural hybrid.’ A term which raised serious concerns; it seemed to imply that ‘pure’ components of culture exist and encounter in different space and time to produce a ‘less pure’ diluted instance. Once you ‘become’ ‘hybrid’ that is what you permanently are, having achieved a sense of cultural and ethnic homeostasis. It seemed that I would never be able to shed or escape this multiple identity predicament. No matter where I lived, I would always be the ‘other;’ cultural diversity was happening in me, I was an individual caught in a space of difference in which my ‘identification’ was constantly self-contested between my past memories of the one who I though I remembered myself being, and the other, who I imagined myself becoming.

Nevertheless, there was a time in my life in which I did feel as if my cultural ‘uniqueness’ was something fixed, immovable, something that came with my passport or my identification certificate, given to me by the state, instilled in me by having been brought-up in a specific cultural and natural milieu. The early history and geography lessons I was subjected to in school, instilled in me a strong sense of loyalty for Venezuelan national symbols, such as the national anthem, the coat of arms or the many

images and cultural aspects that are appropriated by the state to forge the elements of identity that give substance to the Venezuelan nationality.

I felt a strong identification with historic events, which nurtured and reproduced the collective ideals of 'Venezuelaness,' in me. I was proud of the many 'heroes' who in the past had offered their lives "for the emancipation of our country from the Spanish tyranny during the independence war". The super structural state apparatuses were at work creating internalized memories about who I was supposed to be as a Venezuelan in relation to others.

As a youth, growing up in this cultural duality, I faced the choice of having to choose between the Trinidad and Tobago and the Venezuelan passports, to which I was entitled because of my birthrights and my mother's nationality; I chose the later. Educated in Venezuela from a very early age, I acquired a deep social and cultural sense of loyalty and belonging to my 'adoptive' nationality. Later when I chose to become a Canadian citizen, I resolved the dichotomy that this new situation created, by convincing myself that my 'true nationality' was the Venezuelan, and the Canadian was a sort of convenient arrangement, necessary to negotiate my existence in North America. When I travelled south, I did so on the Venezuelan passport and when I returned it was the Canadian that opened the doors through the United States, which since then was already acting as a gatekeeper to my new Canadian homeland.

From a very early age, this 'cultural duality' to which I had been exposed shaped my memories; through my life, continuous sensorial stimuli would continue shaping the bedrock that supports my identification; with time, reason was conceding to emotions what memories had experienced through the senses.

A caveat must be raised at this stage with regards to the apparent fixity of sensorial experiences trapped in the mind; these earlier memories are not internal cultural 'straightjackets' from which escape is impossible, they are part of a process subjected to new sensorial stimuli and constant growth; constantly modified and enriched through a creative process of social interaction, the media and the imagination. Neither are the first memories stronger or deeper than ones that are more recent. All grow and help enhance the experience of our changing cultural 'realities'

While living in Ecuador, I was asked by another Venezuelan in Quito, how come I had not decided to become naturalized Ecuadorian after having resided there for so long; I was fast in my reply stating to him that as long as I continued having strong cravings for certain Venezuelan 'traditional' dishes and expressed great emotional response to Venezuelan music and cultural situation, which I experienced at an early age while living there, I considered myself having an unwavering Venezuelan cultural 'identity.'

Smells, images, tastes, textures and sounds, all stored in specific mental 'slots' in my brain, generated a complex web of signification, and an expanded 'structure of feelings,' which confirmed my active existence as an individual member of a collective social group and allowed me to interpret my 'identification' as a cultural construction, based on past situations positioned within a transforming context of historical circumstances and of social action.

1.3 Conclusions

The self-analysis of these personal experiences, contextualized by the concerns of anthropology, helped me to better understand the process by which 'identification'

articulate a bedrock of memories entangled within a network of social interrelations, mediated by the mass media within a spatial-temporal relationship and constructed by the imagination. A process, which re-interprets memories in relation to present contextual circumstances, allowing the individual and the collective to socially 're-invent' themselves according to their cultural and psychosocial needs.

Far from being alone in an involved participation with the object of research, as anthropology crosses the barriers from western perspectives into the realm of the 'others' in which otherness is a two-way avenue, then all approaches to research recognizes its self participatory involvement in analysis. In one of his seminal 1966 essays Geertz recognizes the unavoidable self-involvement of anthropologists in the research, "Bent over his own chips, stones, and common plants, the anthropologist broods, too, upon the true and insignificant, glimpsing in it, or so he thinks, fleetingly and insecurely, the disturbing, changeful image of himself" (Geertz, 1973:54).

Notwithstanding, this concern with self-involvement is one which still safeguards the anthropologist's stance as a distant 'qualified' observer of the 'other,' because it has not yet broken loose from a Western-dominated perspective in which the observer, through an involved analysis, looks for answers about 'others' through his or her involvement as a subject and not as object of study. The former approximates the subject and the object, the latter, conjugates both.

Chapter two

Ballet *Jacchigua*: An engagement with tradition

Prophets and artists tend to be liminal and marginal people, "edgemen," who strive with a passionate sincerity to rid themselves of the cliché associated with status incumbency and role-playing and to enter into vital relations with other men in fact of imagination. .

–Victor Turner

Nothing endures but change.

– Heraclitus

1.1 Introduction

A conventional approach to understanding popular traditions and celebrations is to assume that these are unwavering cultural expressions, which can only be performed strictly adhering to modalities of form and content passed on from generation to generation by the local populations where they purportedly originate. According to this premise, change in tradition would seem unacceptable.

Two of the main purposes of this chapter are: First, to explore the process of 'identification' among social groups by studying the performance of 'traditional' cultural expressions, based on the premise that performance has "[T]he power to shape, reflect and embody human identity" (Fine, 1992: 1).

Second, to demonstrate that change, which is intrinsic to all cultural activity, does not void the expressive legitimacy of 'traditional' popular culture. Based on the observations of Eric Hobsbawn, Richard Schechner, Victor Turner, Renato Rosaldo, Dan Ben Amos and Américo Paredes, among others, I will demonstrate that the assumption of tradition as an unchanging cultural circumstance is a naïve and recent construction (Hobsbawn, 1983, 1).

1.2 Main Concepts

I have selected the choreographies of the *Ecuadorian Folkloric Ballet Jacchigua*, to illustrate how the performance of selected expressions of ‘traditional’ Ecuadorian popular culture, which act as historic identification markers, can be systematically transformed and re-staged within changing spatiotemporal dimensions without losing their symbolic intent.

To do so, three main premises will guide the analysis of *Jacchigua's* choreographies as restored social action related to the process of identification.

First, that ‘identification’ can be understood as a ‘performative’ circumstance by which individuals and groups can choose what cultural aspects they consider more relevant to represent their uniqueness (Fine, 1992: 17,18).

Second, that ‘identification’ as performative act, is a condition, which selects and builds on individual and collective memories reinterpreted according to historical aspects affected by personal experiences (Schechner, 1985: 35).

And finally, that *Ecuadorian Folkloric Ballet Jacchigua* as a symbol of ‘restored’ ‘identification,’ which reflects historic and contemporary social relations, asserts itself as an expression of agency, resistance and negotiation within a local and a globalized cultural context (Fine 1992:10).

1.3 Further Theoretical Concerns

*“The bones, just the bones
The bones that support the other bones.”*

To understand how *Jacchigua's* choreographies are part of a “performative” process of ‘identification,’ which recognizes recreated cultural representations as more than just mere cultural commodifications for mass consumption, it is necessary to become

familiarized with the concept of 'restored social action,' as a construct inspired by Richard Schechner's definition of "restored behaviour" and by Clifford Geertz, who defines 'behaviour' in anthropological terms, as 'social action' (Geertz, 1973:17).

Furthermore, Victor Turner's ongoing concerns for rituals and ceremonies paved the path for anthropology's comprehension of cultural performance as social action. In the later part of his research, Turner was influenced by Schechner's work, "[A] theatrical impresario, versed in and open toward sociological and psychological theories" (Schechner, 1985: xi) who studied the commonalities between anthropology and theatre (Schechner, 1985: 3). According to Turner, Schechner opened the path to understanding all performance as restored behaviour. This perspective allows a more subjective analysis of 'traditional' folk celebrations as "[A] laboratory of performative experiments normally inaccessible to field anthropologists" (Schechner, 1985: xi).

However, before we delve deeper into the concepts of 'performative processes' and 'cultural restorations' in relation to 'identification,' it will be necessary to briefly address the controversy regarding the definition of what is considered 'authentic' popular culture (folk) and what is not. The relative centrality of this concern lies in the fact that *Jacchigua* has defined itself as a *Ballet Folklorico Ecuatoriano* and as such, has crossed over several boundaries of cultural expressions, calling on itself severe criticism from certain scholars who reject the multiple categories this self definition simultaneously embrace. *Ballet Folklorico Ecuatoriano* implies ballet, as an expression of high performative art; folklore, as a representation of traditional popular oral expressions; and Ecuadorian, which grounds its cultural characteristics within the boundaries of the Ecuadorian modern nation state.

It is through the analysis of these apparent contradictions that we can gain knowledge to better understand how the ‘commodification’ of popular culture for mass consumption, can occur without necessarily invalidating the ‘authenticity,’ usually associated with ‘traditional’ cultural representations. The term *Ballet Folklórico* also evidences the juxtaposition of two cultural discourses, a dialectic from which emerges a cultural superimposition as a synthesis.

The simultaneous denominations of *Jacchigua* as ‘Ballet,’ ‘Folk’ and ‘Ecuadorian’ are the consequences of decisions made in relation to how these choreographies have been constructed as individual and collective representations in a wider global context; decisions that reflect the influence of conscious and unconscious, internal and external factors, such as memories, social interaction, the media and the imagination.

According to Camino, the adoption of the word ‘Ballet’ as part of the name of the ensemble is the outcome of a marketing strategy to gain access to the largest segment of the potential viewer’s market. He does not consider this strategy to overly compromise the ‘authentic’ content of the choreographies; in other words, the purpose is “to establish a wide as possible consumer target” to enable the optimal financial functioning of the dance ensemble without being acquiescent to viewers and sponsors. With regard to this last consideration, I believe that performance is not isolated from sponsor and viewers’ influences. Quite to the contrary, performance enables a negotiated communicative process between choreographers, performers and the public. Nevertheless, this potential acquiescence does not rob the performance of its cultural authenticity.

1.4 Definition of 'Folk': The contradictions of authenticity

"To be or not be is still the question."

The definition of 'folk,' as 'authentic' cultural expressions, flexes between the considerations of change and permanence. The controversy seems to be rooted in understanding 'folk'—or what is referred to in Latin American parlance as 'popular culture'—as, unwavering oral traditions, whose 'purity' must be maintained at all odds; a stance that rejects the concept of 'popular culture' as a creative transformative and poetic experience.

In more recent times scholars such as Ben-Amos, Richard Bauman and Roger Abrahams have criticized the vague and inconsistent definitions of folklore and tradition as 'primitive oral traditions,' "arguing for a reconceptualization of folklore in terms of communicative processes rather than traditional artefacts" (Paredes, 1973: xii). This position redefines 'folk,' as 'performance oriented' cultural activity, which can also be understood as 'restored' social action; 'restored' from its seminal oral origin and which acquires a "life of its own" independent of the performers, who nevertheless, may infuse in these performances their own personal experiences. It is this later circumstance that it is central to understanding 'folk' or 'popular culture' as creative performance with a life of its own and independent of their "indigenous environment and cultural context," which 'are not required for their continuous existence" (Paredes, 1973: 4).

In the past, 'folk' performances have been regarded as 'authentic' unmovable cultural systems, which explain and understand popular cultural representations a product of certain linear evolutionary characteristics of human organization. According to this premise, folklore is a category of 'exotic' oral representations of 'primitive' social activity, preserved at all cost as desirable and immovable traits of cultural identity.

This was the approach most commonly supported by many folklorists until recent times, a conception of folklore as a body of traditional knowledge, a super organic body, which helped reaffirm the belief of the existence of ‘pristine cultural situations,’ which supposedly characterized all pre-industrial societies. Some scholars have even gone to the extreme of defining folklore within a context that excludes the possibility of performance by any written or electronic means (Ben-Amos, 1973: 8,9).

Somehow, we tend to easily accept oral traditions as bearers of ‘pristine realities,’ immutably transferred from generation to generation, disregarding the fact that no two storytellers tell the same story alike. Neither the same narrator recites the same story the same way, twice. Besides folkloric expressions are fragments of an abstract construction based on the collective information stored in many individuals, one person of a community possesses all the fragments of his culture

On the other extreme of this duality, we encounter a more recent understanding of popular culture as a performative and communicational process, which accepts and understands its role of re-creating ‘traditional’ cultural expressions within transforming social contexts, without losing its essence of cultural uniqueness. “To define folklore, it is necessary to examine the phenomena as they exist. In its cultural context, folklore is not an aggregate of things, but a process, – communicative process, to be exact” (Ben-Amos, 1973: 9). A continuum by which performers come to terms with their own historic and cultural past within a changing ‘globalized’ environment, without giving up individual and collective claims to an imagined ‘authenticity’; in other words, a mechanism of cultural negotiation and survival within a larger dominant social context (Garcia-Canclini, 2001: 145). A mechanism of social control mediated by relations of

power that surrounds the definition of what ‘folk’ is, or is not, veils the concept of what is ‘authentic.’ The control of the knowledge considered ‘authentic,’ about how a particular celebration is performed determines the reproduction of cultural events.

Furthermore, *Jacchigua*’s choreographies, as adaptations of cultural expressions from the past accommodated to present “structures of feeling,” fit the definition of what Eric Hobsbawn (1983) considers ‘invented traditions:’ “[A] set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with suitable historic past” (Hobsbawn, 1983: 2).

Hobsbawn understands the progression of ‘traditional’ cultural expressions through time, as a dialectical relationship, which stretches between the past and the present in an attempt to recreate for the future, cultural performances with a claim to historic authenticity, by establishing a ‘rigid’ template in the present for an ‘exact’ repetition in the future. However, even these apparently ‘immutable’ templates, leave space for innovation as symbolism adopts new meaning introduced by change, as long as the changes introduced, remain compatible and sanctioned by the precedence, social continuity and historic natural laws.

A careful analysis of *Jacchigua*, allows a vision of how creative performances and material culture mediate human social interaction. The analysis of the ‘aestheticization’ of popular cultural representations as tourist attractions through collective performances, offers insight into a mechanism for the exploration of cultural

productions, which function in a system of unequal relations of power, as tools of negotiation and resistance

1.5 *Jacchigua*: The ‘Guilty’ Ensemble.

*“The guilty does not stand alone
He carries the burden of the victim’s blame”*

The Ecuadorian Folkloric Ballet *Jacchigua* is a highly successful Ecuadorian folk dance troupe, which offers performances to local and international audiences. According to Rafael Camino, director and creator of the company, *Jacchigua* is the *Quichua*¹ word, for a pre-Hispanic festivity or celebration of the feast of the harvest, which translates to: “The infinite joy of the harvest”. During colonial times, this festivity together with many other indigenous celebrations were syncretized into the Catholic religion and it became customary for certain *hacendados* (land owners) to sponsor these celebrations as a way of gratifying the aboriginal community who worked as serfs on the land and keeping control of their social affairs. This syncretized celebration also reflects the transformation of the social relations of production during and after colonial times.

1.6 My first encounter with Rafael Camino.

“To witness the revival of the flame and to be consumed in its heat”

I met Rafael Camino in 1988 while shooting a documentary among a rural population neighbouring the *Chimborazo* Volcano in the heartlands of the Ecuadorian Andes. He was the director of the *Conjunto Nacional Ecuatoriano de Herencia Popular* (Ecuadorian National Ensemble of Popular Heritage), a nascent folkloric group made-up of young performers who Camino had organized while diligently occupied with the task of investigating and rescuing almost forgotten regional folkloric dances and oral

¹ Quichua or Quechua is the pre-Hispanic language spoken by the natives in most of the regions of what is today Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador. During the past year, indigenous leaders have chosen to rewrite *Quichua* as *Kichwa*.

traditions. A task that Camino seriously undertook inspired by a deep sensibility for his cultural legacy and by his childhood memories of growing up in a local hacienda.

The name *Conjunto Nacional Ecuatoriano de Herencia Popular*, reflects Camino's early "structure of feelings" regarding 'traditional' folkloric performances and the object of his research while collecting information among several Andean rural communities. His quite ambitious goal at that time in his own words "was to create an ensemble of dancers and musicians, which would act as a reference of Ecuadorian popular culture for the world".

One of the most interesting aspects of this first encounter was that I interviewed Rafael for the documentary without ever seeing his face; during our interview, he donned an enigmatic colourful over-the-head two-faced mask worn usually during popular celebrations by a character known as the *Diablo Huma*. The choreographically vigorous, precise movements and the overwhelming personality portrayed by this character during performances had always captured my attention. During his performance, I became curious as to whether he would still be able to retain the extraordinary vigorous comportment of the character during his performance without wearing the mask.

After I posed this concern to Rafael, he agreed to perform without the two-faced mask. To our surprise, the performance was noticeably different and very unconvincing; he lacked the force and energy of the masked character, not being able to impose his influence on the other dancers who seemed distracted by his performance. He then covered his face and suddenly the overwhelming magic returned to his performance. Was the absence of the mask exposing his *mestizo* ethnicity to the troupe responsible for

this outcome? Or maybe the bare face of the performer was not able to escape previously established codes of social relations among the group.

1.7 Memories of things before: The Phoenix in the grave

"I will then extend my wings and once again pretend to be me".

From a very early age, Camino witnessed many forms of festive celebrations, which were part of his cultural environment. These 'traditional' *fiestas populares* are collective cultural expressions invested with surrealist atmospheres amid collective pagan-Christian celebrations of dance, music and colour from which men and women emerge as escaping the realm of the rational, travelling into the contortions of the crowded spaces of ancient memories born on the wings of their imagination. These celebrations are a social valve, which allow a temporary escape from five hundred years of historic oppression.

While Camino was collecting 'authentic' head pieces, costumes, musical instruments, oral legends, lyrics and objects with which he could piece together the historic and symbolic progression of Ecuadorian Andean popular culture, he discovered that his father had been the *mayordomo* of the hacienda where his mother performed her duties as a serf. This conflicting situation, which came as a surprise to him, helped Camino contextualize and comprehend the tense social relations that prevailed between the people of his community regarding the white-*mestizo* population of the rest of Ecuador, a situation, which he incorporated to the performances of his embryonic dance company.

1.8 A Second Encounter: Dealing with change

Years later Camino told me that after our first TV interview, his brothers and sisters had seriously criticized him for having publicly acknowledged his *mestizo* origins. His family considered that such outrageous remarks coming from their younger brother seriously undermined their urban social status. Many of them, now respectable professionals who had long moved from the countryside to Quito, felt embarrassed by these remarks. Even today, after many years, his relationship with some of his family is still seriously marred because of that incident. Having publicly recognized that your mother is an illiterate Indian and your father was an abusive *mayordomo* on a hacienda was not something you publicly recognized, it just did not boost the family's social status.

What made matters even worse was the social implications of his father being a *mestizo mayordomo*, which implied a situation of exploitive social relations to extract more labour from the natives in an attempt to gain respect from the *hacendados*. Because of their mixed blood, these *mestizo mayordomos* existed in between two cultures; not accepted by the whites as equals and despised by the Indians subjected to their abusive treatment.

Camino's imagination conceives his own 'reality' based on a re-interpretation of his memories mediated through his social interrelations with other members of the community and the media, a personal experience, which he exposes in his choreographies.



Fig 1 Jacchigua Ballet during a performance of the Corpus Christy choreography.
Note the lambskin chaps worn by one of the performers back to the camera.



Fig 2 During performances Jacchigua's dancers display an array of colourful 'traditional' dresses recovered by Rafael Camino or remade according to historic approximations. Note the extensive use of Christian religious elements and ancestral symbols.



Fig 3 Jacchigua's performers during the celebration of the *Pase del Niño* (Passage of the Infant Christ) along the streets in Quito. Note the *priostes* (sponsors) dressed in suits in the back, which in this case could be understood as part of the process of *Blanqueamiento* and as an expressions of financial prosperity

1.9 The tourist Connection: Representation as choice

I will have a garage sale

Even if I don't have a garage or a car

In a global economy, it has become common for local communities to re-create performances based on their cultural characteristics for an audience of international travellers as a source of income. Choreographers and performers appropriate 'traditional' cultural manifestations and artefacts rooted in popular social action, as sources of inspiration and reflection for the creation of new performances; a process of recreation, which involves the articulation of selected memories affected by specific personal experiences (Turner, 1986: 24). As an outcome, the restaged and transformed executions that emerge because of this creative intervention, embody new representations of social action affected by personal interrelations, economic and political sources, influenced by the mass media and the imagination, adding new significance to previous memories of social action.

Wherever the tourist travels in search of the exotic, restored performances are abundant; hence the differentiation between 'authentic' expressions of cultural significance and lesser 'shows for tourists' consumption. This is not a process of adaptation restricted exclusively to theatrical performances, it is also part of the daily experiences of individuals living in diaspora and within globalized contexts, whose 'identification' is an expression of cultural negotiation within a dominant culture. These cultural commodifications do not happen in a vacuum; rather they are part of a socio-economic system of exchange. Then again, the fact that these are constructed representations does not deprive them of their cultural 'authenticity' and relevance,

because they also express ‘authentic’ cultural reactions to ‘authentic’ prevailing social dynamics.

Moreover, the commodification of ‘traditional’ cultural celebrations and symbolic objects for tourist consumption can be analyzed as an instrument of mediation, which allows individuals and groups to come to terms with their historic and cultural past while renegotiating a social space within a modernist cultural system, whether it be capitalist or not.

These ‘traditional’ representations affected by change are what Richard Schechner (1985: 35) refers to as “restored behaviour,” which implies that recreations of traditional cultural performances entertain innovation. In other words, the proper discernment of any given performance must take into consideration an analysis of how the events portrayed have been historically performed, and how they are being represented in contemporary circumstances.

We must raise a caveat regarding the dismissal of *Jacchigua's* ‘restored’ performances as a ‘submissive cultural product for tourist consumption.’ The fact that the group needs to make certain compromises to become appealing to potential audiences does not demerit the authenticity of their performance in relation to Ecuadorian ‘traditional’ popular (folk) cultural representations. Quite to the contrary, it exposes a process of identification articulated by circumstances of negotiation and resistance.

1.10 A Third Encounter: A dozen years later

*“Rain became rivers with names,
rivers that flow back anonymously to the sea”*

While conducting my research back in Quito during the summer of 2001, the *Jacchigua Ballet* was celebrating its twelfth anniversary, performing in one of the main

theatres of *La Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana* (The House of Ecuadorian Culture), an autonomous official institution through which the Ecuadorian State channels and promotes national cultural activity. Since in principle any group or person can rent these spaces for public performances, this does not necessarily suggest an official endorsement by the main cultural authorities of the events that take place in these theatres. The fact that the performances took part there is an indication of the success achieved by the ensemble. As a successful ensemble, *Jacchigua* attained two major goals, becoming a main cultural attraction for tourists visiting Ecuador and a performance appealing to a wider general Ecuadorian public. These achievements reflect both international recognition and local acceptance; a long task after having endured many years of presentations in smaller theatres and public spaces, without any support from the Ecuadorian State. *Jacchigua* has grown from 32 dancers in its initial stages, to an ensemble with 320 active members, made up of musicians, dancers and a production team, all under the direction of Rafael Camino.

For the members of the troupe, these choreographies become restored images of self-reference. The members of the ensemble acknowledge that *Jacchigua's* has promoted Ecuadorian traditional culture between the growing international tourist industry and provided an imaginative reflection of national cultural 'identification' for the local population, who are introduced to these performances.

The fact that Camino has restyled and de-contemporised many different popular celebrations, which are usually performed on special dates spread over long periods in remote rural areas, and made them available for consumption as a condensed two hour spectacle, has not escaped the scrutiny of self-appointed 'guardians' who are

'responsible' for the 'safe keeping' of authentic 'traditional' expressions of Ecuadorian heritage; for them, Camino's representations are vile commodifications of 'traditions' for mass consumption.

1.11 *Jacchigua*: The Performance

*To let you know that we are caught
in the webs of our own construction*

During my research in Quito, Camino invited me to one of *Jacchigua*'s performances in "La Casa de la Cultura" on the occasion the ensemble's twelfth anniversary. I was anxious to see how the small groups of dancers, which I had met years ago, had become an internationally renowned dance ensemble; my Ecuadorian wife and 5-year-old son accompanied me.

As we entered the theatre's atrium, I was impressed with the pre-show display; several members of the ensemble, fully clad in 'traditional' outfits, were standing at the entrance welcoming the public to the performance. Rafael was standing at the head of the queue closest to the entrance. The theatre completely sold out mostly to an Ecuadorian audience.

Just before the show began, a group of approximately thirty tourists came through the main isle guided towards their seats by a couple of members of the troupe. They seemed Europeans, men and women in their fifties, all holding a program translated from Spanish to English, which offered a historic background of the group and a brief description of each of the choreographies in the performance.

Before the show, a rather contagious festive atmosphere permeated the theatre's ambiance. Along the isles and rows of seats, members of the audience who were strangers to each other, exchanged greetings as they searched for their seats. On stage, the

movements behind the curtains revealed the presence of performers taking-up their positions.

As the lights in the theatre slowly dimmed, the group of dancers that were part of the reception committee at the door, advanced down the centre aisle towards the stage preceded by a group of musicians whose *bocinas* resonated with their characteristic deep monotone sounds. These *bocinas* are ancient wind instruments used in the highlands to communicate between villages. They are made of a long hollow cane with an animal's horn attached on one extreme and on the other a rudimentary mouthpiece. This instrument resonates loudly in a very similar way to the horns used in the Swiss Alps. Lately these instruments substitute the long 'traditional' cane for a plastic tube, which tied into a ring makes it shorter and facilitates its transportation.

By the time the theatre was completely in shadows, the musicians had already occupied their places in one of the balconies above the stage. Suddenly, a piecing spotlight carved a cylinder of light through the darkness over the crowd, drawing an intense bluish circle on the surface of a small podium placed to the left of the stage. Standing in its middle, looking down at the floor, Rafael Camino fully clad in a dark suit and tie, donned a wide-brim hat low on his forehead. If I had ever seen one, I was in the presence of a 20th century personification of a *mestizo mayordomo* reclaimed from the ancestral colonial *hacienda*. Over the applause from the audience, he slowly raised his head and addressed the public with a brief history of the group and the program for that night.

Camino mentioned to the public the fact that the ensemble never received any financial support from the Ecuadorian State. Rather, he was quick to express his gratitude

to the private tourist industry, in particular to Ecuador's pioneer and most important travel enterprise, *Metropolitan Touring*, which had promoted their activities ever since their initial performances. Metropolitan Touring, offers tourist packages to all regions of Ecuador, even to the remote Andes, Amazon jungle and the Galapagos Islands. Rafael emphasized their continuous support, which enabled the group to continuously perform to international tourists who enjoy *Jacchigua's* weekly performances. He also expressed his gratitude to the Municipality of Quito, for having provided the ensemble with a locale where they can conduct their daily rehearsals.

In his introduction to the audience, Camino also mentioned that he was the son of an illiterate Indian mother and a *mestizo* father. By doing so, he placed himself within the socio-cultural and historical circumstances that inspired his performances, both as an actor and as an element acted on. The identification with these historic circumstances were the outcome of a dialectic between the past 'authenticity' of his memories and the present innovation of his imagination, which allowed him to represent these past events included in the performances, as a 'valid' Ecuadorian 'traditional' spectacle.

To further validate *Jacchigua's* connection to 'traditional' Ecuadorian cultural representations, Camino emphasized the fact that the ensemble had won great international recognition for their choreographies by representing Ecuador in several international dance festivals.



Fig 4 Jacchigua's dancers dressed as Natives from Cuenca during the celebration of the Christmas festivity *El Pase del Niño*.

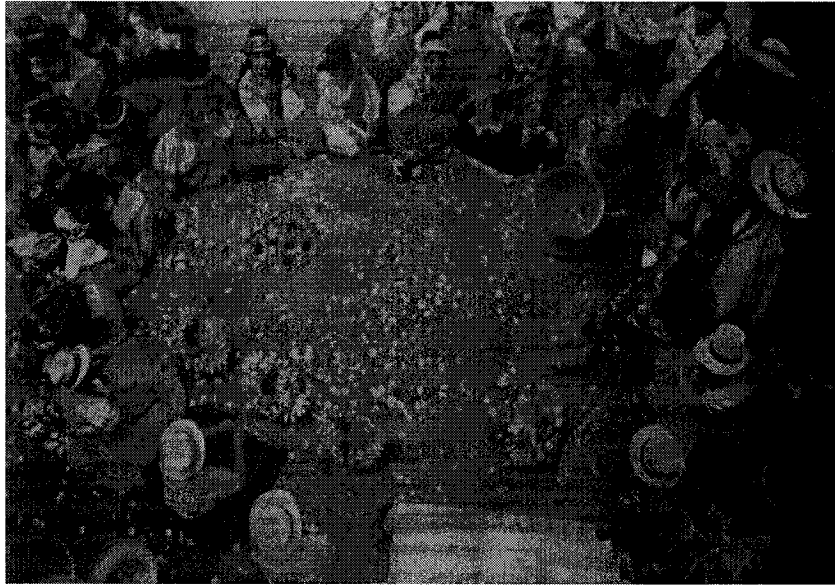


Fig. 5 The celebration of the *Pase del Niño* continues amid a shower of petals. Note that Joseph and the Virgin Mary are dressed as Andean peasants.



Fig. 6 The Christmas celebration of the *Pase del Niño* as performed by Jacchigua Ballet on the streets between the Cathedral and the Presidential Palace in Quito, the colonial capital of Ecuador.

1.12 The Choreographies: Let the show begin

*“The ran in circles for many days
never twice on their footsteps.”*

After the spotlight on Camino faded, a group of dancers emerged from among the centre aisle advancing towards the stage creating an eerie sense of fantasy. The audience was elevated to a dimension beyond the physical space of the theatre; the spectators were elevated to their own spatial environment within; a place beyond the corporeal; a dimension where sounds and images vibrantly commingle stirring up memories of things forgotten and emotions of past events. In other words, places where the imagination winds back into the collective memory of people who have chosen the images with which they want to identify with. Through *Jacchigua's* performances, Rafael Camino has made the choice to recreate histories, myths and personal experiences as untold accounts supported by his colourful choreographies that the audience and performers accept and choose to believe.

The choreography of *La Cacería de la Venada* (The Deer Hunt), which depicts a doe courted by several young and vigorous bucks in the forest, opened the performance. Their courtship is interrupted when the exhausted doe falls prey to a group of peasants who pursue the animals during a collective hunt performed exclusively by the men of the village. What impressed me mostly about this choreography is the fact that the main performers, who represent the deer, donned rather scant outfits, which revealed extensive parts of their bodies, a situation uncommon to ‘traditional’ representations of Andean folklore.

The headpieces worn by the performers are authentic deer heads tied to the dancer's hair. The rest of the costumes are also made from authentic deerskin. This

choreography has a strong resemblance to a similar dance performed by the *Mexican National Folklore Ballet*, which also depicts deer in a similar fashion. I can only speculate that since deer are common to both environments it is possible that these animals inspired simultaneous similar ancestral celebrations in both cultures. It would be interesting to further analyze the symbolic meaning that deer have for Andean and Mexican cultures. Similarly, it would prove useful to explore further implications related to the symbolism of gender construction in this choreography.

The performance continued with the presentation of *Cuando Canta el Gallo* (When the Rooster sings), a choreography, which depicts women from the region of *Otavalo*, washing at the San Pablo Lake in the province of *Imbabura*, an internationally acclaimed tourists attraction, highly renowned for its natural beauty and the profuse production of woven handicrafts. During this choreography, the dancers execute perfectly synchronized movements, which evoke idealized images of women dressed in ‘traditional’ stunning blue long skirts and white frilly blouses, performing their daily chores at the *San Pablo Lake*; their necks adorned with gold coloured crystal-bead necklaces and on their heads, natural-wool-coloured wide brimmed hats. Men are dressed in mid-calves white pants, white shirts and wearing their characteristic two-sided woollen ponchos: one side is solid blue, the other is decorated with a pattern of thin blue squares on a grey background. They wear their hair long and tied into a braid, under a black wide-brimmed hat. Both men and women wear *alpargatas* (knitted sandals) tied at their ankles.

The *Otavaleño* People are renowned for their artful handicrafts, their colourful dresses and their personal cleanliness; they are very laborious people who thrive and

became world renowned as weavers ever since pre-Hispanic times. Today their handicrafts enjoy international recognition and growing demand. *Otavaleño* men and women travel the world marketing their merchandise adapting to the extraterritorial demands for Ecuadorian tourist handicrafts. Many have found in this activity financial success unparalleled by any other ethnic group in Ecuador. “In the course of the overseas marketing of their own products and those of Indian and non-Indian peasant groups, Otavaleños have carved out a global market niche for inexpensive handicrafts manufactured by household labor (sic) using pre-industrial and industrial technologies of scale” (Kyle, 2000: 114). In reality, one of the possible reasons that Otavaleños have avoided ‘transculturization,’ choosing to maintain their ‘traditional’ dresses is precisely to avoid hurting cultural characteristics that make them attractive to the tourist industry (Belote, 2000: 99). In other words, they have transformed their ‘traditional’ dress into a commodity for tourist consumption.

Drawn from this reality, it would be difficult to still find women at the lake at dawn waiting for men to begin their ‘love dance’ as depicted in the choreography. Even though this dance is not part of *Otavaleño*’s ‘traditional reality,’ for the audience this choreography has become a romanticized cultural representation, which evokes idealized chores expressed through a creative and poetic performance. When I mentioned to Rafael that never in my abundant trips through the Andean rural areas did I witness people dancing while performing their daily chores, he was quick to respond. “ I know that most of the *Otavaleño* women today wash their clothes in washing machines and get their water piped directly into their homes. Nevertheless, what we try to do is to recreate the memories and sensibility of women at work in dreamt up time.”

The third choreography recompiles several celebrations among the *Saraguro* People who live in the province of *Loja* in the southern Ecuador, situated within the very abrupt topography of the Andes, adjacent to the Peruvian border. According to certain scholars, The *Saraguro* and the *Otavalo* People are *Mitimaes* (Mitmakuna), communities who were brought to this region by the advancing Inca conquest, which preceded the Spanish Conquistadors, as a system of introducing cultural reforms that aligned the conquered populations to a central imperial Inca hegemony (Kyle, 2000:116). The Incas not only imposed their organization and culture onto the conquered populations but also incorporated certain cultural characteristics from conquered states to their social and political organization.

Similar to the *Otaveño* People the *Saraguros* are a tightly knit society which thrives on land and cattle ownership. Few emigrate from their homeland, rather, quite the contrary happens, many poor white and *mestizo* become transculturalized into *Saraguro* communities in an effort to improve their financial situation, a kind of reverse of the process *blanqueamiento* discussed earlier, by which natives attempt to be recognized as white. (Belote-Belote, 2000: 84, 85).

Among the *Saraguros*, men and women dress in black and wear wide brim hats made from compressed wool; these hats, which can weight between two and three kilograms each, are social markers that differentiate the *Saraguros* from other native communities in Ecuador. The bottom part of the brim is painted with black Dalmatian-type spots. It is the use of these mostly black indumenta, which has given rise to the myth that the *Saraguro* are mourning for the Inca Emperor slain by the Spanish *Conquistadores* in *Cajamarca* after collecting a hefty ransom for his release.

Two other *Jacchigua's* choreographies, the *Haya Huma (Diablo Huma)* and the *Huasipungo*, are profusely imbued with socio-political signification. It is during the performance of these dances that Rafael Camino fuses the roles of director, choreographer and dancer into one. His on-stage metamorphosis during these performances captures the magic symbolism of two significant personages of Ecuadorian popular culture, the *Mayordomo* and the *Diablo Huma*. The indumenta for the *Diablo Huma*, is made up of lamb chaps, a whip and the two faced mask; the *Mayordomo* in the *Huasipungo* choreography wears the same outfit except for the mask. These two characters played by Rafael, represent the duality of the human condition mediated through the relations of power, which reigned during the Colonial and post-Colonial times in the local *haciendas*.

The *Diablo Huma's* is one of the main characters during the festivities of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, which takes place during the summer solstice. This character present in several other popular celebrations in the Andean rural areas of Ecuador is one of the least modified characters of Ecuadorian popular culture. Camino has created a choreography committed solely to this personage, in which six other minor *Diablo Humas* interact on stage. During the performance of this dance, Camino plays the leading devil highlighting the central role of the *Haya Huma* in Andean popular festivities. Camino transposes his role as the director of the group to the performance of the *Diablo Huma*. His hierarchy as a director and main devil are evidenced by certain characteristics of his costume, which exudes greater extravaganza expressed through the use of deeper colours and the size of his mask, which is visually more expressive, extending in height above the other dancer's heads. The rigid spastic movements of the lower part of the

body in synchronic interplay with the torso and the whipping of the arms transpose a magic quality to this personage during the performance. During this dance, these characteristic vigorous movements of the dancers legs covered with the lamb chaps impregnate the air in the theatre with the aged smell of wool.

The highlight of Jacchigua's presentation that night was the *Huasipungo* choreography, which is Caminos's most celebrated and internationally renowned choreography. The *Huasipungo* has been the drama "sine qua non" of the Ecuadorian Andean aboriginal population. It was a feudal serf system, which appropriated the Natives as part of the work force together with the land. The *huasipungueros* (serfs) were allowed to own small parcels of land on which they lived with their families and animals, in exchange for work on the hacienda; it was common for the haciendas to be sold with the Indians as part of the inventory. It represented the most exploitive system of power relations imposed during the Spanish conquest; the entire population worked for the elite landowners under the ideological blessings of the Catholic Church; a situation, which continued until abolished by the land reforms of 1964. The *huasipungo* system scarred the Native population culturally and psychologically. "This economic context strongly influenced the nature and development of Indigenous ethnicity in *Cayambe* and throughout Ecuador" (Becker, 1998).

In the *Huasipungo* choreography Camino does not only direct, he also plays the leading role of an idealized *mayordomo*, who according to his representation of this character, embodies many different facets of Camino's childhood memories. The *mayordomo* is a dual personage; traditionally he is the owner of the hacienda during the

absence of the patron (the landowner), who grants him special powers so that he may safeguard his interests while he is away in the city.

“On the other hand, when I perform the *mayordomo* in *Huasipungo*, it is a dynamic representation through time and space impregnated in my memories. It is my father’s *mayordomo* image, my grandfather’s and mine captured in the hacienda where I grew up.” Camino recuperates the ‘structure of feelings’ of these personalities, of the swearing *mayordomo*, the abusive *mayordomo* and the humane *Mayordomo*. “I try to portray the *mayordomo* captured in the memories of a small individual who witnessed these situations and who grew-up to become a simple and sensitive man,” (referring to himself). It is quite evident that for Camino, the *mayordomo* embodies the pain, the contradictions, the power relations and the human psychosocial conditions during the *Huasipungo* system. Both the *Mayordomo* and the *Diablo Huma* are characters, which offer great insight into the restored social action represented in *Jacchigua*’s performances. The indumenta with which Camino has chosen to represent these personages in his choreographies are loaded with symbolic psychosocial meaning.

First, the lambskin chaps indicate that he rides a horse while performing his daily activities, placing him physically and socially above the Indians. It was after the arrival of the Spanish that sheep were introduced.

Second, the wide brimmed hat is distinctively different from the knitted hats worn by the natives; they are rather similar to the ones worn by the Spanish *patrón* (master).

Third, the whip as an element of authority, used to command obedience and respect. It evokes the power of the *Mayordomo* who controlled the native ‘*Husipungueros*’ that were part of the mode and means of production in the hacienda.

And finally, the double-faced mask might be related to the fact that the ‘*Mayordomo*’ was usually the bastard son of the white *patrón* (master) and an Indian woman, living in a social limbo, never gaining total acceptance from either, authoritarian with the Indians and servile with the master.

Camino choreographies transform social pain into poetry by restoring social action according to the choices made in his choreographies. These performances contain the memories and sensations, which express his understanding of his cultural essence. Memories can be reinterpreted according to personal experiences and transformed through the imagination into expressions of human cultural interaction within a continuous process of change.

1.13 Music: The sounds of the Andes

*“They held the wind in their hands
Carving stories in their breaths.”*

A group of six eager young musicians provided the live music for the performance, accompanied by acoustic ‘traditional’ instruments: the *pingullo*, the *quena*, the *Ocarina*, the *Rondador* the *zampoñas*, the *charrang*, the *bombo*, and the Spanish Guitar.

These instruments used by *Jacchigua’s* musicians, considered by some as ‘traditional’ implements related to autochthonous cultures, reveal a process of juxtaposition of pre-Hispanic and Hispanic cultures during colonial times; their presence as part of *Jacchigua’s* performance, plays a fundamental role within the discourse of ‘tradition’ and ‘authenticity’ that *Jacchigua* capitalizes on as part of its ‘identification.’ These musicians and their ‘traditional’ instruments, as material culture, are the living

evidence the progressive cultural transformation and adaptation, which has been affecting pre-Hispanic Andean cultures during the past five hundred years.

The *pingullo* is a small flute - 30 centimetres long, - of very traditional indigenous origins in the South American Andes. According to older artisans, the best *Pingullos* are made from animal bones such as the now almost extinct Condor's wing bones. This instrument produces an extremely high pitch sound commonly associated with sad melodies. The *pingullo* has seven finger holes, 'traditionally' tuned in regional pentatonic scales; nowadays diatonic and chromatic tunings are used. In antiquity, the *pingullo* was tuned using a technique, which took into account the proportions of the human body, such as, size, height and the distance from the flute to the hands.

Since colonial times, the *pingullo*, like the guitar and other wind and stringed instruments in the Andes, has also undergone significant transformation in its construction and execution. Nevertheless, its present day use in folkloric bands and its construction characteristics continue to express regional cultural characteristics.

The *quena* is a flute about the same size as the *pingullo* but larger in diameter; it has seven holes, six on top and one below. It produces a melancholic rhythmic sound. Traditionally it was made from the *llama* and *llamingo* leg bones. However, evidence of *quenás* made from stone, gold and human femur bones have been found in archaeological sites in Peru and Bolivia, dating back 5.000 years, predating the Inca culture. Today *quenás* are mostly built from bamboo.

According to Andean musicians, before the arrival of Western civilization, the *quena* was a customized instrument, made from a hollow cane, which did not follow a tight schematic design. They had four or five holes, randomly distanced according to the

player's physical requirements, such as finger width and length. It was tuned to a pentatonic scale and played according to regional cultural variants. In today's Andean musical bands, *queñas* tuned to a 'G' major in Western standards have six or seven finger holes.

The *ocarina* is a ceramic flute, which 'traditionally' has been made in the shapes of fishes, birds, turtles, potatoes and some even abstract unrecognizable forms. This instrument has been found in many North, South and Central America cultures predating colonial times. It was also extensively used by other cultures worldwide, which explains the European origin of its name that derives from the Italian word *oca*, meaning goose. The number of holes of an *ocarina* varies according to local cultural characteristics and the specific musician's requirements. It is played by covering the holes with the fingers from both hands, which produces high pitch sound similar to those from birds and insects.

The *rondador* was originally made from clay tubes and was indigenous to many cultures situated in the region which is today Ecuador. Its name originates from the Spanish word *ronda*, which translates to 'walk around.' *Ronda* is also the name for the space between the base of the exterior walls of a fortified city and the houses. This term may also suggest the use of this instrument by groups of musicians who would gather at night in groups called '*rondas*' to play music. Maybe during colonial times, this instrument was used as a signal of vigilance by guards who walked around the villages. Not too long ago, knife and scissor sharpeners would walk along the streets of Quito, the Ecuadorian Colonial Capital, playing a *rondador* so that housewives and barbers noted his presence in the neighbourhood. The many reasons this aboriginal instrument is now

called *Rondador* is now long lost in history, nevertheless, somehow its name bears the marks of the social relations and cultural characteristics of colonial times in Ecuador. The *rondador* is similar to a European Panpipe in its construction. However, it is tuned to a pentatonic scale as all Andean instruments before the Spanish Conquest. Today they are made from very thin walled canes that are arranged in a single row. It is played by blowing on two contiguous tubes at the same time, which is quite different to how other similar instruments are played in the Andes; it is a unique instrument since it can produce harmony and melody simultaneously.

The *zampoña*, also called *siku*, and the *rondador* are close relatives. They are similar in their construction but made from larger and longer pieces of hollow cane tied together and made in different sizes. These instruments produce a deep low frequency blowing sound that according to musicians to whom I spoke, resemble the “breath emerging from the bowels of the earth.” Archaeological evidence situates them 10,000 years back within Bolivian and Peruvian aboriginal cultures, making them one of the oldest wind instruments found on the American continent.

These instruments embody the limitations and conditions of the musicians that played them and the natural environment in which they originated. Because of the larger diameter of the *zampona's* canes, musicians must exert larger efforts to blow larger volumes of air into the tubes. In the high Andean mountains, where oxygen is scarcer, these instruments are usually played by a twosome of performers, who by means of great and fast synchronization complement each other during performance; while one player takes very fast breaths of air the other plays part of the melody. It is also common for

musicians to tie two rows of *zampoña*'s canes together; to play a scale the player's mouth must jump from one row to another.

The *charango* is a small ten-string lute that originated in South America inspired by the *vihuela*, an ancestor of the guitar. The Native people lacked the technology and tools to shape the resonating box like the Spanish instrument so they applied their ingenuity using the hollow skins of *armadillos*. It was a "happy day for music but as sad day for *armadillos*". Local people who joke about the uniqueness of the construction of this instrument say that the *armadillo* has to go to the conservatory for five years to become a *charango*, besides *Armadillos* are the only creatures that can make music after dead. However, nowadays, *charangos* are made out of carved wooden backs. Their long fret board in contrast with their small resonating box make then resemble toy guitars. It is a high-pitched instrument, which has made its way from the highlands of Bolivia and Peru to the rest of the Andean regions.

The *charango's* uniqueness lies in both its musical qualities, producing very fast and high-pitched melodic tunes and the vibrant and fast movements of the wrist and hand required to play it. Some masterful players hands move so fast that they elude the eye, just as the wings of the hummingbirds do. The *charango* imparts a sense of *folie* to the performance of Andean melodies.

The *bombo* is a drum widely used in all musical performance in the Andean region. The drum is played with a stick and a mallet, which strike the wooden rims and the head. The body of the drum made from a hollow tree is covered in animal skin,

which still retains its fur, producing a very distinctive mellow and deep tone when played.

Since the very beginning of the Spanish presence in America, the guitar has worked its way into almost every musical genre. It is the most popular of all instruments used in Latin American music. It is a sort of double hybridizing cultural element, which has been a subject and an object of 'hybridity.' In the hands of local artisans, the guitar has undergone many transformations, influencing the form and performance of several other string instruments throughout Latin America.

These 'traditional' instruments represent an extensive and complex process of social interrelations between pre-Hispanic and Hispanic cultures, a process, which has been shaping human social action for thousands of years. However, the pre-Hispanic instruments did not follow universal patterns of construction, it was after the Spanish Conquest that musicians attempted to uniform their construction and standardize their tuning to meet Western musical requirements and to homogenize their musical qualities. These instruments and their music contextualized within the discourse of 'transformative' authenticity of *Jacchigua*, play a fundamental role in understanding tradition as a "transformative" cultural expression.



Fig. 7 Jacchigua's Musicians perform live on the streets. The *bombo*, and guitars appear from front to back. The singer's voice is amplified by a hand-held megaphone.

1.14 Printed Programs: The construction of texts

To further comprehend the discourse of ‘transformative’ authenticity, which surrounds Camino’s work, we must refer to the printed program distributed to the audience before *Jacchigua’s* presentations. This program is made available in Spanish and English. The English version supports this discourse of authenticity of the text both in form and in content. In form, because the rather ‘basic literal’ flawed translation from Spanish describing the choreographies creates a sense of translated locality, in the same manner spoken language expresses identification through accents and idiomatic expressions; a cultural construction of authenticity similar to the demeanour of an actor who delivers his lines in English with a Spanish accent to emphasize and support the requirements of his role. A similar situation when foreign names or places inserted in an English conversation and uttered in their native pronunciation. In other words, the text as material culture works as a sign in which the signified is the ‘otherness’ represented in the form of the text in the same way that stereotypes are the ‘essentialness’ of representation.

The content of the program supports the discourse of authenticity because what is expressed in the text about the performance reflects the choices of the elements of representation, which Camino has selected as main components of *Jacchigua’s* choreographies. These texts evidence the process of selection of certain instances of culture by which a synthesis of social action is converted to an artistic expression.

These are the descriptions as they virtually appear in the English program made available to the audience before the performance:

The Ecuadorian Folklore Ballet Jacchigua invites you to share a cultural dream, which was made real with the production and direction (sic) of Rafael Camino

The Quichua term JACCHIGUA means the infinite joy of the harvest, and this is how the Ecuadorian Folklore Ballet Jacchigua gathers the richness of our popular culture, showing the world the ancestral (sic) traditions and customs of Ecuador, a pluricultural, multiethnic and plurilingual country.

Ninety dancers, musicians, technicians and social investigators put their knowledge (sic) and artistic sensibility on the stage (sic), creating these choreographies to show the past (sic) and present splendour of the peoples (sic) of Ecuador (taken from the program).

The program guide contains a very succinct description and historical reference to the origins of the choreographies. It acts as a sample of oral narratives transferred to written language maintaining a relation to the ‘exoticized other’. The guide itself reveals the mode of production and the social relations of the ensemble. It also allows for standing the premise of “reading culture as texts” on its head, by understanding text as material culture, which embodies social action. The English version is a rather sui-generis literal translation of the original Spanish text and has a double effect on the reader. First, its descriptions fill the international traveller’s expectations by indirectly addressing issues related to the environmental issues. Second, it conveys a sense of ‘primitiveness’ to the performance by presenting a more rudimentary translation of the text as evidence of a precarious condition associated with performances invested with an aura of authenticity. The rather simplistic selection of words and immature descriptions of the translation enhances the images of the ‘exotic otherness’, which is portrayed in the performance and which many believe to be essential components of ‘primitive’ cultures.

One gets the impression that these translations have been done by the members of the ballet themselves, whose basic English reveals their limited capacity of expression in this language, adding a certain ‘sense of primitive authenticity’ to the descriptions. On the other hand, if both the Spanish and English in texts were drawn up and translated by

specialists using a more academic language it might convey the idea of the ballet being a more highly sophisticated organization, distanced from a 'primitive' past, depriving it of the 'aura of authenticity' that a more naïve description conveys.

The 'written accent' evident in the program confers a 'sense of authenticity' to the descriptive text of the performance. A less 'polished' English exposes a certain sense of naiveté associated to the ensemble and makes the performance in the description more believable. A situation, similar to what Clifford refers to in the legal case in Boston Federal Court in which the descendants of the *Wampanoag's* People of Massachusetts were required to prove their identity by showing continuous tribal existence. "Modern Indians, who spoke in New England-accented English about the Great Spirit, had to convince a white Boston jury of their authenticity" (Clifford, 1988: 8).

An analysis of the description of the opening choreography, *La Caceria de la Venada* (The hunt of the Doe), found in the printed program exposes both the construction of Camino's discourse in relation to this choreography and what I have referred to as the 'aura of authenticity' of the translated from Spanish text.

"The deer, lords of the Andean moorlands, (sic) battle over the female, ignoring that men are watching and chasing, in search of their skin and exquisite meat. This choreography represents the deer hunt and the celebration of the capture by the communities of Chimborazo"

A second translation from another program follows a similar pattern of construction.

"It is possible to demonstrate to the world that the deer are the owners of the inter-Andean region and that the inhabitants of our highlands are capable of representing them with respect. Because of this, while these handsome animals feel that they are the masters of the moor-lands the does in heat incites the bucks to begin their courtship, without realizing that man, hungry for their skin and exquisite meat, prey on them waiting for the moment to grab from nature their richness for after having obtained, celebrate in their community the triumph." (My translation from a second program)

In both translations, the description of the circumstances and the ‘rudimentary’ English exposes certain aspects of the relations of production of the ensemble, which conveniently represents a small group of people who interact in an effort to recreate popular cultures according to oral traditions, personal experiences and memories. A group of men and women performing multiple functions devoid of large amounts of financial resources with which to produce a mega production, which would demand a more sophisticated organization.

Let us consider the following texts extracted from the same program:

Traditions from Saraguro

“The Saraguro people are mitimaes originally from Bolivia and Peru, were brought to the south of Ecuador –the province of Loja- by the Incas, This dance shows the process of blending of cultures at the time of the Conquistadores, represented by the following segments:

The offerings: The women dress up and take offerings of flowers to church, at seven in the morning; thus, when they die, they will enter heaven.

The Guaquis or Monkeys: Are popular in the fiestas of the communities. They put humor (sic) with their jokes, high spirits and grace.

The Dancers of Guañil: Symbolize the natural force and bravery of the animal, represented by men.

The Hat Dance: The *sombrero* (hat) is the testimony of the ancestors and the witness to future generations. It represents the cultural and ethnic value of the dresses.

When the Rooster sings

At dawn the Otavalo, women of the province of Imbabura wash clothes and gather water at Lake San Pablo. When the rooster sings, the men wake up and a dance of love begins.

Huasipungo

Means a piece of land given by the landowner to the Indian worker as payment for his work and services.

This choreography shows the daily life in the Andean communities, oppressed by the force of the master and who rise searching for respect and equal rights.

Rafael Camino, producer and director, incorporates his personal experiences at Hacienda la Compañía, in his native Pilligsillí to this production.

The Haya Huma and the Fiesta of Saint Peter y Saint Paul (Haya Huma is the name also given to the Diablo Huma)

In the Ecuadorian Andes, the Haya Huma is the devil, but does not represent evil as the conquistadors believed. It is a symbol of the wisdom of the ancestors, the experience, the sensibility of the Indian people. In the fiestas of the Summer Solstice, the beginning of the harvest represents (sic) the ancestral force and rebellion.

Led by the Haya Humas, the Aruchicos descend from their communities to take over the town plaza, as a symbol of millenary struggle, accompanied by their beautiful women and by the sound (sic) of different wind instruments like chinucas, quipas and bocinas.

Attire

In order to safe keep the ancestral design, textures and colors (sic), and after a study of the late 19th century and beginning of the 20th, dresses, costumes and ethnical elements were gathered and used in the different choreographies of this Ballet. They were made by artisans and rescued from the mestizo acculturation.

These succinct and simple descriptions reveal referential aspects pertaining to ‘authenticity’ in both form and content. They also expose the transformation of social action in different regions of the Ecuadorian Andes mediated through social, gender, historic and ideological relations. They represent choices made, memories and personal impressions culturally shaped and psychologically impressed in the mind of a creative mediator who has built a discourse around these presentations. This is Rafael Camino’s construction of his psycho- social reality.

We must be cautioned concerning the descriptive simplicity of these texts, which could be interpreted as a cultural reductionism by Camino of Andean culture. Their simplicity is a rather functional element for the consumption by an audience concerned mostly with the visual aspects of the spectacle; these texts do not reflect the complexity, depth and social dynamics of Camino’s choreographies on stage. Besides, these descriptions lend themselves for much deeper anthropological and psychological analysis, however, not central to this discussion.

After the performance, a *Banda de Pueblo* (band made up of local village musicians) stationed at the theatre's main gardens, accompanied by fireworks, just like in a *fiesta de pueblo*, enticed the audience exiting from the theatre, to join them in the celebration of *Jacchigua's* twelfth anniversary. Rafael Camino still clad in the *Mayordomo's* outfit from one of his choreographies, together with other members of the cast, invited spectators to take part in a collective and informal celebratory dance. I was pulled in to the celebration by one of the dancers dressed in an *Otavaleña's* dress and danced while my wife and son, watched from a 'safe' distance.

1.15 Change as Tradition: The discursive defence

Rafael Camino continuously emphasizes that his choreographies represent traditional popular celebrations (folk), inspired from his childhood memories; the recreation of stories told to him by his Indian mother and by an older generation of acquaintances and relatives, recreated by his imagination and by his deep artistic sensibility. In his choreographies, Camino has transformed the sometimes-routine daily activities of common people, into colourful artistic expressions. These choreographies are cultural manifestations, which promote a reconnection to waning 'traditional' bonds, while simultaneously allowing the individual's creative experience to release ancient 'folkloric' expressions from the stronghold of the rigid definitions conceptions of 'tradition.'

Camino's selective memories and their transformation to meet the expectancies of his choreographies can be explained by means of what Raymond Williams (1977, 121-123) considers the complexities of culture, a process which interrelates dominant, residual and emergent values, which also explains the unwillingness of certain sectors of

Ecuadorians who resists changes to traditional expressions or the emergence of new ones. Quite to the contrary, Camino understands ‘living traditions’ as forces susceptible to transformation, always attempting to break away from “dominant and hegemonic pressures” (Williams, 1977: 115).

Apparently, for some critics, financial success and popular acceptance are detrimental to intellectual recognition. Rafael Camino has been criticized by some local scholars for having appropriated “genuine cultural traditions” and transformed them into a “fast food” of moving images that comply with the demands for exoticism from the tourist industry. He has been faulted for having invented cultural representations by having reduced and ‘estheticized’ regional festive celebrations. Some even consider him a borderline sensationalist for having incorporated blind and deaf children into a special troupe of the *Jacchigua Ballet*; according to some detractors, these performances lure morbid spectators who would not usually attend a presentation of this sort.

Rafael’s response to this criticism is to explain that his choreographies, such as the internationally acclaimed *Huasipungo choreography*, which recreates and re-interprets the social conditions of the native population during Colonial and post-Colonial times, are social statements elevated to the mastery of art. These choreographies inspired in past social action are artistic statements, which are unbound from the labels of authenticity and realism.

With regards to the use of deaf and blind people in *Jacchigua’s* performances, Rafael states that, “Handicapped people in Ecuador have never been taken into consideration in such widespread and unified cultural activity, in which they have the

opportunity to perform according to their innate talents, not as curious objects, but as qualified artist”.

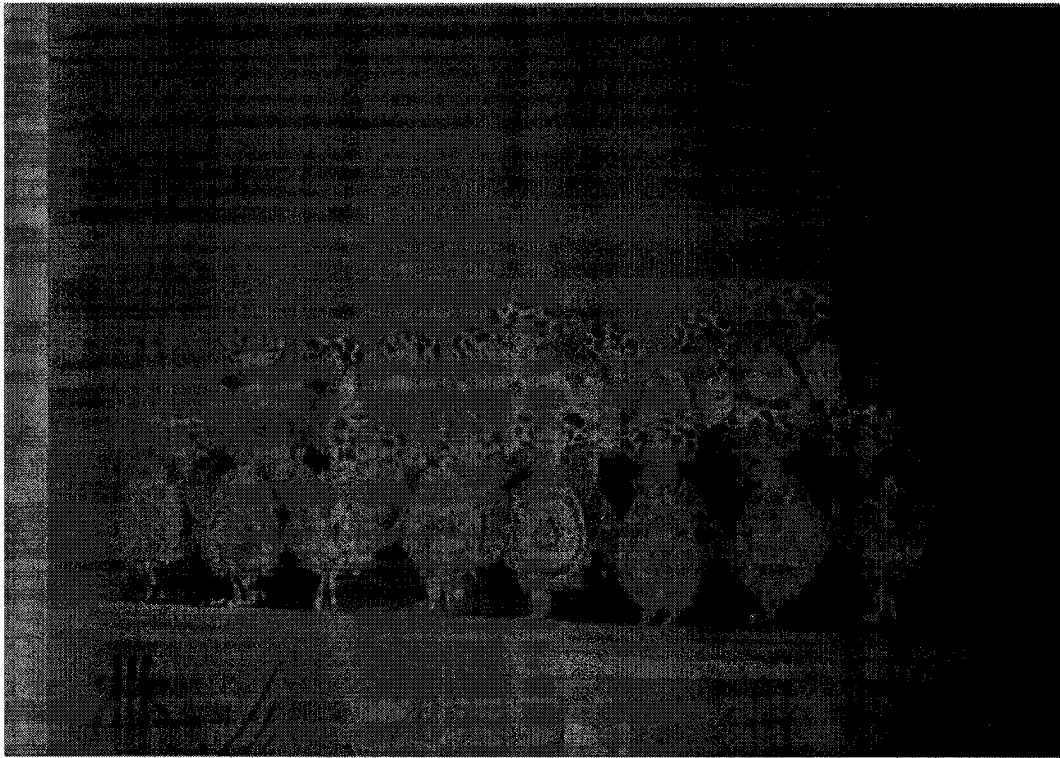


Fig 8 Jacchigua's performers dressed as Native *Saraguro* women in their 'traditional' black dresses complemented with colourful accessories. Note the black spots painted on the hats' brims



Fig. 9 Jacchigua's performers dressed as *Otavaleñas* wearing their traditional dresses and hats made from pressed wool.



Fig. 10 Jacchigua's children dancers dressed as *Otavaleño* Natives with banners.



Fig. 11 Jacchigua's children performers take to the streets of Quito under the watchful eyes of Rafael Camino, seen wearing a light-coloured *toquilla* straw hat.



Fig. 12 Jacchigua's dancers dressed as *Salasaca* Natives from the Central Ecuadorian Andes, enjoy a break under the perpendicular midday Equatorial sun. Note the absence of shadows.

Rafael mentioned that one of his most annoying moments as a director of *Jacchigua* was during a performance at the Faculty of Communication of the *Universidad Central in Quito*, during which he overheard the Dean and Assistant Dean, arguing over the supposed origins of the *Saraguro* people's outfits, who 'traditionally' dress in black. These scholars attributed this custom as the *Saraguro*'s expression of mourning for the death of the last Inca emperor, *Atahualpa*, executed by Francisco Pizarro during the initial stages of the Spanish Conquest. "How dare do these Ecuadorian scholars criticize our performances when they are ignorant of the historic origins of their own people; how can they keep on repeating such a ridiculous story about the reason behind the choice of black among the *Saraguro* people. It is time to disperse so many of these made-up stories that I have been listening to from teachers since my school days."

The absurdity regarding the *Saraguro*'s custom of wearing black as a symbol of mourning is a recent construction, which has no roots in native colour symbology. This is further sustained by Gonzalo Endara Crow (1992: 97), a nativist Ecuadorian painter who has researched the symbolism of colour among pre-Hispanic inhabitants of the Ecuadorian Andes, who concludes that black symbolizes the abundance of the land, the colour of the soil ready to be sowed.

1.16 Conclusion

"The spectacle learns from life, life is the spectacle that we never forget "

To elucidate what is, and what is not, 'authentic' within the process of identification, is not the main concern of this chapter, but rather to understand performance as a consequence of socio-cultural interaction related to identification as an ongoing articulation of several components of selective human social condition, in this case, specifically associated to the performances of *Jacchigua*'s choreographies.

Popular celebrations are expressions of a ‘transformative’ process by which individuals and groups can reinterpret their culture according to what they choose to believe about themselves.

The choreographies of the *Jacchigua Folkloric National Ballet* of Ecuador offer clear evidence of ‘identification’ through performances as restored behaviour in which people learn to deal with social, historic, cultural and emotional circumstances that have had deep influences on their lives. These representations offer insight into how material culture affects and is affected by social interaction. They are part of the spectacle in which truth stands within a duality of the real and represented, each lending from each other and part of a process of inclusion, which integrates the one into the other (Debord, 1994: 14), stated differently, the mirror feeds on the image and the image drinks from the reflection.

Performances such as *Jacchigua’s* choreographies are the outcome of a creative process of identity construction inspired by events in the past, which takes into consideration not only what the director and the performers have chosen to represent, but also how the audience reacts to these representations. “As one’s identity develops in the dialectic between individual and society, those performances that have proven most useful, most confirming, and most coherent with one another becomes repeated and essential parts of and individual’s ‘presentation of self’” (Fine, 1992: 9).

Rafael Camino has built his choreographies on personal choices and assumptions of what he recalls from his childhood experiences and memories. In a similar manner the *Otavaleño* and the *Saraguro* People have chosen to uphold and retain certain cultural characteristics which distinguishes them from other indigenous cultures, in order to

conveniently benefit from this association for their won individual and collective purposes.

My analysis on the subject of ‘authenticity’ of popular cultural representations allows me to conclude that even ‘commodified’ cultural expressions are authentic statements of social action. The question should not be whether cultural manifestations have lost their validity because they have been ‘commodified’ for consumption, but rather how can we gain a better understanding of human cultural activity expressed through all organized performative processes; the mere fact that performance is the outcome of social activity concedes its rights to its claim to legitimacy.

To understand the performance of folkloric expressions as part of a communicative process allows a reflexive analysis of how people chose to construct their self-image. It is also a “critical way of grasping how persons choose to present themselves, how they construct their identity, and, ultimately, how they embody, reflect and construct their culture” (Fine, 1992:10).

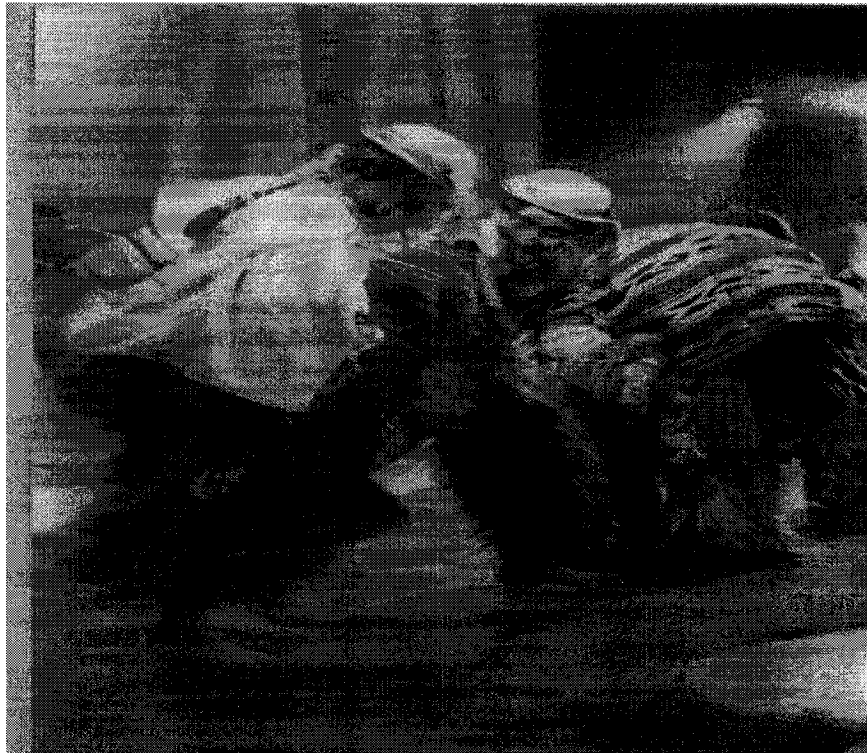


Fig. 13 Jacchigua's performers during the *Hunt of the Doe* choreography. Note the vigorous movements of the lamb chaps, which impregnate the atmosphere with the strong smells of the old animal skins.

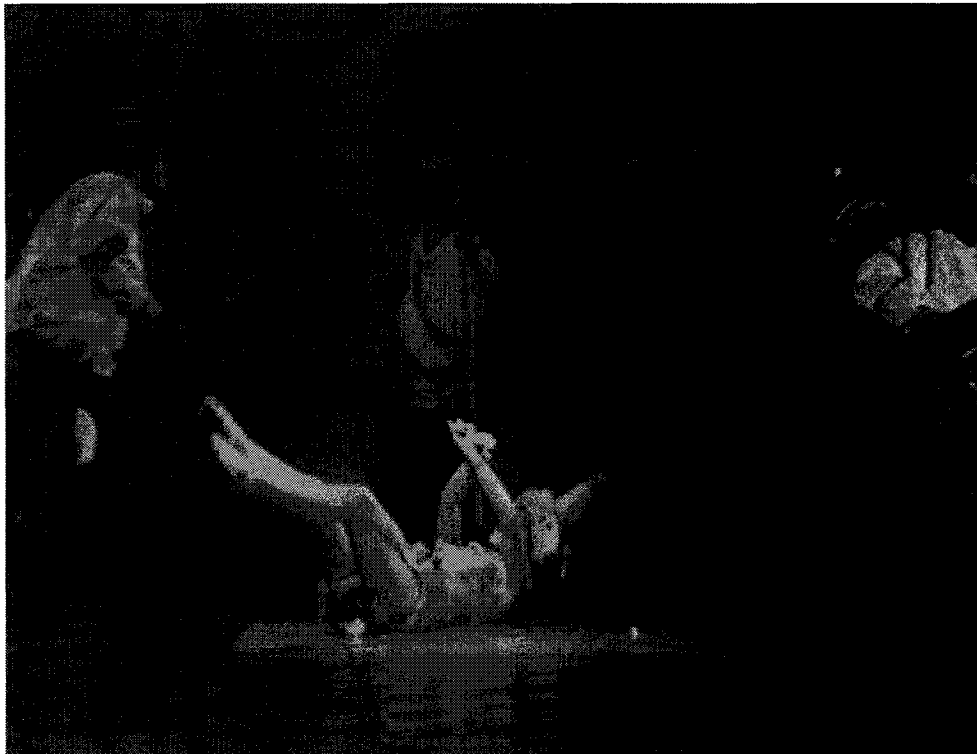


Fig. 14 The hunters take away the captured doe. Note the dancer's scant outfit, which exposes most of her body in this choreography.

Chapter 3

Now you see me, now you do not: To be, or not to be visible.

Erect the headstones

Walked towards the bosom of the night

Dragging their pale shadows behind.

Their stories hidden in layers of time

Knee-deep into their past.

1.1 Introduction

As part of the process of resettlement in foreign lands, it is common for migrants to choose which observable cultural characteristics to display or to suppress in order to become culturally 'invisible' to improve their options for survival while living in potentially hostile social environments. Additionally, the ongoing presence and consumption of certain culturally coded commodities among diasporic populations, which are part of their cultural uniqueness, are increasingly relevant in understanding their social organization.

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze the links between material culture and 'identification' among migrants from Ecuador. The analysis of the presence or absence of certain material of household appliances and personal commodities, associated with 'Ecuadorianess' within negotiated geographies where migrants socialize, offers potential insight into choices made in the process of 'identification.'

1.2 Objects that resist globalization?

I stood up to the storm and let myself be caught in its burning rage

At first, my concern was to locate objects or commodities rooted in a 'traditional' past, which retained symbolic relevance and practical usefulness within a transforming cultural environment that would reveal the permanence of certain cultural traits

associated to the process of identification among migrants caught within a situation of a more recent and 'accelerated' condition of globalization.

During the initial stages of my research in Ecuador, I observed several household appliances, significant in the preparation of 'typical' dishes, which offered the potential of retaining and exposing particular symbolic connections as 'irreplaceable objects of cultural significance.' After speaking to rural dwellers, housewives and people from older generations, I was able to locate several of these objects considered relevant in the preparation of special 'traditional' dishes and of which could be said, offered certain resistance to the process of globalization.

The first item on my list is a very large bronze pan *paila de bronce* used in the preparation of a dish called *fritada*. For many Ecuadorians from the highlands this typical dish, which is made with pork cut into small pieces, cooked during hours in its own fat and served together with an Andean variety of toasted corn, fried plantain and potatoes, is the 'Ecuadorian national dish' par-excellence. According to most women to whom I spoke, one of the main secrets of its taste lies in the use of this large bronze pot, which gives it its special flavour.

The second item is a strainer made from a mesh of woven horsehair attached to a thin circular wood frame, used to filter natural fruit juices. According to the people that use them, these strainers allow the adequate amount of juice and pulp to permeate the fine holes. These utensils are used for steaming vegetables in the kitchen.

The third item was a tall aluminium pot with several interior levels called a *tamalera* used in the preparation of *humitas* (young corn pies) which long ago were made in made in clay pots lined with straw.

Finally, the most widely used cooking appliance in many regions of Ecuador is a small tin pot called *achioto*, a container used to store and dispense *achiote*, a red food colouring made from the seeds of the *Bixa Orellana* tree. This plant is indigenous to the Amazon rain forest where natives also use it as ceremonial body paint and as protection from insect bites.

Back in North America, based on the premise that, “All objects are social agents in the limited sense that they extend human action and mediate meaning between humans,” (Dant, 199: 13) As I visited several migrants’ homes I kept an eye open for looking for the presence of these appliances, in order to establish their symbolic importance, if any, in the performance of daily household chores.

1.3 Back in the Big City.

I have often seen you in your mountain.

Now I search for you in vain on my street.

Contrary to my expectations, I found scarce evidence of these ‘traditional’ appliances among Ecuadorian households during my research. Most regarded these appliances, as too cumbersome to work with in the reduced spaces of North American households, and excessively heavy to transport from back home.

However, many did acknowledge that the older ‘traditional’ artefacts enhanced flavourful characteristics of Ecuadorian typical dishes. This recognition evidenced the presence of ‘structures of feelings’ in relation to objects that even though are absent from daily social action, do preserve ‘auratic’ characteristics associated with past memories and uses.

Graciela Rodriguez, the chef and co-owner of one of the most popular Ecuadorian restaurants in Queens, said, because it was now possible to bring almost all fresh ingredients from Ecuador from one day to another, what concerned her customers more

than the use of traditional cooking implements and ingredients, was the geographical origin of the restaurant's owner and chef. Some customers would go as far as to ask who were their relatives back home and where did they live, trying to establish a connection to a particular 'recognizable' taste within a social context of time and space.

For many customers, the tastiness of the food depended strongly on the restaurant owner's social relations and place of origin; this implies that savours are capable of encapsulating social relations and emotional responses, characteristically linked to social action situated in specific geographical regions of their homeland contained in embodied memories. Otherwise stated, the consumption of certain 'typical' dishes can trigger memories of tastes transferred over space and time via social impressions recorded in the senses. Similarly, restaurant owners could easily tell what region a customer came from in Ecuador, by the food they ordered and the manner they ate it.

1.4 Presence by Absence

While in New York I found one of the previously mentioned large bronze pots; Violeta Rodriguez, a 90-year-old woman brought it with her when she migrated to Queens more than 40 years ago. She placed it on the floor in a corner of the kitchen. She claimed not to have used it for many years because it was too heavy; she acknowledged that she kept it in the family because it reflected her genuine emotional ties to her homeland. "Because of my old age I am not allowed to travel on aircrafts anymore and I will probably never visit Ecuador again, but when I look at the *paila* I can remember many things about my country and my youth," she said.

Within the homes of a few older informants it is common to find grinding stones, hand-carved wooden spoons and some minor kitchen utensils, which for their owners

retain a special significant bond to their ‘traditional’ gastronomy. Mariana Granja, who has lived for 30 years in Montreal, owns a grinding stone, which she frequently uses in her kitchen. Among the cooking ingredients, which she brings back from her trips to Ecuador is an industrially produced chicken broth, made by *Nestle* under the commercial name of *Caldos de Gallina Maggi*, which she considers to have an unique taste like no other produced by the same company in other countries. However, among more recently arrived migrants, I did not find sufficient symbolic meaning attached to the use of any such ‘traditional’ household appliances. It seemed that they shunned these objects for some unmentioned reason.

1.5 The Media and Social Interrelations: A mirror of recognition

What I did find in almost every home, office and businesses that I visited in New York, was a poster of the Ecuadorian national soccer team, visibly placed together with the Ecuadorian flag and coat of arms. This image of the soccer team was acting as an element of cohesion among diasporic Ecuadorians; for the first time in history, the Ecuadorian team had classified for an international tournament as important as the 2002 World Cup in Korea. Suddenly, it became common to find Ecuadorian flags in public and private places where Ecuadorian men, women and children gathered.

Finally, Ecuador was getting positive media coverage, which was having a positive influence on the social interrelations with other Hispanic groups and North Americans. From the moment of classification of the soccer team, up to the game that it was eliminated Ecuadorians had a common recognizable subject, which they could share and discuss with other people within the world cultural context. Very seldom does the Spanish or English local media cover positive aspects about Ecuadorian culture; quite to

the contrary, frequently, Hispanics are misrepresented on the news coverage, which portray them in relation to situations of national tragedies, crime and household violence. The interest that the Ecuadorian team was receiving from the media worldwide validated and activated a sense of identification that crossed cultural, social and political barriers uniting Ecuadorians wherever they lived.

Many second-generation Ecuadorians born in Queens, whom I spoke to, told me that they had become prouder of their Ecuadorian roots because their national soccer team had classified for the World Cup. This situation has had a positive effect on the psyche, prompting a collective emotional response among most Ecuadorians in diaspora, raising their self-esteem among many who acknowledged their Ecuadorian nationality and who externalized their allegiance to their country by displaying 'ministrips' that bear the emblem of the national soccer team. (Dante, 1999:6)

For all, the national soccer team's success in classifying for the World Cup had brought universal recognition to the Ecuadorian nation and its people and given migrants a reason to be proud of their country of origin; all of a sudden, the rest of the planet became aware of the location of Ecuador on the world's geographical and cultural map; boosting the morale of Ecuadorians in diaspora.

The presence of these symbolic elements contradicted my previous findings where most 'traditional' material culture was absent from the households. However, this absence of household artefacts related to Ecuadorian culture did not mean that migrants were shedding all connections to their past and becoming 'westernized,' rather it indicated that they were choosing when and where to become culturally visible, they were negotiating their identification to their convenience. The presence of the soccer

team photos was a choice, a situation that placed them above or equal to other world nations that were taking part in the world tournament. After Ecuador was eliminated and the World Cup was over, the social circumstance among migrants returned to 'normal invisible mode.' This circumstance prompted me to refocus my search for less functional and more symbolic objects related to Ecuadorian uniqueness.

1.6 To be visible or not: without a choice

I bring my charade to the dance. The genuine I, stays at home far from piercing eyes.

To understand the social dynamics within which certain symbolic objects circulate, or are absent from social action, it is necessary to better understand the social and cultural restrictions imposed by the process of migration on rural Ecuadorians relocating to North American cities.

The Consulate of Ecuador estimates that over 600.000 Ecuadorian migrants live in New York State. This is an uncertain figure because most migrants choose not to register with the consular office in fear of being too visible to local immigration authorities. To survive hostile cultural environments Ecuadorian migrants make extraordinary efforts to blend-in to the local cultural environments they encounter while traveling to and after arriving in the United States. Once in the United States, while sharing the work market with migrants from other Latin American countries they are aware that they must reduce social friction to a minimum during their daily encounters while waiting for employment on street corners.

Roosevelt Avenue in Queens has been the meeting place for migrant workers for many years; it represents a space where the social dynamics of a migrant population articulates with the political control of public spaces exercised by forces of the nation state, and other social groups with which Ecuadorian migrants compete for work. Flanked

on both sides by businesses owned by members of various ethnic groups this main avenue spears through downtown Queens, where Koreans, East Indians, Pakistanis, Colombians, Ecuadorians and Dominicans share this space where each occupy certain blocks as symbolically marked 'territories'. There are no businesses owned by ethnic North Americans in the area, with the exception of large food chains such as Mac Donald's and Burger King restaurants. Sidewalks are crowded with street vendors who peddle their products to ongoing pedestrians; local vehicular traffic flows in both directions frequently coming to a complete standstill at intersections where hundreds of pedestrians cross at a time.

A canopy of steel extends over the jammed pedestrian and vehicular space, blocking out the sunlight and growing into the skyline like a lifelike gigantic iron vine, covered in a cortex of rusty bolts. This superstructure emerges from the centre of the avenue like a forest of metallic trees standing in a motionless queue indifferent to the ongoing traffic. From these eyrie pillars, grow branch-like structures that support the railway system, which connects Queens to Manhattan. At a distance, Roosevelt Avenue seems to be invaded by a gigantic centipede that crawls through the intersections searching for an escape, all the way right up to Flushing Park; caught above in spastic convulsions, railcars run in continuous sequence of stops and goes, back and forth, up and down, all day, all night, all year round.

The smell and sounds of iron wheels screeching high on the suspended rails impregnate the atmosphere with a taste of hell. The roaring howls of running cars pounding against each other as they advance digest their human prey within bowels of

endless space, as they continue their futile dance between platforms trapped in the confinements of crowded stations suspended from the sky.

On ordinary weekdays, local volunteer welfare organizations offer free light meals from mobile kiosks to migrants that nonchalantly gather on the corners looking for work during the morning hours. Not too long ago, police officers in their patrol cars would go by infrequently, seldom bothering migrants who went about ‘invisible’ to the piercing eyes of the gendarmes in their dark blue uniforms. Lately, because of increased concerns for public safety, law officers are more attentive, and frequently frisk migrant men and women who seem to be carrying ‘suspicious’ packages; for migrants, an arrest in these situations means that they will be surely deported back home.

Besides sharing the same public spaces along Roosevelt Avenue, while looking for work, Ecuadorians and Mexicans also share the same language and similar phenotypes. However, they are capable of distinguishing themselves from each other by the presence and absence of certain visible markers. Antonio Vera, an Ecuadorian who claims to be the oldest member of a group of migrant workers, which has been meeting at the same corner for the past eight years, says “Ecuadorians do not wear tattoos, pierce their bodies or wear gang type baggy clothes, we have been brought-up with tight family values, that do not tolerate these unruly expressions. Besides, we harmonize with the environment, we try to keep a low profile,” he added.

The social diversity created within this multicultural circumstance provides the scenario where Ecuadorian migrants must live avoiding overexposure to local authorities. However, state control is becoming more stringent making it more difficult for migrants to go by unbothered. Vera also noted that unlike Ecuadorians, Mexicans have more hair

on their faces, wear moustaches and tend to be fancier with their dress, adopting a more in-vogue North American appearance. He says Ecuadorians spend less on fashion garments. This statement seems to be in accordance with Colin Campbell (1996) and Alan Warde's (1994) observations, (cited in Dant, 1999: 36) regarding clothing choices made to become part of the cultural environment rather than creating a new lifestyle. Warde suggests that the consumption of items can be part of a process of accommodation by which people choose to become part of the local cultural context rather than contrast with it order to become part of it.

Vera said that when he first started to come to Roosevelt Avenue looking for work as a *mil-uso* (the name by which some migrants choose to be identified, which originates from the Spanish words *mil* –thousand– and *uso* –use–), most men would gather at the corner of 65th street and Roosevelt in Woodside. He said that now migration had increased to such an extent that the queues of Mexicans and Ecuadorians migrants looking for work stretch all the way up to 75th street in Broadway. This has promoted a territorial appropriation of certain corners; the older workers are closer to the overpass bridge that connects the two sides of Woodside Station above 65th street. At this location, Ecuadorians that arrived long ago are found in higher density; newcomers locate further away, towards 75th street.

Long before they arrive to enjoy this 'American Dream' most migrants undertake a long and perilous voyage from Ecuador by land, air and sea, exposed to personal risks; trusting their lives to intermediaries and casual acquaintances, whom they meet just by divine providence; in this attempt, some die, others return wounded or broke, but willing to give it another try.

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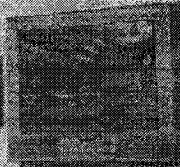
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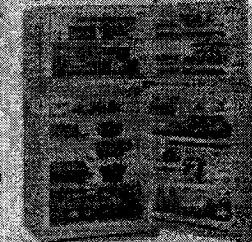
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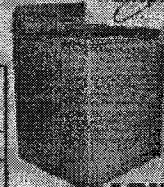
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Fig. 15 Poster advertising the delivery of household appliances bought in Queens anywhere in Ecuador

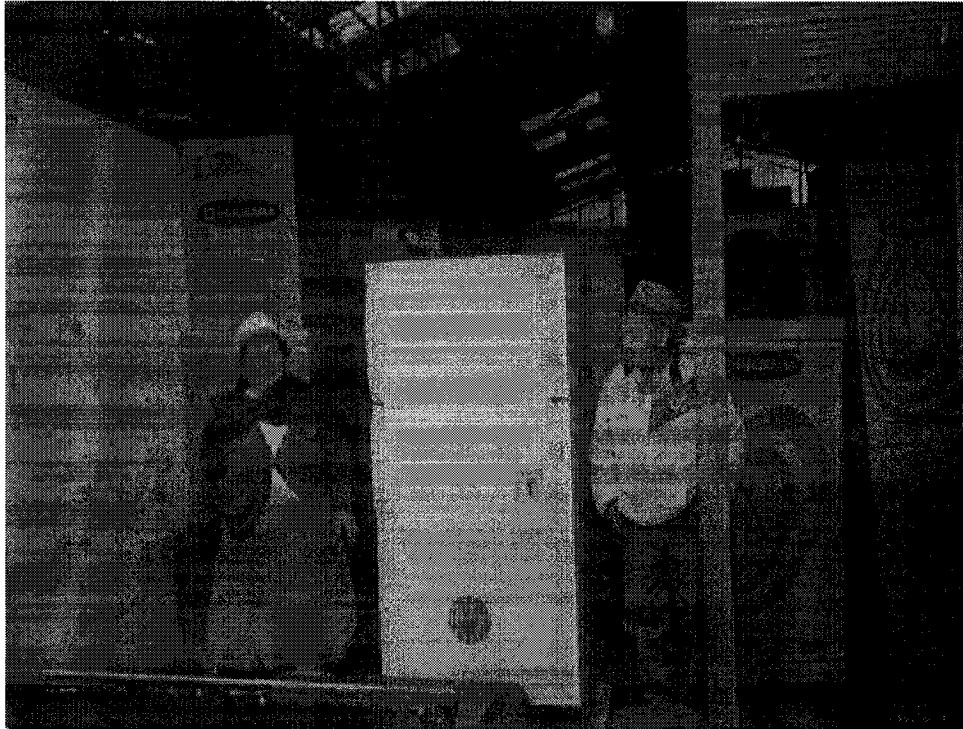


Fig. 16 In the city of Cuenca a couple of peasants receive a refrigerator at a local warehouse, paid for in Queens and assembled in Ecuador with partially imported parts and local labour



Fig. 17 On mother's day it is not unusual to receive an appliance as a gift from abroad.



Fig 18 The process of migration places a great load on Ecuadorian Families. While parents are gone, children are taken care by relatives. Meanwhile, appliances are sent back to fill the human void.



Fig. 19 Families on the Ecuadorian coast are also affected by the American Dream and material 'bonanza' of household appliances. Note the cement bare bricks of the house still under construction. The bamboo portion of the interior wall on the upper left of the picture, situates this house on the Ecuadorian coastal region, where these materials are common.



Fig. 20 Inside a house still under construction in the town of Deleg, in the southern Ecuadorian Andes. Note the candles as offerings to Patron Saints and the image of the Virgin Mary on the wall. Also, electricity outlets for the new VHS and two TV sets. Woman in photo is wearing a *paja toquilla* hat made in the region.

1.7 Secret Identities: Journeys across the unknown

I hide from your ensnaring eyes that delay my walk into heaven

From the onset of their journey from Ecuador, migrants who choose to travel by land through Central America and Mexico are aware that they must become inconspicuous to make it across to the United States border. Not only do they encounter cultural barriers but also hostile environmental characteristics that threaten their physical safety and survival. Many die of dehydration, starvation or by accidents during the journey.

When seventeen Ecuadorian migrants drowned crossing the *Cocibolca* Lake in Central America in 1988, travelling in a precariously overloaded boat, Dr. Hernán Holguín, the Ecuadorian Consul General in New York and professor of political science, who chose to be cited for this research, was the Ecuadorian Ambassador to Nicaragua at that time. He sadly recalls how one of the survivors of this tragic situation, while still holding on to a gasoline tank, witnessed his sister drown in the lake; later, the tank he was holding on to, caught on fire and he was severely burned over most of his body. This is one of hundreds of well-documented tales reported by international migrant organizations.

According to Dr. Holguín, when travelling by land to the United States many migrants encounter a geographical and political bottleneck in Nicaragua and are deported back to Ecuador by local authorities. Prompted by the United States to become immigration watchdogs, many Central American governments become the most difficult obstacles for migrants to overcome. However, because of the corruption within the law enforcement agencies, migrants are able to pay their way through these countries with cash they carry hidden close to their bodies.

To pass as locals while travelling through Central America and Mexico and to survive hostile environments, migrants choose to divest of all documents, personal articles and cultural traits that could connect them to Ecuador. Many migrants are forced to lie on the floor when detained by local authorities so that inspectors can check the soles of their shoes searching for brand names manufactured in Ecuador, which could reveal their place of origin.

Professional migrant smugglers, known as *coyotes*, brief and caution migrants about these and other detection practices and ensure that all objects are removed, clothes and articles that could give away their Ecuadorian nationality. It is during these difficult circumstances that rural peasants from Ecuador discover for the first time their cultural differences and uniqueness in relation to other people and cultures. Paradoxically, it is during this exodus from home when they first become aware of some of the traits that define their cultural heritage.

Not all migrants manage to make it across the border into the United States on their first attempt. For many, it requires several unsuccessful efforts before getting across. For others less fortunate, even after many such attempts, crossing the border from Mexico remains an ever-elusive task. Frequently, the successful end to these voyages depends strongly on the permanent connections and communications with relatives back home and in the United States who provide the necessary emotional and financial support. Families and friends become guarantors to loan sharks and financial institutions that provide the necessary resources for the trip. Long before travelling, they must obtain updated travel documents. This involves several trips to provincial capitals to obtain birth certificates, military papers, proof of having voted in the past elections and photographs.

Additionally, migrants must obtain a visa to Mexico (usually counterfeit) and finally, they must rely on a network of ‘coyotes’ who will hopefully get them across Mexico into the United States and who continuously brief them on the cultural characteristics of each of the regions they will cross during the voyage.

Speaking to migrants looking for jobs on Roosevelt Avenue in Queens about the process of getting across Mexico, Antonio Vera said migrants must relearn the local meanings of certain Spanish words. They must also learn the history, geography and be able to describe the places where they have supposedly been born to be able to pass as locals. He said most migrants must memorize the Mexican national anthem and many popular songs to be able to pass as natives.

Pedro Rosas, the son-in-law of the lady I stayed at in Queens on one of my trips, said that he crossed from Ecuador to Colombia by bus and in Bogotá bought an illegal Venezuelan passport, which he used to get to Mexico. Once there, he got rid of the passport and became an imaginary Mexican citizen. Instructed to dress completely in black, to avoid being detected while travelling at night by border patrol officers and special scanning equipment, the group of people with which he travelled, continued the last stretch of the journey; he said he walked in darkness through repugnant swamp waters towards the U.S. border, unaware of his position. After walking many miles and travelling in the back of a truck for days, he was still dressed in black when he finally arrived on the streets of Queens the following week. Once in the presence of his mother – in-law the *coyote* delivered him over in exchange for the last instalment payment for successfully delivering him into the United States.

Safely released to her husband in New York, two months after she began her trip, Matilda Pérez described a similar situation. After the first down payment of 2.500 dollars, she left her hometown in Ecuador and travelled to *Manta*, a city on the coast of Ecuador from where she travelled to Guatemala by sea. “We were cramped into the centre of the small boat. We had no privacy for our personal needs,” she said. “The trip took eight endless days. We ate sardines and bread and drank lots of water. I was so sea sick I kept throwing up everything I ate,” Pérez added.

Once ashore in Guatemala, at a safe distance, the coyotes followed the migrants who were organized into groups of three. Matilda was dressed as a local peasant woman, “I was given a white blouse a blue skirt and a waist band, the same that women in that region of Guatemala wear. I pretended being a local as we all walked towards the Mexican border. Many times, local authorities stopped us and demanded money, usually one hundred dollars at a time. I kept my cash in my hair and in my skirt belt. Once, a local police almost found it, I was very scared. It took us twenty days to go through Guatemala up to the Mexican border.”

Matilda travelled with her brother-in-law who encouraged her to continue after she fell and hurt her ankle. “I was able to walk by holding a piece of stick I found in the desert, I wanted to stay behind and wait for another group, but my brother-in-law would not leave me behind.”

Once over the Mexican border, after paying the second instalment to the *coyotes*, the group of migrants was again briefed on local customs, Mexican history and geography. “They made us familiar with the names of Mexican border towns where most people resemble us. There are other nearby cities where the population is mostly white and

we could not mistakenly say that we came from these places because we would become suspect,” she added.

As they travelled through mountainous desert regions towards the U. S. border an extensive network of coyotes spread out over the distance guided the migrants along the way. “At night we were kept together in small rooms after walking endlessly during the day. When we were close to the frontier, we continued our journey by night. We crossed over by walking for many hours in swamplands; I sank up to my neck in putrid water and again I relied on my brother-in-law who urged me to continue. I kept reminding myself about my husband waiting for me in New York and the two children that I left behind. Many times I thought I would never see them again.”

Once across the border, Matilda paid the *coyotes* her third instalment for that portion of the journey. Adopting the cultural traits of Mexican peasants, they continued their trip organized into small groups, walking along the Arizona frontier towards the city of Los Angeles, from where they continued to their final destination in Queens by plane. “When we finally got to Los Angeles, a new group of *coyotes* took-over the operation and we were booked on a flight at seven the following morning. These men smoked drugs all night. Since it became too late to find us lodging one of the coyotes took us to his home, where we waited until daylight. He was married and had a small child. The following morning he overslept and we lost the flight. He then bought two more tickets out of his own money. Two of them took us to the airport; they were dressed in long black coats with dark glasses covering their eyes. After filling out some papers, they told us not to look face-to-face at any one and to act natural, as if we were Mexicans. Several hours later, we were in Queens.”

Sometimes Matilda regrets having left her two children, a 13-year-old boy and a ten-year old girl, who she has not seen for the past 5 years. “They live with their grandmother, who is not kind to them, they complain a lot about how she treats them. I am thinking of bringing them with us or even going back to them, I don’t know what to do.”

Since her arrival, Matilda has had another baby who is now two-years-old. She sells bottled water, soft drinks and beer on her bicycle in Flushing Park, where many times she has been hassled by local police looking for illegal substances. Sometimes they turn their heads regarding her immigration papers, as pretending that they are legally in the United States.

1.8 Invisibility: The two sides of a mirror

This invisibility phenomenon functions at two different levels, it also affects people back home that are unable to migrate. While Ecuadorian migrants become invisible by blending into the new cultural environment where they live, back home some relatives of those abroad choose to differentiate themselves from other members of their community by adopting constructed images of ‘otherness.’ Remittance money allows relatives to adopt modern lifestyles expressed through the conspicuous acquisition of imported goods, clothing and material objects associated with life in the United States. As a consequence, cultural characteristics linked to poverty and deprivation disappear. By adopting new patterns of behaviour, they choose to distance themselves from a historic past burdened with social stigma, a situation which evidences that the process of identification is not only a cohesive element of sameness, but also has a differentiating characteristic of separation.

These are some of the symptoms of a process of nihilistic delusion, by which migrants and relatives back home adopt new external appearances in order to render past heritage inconspicuous, distancing and differentiating members of the same community from one another.

Nevertheless, in both cases in which people shed all external markers of social and cultural visibility, identification goes underground stored in embodied memories, which emerge at will and are publicly or privately manifest during specific moments of social action, reinforced by the consumption of symbolic commodities and the expression of cultural traits.

1.9 Independence Day: Now you see me again

I come to the market to buy and sell the chains of time.

On August 10, 2002, over 100.000 Ecuadorians gathered in Flushing Park in Queens, to celebrate the Ecuadorian Independence Day; one of the largest events held in this park, which each year on the same date brings together the largest gathering of Ecuadorians in the world. Migrants gather to enjoy a monumental eight-hour show with Latin American artists, Hispanic celebrities, local politicians, and catholic priests who take advantage of the situation to proselytize to the large audience. Fundamentally, they take part of such a massive gathering to become culturally visible without becoming invisible, legal and illegal migrants are together, unlikely differentiated from each other, caught in a temporary buffer zone.

Under the hot summer sun, this open-air fair brings together migrants of all ages and from all regions of Ecuador who live in the states of New York and New Jersey. They come to savour traditional dishes, to purchase nostalgic products, music, and souvenirs, and to take part in a collective and individual expression of cultural awareness.

Most people carry Ecuadorian flags and wear yellow, red, and blue T-shirts and headscarves.

From very early in the morning, Ecuadorian migrants converge at Flushing Park. The first to arrive get as close as possible to the stage, standing for hours waiting for the performers and separated from the stage by heavy metal barriers. On the opposite extreme of the park, kiosks and food-stands are set-up along the park's open pathways catering to the public, avid to purchase souvenirs and to savour 'traditional' Ecuadorian dishes.

By eleven in the morning, a trail of bluish smoke follows the direction of the summer wind over the crowd. Strolling along the kiosks, one has the same impression of walking down a main street in a rural town in the Andes. Whole roasted pigs, lay flat on large trays from which portions are served in plastic plates together with abundant side dishes of baked potatoes, fried plantain and *tostado* (a variety of toasted corn) found only in the highlands of the Andes. These grains of corn cooked with lard in large pans become crunchy on the outside and tender in the middle; their luscious golden marble-like texture shines under the midday sun, like tiger-eyes-stones. Food portions must be large, just the way food is served back home, rising high in the plates and to the brim, almost beyond capacity.

The salmagundi of aromas that emanate from the serpent-like arrangements of kiosks along the pathways, overpower all other sensorial geographies in the park. The voices of women calling out to people going by, offering their dishes, is suggestive of a rural market back in Ecuador. Sensory perception and embodied memories convert this park in New York State, into a place back in the rural Ecuadorian Andes.

In the kiosks, family members take turns together selling and serving the dishes. Some hands wearing transparent plastic gloves serve the food while others collect the money from customers and toss the bills into a large cardboard box at the back of the kiosk; loose bills of all denominations pile one on top the other, filling the box, almost to the top.

I approached a young man, wearing a handkerchief with the colours of the Ecuadorian flag on his head, in his hands a complete roasted guinea pig stretched from side to side in a plastic plate. He grabbed it with his bare hands and bit deep into its crisp toasted skin, which crunched under his teeth, resonating in the cavity of his mouth like miniature fireworks exploding within the skyline in his head. “I enjoy coming here once a year,” he said joyously, “Only when I come to celebrate Independence Day can I taste this food. I was born here in New York and have never been to Ecuador. I learnt to eat *cuyes* from my father; he says these little animals have the taste of Ecuador in them, so this is my way of tasting what he tastes,” he said smiling, as he took another bite encouraged by his friends who jokingly cheered him to continue.

People gather at this Independence Day celebration to share their sameness and assert their distinctiveness as they come into contact with other members of the community; to reconnect to the homeland of their imagined past, via embodied memories shocked to the present by an array of tastes, textures, sounds, smells and images abundantly displayed during this collective feast.

While walking back, I advance along the crowded path that leads to the stage, where thousands of people go back and forth along the route exploring commercial kiosks that offer health insurance plans, internet services, bank accounts, newspapers,

money and merchandise remittance services and all sorts of souvenirs, especially t-shirts with slogans about the pridefulness of being Ecuadorian. The hottest item was a yellow, blue and red t-shirt, identical to the one worn by the national soccer team players during the recent World Cup in Korea. During this stroll, I encountered an acquaintance that became vital to my future observations.

1.10 Edgar Chocho: A soul in exchange for one ticket into hell

“I have come hoping to return home following the elusive path that changes directions with every step.”

The first time I met Edgar Chocho, – he insisted to be identified by his name – was during 1987, we were sitting in adjoining seats during a flight between Quito and Panama City. I was on assignment for a television station in Ecuador; Chocho had begun an odyssey to escape an oppressive rural lifestyle, which did not allow him to make enough income to support his wife and three daughters.

It was his first time on an airplane, the first time away from his town, the first time alone without his family, the first time facing the unknown in another country. All he knew about his uncertain faith was what he had learnt from reading books. Using maps obtained from travel agencies, he had carefully charted his course from *Chordeleg*, his rural hometown all the way across Mexico into the United States.

Once in Panama, I wished him the best as we parted in the airport lobby. Before becoming invisible among other passengers, he turned towards me and said, “Will see you again, one of these days, I hope.”

Fifteen years later, there is Chocho, standing in the crowd, calling out my name aloud waving his hands at me from among the people gathered to watch the show in Flushing Park; after a brief conversation, he offers me a phone number where he could be reached at work. He did mention that I should call after ten at night.

This situation offered an exceptional opportunity to establish a relationship of trust with a person who had experienced many of the vicissitudes that illegal migrants face in diaspora. I asked him if he would mind being an informant for my research. He gladly offered his assistance. “Ask me anything you like, I can tell you so many things, like what it is like to be poor, to have three young daughters while holding your hands, watch other children eat ice cream and not being able to explain to them that you don’t have money to buy them one. Ask me anything about why I am here and why I left them behind, ask me I will tell you all,” he said, in a compelling tone.

He told me that after we had departed at the airport back in 1987, he and his brother-in-law began a journey through Central America and Mexico into the United States. Chocho, a witty and highly intelligent person, spoke about how he followed the maps he obtained from the travel agency back in Ecuador, successfully charting the route across the border into the United States. He told me how he sold his old motorcycle and acquired a large debt with a loan shark to finance his trip; he described the process for obtaining his passport and documents, and how he bought enough food on credit from the local storekeeper so that his family would survive for two weeks, before leaving on his journey.

On several occasions over telephone conversations, while he was working the night shift at the factory where he has been working since he arrived in the United States, Chocho said to me, “ After I crossed into Mexico from Guatemala I bought airline tickets for several local up to the border with the United States. It took me two days to complete the trip through Mexico. When I finally encountered the Mexican authorities at the U.S. border crossing, I decided to tell the truth. I do not like to lie. I said a prayer and asked

for help from the almighty above. I then gave the officer my passport with 70 dollars in cash placed among the pages and I told him what I was up to. The officer looked at me and said that he had a fondness for honest people. He said, 'I don't like when people try to fool me.' After looking at me directly in the eye, he guided me towards a narrow passageway that led to the other side of the building and wished me good luck. That was the last time I saw my brother-in-law, who had tried to outsmart the Mexican authorities by trying to pass as Mexican national, speaking in a faked local accent. The authorities annoyed with his behaviour immediately deported him back to Ecuador.

Chocho walked through the long passage alone, on the other side a bus parked on the hot pavement was departing for San Diego. Some hours later, he was in the United States. After eluding immigration officers on several occasions Chocho was arrested once on his way north; he paid a fine and a couple of days later, he was finally on his way to New Jersey, where for the past 15 years he has worked a seven-day- a- week night shift in a clothing-manufacturing factory.

During these years, he has sent back enough money for his wife to build a large three-story cement house and for his three daughters to start university studies. He wants them to become doctors. So far, two have quit to marry, and the youngest is still in veterinary school. "My wife has spent a lot of my money on parties and celebrations and one of my daughters told me it is better that I don't return to avoid fighting with her mother," he said. "I gave them everything I made, I spent nothing on myself and after 15 years I am still illegal in this country."

Chocho has decided not to send any more money to his wife. Rather, he has decided to send monthly quotas to his mother and to his youngest daughter. He keeps his

money in cash in his backpack or in the very small room that he rents in a house from a Guatemalan family.

1.11 Poverty: A living experience.

He told me about his childhood. “I grew-up in a very poor family. We lived in a four by seven metres dirt house, together with my two brothers, one sister, and my parents, all we owned were our wooden spoons. You can always tell how many people are in a family by the amount of wooden spoons near to the stove. In our house, there were five. That is all we had,” he said.

He slept on a cane matt placed on the dirt floor in the one-room-house, together with the rest of the family, protected from the cold Andean nights covered with his dead grandfather’s old *poncho*. “There are no toilets; when you need to go, you do it in the bushes near the house, you just bend over and that’s it. Until I was seven-years-old, I was so scared of going out into the dark cold night, that I would urinate on myself. That’s how poor we were,” he added.

In Chocho’s village, houses’ interiors are dark without windows. Because there are no chimneys, the walls are covered with soot from cooking on the *fogón*, – a rudimentary stove built with four river stones that cooks on dry wood. – Houses are cool and have a strong characteristic cumulative smell of everything that has taken place in its interior.

Chocho’s father was a Native from the region; his mother was white of ancient Spanish descent. He remembers that these ethnic and cultural disparities created a tense family situation, which awoke him to the realities of his social status in an ethnically segregated society. He considers himself a *mestizo* who did not completely belong to the

native or the white communities. “I never quite understood why my mother married an Indian or why my father did not marry someone like himself,” he told me.

1.12 Embodied Memories and Symbolic Consumption

The night before he embarked on his flight to North America, Edgar Chocho made a tour of the town on his motorcycle. He visited all the churches and sanctuaries in his hometown to pray to the saints and virgins, in his words, bidding farewell to them and asking for their protection and guidance. As part of the process of becoming invisible, Chocho got rid of everything that could give away his identity while travelling to the United States, excepting his religious icons. “I am a strong believer in *El Señor de Andacocha*, –an image of Jesus– in *La Virgen de la Nube* (also revered as the Virgin of the absentee Ecuadorian) and in *La Virgen del Cisne* (originally from the city of Loja in the southern regions of the Ecuadorian Andes). I also own an image of *San Martín de Porres*, – a black saint– They are all sacred, and they all help me.” Even though he travelled with very little personal possessions, he carried his religious icons with him at all times. “I hid my images in my underwear close to my body, where no one would dare put their hands.”

Back home, just as most men do, Chocho drank *Zhumir* a traditional drink made from cane alcohol. In his own joking words, *Zhumir* is a personal complement to the Ecuadorian identity acquired at birth,” meaning that this drink takes you back to your earliest cultural essence. “It is better than whisky, rum or vodka. It is healthier.” This is a strong consensus shared among all the migrant men from the same region where Edgar came from and to whom I spoke during my research; they all considered *Zhumir* to bear the authentic taste of their land.

Chocho, who was not aware that *Zhumir* was now readily available in local stores in New York, said, “*Zhumir* is made in the town of *Chordeleg*, just three kilometres from where I was born. Here in the United States, most of the time I drink beer, I drink Budweiser, it tastes American,” He suggested that one day we should drink a bottle to celebrate our encounter and so that we could talk better.

These conversations with Chocho re-oriented my research towards symbolic commodities articulated within the process of identification. It was through these encounters that I decided to heighten my observations on the consumption of guinea pigs, *Zhumir* and religious icons and their relationship to identification among most migrants coming from the southern Andean region of Ecuador. The consumption of these symbolic elements within a transforming context of migration reinforced its cultural significance as individual and collective connections to a bastion of common cultural identity.

When he arrived in New Jersey, a relative helped him rent a small bed in a room where he lived with ten other men. “It was a cockroach nest. The smell was unbearable; the stench of drunks and their dirty feet soiled the air, besides there was no place to shower, just a sink and a dirty toilet. All I owned was a bag filled with some personal belongings and the clothes on my back. You save as much money as you can, to send home. You don’t buy anything, not even soap,” he said. “Now I understand my wife, now I know what it is like to sleep in a crowded room with a snoring drunk man next to you,” he added jokingly.



Fig 21 Migrants carry *Virgin of the Cloud* to the stage during Independence Day celebration in Flushing Park, August 10, 2003



Fig. 22 The *Virgin of the Cloud*, also referred to as the *Madre del Ecuatoriano Ausente*, (Mother of the Absent Ecuatorian) is taken to the stage early in the morning to open the Independence Day celebration in Flushing Park, August 10, 2003.

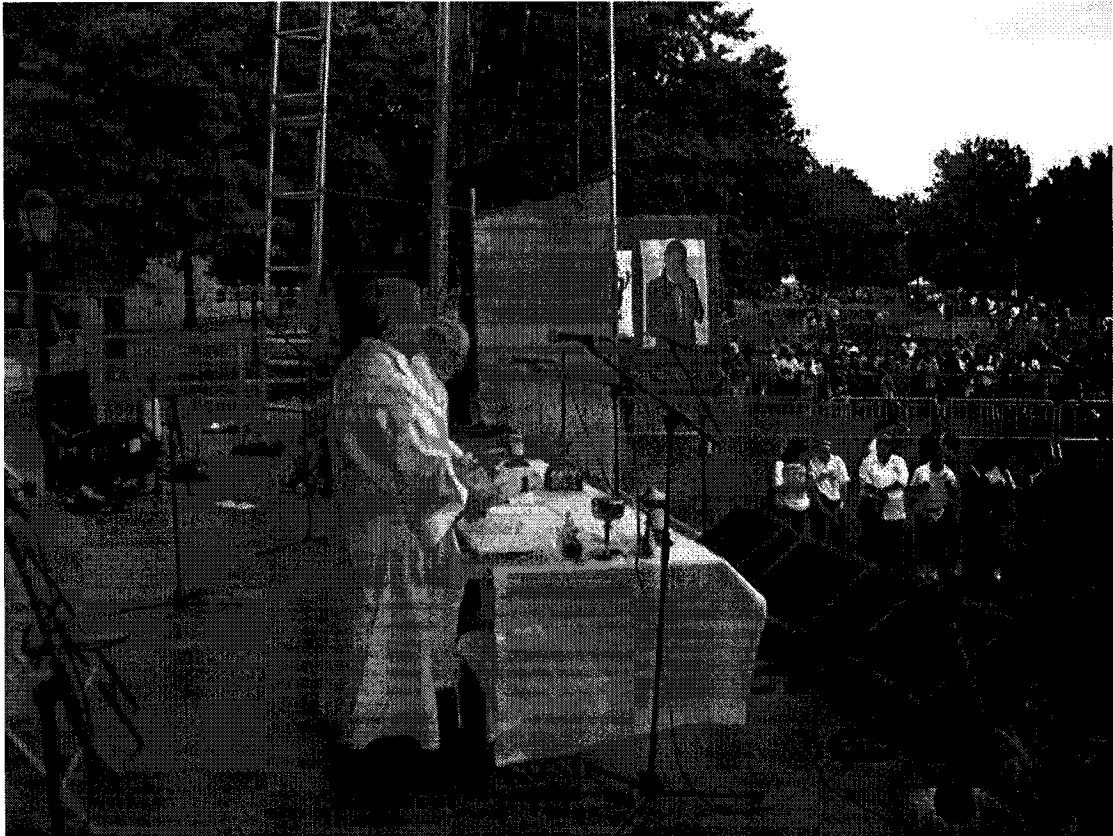


Fig. 23 Early on a rainy day on August 10, 2003, Catholic priest initiate the celebration of the Independence Day celebration with a mass.



Fig. 24 The *Virgin of The cloud* on stage during the opening ceremony.

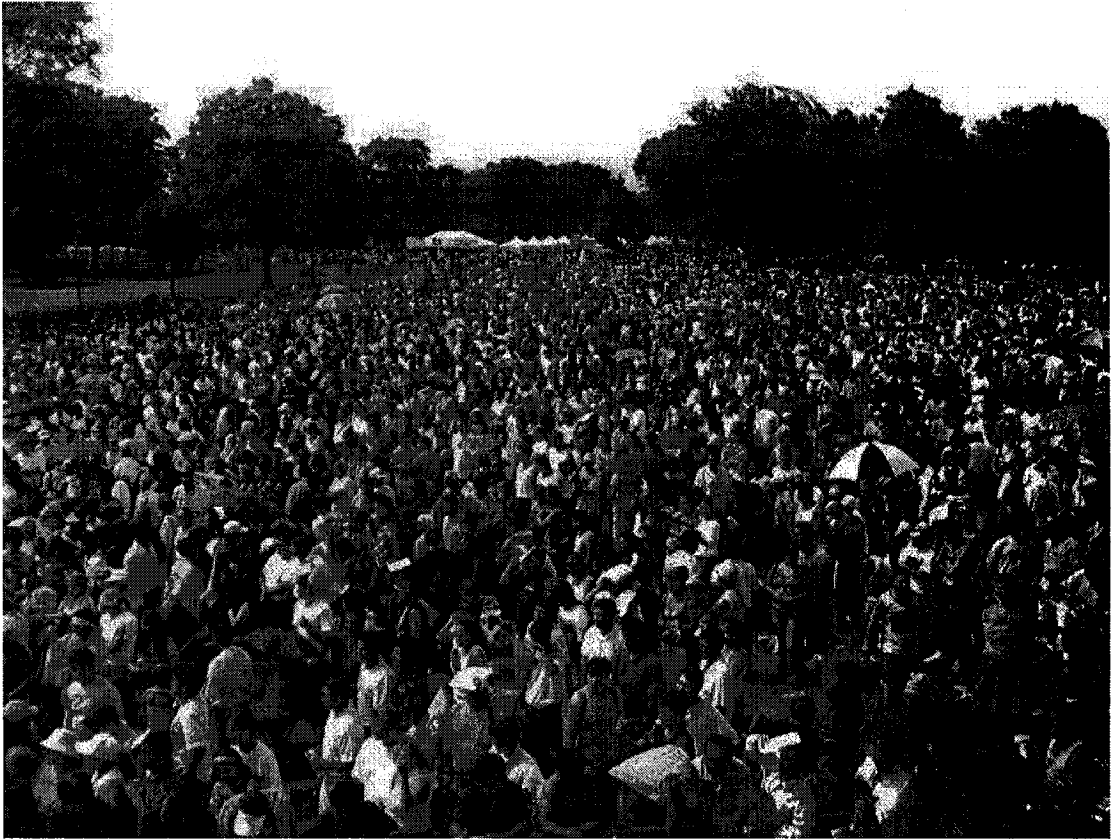


Fig. 25 According to police accounts, close to 100,000 Ecuadorians migrants gathered in Flushing Park each year to celebrate their Independence Day on August 10, or the closest Sunday to that date.



Fig. 26 Yellow, red and blue, the colours of the Ecuadorian flag are visible everywhere during the Independence Day celebration.

Chapter 4

Products and Nostalgia: Now you see me again

*“Time grew on their scars
As memories of voyages
Stream in a sea of awareness.”*

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter I have advanced the scope of my analysis beyond the exploration for material objects, which retain characteristics of cultural attachment to the past and are capable of resisting the onslaught of globalization, to encompass the consumption of symbolic commodities, which originate in specific cultural and physical environments and are capable of activating embodied signs of ‘connectiveness’ to a common cultural bedrock. Expanding the field of analysis to the consumption of symbolic elements such as guinea pigs, religious icons and *Zhumir* will offer insight to the articulation of material culture, embodied memories and the imagination within the process of identification among diasporic Ecuadorians.

In Western markets the growing supply of and demand for ‘exotic’ foods and articles originating in distant regions of the globe, evidences the trans-cultural presence of certain unconventional commodities attached to past human social action. Many stores in North America and Europe specialize in importing and trading all sorts of commodities not produced locally, which are essential components of the cultural identification of human groups in diaspora. Whether consumed as ‘traditional’ food by migrants, or whether they have become part of ‘faked cosmopolitan elite’ as an outcome of global encounter, the study of the consumption of these commodities can reveal aspects of the construction of cultural identification.

'Nostalgic products' is the term coined by several international brokers, traders and transport companies, usually established in developed countries, to describe comestibles goods, symbolic articles and handicrafts, yearned for and consumed by individuals and groups, which have the potential to reconnect consumers to a distant and distinct cultural awareness.

For these 'nostalgic products' to be considered 'authentic,' it is indispensable for them to have had direct physical contact or have originated within specific cultural or physical environments; not only because of their unique flavours, textures, scents colours, smells and cultural characteristics, but because by having had direct contact with distant home environments, concedes to them an indefinable special quality of uniqueness. The contact with, and consumption of these 'authentic' nostalgic products can activate embodied memories, which evoke emotional situations, capable of establishing a dynamic relationship with a distant geographical space and time (Bell and Valentine, 1997: 155).

The condition of uniqueness assigned to material objects, which have sustained an intimate contact with symbolic locations, persons or situations capable of activating embodied memories, is what Laura Marks (2000) refers to as 'aura'. Her definition on this matter draws its inspiration from the studies of Marx, Bergson, Benjamin, Proust, Deluze and many other social scientist, who have written extensively on the subject of sensorial perception, embodied memories and objects of recollection.

"Aura is the sense an object gives that it can speak to us of the past, without ever letting us completely decipher it. It is a brush with involuntary memory, memory that can only be arrived through a shock. We return again and again to the auratic object, still thirsty (187, referring to Paul Velery), because it can never completely satisfy our desire to recover that memory. (Marks, 2000,81)

The analysis of material culture endowed with symbolic significance allows insight into the social construction of embodied memories and sensorial perception. This analysis also offers insight into cultural circumstances stored in objects and which can be released when exposed to over distance and time to new sensorial perception (Dant, 1999, 14).

Based on these premises, I sustain with Mark (2000:64) that the consumption of 'nostalgic products' act as 'sensorial triggers,' which activate involuntary, individual and collective embodied memories (Marks, 2000: 64).

1.2 Consuming Memories: Understanding symbolic consumption *I give you the keys to my universe in exchange for a glance through your eyes.*

To better comprehend the links between consumption and identification we must understand consumption beyond its economic dimension and delve into its social significance. This concern prompt us to understand the consumption of symbolic commodities as more than the circulation of goods within an economic system and as mere components of a power structure in which those who control the production of goods control consumers (Friedman, 1994: 3).

Furthermore, to be able to deal with the concerns of the circulation of symbolic objects as commodities in socio-economic circumstances within the realms of anthropology, it was then necessary to understand the consumption of guinea pigs, religious icons and *Zhumir* by Ecuadorian migrants, as part of a social process of exchange deeply rooted in a pre-capitalist mode of production, a system by which these commodities are part of an reciprocate exchange linked to deeper social dynamics.

The circulation of goods as bearers of symbolic meanings and as part of identification is essential to grasping the significance of the social bonds activated during

the consumption of 'nostalgic products' that bear a continuous relationship between the people who share them. "Things, both natural and man-made, are appropriated into human culture in such a way that they re-present the social relations of culture, standing in for other human beings." (Dant, 1999: 1)

These artefacts and objects establish a metaphysical bond between social groups and establish links of cultural identity, (Lee, 1993:27, 28) especially when commodities are part of a system of codes strengthened by embodied memories.

1.3 Memories, Material Culture and the Senses

The songs of crickets bore the memories of night

To understand the concept, by which the senses can be creators and retainers of embodied memories, implies understanding sensorial experiences as socially constructed phenomena. This condition has been extensively studied by Howes (1991) Classen (1993), (Stoller1989), Dant (1999), and (Synnott1994), among others. It implies realizing that sensorial experiences are symbolically coded reactions stored and activated in the body, within a context of social dynamics (Marks, 2000:145).

The changing socio-cultural contexts in which people interact and the continuous exposure to new sensorial experiences, influenced by time, social interrelations, the media, and the imagination, transform and distil memories beyond the recognition of rational experience. (Appadurai, 1996) It is these memories of uncertain origin, stratified into the cultural essence of people who have a common cultural heritage, which I refer to as embodied memories.

Even though sensorial experiences can connect people to a common cultural essence, the consumption of 'nostalgic products' or 'auratic' commodities by individuals as part of a collective does not homogenize expressions of cultural awareness and

uniqueness; rather, this process of consumption is part of a cultural process that exposes the diversity and the uniqueness of individual and collective experiences within the transforming circumstances that originate in alternate dimensions of space and time. The connection to a common cultural bedrock by means of the consumption of symbolic objects is both an individual and a collective experience.

1.4 Guinea pigs: more than food.

"I cannot see, hear or smell you, but I can touch you with my mouth open among the crowded spaces of my mind."

Long before the arrival of the Spanish Conquistadors, guinea pigs have been part of the peasant's 'traditional' diet as a symbolic food served during special festivities in the Andean regions (Cuvi, 2001: 40 Archetti, 1997:30).

Guinea pigs also transcend their roles as symbolic food and become a healing medium for the body and soul. Used to diagnose sickness by native healers, these household animals are part of a complex system of traditional medicine and of social interaction, (Archetti, 1977: x, 14, 15), which extends beyond the distance of migration and helps mitigate the process of globalization among Ecuadorians in diaspora by becoming a medium that reconnects people to a common cultural essence.

According to Eduardo Archetti, who has done extensive research on the subject, guinea pigs in the Andean regions of Ecuador belong to the realm of the feminine. In rural areas, peasant women keep guinea pigs in their kitchens as food and as commodities for social and economic exchange. They are not treated as pets, they are not named or counted (Archetti, 1997, 14, 16); they are part of the household and are reared by the elder woman of the family as food for special occasions. When a woman marries, she takes her guinea pigs with her to the new home. They are fed leftovers and grass brought from nearby areas and are kept the inside protected from outside predators such as dogs

and cats. Even though guinea pigs share the same domestic space with humans they are raised to be killed and their death, contrary to pets such as cats and dogs, are not a motive of sadness, quite to the contrary, their sacrifice is a motive of celebration.

Nonetheless, in one way or another, all the members of the household and the community become involved in the rearing and consumption of guinea pig. According to Edgar Chocho, men can also raise their guinea pigs “When I left my home to travel to America, I had 43 guinea-pigs, they were all mine, I personally took care of them.” This remark differs with Archetti’s observation on the matter.

Guinea pigs are part of a strong sensorial relationship among people that live in rural communities in the Andes. All informants agreed that these animals actually absorb the taste of the local households and geographical environment, which they share with humans. Fed a particular type of grass that is common to the region and easily found near houses, guinea pigs acquire a particular flavour conditioned by environmental factors related to the southern Andes of Ecuador.

While in the United States, Edgar Chocho claims that he does not eat guinea pigs, “Because they are raised in farms in the United States and they do not have the same flavour as the ones back home.” He added jokingly that, “Some times, I might have a small bite, when a friend receives one from relatives back home, only then I might taste a small piece. The guinea-pigs that come from Ecuador taste like heaven.” Besides, he confessed that no one back home had ever sent him any type of food or drinks. He went on to say that because his relationship with his wife had deteriorated it was highly improbable that she would take the trouble of sending him this treat all the way from Ecuador. Chocho seemed disappointed when he acknowledged that relatives send cooked

guinea pigs as reinforcement of affective bonds. “It is a way of expressing concern for someone who is far away,” he said. He added that “Guinea pigs are the best meat, because these little animals, do not eat excrement like other animals do. Guinea pigs are eaten mostly on special occasions, a celebration among friends and relatives is not a celebration without guinea pigs and authentic *Zhumir*.”

According to Laura Marks, (2002: xiii) we all hold knowledge in our bodies and our senses. Such is the case of emotions and memories of home and of relatives, which resurface among migrants while consuming guinea pigs in diaspora. These embodied experiences allow us to emotionally relocate past social actions. Embodied memories establish a bridge to an absent social space or time, by stimulating memories trapped in the sensorial realm of the body.

Hernán Astudillo (his real name), an Anglican priest in Toronto who comes from El Valle, a town close to the cities of *Cuenca* and *Chordeleg*, situated 30 minutes by car from *Deleg*, and who has not been back to Ecuador in the past five years, agrees that “[T]he best food when you are away from home are roasted *cuy*s (guinea pigs). He recounts that not to long ago his daughter who was visiting relatives back home brought back to Toronto two guinea pigs that his mother prepared for him. “We rent part of a house with a Canadian lady,” he said, “One night my daughter and I were eating the one of the guinea pigs very slowly nibbling at it with our hands and savouring every pinch while connecting to my memories of home. We ate half and left the rest in the refrigerator. With the intention of finishing what he had left over from the previous day, we went to the kitchen in haste. To our surprise, we did not find the guinea pigs where we left them the night before. Our landlady had opened the refrigerator and saw these

animals looking straight into her eyes in the dish and was so scared that she threw them right into the garbage, that was the end of our feast,” he added jokingly.

In other words, guinea pigs reared in Ecuador and cooked by relatives who deliver them to relatives in New York, are feeding more than the stomachs, they are stimulating and reinforcing social connections related to a common cultural essence.

1.5 Memories of Home: Guinea pigs in diaspora

Matilda Perez, who arrived in Queens three years ago, said that when she lived in Ecuador she owned many pigs, she fed them with vegetables left over from the kitchen and grass from outside her house and they were only eaten on special occasions. Some restaurants do serve guinea pigs as their specialty. In the city of *Ambato*, in the central Andean region of Ecuador, many restaurants cater to tourists and locals, where guinea pigs are cooked en masse. These animals raised in small farms owned by local women as part of rural development projects, are fed special artificial formulas that make them grow to twice the size of normal guinea pigs in half the time. However, according to Matilda they are not as tasty. “When they are placed over the fire they take longer to roast and their skin never becomes crunchy, it becomes like chewing gum because they are too fat.”

Matilda added, “It is also possible to eat guinea pigs in Flushing Park in Queens, on the weekends. Women hide among the trees with portable BBQs and roast them out of the view of park authorities. People buy them and go off to the benches and eat them away from public view, they pay 30 dollars for each one. These guinea pigs are also raised in farms close to New Jersey, but they cannot be compared to the real ones that come from Ecuador.”

Hernán Astudillo says that every family has a particular way of preparing guinea pigs for consumption, “A friend of the family feeds them the leaves from the garlic plants in his backyard, those are the best I have ever tasted and together with *Zhumir* they are extraordinary.”

The consumption of guinea pig meat and cultural identification goes beyond the consumption of guinea pigs as a supplement to protein deficient food among peasants in the highlands. It is the reflection of a complex system of social dynamics articulated in the concrete practices of eating a type of food during specific moments in time that expresses emotional ‘connectiveness’ to a social group; this practice allows us to understand the relation between ideas, beliefs and social action. (Archetti, 1997: 15).

When guinea pigs are consumed during social events, such as weddings, baptisms, first communion, or any special celebration, they are part of a system that follows certain rules; they represent something irreducible to instrumental content, and their actions have special significance (Archetti, 1997:17), which substantiates the complexity between symbolic material objects and social action.

Sandro Rodas, the owner of a transport company that specializes in the remittance of money and the importation of goods from Ecuador, said that every week people from Ecuador send small shipments of guinea pigs to relatives in Queens. It is legal to import them if they are cooked, he said. “They are individually wrapped in aluminium foil, and sealed in plastic containers. During certain celebrations, I have received up to 30 guinea pigs especially for the feasts that accompany the christening of children in the Catholic Church. They are cut into portions and served with side dishes of potatoes, corn and vegetables, accompanied with *Zhumir*, which is a must; if you want to cause a better

impression among guests you must serve guinea pigs and *Zhumir* together at all special celebrations. The more guinea pigs and *Zhumir* the more prestige the owner receives.” During the Christmas and the 2004 New Year celebrations, Rodas said that the volume of Guinea pigs and ‘prepared’ alcoholic beverages had tripled. Additionally, the increased demand for guinea pigs and *Zhumir* are indexical of a growing migrant population or an increase in nostalgic consumption, which is legally sanctioned by the customs, which allow a restricted amount of these items per person.

1.6 Roasted, Fried, Baked or Boiled: More than taste, a matter of attachment.

The time you give me

Is the time I am yours.

Traditionally, women slaughtered these animals by crushing their nose against a stone. With only the guts discarded, guinea pigs are cooked whole, including head and feet. They can be roasted, fried or boiled. How they are prepared expresses social connection and affective bonds between people. “Undoubtedly, roast guinea-pig is the ‘dish of kings’ *par excellence*” (Archetti, 1997: 60). This does not mean that there are hierarchies between roasting, at the top of the social scale, and any other form of preparation at the inferior part of this scale. These preparations conform to certain ‘recipes’ and represent creative aspects of food preparation based on knowledge and culinary practices that express ideology.

A roasted guinea pig has a ‘gleam’ to its surface, which is achieved by marinating the whole animal one-day ahead. This is evidently a more laborious form of preparation and represents a higher symbolic meaning. Consequently, it can be served in one piece, the meat has a ‘better’ taste and the intrinsic temperature is better maintained. Guinea pigs are fried when there is not enough time for preparation, it merely requires a few

hours of marinating to cook them this way. In a matter of hours, the *animalito* (little animal), as peasants refer to them, is ready. They are cut into pieces and fried in lard. According to Archetti, there is no agreement about boiled guinea pig. For some women it is "really bad and slimy as jelly." (Archetti, 1997: 66) However, this is a similar practice to the preparation of other dishes, such as soups and casseroles, which are part of Andean traditional gastronomy. However, serving the dishes on special occasions is as relevant as preparation. A roasted guinea pig is much more appetizing and aesthetically relevant than a boiled guinea pig. It requires more personal involvement and concern to prepare a roasted guinea pig; it not only looks like a guinea pig, it appeals to the senses in a more involved manner, it tastes better, it feels crunchier, it smells richer and it has a more manageable consistency when eaten with the hands.

Baking guinea pigs requires a bread oven and marinating the meat previously. This form of preparation requires advance planning since it must be roasted on the same day bread is baked to optimize the use of resources (Archetti, 1997: 68). Furthermore, roasting requires that guinea pigs be rotated continuously over the charcoal until done, this way of preparation impregnates the charcoal's aroma to the meat. Roasting is a slower process, which allows the skin to become crunchier and shinier. Baking it in a bread oven requires that they remain in one place until completely cooked, it is a similar process but it appeals differently to the senses as a cultural construct.

Even though, the meaning of food is expressed through its preparation, it is also necessary to make observations on the way it is consumed, who eats, with whom, where and why, to avoid a biased analysis regarding its symbolic meaning in preparation. "Food is not therefore a symbol in itself, a closed 'text' abstracted from social reality, but an act

which is mainly social, an opening to the world that allows people to experience commensality and to symbolize different kinds of social relations, while still involving social content.” (Archetti, 1997: 69).

On the last occasion I spoke to Edgar Chocho, he told me that two important things had happened in his life. “First I bought cellular phones for my mother and my youngest daughter. Now I can speak to them whenever I want. One night I received a call from my daughter while she was on her way home from university and she told me that she had passed her third year in veterinary studies, I was so happy, to know it immediately, I was so proud.

With the cell phone, I can talk to my mother more often. She does not have to go to a public phone; she can talk from wherever she is performing her daily activities. For the first time since I left home, she has sent me three guinea pigs. They arrived coincidentally on July 4th. After picking them up at the transport company, I could not wait to get home. I sopped on the side of the road and ate one completely ‘bare to the bones;’ tears filled my eyes; it was just wonderful. The second guinea pig I warmed in the microwave and ate it piece by piece during the rest of the week; the last is frozen waiting for the right moment.”

1.7 *Zhumir*: A drink from the past

A kiss of intimate passion that guides me away from your lips

In the southern region of Ecuador, *Zhumir* is a ‘traditional’ alcoholic drink made from sugarcane. A woman who possessed a large sugar cane plantation in the 50s started the distillery where today *Zhumir* is produced. Despite the fact sugarcane was introduced by the Spanish in relatively recent times, this drink has become a cultural marker among

most people from the region during special celebrations. The origin of the symbolism of the consumption of alcohol beverages during popular festivities associated with the consumption of food probably originated from drinking *chicha* (corn beer), which is prepared according to the availability of corn in a pre-capitalist mode of production. Today, *Zhumir* is more easily readily available throughout the year. Because *Zhumir* is distilled, it can be stored for longer periods, unlike all fermented drinks such as beer and wine.

Nevertheless, this 'tradition' of consuming cane alcohol in the Andean region is obviously a rather recent affair. The consumption of fermented drinks with alcoholic content such as *chicha* has been a ritual 'traditionally' associated to the articulation of social networks of reciprocity (Lentz, 1997: 198) 'ever since the beginning of time'. A large variety of alcoholic beverages called *chicha* were made from fermented corn according to regional recipes, which were consumed during special festive celebrations, in which the *prioste* (the assigned patron financially responsible for a specific celebration) begins the drinking by offering each guest a glass, which must be consumed totally. Rejection is considered an unacceptable offence. Only young girls, pregnant women and feeding mothers can refuse to partake of the ceremony. Lately, men who belong to Protestant sects are allowed to reject the invitation to drink, because local communities are aware of the alcoholic prohibitions among its members.

Chicha is also consumed as a refreshing drink during the performance of *mingas* (collective chores performed by members of the community) supplied by the beneficiaries of the task performed, such as the construction of a road, the harvesting of crop or the improvement of a school.

1.8 *Zhumir*: A toast to sameness

We drink who we are.

It was during the decades of the 50s that the consumption of cane alcohol (*aguardiente*) became a traditional practice among rural communities, obviously as part of process of imitation of the White and *Mestizo* habits and as a marker of ‘improved’ social status and economic abundance (Lentz, 1997: 199, 200). The consumption of *Zhumir* has replaced the seasonally available ‘traditional’ fermented corn beverages, as part of a process of acculturation, facilitated by its permanent availability –*chicha*, the same as all fermented drinks, must be consumed all at once before it perishes-.

Zhumir is not flavoured with anise extract as other cane alcohol drinks traditionally consumed in neighbouring regions of Colombia and Ecuador. It maintains its peculiar taste from distilled locally produced sugar cane juice processed and mixed according to a family secret formula.

Hernán Astudillo, said that in his Andean hometown in El Valle, *Zhumir* is mixed with a tea extracted from a reddish flower called *ataco* or *sangurachi* that only grows in that region of Ecuador.

Edgar Chocho also confirmed this practice in *Chordeleg*, where he comes from and said that this tea used to give a peculiar colour to the drink grew only in the highlands of the Andes and possessed a very particular taste.

When referring to *Zhumir*, Hernán Astudillo, described it with the same words as Chocho, “it is a complement of the body,” he said jokingly. We drink it in many ways. One very common is to have a small glass of *Zhumir* after eating a guinea pig in order to help the digestive process. *Zhumir* is served especially when friends visit one another, consumed both during ceremonial and ordinary occasions. “In my hometown it is a

customary to have a *draque*, which is a drink prepared with *Zhumir* and certain plant extracts, after eating guinea pigs.” As a token of respect and friendship, all people I spoke to agree that *Zhumir* should be served pure in small glasses and drunk in one shot sharing the same glass. The association of *Zhumir* as a part of discourse of identification has become part of the marketing strategy of *Destileria Zhumir* who produces this drink for local and international markets. The following translation taking from their Web page evidences the cultural construction articulated within a process of identification and appropriated within a marketing strategy, which facilitates the creation of a sense of sameness among a segment of a population.

Chht!! (Onomatopoeic sound made calling for silence). Start thinking about the place where you are living. That’s right, place yourself at the centre of the planet, at 0° Latitude, or if you prefer in the middle of the world.

Think! You are in the place where Huayna Capac (Inca monarch, who annexed Ecuador to the Inca empire) father of Atahualpa (Last Inca at the time of the Spanish Conquest) who all his life loved the place where everyday the sun rises and falls at the same time, where sunlight is vertical, where the Metric system was discovered.

By now, do you realize that it is Ecuador? Well then, you must first feel ECUADORIAN and here is an inspiring hint: To be Ecuadorian is to grow-up surrounded by great mountains under the bluest of skies that you have ever seen, it is to trap the wind from the sea in a whisper and to be blinded by the sunset, it is listening to the concert of life in the forest, it is to be stunned by the absolute expressions of nature’s force.

That’s were I wish to see you. To be Ecuadorian is to be a good friend, chum or ‘brother’ (English word used in colloquial Spanish to signal closeness, friendship bond) to be present in good and bad times; to struggle day by day, no matter how difficult. It is to be spontaneous and to have an extraordinary imagination. It is to loose your voice for one week after a soccer match with the national soccer team. It is to still believe in serenades (to bring live music to a woman as part of a romantic courtship) even if it goes wrong; it is to become trapped in the fire of life as though each day was your last. ¡Qué bacán, qué gara, qué pleno! (Colloquial regional expressions, which define a situation of awe: bacán used in

Guayaquil, the coastal region of Ecuador; gara used in Cuenca, the southern region of the Andes; pleno, used in Quito, the central Andes).

Finally, this is only a point of view to try to express what it means to belong to this place, Ecuador. To love your country and to be together! FOREVER! Whether the national soccer team plays or not, irregardless of corrupt politicians, whether we witness unavoidable war: the essence of our country will be pure as long as each one of us knows the marvels that we have, who we are and are proud of it.

With this short foreword, it must be noted that ZHUMIR was born in the land of Ecuador, more than 40 years ago in Paute, near the city of Cuenca. In this warm valley, the place where Lorenzo de Cepeda and Atahualpa and Don Francisco Cabeza de Vaca (Spanish Conquistadors and Inca Monarch), were marvelled and who during a moment of enlightenment exclaimed: "This with a shot..." (inferring that a strong drink would better allow enjoyment of such a situation). My translation and interpretation of idiomatic expressions. (http://www.zhumir.com/index_b.asp)

1.9 Legality and Contraband: Memories without a visa.

The consumption of alcohol during special occasions among people in the Andes has long been part of a system of social reciprocity and generosity. When drinking begins among acquaintances and relatives, it continues until all persons involved are lying drunk and asleep on the ground (Lentz, 1997: 199). A process which has apparently been part of socialization among native communities since times immemorial and which has acquired new meanings and ritualistic expressions as an outcome of cultural encounter.

According to Victor Henriquez the distributor for *Zhumir* in the United States, migrants first introduced the drink locally, smuggled in their suitcases. About thirty years ago travel agencies back in Ecuador offered travelers a small discount if they would agree to carry a dozen bottles hidden among their personal belongings. Ecuadorian migrants living in the United States would pay considerably higher prices for this drink.

In recent years, because of the increasing demand for *Zhumir* in the United States and following a lengthy legal process, *Doen Zhumir*, Importers and Distributors, Inc., received a permit for the legal importation of *Zhumir* under strict regulations of the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

Even though *Zhumir* is imported legally into the United States and widely available in local stores, some migrants prefer to pay higher prices for contraband bottles. The price for a legally imported bottle of *Zhumir* is less than U.S. \$ 12, against U.S. \$20 for a contraband bottle. In Ecuador, the same bottle sells for U.S. \$2.

According to Henriquez, the only difference between contraband and legal *Zhumir* is the label. The drink is prepared at the distillery in Ecuador and bottled for local consumption and export. Because of U.S. regulations, the labels on the bottles for consumption in the U.S. must be printed in English and display a warning about the health hazards of alcohol consumption.

Henriquez says that migrants from the southern regions of Ecuador consume *Zhumir* during all their special celebrations. “It is as if they are capable of reliving their cultural essence when the drink *Zhumir*. Every one, regardless of age and social status has at one time or another consumed *Zhumir*, it is common in all social strata, and it is part of their culture. Served with guinea pigs and potatoes it is a must in *bautizos* (baptisms), *quinceaños* (fifteen –year birthday celebrations) *matrimonios* (weddings) and all social celebrations that mark special occasions.”

Recently there has been an increase in the demand for *Zhumir*, which is consistent with the growth of the population of illegal migrants from Ecuador and because of a local advertising campaign, which directly targets Ecuadorians and other Hispanic

communities in New York and New Jersey. This campaign positions the consumption of *Zhumir* among younger segments of the population de-emphasizing the 'traditionality' of the drink by using younger more westernized models, to represent the targeted consumers in the TV ads; a campaign aimed at boosting the prestige and social status of the drink among migrants by offering alternatives of the drink flavoured with lemon and coconut extract. The TV and newspaper ads recommend its consumption as rum, blended with fruit juices or soft drinks. Henriquez added, that the publicity campaign was aimed at informing consumers that *Zhumir* was available in stores in the U.S. because the consumption of contraband *Zhumir*, though impossible to quantify, was increasing considerably.

Henriquez added that certain local idiosyncrasies affect the consumption of *Zhumir* among the Ecuadorian population in the United States. During social events, consumers would boast that their *Zhumir* was 'authentic' because the labels on their bottles printed in Spanish evidenced a direct connection to home. Even though Henriquez dismissed this as a superficial peculiarity, for migrants this seems to be an indication of what Laura Marks refers to as the 'auratic' characteristics of commodities expressed through social action. The fact that it is contraband *Zhumir* makes it more valuable. Maybe the illegality of the drink is concurrent to the situation of illegality experienced by many illegal Ecuadorian migrants in diaspora.



Fig. 27 A *Cuy* in the hand...roasted guinea pigs for sale in Flushing Park.



Fig. 28 Roasted pigs, boiled corn on cobs and potatoes; a culinary feast loaded symbolism will trigger many embodied memories.



Fig. 29 An Ecuadorian migrant roasts guinea pigs with watchful eyes in Flushing Park in Queens.



Fig. 30 Ecuadorian migrants dressed in the colours of the national soccer team, enjoy the unique flavours of guinea pigs during the festivities on August 10, 2003.

1.10 Whisky versus *Zhumir*: Identification as difference

At certain events, such as those when Ecuadorian artists are invited to perform in nightclubs or hotel ballrooms in Queens or New Jersey, which draw large crowds of migrants that reconnect to their cultural essence through the performance of musical events, paradoxically, it is common to see migrants buying the most expensive scotch whiskies in a sumptuous display among their peers. Lately, the consumption of whisky has become a norm among migrants who wish to demonstrate financial success and urban savvy (Lentz, 1997, 207), which explains why *Zhumir* has become an even more relevant element of 'identification' among migrants, since it can be displayed or kept out of sight as part of a process of social articulation; part of a selective ritual of intimate communion or segregation. Even though expensive whisky is consumed as a sumptuous drink, to impress others during certain less formal social gatherings, usually *Zhumir* establishes a closer bond of 'identification.' In this case, the consumption of whisky, associated with western elitist cultural patterns, serves the process of 'identification' as a choice of becoming distant from social peers on certain occasions

According to Edgar Chocho and Hernan Astudillo, the consumption of whisky denotes economic capacity to purchase an expensive drink and to show-off status and urban shrewdness. However, in intimate reunions, bonds of closeness are asserted by consuming *Zhumir*.

1.11 Religious Icons: Virgins and Patron Saints

I sense your presence in the wind that blows the memories of your absence into oblivion.

For the past five hundred years, Catholicism has been intimately linked to the cultural essence of the peoples of the Andes. It became a strong and unifying element among

expressions of pre-Hispanic cultures, which though syncretized into the Catholic religion, nourished sui-generis regional interpretations and manifestations of Christianity without totalling becoming detached from ancestral cosmologies, which as an outcome produced a particular cultural baggage of amalgamated and inherited collective memories.

As part of this process of enculturation, several have been the outcomes of a long process of religious worship in Hispanic America. The people of the Ecuadorian Andes even though culturally similar to neighbouring countries in many aspects of pre-Hispanic cosmologies have particular ways of expressing religious worship. One of these particularities throughout several regions of Ecuador is the deeply rooted devotion for the Virgin Mary, who in many circumstances is revered more than the Christ. Every region of Ecuador has been historically associated to a particular representation of the Virgin or of a patron saint. Even today, all communities identify with their own specific religious representation of a particular Virgin or a Saint, as part of a local religious discourse that historically relates the image to the community.

It is common for most Ecuadorian migrants to own and worship religious icons of the Virgin Mary, Jesus and many Patron Saints. For most migrants, these wallet-size representations – *estampas* – are intimate connections to their religious faith and cultural identification. Many of these *estampas* kept over the years, are passed on from generation to generation between close relatives; these images, which are considered miraculous, are usually kept close to the body or in small shrines at home. Newer versions, which maintain ‘traditional’ characteristics are continuously produced and shared by *priostes* at religious gatherings with friends and guests. It is during the popular celebration of

religious festivities that guinea pigs, alcohol and icons converge as essential expressions of social action and identification.

To better comprehend the role that these images play in the lives of diasporic Ecuadorians, it is necessary to go back to the not so distant past. What are separate Latin American countries today, were organized quite differently within a wider indigenous cultural spectrum of similarities and differences. What many refer to, as Latin American culture is the result of the sedimentation, juxtaposition and syncretism of indigenous traditions with Hispanic colonial Catholicism, influenced by political and educational circumstances, and recently, by modern technology and the media. (García Canclini, 1995, 71).

Even though many rural communities in Ecuador have been converting to other variants of Christianity and Protestantism, which forbid the consumption of alcohol and stimulate stringent work ethics, most migrants in the research area are Catholics. This translates into abundant social activities linked to religious festivities all year round. Even while away from their communities, migrants follow these celebrations in Catholic churches in North America that cater to the large migrant populations, who strongly adhere to their own particular ways of expressing their worship to these images. Those who can, as a sign of strong devotion, travel back home to be present during the festivities of their saint or virgin. Those who are unable to travel back attend services in local churches and often send donations to the parishes back home through relatives, in gratitude for spiritual protection and guidance while abroad.

It is customary to offer a mass to a Patron Saint or the Virgin Mary on specific religious calendar dates. The family or the person responsible for the celebration of the

mass must cover all expenses for the celebration and must offer a significant *limosna* (donation) to the church. The head of the celebration, a male member of the family, is the *prioste*. Traditionally as part of his responsibilities and as a signal of gratitude, the *prioste* prints many image cards called *estampas* of the Saint or Virgin of his devotion and offer them to his guests and family members as a token of the event. Guinea pigs and alcohol for the celebration is also provided by the *prioste*.

In New York and New Jersey, the *priostes* print the *estampas* with the virgin on one side, and on the other, a small description of the celebration, which includes a short prayer, the date, name of the *prioste* and the location where the celebration took place. These *estampas* handed out to the guests and frequently sent back home as part of a process of communication, which informs local communities back home of these events; they become official confirmations that these events have taken place in ‘absentia.’ These *estampas* bear certain prestige attached to them, they inform the community back home, that the migrant *prioste* is doing well and has shared his prosperity with others. According to Carlos Rodriguez, proprietor of *Rodriguez Printing* in Queens, who does most of the printing for the Ecuadorean communities in the research area, it is quite common for these *estampas* to be individualized by the *prioste*, who prints brief personal information about the celebration.

Not only the *priostes* have *estampas* printed for specific celebrations. In Queens, there are several ‘official self appointed’ representatives of the “Virgen del Cisne” and the “Virgen de las Nubes,” two of the most worshipped virgins from two different regions from the southern Andean region of Ecuador, who print large amounts of these icons to help raise funds for local organizations and churches back in Ecuador. There is

no control of what percentage of the proceeds from these sales are actually remitted to the parishes back home. This has not escaped local scrutiny and raised concerns about the final destiny of the funds.

The seasonal celebrations of *La Virgen de Cisne* y la *Virgen de la Nube* has grown to such proportions, that self-proclaimed representatives in New York and New Jersey in conjunction with local parishes cater to migrants by celebrating regular religious ceremonies in the virgins' names. One of the most notorious is the mass on the first day of January, to which more than 5.000 people attend at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York. Many devotees, who because of space limitation must listen to the mass from outside the cathedral, line the adjacent streets and listen to the celebration over special speakers specially installed for the event. It was here, the seat of the New York Diocese, that on August 12, 1995, the bishop of Ecuador ordained La Virgen del Cisne as the protector of "los ecuatorianos ausentes" (absent Ecuadorians).

Father Hernán Astudillo, the Anglican priest, cited on several occasions in the preceding text, who ministers to a large population of Hispanic migrants in Toronto helped me grasp the significance of religious icons beyond a Christian symbol-worship interpretation. Before being ordained, Astudillo graduated in philosophy and anthropology from two Ecuadorian universities.

When asked about the importance of religious icons among migrants from Ecuador, he said, "The Andean Natives are people of signs and symbols, images are very important to us, all colours and shapes have special meaning. The imposition of European culture has made us a hybrid population. However, ancient traditions have not

disappeared totally, they survive in the collective memory of natives, unconsciously in our way of life, these traditions are embedded deep in our blood.”

Father Astudillo also said, that “Pre-Hispanic natives had more imagery than Europeans. What has happened is that there has been no significant scholarly follow-up on the importance of these images in Native culture. If you look at the icon of the Virgin Mary, you will notice that she is standing on the *Mama Quilla* the Quechua word for moon. If you look at the Christian image of the Holy Father, you will recognize the sun and the holy host in the middle, this represents the *Inti Raimi*, the Sun God of the natives. There is Native cosmology hidden among these images. The same happens with the mountains, you will always find a church or a chapel at the highest point, it coincides with natives customs because it was on the highest parts of the land where natives made their offering to their Gods.”

With regards to the icons of several versions of the Virgin Mary used in conjunction with certain geographical regions such as the ‘*Virgen de la Nube*,’ the ‘*Virgen del Cisne*,’ the ‘*Virgen del Quinche*,’ father Astudillo said, “They are all intimately related to aboriginal culture, they myths of their first appearance all have a hidden pretext to conceal previous rituals that took place in a particular geographical area previous to the Spanish Conquest. Historically speaking, the ‘*Virgen del Quinche*’ is related to the resistance presented to the Spanish conquistadors by the native population. After the Spanish captured Atahualpa, the last reigning Inca, Rumiñahui his most faithful general fled the capital of the Kingdom of Quito and took refuge in the nearby town of *El Quinche* and offered strong resistance to the Spanish Conquistadors. When he was finally defeated, the Spanish priests conceived the image of the *Virgen del Quinche* to erase the

defying memory of *Rumiñawi* in that town. This event aids our understanding of the appearance of other virgin images in other geographies. It is a way of taking possession of natives' traditional worship places and memories. Besides, there is a duality in the worship of virgins, in Ecuadorian aboriginal religions, the God of creation is feminine, and she is the '*Pacha Mama*,' the mother of time and of the land. That is why animals, plants and humans have the same importance in the eyes of the creator.”

The reverence of these religious icons by large sectors of the rural population evidences the perpetuation of hidden ancestral beliefs and customs, which have become invisible, having reappeared with a new religious representation, which establishes a memory bond, which unites migrants through space and time to ancestral and geographical roots.

This phenomenon is not an isolated situation related exclusively to the Ecuadorian Andes and its neighbouring regions. Rather, this is a situation widespread through Hispanic America. Father Astudillo's observations in relation to the Ecuadorian virgins are consistent with other scholars, who have tried to explain the importance of the many facets of the veneration of the Virgin Mary in Latin America.

To further comprehend this phenomenon, so pervasive among Ecuadorian migrants, it would prove useful to review a similar situation, which originated in Mexico, where the first apparition and the most prominent of these phenomena took place; according to historic annals, it was barely ten years after the Spaniards entered the Aztec kingdom in 1531, when the Virgin Mary appeared to a Native peasant addressing him in the *Nahuatl* language as the *Virgen de Guadalupe*.

The worship of the Virgin of Guadalupe falls on one side of the Native symbolic dichotomy between the sun as an element of war, and the moon, as the mother earth and Goddess of fertility. Through history, the image of Guadalupe has been a controversial figure present in several moments of Mexican social transformation. First, certain congregations of the Roma Catholic Church rejected her, because of her popular identification with the Native goddess of land and fertility from the Mesoamerican cosmology. Several Spanish friars attest to the fact that initially the veneration of the Guadalupe commingled and was influenced by the pre Hispanic worship of the Goddess Tonantzin, whose temple was located in the hills of *Tepeyac*, where the Virgin made her first apparitions and where her first site of adoration was constructed.

Specifically in the writings of Fray Bernardino de Sahagún (Wolf: 1958, 35), barely fifty years after the Spanish conquest of *Tenochticlan*, deplored the fact that the Indian pilgrims to the shrine built on the site where the Virgin appeared to the peasant, were referring to the Virgin of Guadalupe as *Tonantzin*. He wrote, "The term refers to that ancient *Tonantzin*, and this state of affairs should be remedied, because the proper name of the Mother of God is not *Tonantzin* but Dios and Nantzin. It seems to be a satanic device to mask idolatry." Additionally in Friar Martín de León's writings, he states, "On the hill where our Lady of Guadalupe is they adored the idol of a goddess they called Tonatzin which means Our Mother, and this is also the name they give our Lady and they always say they are going to *Tonatzin* or they are celebrating *Tonatzin* and many of them understand this in the old way and not in the modern way" (Echánove Trujillo, 1948: 105: Wolf, 1958, 35).

Later in Mexican history, she became an emblem during the independence war against Spain. In more recent times during the Mexican agrarian revolution, under the leadership of Emiliano Zapata, soldiers marched into war under the spiritual guidance of the *Virgen de Guadalupe*, fighting for their rights to live in a nation that granted all Mexicans equal conditions.

1.12 The Virgin of Guadalupe as Identification: An anthropological Perspective

According to Eric Wolf (1999: 13,14), the Virgin of Guadalupe has been and continues to be, the most pervasive representation of Mexican identity, “a collective representation of Mexican society.” He recalls that on his visit to Mexico in 1951, what impressed him the most was the presence in many houses in the rural villages a sign that read: “ ‘We are neither Protestants nor Communists - we believe in the Virgin of Guadalupe.’ ” In trying to understand how this religious icon became such a unifying factor, he realized he had breached a stage of anthropology that considered ‘native ways’ (sic) as enacted static culture. He realized that the question opened the door to an anthropology that. “Introduced history as a dimension, calling for us to look at the making of key symbols as the outcome of processes unfolding over time. They put forth the idea that a common collective representation might be fashioned from very diverse discourses and imaginings of people stationed in different social and cultural positions” (Wolf, 1999: 13,14).

In his seminal paper, Wolf (1958: 34-39), after briefly reviewing the historic accounts of the apparition of the Virgin of Guadalupe, furthers his analysis of functional aspects, which affect ‘major social relationships of Mexican society,’ such as kinship ties and the emotions generated in family interaction. He concludes that some of the

meanings of the Virgin symbol derive from emotional situations as an outcome of kinship relationships associated with the Native ancestral and more recent Mexican family structures.

The Indian family pattern is consistent with the behaviour towards the Guadalupe described by John Bushnell in the Matlazinca speaking community of San Juan Atzingo in the valley of Toluca (Bushnell, 1955). There, the image of the Virgin is addressed in passionate terms as a source of warmth and love, and the pulque or century plant beer drunk in ceremonial occasions is identified with her milk. Bushnell postulates that here the Guadalupe is identified with the mother as a source of early satisfactions never experienced after separation from the mother and emergence into social adulthood. In such the Guadalupe embodies a longing to return to the pristine state in which hunger and unsatisfactory social relations are minimized.
Wolf(1958, 36)

In relation to the emergence of new family patterns within the Mexican nation-state, prompted by technology, social and economic factors, place of residence and power relations, Wolf suggests that the Guadalupe's image is associated with the empowerment of submissive women and children in a situation by which the image is charged with energy of rebellion against the dominant father figure. "Her image is the embodiment of hope in a victorious outcome of the struggle between generations. This struggle leads to a further extension of the symbolism. Successful rebellion against power figures is equated with the promise of life; defeat with the promise of death...Guadalupe stands for life, for hope, for health; Christ on the cross, for despair and for death." (Wolf, 1958: 36,37). These observations are consistent with the presence of Guadalupe's image during the historical moments of the Mexican society mentioned earlier in this paper and with the emotions expressed by Ecuadorian migrants with respect to the *Virgen de la Nube* and the *Virgen del Cisne*.

Wolf's contextual definition of the Virgin of Guadalupe within the Native Mesoamerican kinship system supports the pattern of analysis of the earlier part of this

chapter pertinent to the *Virgen del Cisne* and the *Virgen de las nube*, which can also be applied to the study of the veneration of the Virgin Mary in her different renderings throughout other Latin American countries.

Finally, according to Brother John M. Samaha, S.M., who has written extensively on this subject influenced by Wolf's conclusions,

“Our Lady of Guadalupe is important to Mexicans not only because she is a Supernatural Mother, but also because she embodies their major religious and political aspirations. To the Indians, the symbol is more than an embodiment of life and hope. It restores to them the hopes of salvation. The Spanish Conquest signified not only military defeat, but the defeat also of the old gods and the decline of the old ritual. The apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe to an Indian commoner represented in one way the return of Tonantzin. Tannenbaum had observed, ‘The Church gave the Indian an opportunity not merely to save his own life, but also to save his faith in his own gods.’”

<http://www.udayton.edu/mary/meditations/samaha6.html>

1.13 Last observations: Chocho's transformation and reflections of myself.

Tell me mirror, is this my reflection or someone else's standing over me?

While I was at the final stage of this paper, Edgar Chocho called over the phone. He told me he had located three nephews who had made it to the United States ten years ago. This meant he had relatives to whom he could closely relate.

He also mentioned that he had been reflecting on the guinea pigs, which he had recently eaten and was going to ask his mother to send him some more. However, he was concerned about one of the guinea pigs he had received. While he was eating one of the three, he noticed the nipples a bit enlarged, which meant that it might have been a pregnant female. This could be a sign that his mother did not own enough guinea pigs and that she probably killed one about to give birth; for him this was unacceptable. He said that since his mother does not get along with his wife, next time he would recommend that she buy guinea pigs from a neighbour. Trapped in his solitary confinement away from his family, his mother's guinea pigs represented the connection

to his home. This could mean that his nostalgia has increased and consuming guinea pigs is a way of mitigating the pain of absence. It also indicates that a higher demand over a short term of guinea pigs by more migrants living similar circumstances could affect the 'traditional' production of guinea pigs in the region. In fact, Sandro Rodas, who owns the company that transports cooked guinea to Queens, said that this year on Saint Valentine's day the shipment of guinea pigs and *Zhumir* from Ecuador increased threefold in comparison to the previous year.

Back in Ecuador, on the same land on which Edgar Chocho's new house stands, the old peasant dirt dwelling is now used exclusively to raise guinea pigs. In the new house, there are two garages. In one is parked his new *Pantera* pickup used by his daughters awaiting his return, in the other, the old motorcycle he used on his last tour of the town, hides in a dark corner far from the sight of the old rider.

Impressed by my continuous interest in his culture, Chocho said that maybe I was trying to connect to my past by listening to his tales, he then laughed.

1.14 Conclusion

The head will be connected to the tail for longer for than the body can realize

The patterns of consumption of 'nostalgic products' among migrants from the rural regions of the Ecuadorian Andes allows us to conclude that embodied memories and imagination are extremes of a dialectic continuum that helps determine cultural identification. Memories act as a gravitational force from which the imagination attempts to break loose while expanding the characteristics of cultural identification as it adapts to transforming cultural and geographical environments.

In an increasingly disembodied world of virtual human existence, embodied memories related to symbolic commodities such as guinea pigs, *Zhumir*, and religious

icons, provide cultural referential epicentres around which social action revolves. Memories of social relations created within specific cultural and natural environmental circumstances define time and locality. Embodied memories allow cultural locality to be transported beyond geographical confinement, connecting to a common social past; building new expressions over previous cultural characteristics of identification.

These embodied memories transferred between generations allow the survival of entrenched connections to a common cultural essence; these memories, long separated from their original source, act as trans-generational cultural transmitters.

Because of the permanence of embodied memories, cultural identification among migrants from the southern Ecuadorian Andes in diaspora will not be drastically transformed within the accelerated process of globalization. It seems that the more people are distanced from their cultural essence over social space and time, the greater their propensity to reconnect to the past by means of the consumption of 'nostalgic products.' In other words, long after the bulldozers of globalization have flattened the cultural surfaces of the planet, people will then grow their mountains from within. Left to What is left to be seen is the effect caused by migration to these rural people when they return home, if they ever do return.



Fig. 31 The shining skin and smaller size of these guinea pigs are signs of the 'authentic' flavour of this dish.



Fig. 32 Migrants in Flushing Park walk along the paths paved with kiosks that offer all sorts of products and services.



Fig 33 Families work together to provide food for migrants and to make additional income during Independence Day celebration in Flushing Park, with special permits form the city.



Fig 34 Two migrants from the southern Ecuadorian Andes inconspicuously dressed to become culturally 'invisible' tape images of the celebration to send to relatives back home.



Fig 35 The *Virgin of the Cloud* during the celebration of a special mass in New York on May 29, 2003.



Fig 36 Closer view of the *Virgin of the Cloud* on altar during the special mass. Not the food offering with guinea pigs at the feet of the Virgin

Chapter 5

Domus et Persona: Houses as places of social transformation and personal rebirth.

“My house is diaphanous, but it is not of glass. It is more of the nature of vapour. Its walls contract and expand, as I desire. At times, I draw them close about me like protective armour...but at others, I let the walls of my house blossom out in their own space, which is infinitely extensible.”

George Spyridaki, Mort Lucide, p.55, Seghers, Paris

1.1 Introduction:

The central concern of this chapter is to explore the construction of houses articulated within the process of cultural identification, as a resource for social transformation among Ecuadorian migrants; specifically to understand the process by which migrants build modern houses in their villages as imagined extensions of their persona.

It also focuses on understanding space and place as symbolic elements capable of connecting and disconnecting humans from themselves and the rest of the world and to understanding houses as symbolic elements of ‘identification.’ By comprehending human dwellings as symbolic places for social action, capable of representing individuals within social space, I will demonstrate how houses become expressions of constructed identification.

In other words, the goal is to understand houses as microenvironments fit for social interaction, within which we can dream about our most intimate desires and which become our first universe, our corners of the world (Bachelard, 1994:4) and houses, as places where individuals can imagine themselves in relation to other members of society.

To present the reader with the idea of houses both as material expressions of culture and extensions of social action (Dant, 1999: 62) it is relevant to observe how

historic spaces are affected by the construction of these new houses and how social action is influenced by these changes. Otherwise stated, it is pertinent to become aware of the alterations introduced to an historic system of social relations of production, which are influenced by the presence of these new houses amid the Ecuadorian Andean ethnoscape.

1.2 Mud Houses that grew on the Land: Historical aspects of rural dwellings.

Historically rural houses in the high Andes were one room, dome-like constructions made with clay, cane and straw. During the Spanish conquest these houses became rectangular, with walls made with mud bricks covered by clay tiled roofs. Because of their 'sameness,' houses represented the identity of rural people as a collective element. In the past, houses were mostly functional, made by optimizing materials and labour, sometimes, the outcome of a collective activity (*minga*) in which neighbours, friends and relatives would join forces for a common purpose. These houses showed very little change in their design over time. However, they were part of a ceremonious act (Tuan, 1977:104), which bounded people of common cultural characteristics within a pre-Capitalist mode of production. They were built without the requirements for detailed plans, mathematical calculations and master builders. Rather they depended on social memories and practical experience more than master builders.

These houses were usually surrounded by a small portion of land cultivated with corn and other agricultural products, on which family owned animals lived and which provided milk, wool and work force for the family's sustenance. The land ownership introduced during colonial times, concentrated most of the land in the hands of the elite white population, who controlled agricultural production of the haciendas. (Lentz, 1997). This situation limited the land available to local peasants and kept their agricultural

production to a bare minimum for family support until the land reforms were introduced in the 60s.

‘Traditional’ houses are usually one-room dwellings with no interior partitioning. These houses are very dark and reek of burnt wood. The use of candles as illumination over long periods causes a dense soot to adhere to the walls. Electricity is a luxury not everyone can afford. An exterior extension of the roof covers a rustic porch over the entrance under which some household activities and social activities take place. A couple of small windows allow a limited view of the exterior. At the top of clay-tile-roof, owners of the house place certain symbolic elements such as Christian crosses, pigeons and farm animals, cut-out of metal sheets or made with clay are placed for protection when houses are first inhabited.

It is common for socializing with alcoholic beverages among peasants to take part in open areas outside houses. Drinking is seldom an individual affair, rather it is a ritual performed in the public areas of the dwellings, never in the living areas or the kitchen. There is an exterior place with a washing stone and in some cases a nearby latrine for personal hygiene. Since there is no piped water members of the family must consume the irrigation water from the local ravine.

Recently, houses have become individual expressions of the imagination and of personal projection; in this case, ‘identification’ is framed within a context of individuality and difference, as a sign of individual contention.

1.3 Houses as Masks: People behind the place

One of the relevant concerns of this chapter is to understand houses as masks of duality, with facades to look at and windows to look out from, as objects related to social interaction, which whether we realize it or not, acquire the identity of the persons who build or dwell within them.²

While doing my preliminary research among diasporic Ecuadorians living in Queens, regarding the process of identification as a mechanism of negotiation and survival, I realized that most of the financial resources which are remitted back home by Ecuadorian migrant workers are committed to the construction of houses (Carpio-Benalcazar, 1992, 53); not just mere improved living quarters, but houses invested with ‘poetic’ characteristics (Bachelard, 1994), which not only were intended for attaining better living conditions for themselves and their families back in their rural communities in Ecuador, but as material representations of personal achievement. The construction of a house implied a situation equivalent to a rite of passage, as a sign of having successfully made it across geographical and cultural borders, pursuing economic goals to transform their social status as individuals within their community.

Ecuadorian migrants from the Ecuadorian Andes seem to be guided mostly by the urge to obtain financial resources to transform their poor agrarian conditions to

² We can find reference to houses as important elements of material culture related to the construction of identity among two-thousand year old writings of several ancient scholars such as Cicero’s “De Domo Sua” in which he makes reference to: ‘Houses Representing a Person’, ‘Justice and the Republic’, ‘Houses Representing Family Name’, ‘Magnificent Houses can Win Votes’, ‘Noble Men Ought to Have Spacious Houses’. In Vivy, 5.41 ‘Romans Choose to Die in Their Houses during the Gaelic Invasion’. Pliny the Younger, Letters 8.16 Houses and State Compared. Plutarch, March Anthony 21, ‘Anthony’s House is a Disgrace’. Gaius Gracchus 12, G. ‘Gracchus Moves to be with the People’. Marius 32, ‘Building a House near the Forum to Gain Popularity’; Publicola 20, ‘A House Built as a Symbol of Honour. Polibius, Histories 6,39 ‘Military Decorations should be displayed in House’. Suetonius, Nero 16, ‘Fire Fighting Porches’; Nero 37 ‘Shops Built into Houses’. These are some very explicit examples of houses at the centre of human spatial, temporal, functional and symbolic activities since early-recorded history, found at <http://domusaurea.org.uk/texts/houses.txt>

accommodate lifestyles that are more global not only by improving their material living conditions, but advancing a social status, which has been stigmatized for the past five centuries (Carpio-Benalcazar, 1992: 39- 44).

Ever since the initial stigmatization of indigenous people after the Spanish conquest, a practice of *blanqueamineto* (becoming white) has been taking place. Since Indians were situated at one extreme of a social scale and whites at the other, there has been an ongoing struggle of climbing that social ladder through a process of *Mestizaje* (blending of cultures) in order to escape racial segregation and aspiring to become socially 'whitened' (Espinosa-Apolo, 2000) (Adoum, 2000) (Donoso-Pareja, 2000) (Yépez, 1998) (Lentz, 1997). Financial success is one of the most effective mechanisms of *blanqueamineto*, which implies upward social mobility and recognition from other members of society.

One way of making this transformation visible, is by building modern houses back home, which do not conform to the 'traditional' type rural dwellings found in their local communities; these new houses literally stand out of the Andean landscape in representation of the absent-present owners who recreate on public spaces imagined representations of identification. They have become erasers of past oppression.

Even though the owners are physically away, these partially inhabited constructions in progress act as signifiers, allowing the signified, in this case the migrant, to be symbolically present and remembered by family members and neighbours. These houses inform and reassure relatives and neighbours about the owner's successful performance abroad while pursuing the American Dream. These magnificent homes

inserted into the historical spaces of their communities, camouflage the hardships to which the migrants are subjected to while working abroad.

These modern constructions translate performed labour, by mediating the power of money into a new representation of the social individual; these houses become the new 'persona' that many migrants choose to become in their community. These houses distance migrants from their ethnic and cultural past, uprooting and catapulting them into present-day-modernity.

The shapes, sizes and spatial division of houses reveal and instruct without the need for translation. Houses as human cultural expressions are social symbols, which can be read beyond the signification of linguistic expression. Their meaning changes over time within a larger social, historic and cultural context (Tuan, 1977:114).

All houses new and old are imbued with symbolic meaning (Dant, 1999). Houses and people do not exist in a vacuum; rather, all houses are part of a larger social context, which reveals the constant process of change and the social relations of production of that society. In a capitalist mode of production, houses have become modes of expressions; in Jungian psychology, houses are masks, elements of individual appearance, personal façades presented to the world, "A public image as fragile as Humpty Dumpty."

Houses as human material constructions serve the functional purpose as a shelter from the physical environment and as a symbolic expression that reflects our cultural concerns and choices, a view shared by scholars such as Tim Dant (1999) and Marshal McLuhan (1994), who considers material things people choose for themselves as extensions of their bodies, and which also function as communicating devices within a community (McLuhan, 1994: 127). From a symbolic perspective, all houses express

themselves distinctly, like a silent language amid the geography, through their colours, shapes, size, texture, smell, taste and sounds embedded in their construction.

Since houses are constructed to meet specific personal requirements and furnished with physical objects of particular choice, which as symbolic elements are influenced by the psycho-socio-cultural characteristics of their owners (Traverso, 1998), they become important elements related to my analysis of material culture and how people choose to represent themselves in social interaction (Dant, 1999:75).

This activity, which is a consequence of social interaction, and as such, conditions human response to objects according to their symbolic meaning (Taverso, 1998: 29), has acquired competitive characteristics, which evidences an urge to make obvious the cultural and financial improvements achieved by individuals who translate their financial success into material wealth. These houses will become an expression of the imagination translated into material comfort; a place built according to the image of modern mansions, furnished with all the necessary appliances and services such as hot water installations, microwaves, giant screen television sets, satellite dishes, elevators and an array of household appliances purchased with the intention of making daily chores less burdensome. More than material dwellings, these houses become places of intimate dreams where self reinvention is limited only by the imagination and financial resources; a new shell to represent the emergence of a new social being. “The surest sign of wonder is exaggeration. And since the inhabitant of a shell can amaze us, the imagination will soon make amazing creatures, more amazing than reality, issue from the shell” (Bachelard, 1994:107).

This is why a house under construction back home in one's community financed by migrant work labour becomes a socially transmuting device, reassuring wives and children that better days are coming; something like Penelope's knitting while waiting for Ulysses to return

1.4 Who are these People?

The demand for lower paid labour and the urge to earn better incomes has accelerated the exodus of migrants from Ecuador towards developed countries and offered ancestral peasants the opportunity to be socially transformed. This situation has fostered an entrepreneurial economy performed by Ecuadorians in foreign countries, a situation by which individuals undertake jobs abroad to provide the necessary income to transform their personal financial situation and improve their social status back in Ecuador.

It is now usual for one member of the household to travel abroad for a limited period, to make sufficient cash to become financially independent to go start a personal business, purchase a house or pay off debts. Through an ongoing socio-economic process of the remittance of funds, it is common for many Ecuadorian migrant workers to live a dual personal existence; being physically absent while at the same time symbolically present in their community, sculptured into the cultural materiality of the long processes of building and furnishing their houses from abroad. While away, most diasporic Ecuadorians maintain strong contacts with their families and neighbourhood, through a network of social relations based on the use of telephones, video and audiocassettes and the mass media (Carpio-Benalcazar, 1992). It is vital to maintain a symbolic presence among the community in order to control the allocation of the resources for the specific

purpose of building houses, which sometimes overweighs the financial responsibilities of their families.

Migrants are not only bringing back money, they are changing their lifestyles in relation to their 'temporary' living environment abroad and acquiring new cultural tastes. In fact, many returning migrants have set up Italian restaurants in Ecuador after returning from working as cooks in Italy. Patricio Carpio Benalcazar an Ecuadorian scholar who has written extensively on the subject of migration quotes a rural school teacher, who says that lifestyles are more influenced by material things that are brought back by migrants than with new ideas (Carpio Benalcazar, 1992: 10).

Remittance is not only altering traditional houses, it has affected the local economy by causing the land to increase in value and increased the availability of Western goods. The construction industry is the main beneficiary of his flow of capital; the sales of construction material have skyrocketed and the demand for labour force has raised wages. Since most men are absent it is difficult to find workers from the same region. This situation has caused an influx of labourers from neighbouring regions and from neighbouring Peru and Colombia who in turn are migrating to Ecuador

1.5 Migration: Tales of human Tolls

To travel abroad and to leave everything behind to obtain financial independence does not come without physical risks and an emotional toll. Many migrants are injured or die attempting to reach the US border. Those who make it across are cast into a space of solitude. Many establish new emotional and physical links while abroad, a situation which tears them emotionally between two different worlds.

On one occasion while riding a taxi in Quito, the driver who was accompanied by his fourteen-year-old daughter, told me that since his wife had travelled to work in Europe he was under great physical and emotional distraught. His daughter's company consoled and helped him overcome his long moments of solitude.

One year before, he and his wife decided that one of them would travel abroad to work and earn six thousand dollars to buy a parcel of land, which they would then mortgage with a local financial institution to build their home. At the time of our conversation, his wife was already working abroad for a young couple that hired her to take care of an elderly relative. Since she lived in the same quarters where she worked and her employers covered most of her living expenses, she was able to save most of her salary. She kept in touch with her family back in Ecuador through frequent long distance calls and the Internet.

At the end of her contract, the couple now faced a new dilemma. Her employers had grown fond of her performance and offered her the possibility of extending her work contract another year. The driver told me that he did not know if the financial reward would compensate the emotional 'misery' that he had been through during the past year of her absence and would continue if she decided to stay abroad another year. I joked with him and told him that maybe he should get a new wife or let her find a new husband. He laughed, but this was no joking matter to him; rather this situation evidenced the emotional strain that separation imposes on the families of migrant workers.



Fig 37 Houses along the roads leading to the villages in the southern Ecuadorian Andes



Fig 38 Contrast between a modern house and a 'traditional' mud hose in upper0
left hand corner of picture.



Fig 39 Many houses are never completed. Note the "for sale" sign on the upper part of the metal gate.

1.6 Every Migrant to a House? The impossible dream

It would be unreasonable to assume that every migrant worker manages to make enough money abroad to be able to purchase his dream house; it would be unrealistic to suppose that everyone who wishes to improve his or her financial and social status is capable of migrating. Moreover, not all migrants fit in to the same socio-economic category or are members of the same ethnic group. By no means can we consider the migration phenomenon as a homogeneous process (Carpio Benalcazar, 1992) by which all migrants pursue the same goals of buying houses to improve living conditions and social status. However, for the purpose of this study, to understand the construction of houses by migrant workers abroad as an expression of identification, I have chosen to focus on migrants who originate in *Deleg*, a small town in the Ecuadorian Andes, who live in New York and New Jersey and for whom the construction of houses back home, is a common recurrence.

Deleg is a small provincial village situated close to the Province of *Cañar*'s capital, *Azogues*. It is also situated at approximately 45 Kilometres from *Cuenca* in the Province of *Azuay*, Ecuador's third largest city. According to recent censuses, it is estimated that 90 percent of the men from the town of *Deleg* have migrated to the United States.

1.7 Houses as Headstones: a living experience

"I came to lay the stones that hide the bowels of my ghost. "

Very early the following morning after arriving in *Cuenca*, I travelled by taxi from the hotel where I was staying to *Deleg*. From a distance, as we drove among the green Andean hillsides, the changes became drastically evident. Two and three story buildings were replacing the 'traditional' white dirt houses with their doubled slanted

moss-covered-clay-tile-roofs; these new symbols of ‘progress and prosperity’ attested to the fact that their absent owners had successfully transcended the physical and social boundaries into the elusive realm of the ‘American Dream’.

What first struck me was the material transformation of the peasant landscape. The modern reinforced concrete houses, which contrasted powerfully against the green mountain slopes, were rapidly replacing the one-room peasant dirt houses. These new ‘mansions’ equipped with state of the art household appliances were now part of the new and transforming peasant lifestyle. This cultural encounter (Garcia Canclini, 1995) was transforming the old landscape and peasants’ lifestyles, transferring new meaning to the cultural environment, erasing signs of past social and economic marginality rooted in a not-so-distant colonial past.

The acquisition of houses as sumptuous commodities becomes social indexers (Garcia Canclini, 1998, 36) that allow migrants to apparently overcome the public stigma of a colonial system, which for centuries has placed peasants at the bottom of the Ecuadorian social scale. The remittance of these possessions back home by migrants creates representational spaces that evidence the apparent social transformation of diasporic individuals. The transfer of material goods and funds allow migrants to transform their past socio-economic boundaries by occupying a more ‘significant’ status among other members of their community. Houses then become social statements, because, “Through our lives, whether we re conscious of it or not, our home and its content are very potent statements about who we are,” (Cooper Marcus, 1995) or who we pretend to be.

However, it is not only in the understanding of the desire to improve social status among rural migrants that these houses are relevant to the process of identification. What makes it relevant is that the aesthetic dimensions of consumption practices as representational expressions evidence the action of the imagination as an element of cultural transformation and identification.

It is frequent to see new houses built over the old houses, a process of metamorphosis, which reflects the changes of the owner's identity. I entered one to tape some footage and noticed how new spaces enveloped old places, turning dark dirt walled windowless rooms into modern kitchens, studies, drawing rooms, dining rooms, play rooms and garages. I wondered why none of the new houses I visited had the cross or the pigeons at the vertex of the roof.

While visiting one of these houses in *Deleg*, I encountered the mother of the migrant who owned it. While the house was still under construction she occupied the old adjacent dirt house in which she had lived all her life, over which, the new two-story villa was being constructed. An umbilical-type passageway connected the old house's single entrance to the villa's kitchen. The austere one room environment of the old peasant dwelling juxtaposed against the new house's white cement walls, stood out as clear evidence of a process of transformation of the domestic space. The aged and decoloured clay ties that covered the roof were literally melting into the new construction walls.

Beyond the elaborate iron gates at the entrance to the new house, the balcony-covered porch opened the way into what would become the main social area of the mansion. Hardwood floors from the lower level all the way up the staircase to the second floor. Downstairs a spacious drawing room, a dining room, a game room and a guest

toilet placed to the right of the kitchen's entrance. The toilet inside the house is a detail of highly significant innovation. According to Edgar Chocho, in the past because there were no indoor restrooms, not even nearby outhouses, peasants were accustomed to using surrounding chaparrals close to a ravine, to perform their personal biological needs. Today, the new houses are equipped with gas-operated hot water installations and thanks to this device, it is now possible to have a regular bath within the confines of the dwelling. Quite a significant social change.

In the kitchen, high rows of cabinets in white Formica lined the walls, sometimes so high up that they were unreachable without the help of small ladders. From a window over the sink, a view of the old washing stone barely five meters away, clothes recently washed by hand were drying in the wind. The operation of the washer and dryer already installed in a space adjacent to a luxurious propane gas stove was a daunting task for peasants who have 'traditionally' washed their clothes by hand at the river

The foreman in charge of a three-man team responsible for the construction of the house, said that he was following specific instructions given to him over the phone and by mail by the owner, who designed the house inspired by many homes located in the up-scale residential areas of New York, where he had performed maintenance work for several years.

On the second level, three bedrooms and a studio, each with large windows with large iron-bars, overlooking the winding dirt road and allowing a site of other houses in the distance. During the past twenty years, many such constructions have been proliferating among the green pastures where farm animals still graze unaware of the changing landscape.

The strong scents of the fresh cement newly painted walls and varnished floors, contrasted with the more familiar smell of smoke and soot still emanating from the old wood stove in the adjacent dirt house. Together with the scent of farm animals, which are still kept within the confines of these homes, all these aromas were the signs of changing times.

From behind a decrepit wooden door, the only spatial barrier between the old and the new houses, an older woman stared blank into space ignoring my presence as if I was just a ghost walking around. When I tried to speak to her about the house, she turned her face and said that the owners were away. This unwillingness to speak to strangers was apparently a consequence of the local media who have referred to these houses in the past, as monuments of poor taste. These overpowering remarks are like hegemonic statements made by the ideological superstructure reminding these rural people that they cannot escape this long social entrapment by merely attaining material wealth and building houses.

Architects or engineers seldom supervise the construction of these houses. Highly skilled masons and carpenter build most of them. Since most men from the town have travelled abroad, it has become difficult to find construction workers in the vicinity and labourers must be hired from neighbouring cities. Because of this construction boom, materials and labour have soared.

With the precision of a kitchen knife the main road slices the village in two, each side lined with old houses and new iron fences. There was scarcely anyone around to see us go by as we drove along. Among the scarceness of people, I looked for signs of human activity. Next to a newly painted church, two men worked on a mural representing the

bond between the Ecuadorian migrant and his North American brother. The images of two men of Hispanic appearance embraced each other at a distance, wrapped in the flags of both countries and framed within an urban dwelling somewhere in the North. Something about this mural made me reminisce about Michelangelo's painting on the Creation of Adam in the Sistine chapel, executed in a more expressionist style. A little bit further, down the road, a sign nailed to the trunk of a tree read: "*Se alquila disk jockey*", which translates to "disk jockey for rent".

While I went by one of the houses closer to the road, I was able to get a glance of an older woman clothed in the 'native' style long dress, poncho and straw hat, sitting at the door steps of the house. Separated from the road by a profusely decorated ironwork gate; she just sat there, close to the dogs as if waiting for the corn planted on the lawn to ripen for the harvest. No one looked out from the windows, no one sat in the car in the driveway, no one else moved beyond the walls of the house among the furniture and appliances. The 'traditional' clay-tiled-roof, on which a cross was placed as a sign of Christianity together with small clay figures of domestic animals, had been effaced from the design. Instead of slanted two-way roofs, these houses have large cement terraces from which the owners hope to stand one day when they return home and gaze at the transforming landscape

As I advanced further up the road, a *Coca-Cola* truck overtook us and stopped at a dirt house hidden among the foliage from which a woman emerged holding four two-litres empty bottles. It has become customary to drink soft drinks in substitute for milk and potable water; when you do not own cows, milk can be unaffordable and the irrigation water from the streams are no longer safe.



Fig. 40 On the road between the provincial capital, Cuenca, and the town of Deleg, it is common to find abandoned houses half-way under construction.



Fig 41 Many of these mansion-type houses have long been finished and furnished, awaiting the return of the owners.



Fig. 42 The old wooden columns from an older house frames the view of a migrant's dream home.



Fig 43 No hill is too far to place a dream house. Since many migrants cannot return because of their illegal status abroad, their houses, even though finished, continue to be only oneiric images in their minds.

A little further, I came across an older hacienda type house. At about one hundred metres from where I was standing, a lonely woman was milking a cow and taking care of a small herd of cattle made-up of two bulls, six cows and four calves. After various unsuccessful attempts at starting a conversation with her, she finally spoke back to me. She claimed to have returned from living in the United States and bought this small farm with her savings and on which she worked to survive. There was no surplus utility, and she and her children consumed everything that was produced on the land. According to her version, her husband had left for the United States many years ago to work abroad and had not returned. He had stopped writing back quite a while ago; she did not expect him to do so or to be back soon.

The owner of the local '*dépanneur*' spoke to me about the staple goods that make up their diets: noodles, rice, salt, sugar, vegetable oil, milk, candy, cheeses, candles, propane gas and soft drinks. He says that the volume of sales of these products does not vary all year round; even when people return to visit relatives during the holiday season, they bring their own goods from abroad. Their diets have changed to accommodate the more 'progressive' taste of the North American food. He laughingly said, "some even get stomach sickness from eating the local food that they used to eat before they left." Paradoxically, the food and drink that some crave while away makes them sick when they return; even in these circumstances identification articulates past and present gastronomic commonalities generating a sense of difference with other members of the community, this way, by momentarily rejecting certain food, demonstrates the changes undergone in diaspora, making apparent difference manifest.

Later, when I arrived at the public square, the equatorial sun, played jokes with my shadow. I felt like Peter Pan. At this latitude during the month of June, the sun is in its most vertical position over the equatorial line casting completely vertical rays of light at noon that erase the shadows invisible on the ground.

Over the past ten years, remittance money has become the second source of income for the Ecuadorian State. Here in *Deleg*, 90 percent of the men have migrated at some time or another. Remittance money and goods have had a strong influence on the local economy and population. Westernized patterns are imposing their presence on the local community. Modern houses, tennis shoes, bomber jackets with flying squadron's names, military boots, hair gel, well groomed haircuts, gang activities among certain younger members of the population, video cameras, video stores, automobiles, motorcycles, pedigree dogs and all sorts of imported merchandise bear evidence to this cultural transformation, which implies a break from the past.

On my way back to the car, an older man who walked erratically in the middle of the dirt road, stopped me and asked for a coin to buy a drink. As I searched into my pockets, it occurred to me that maybe he was aware of the reason why there were no crosses or clay figures placed on the new houses. First, the old man said, "I must explain the reason for these crosses and animal placed atop the houses. This is a way of thanking God for all the things that he gives us, he is the one that makes the houses possible, the cross is a sign of devotion to the Roman Catholic Church, it is a sign that the house has been blessed when it was first used by its owners; the pigeons and other animal figures such as cows and chickens area also a tribute of gratitude for God's generosity." According to him the new houses that I saw, do not have these symbols because their

owners have not yet officially occupied them. These symbols are placed only after the traditional house warming celebration (*huasipichai*) has taken place.

After this explanation I am one dollar poorer and still left holding an unanswered question: when migrants return, after having worked for many years under harsh conditions within the ‘cathedrals’ of the high capitalist system, having undergone physical deprivation and overcome years of painful absence, are they still strong in their religious faith and willing to thank God for this abundance? Alternatively, are they going to substitute the symbols of the cross and the pigeons for a dollar coin and the Star Spangled Banner? Any choice they make, it will be difficult one to implement because there are no vertices on these houses’ roofs on which to place the crosses and figures anyway.

1.8 Stories Behind the Masks: Imagining houses.

Edgar Chocho has never seen his two-story house back in his hometown. After paying off the loan shark and all the expenses related to his trip, he was able to finish his house during his first three years in North America. “It was finished exactly three years and seven days after I left. The surrounding wall to my property was finished by the fourth year I was away,” he said. The following year he bought a *Mitsubishi* SUV, which his daughters drive. Because he has not yet obtained legal immigration status, it is now fifteen years since he has been able to return to his homeland. Ever since he arrived in New Jersey he has worked a seven-day-a-week, twelve-hour-night-shift in a factory. He keeps a very low profile and his money hidden in his backpack. He is not able to open a bank account because he does not have any legal papers. The personal relationship with his wife has deteriorated because, according to Chocho, she has spent his money

unwisely; lately he has stopped his remittance to her. He said he was not the least bothered by the fact that everybody in the village was aware that he no longer was sending money to his wife. "After I finished the house she kept having parties and spending my money on useless things," he said.

Chocho has continued to buy land and properties from relatives and friends in his village. "I have many beautiful agricultural lots, with fine-looking fruit trees and abundant water supply." However, he has only had reference to them through his childhood memories, the descriptions over the phone, videotapes and maybe a couple of photographs. He seems concerned, because he does not know when he will have his legal papers, which will allow him to return and keep an open door back to the United States. "You never know, I might not get accustomed to my home again, so I want to return home with my papers," he added.

According to Chocho, social status depends on the house, car and location among other members of the community. "My house is built on two lots in the residential area of my town. Each is ten meters at the front by thirty-three deep. The first I bought for 20.000 *Sucres*, the second, was much more expensive because of its location adjacent to my first lot and because they are located at a corner one block away from the school and the stadium."

It is a five-bedroom house, with a kitchen, living room, dinning room, one bathroom and two garages. "I was a very poor man who lived in a small mud house before I decide to travel. Now my neighbour is a renowned jeweller, I copied my house from his. When I return, people will not refer to me as the *Indio Chocho* (Chocho the Indian). They will call me *Don Chocho*, some close friends and relatives will call me

‘Chochito’ (a diminutive of his name in sign of appreciation). I am now a respected member of my community, even though some people criticize me for not sending money for my wife.” During the past Christmas holidays, his wife made an attempt at trying to communicate with Tipan, “I refused because I am afraid of my reactions when I see her again,” he concluded. If Chocho decides to return it would be interesting to know where he will live, will he have to make another house for himself?

Carlos Puentes arrived in Queens in 1997. He has not been back since then. His house is almost finished. Back home, he drove an old pick-up and made deliveries and transported rural dwellers between their remote homes and the city marketplace. All of his family still live in rural areas outside Cuenca. “I had a dream, to own my own house in the city. The first thing I did after paying my debts was to buy the land, that was the most difficult,” he said.

He has seen pictures of the small condominium over the Internet. “My son sends me pictures. I hired an architect and told him I wanted a building with two apartments above for my children and a commercial area downstairs to set up some business when I get back, if I get back,” Puentes added reluctantly. His condominium also has a garage for two cars. He also spoke about the emotional cost of being away from his wife for such a long time. “People back home believe that everything is easy in New York, they don’t imagine the sacrifice it takes to send money back to build a house and support the family.” The main reason for building this house is so that his family can have a comfortable and clean place to live.



Fig 44 Because of this migratory process the majority of local men have left. Workers from neighbouring villages come to Deleg to fill the void earning higher wages on construction sites such as this three-story building amid the green slopes of Andean hills.



Fig 45 Older houses and buildings, have given way to modern constructions of cement and iron.

1.9 Conclusions

For most migrants that leave the rural regions of the Ecuadorian Andes, financial success to transform ancient conditions of uneven social status are the motivating force for travelling abroad. This transformation expressed through material culture, such as magnificent houses and the acquisition of sumptuous commodities, is a way of relating personal material achievements to the improvement of social status, especially among older migrants who wish to erase social stigmas from the past.

For many migrants, houses have been an expression of social mobility and achievement, a right of passage to social recognition. Luxurious constructions interact in a wider social context articulating individual identity within a wider system of cultural dynamics and social action.

However, these conditions are changing. Houses as social indexers are losing validity for many migrants. According to Pablo Rosas, who comes from the rural areas close to *Cuenca* and who operates a small office, which offers wire transfer services, “[D]uring the past six months there has been a change among my customers. Many people who have gone back are selling their houses and returning to the United States over the Mexican border. They have decided to bring their families with them. This is also common among couples who have children here.”

This situation points to changing patterns and shifting personal interests. For some the need to transform their identification within their past communities is a waning situation. Past concerns about social status and recognition seem to be taking second place to personal goals related to present social realities and improved living conditions in the United States. For younger generations of migrants, beautiful houses in rural areas,

equipped with a cornucopia of household artefacts, apparently does not fulfill present-day expectations of identification. Even with modern homes, life in the rural areas is still affected by a lack of basic services, such running water, sewage, health and medical facilities and efficient electricity and telephone access to which migrants are getting accustomed to in the United States.

These recent changes among migrants coincides with Dr. Hernán Olguín's earlier observations, who remarked that certain migrants were starting to open bank accounts and taking over certain economic activities in North America, previously performed by migrants of other nationalities who had moved on to other more prestigious and lucrative areas in the North American economy.

Furthermore, returning migrants encounter the economic realities of not finding adequate employment to provide financial support to maintain the demands imposed by new patterns of consumption. Besides, "Houses can raise the social status in the community but will never grant you equal rights in the eyes of the law. Here in North America, we are all equal under the law," Puentes concluded.

For many, life in the quiet regions of the Andes has become too peaceful for returning migrants who have become accustomed to a faster North American pace of life. Suddenly the elusive bird of identification is searching for another cage in which to sing.

Chapter 6

Final Statements

Fundamentally, 'identification' is about creative cultural choices and options based on 'culturally available possibilities' (Rosaldo, 1993: 5), a process of selection and rejection by which specific people deal with historical, social and political situations articulated within transforming mental schemes.

The research about how 'identification' articulates social and cultural situations among diasporic migrants offers insight into the circumstances of choices and alternatives available by which people adapt to intensified phenomena of cultural transformation. It exposes cultural baggage as embodied memory and the role it plays together with other cultural alternatives conjugated by the imagination.

'Identification' is about cultural alternatives expressed through choices and options available to individuals and social units; it is about emerging choices people make to best represent themselves amid changing social environments; it is about options that offer fragmented cultural alternatives that best accommodate to social adjustment.

'Identification' is also about conditioned conscious and unconscious choices influenced by embodied memories and previous experiences, affected by the media, and strongly conditioned by existing power and social relations. It is about choices and options as circumstances of social accommodation, which not only implies identification as 'sameness' and cohesion but also as an element that creates distinction and separation from others. It allows the articulation of available circumstances that best allow individuals and collectives cultural subsistence and transmission. It is a process of emergence that offers infinite possibilities of interpreting and expressing cultural

uniqueness and distinctiveness; it is a two-way corridor, it is about the alternative ways we present ourselves to others and also about how others choose to represent us to themselves.

To understand the individuals and collectives' cultural uniqueness and distinctiveness as a process in constant renewal and transformation in which the articulation of elements of memory and the imagination conjugate social circumstance as a mechanism of accommodation, as analyzed in this investigation, dismantles the belief that humans can possess 'multiple identities' according to convenience. Quite to the contrary, this study demonstrates that individuals and collectives through the process of 'identification,' as a circumstance in permanent flux, can accommodate infinite possibilities of cultural expressions of singularity and contrast. As a conclusion, it can be stated that the concern is not about possessing many identities, but rather to have the capacity to choose infinite combinations of elements of cultural baggage and personal experience, as a mechanism with which it is possible to become culturally and socially visible or invisible to others.

To finally conclude, complemented by the 'irrational' alternative poetic discourse expressed in this analysis as an emotional metaphor on how individuals and collectives appear to others and themselves, it is safe to say that 'identification' is a surrealist voyage made up of fragments collected as we travel the road of life, a road without beginning or ending; a road as a destiny that eludes the reasons of memory to walk free on the eaves of the imagination.



Fig. 46 A poster thanking migrants from Deleg who live in New York, for their donations, which financed the water treatment plant and installations in the town, something had neglected for years.

**LOS COROS DE BROOKLYN INVITAN
A LA CORONACION DE LA**

SANTISIMA VIRGEN DE LA NUBE

La Madre del Ecuatoriano Ausente

PROCESION

**DOMINGO 27 DE MAYO
DE 2001**

A LAS 12 DEL MEDIO DIA

**Comienza en la Iglesia de
Sta Brigida Brooklyn**

**409 Linden Street entre Wyckoff Av.
Y San Nicholas Ave.**

La Ceremonia de la Coronación se efectuará
a las 2:00 p.m. En los patios de la Iglesia
SAN JOSÉ PATRÓN

(Willowby Ave. Entre Wilson y Central Av.)

Misa Precidida por el Mons. **MANUEL VALAREZO**
O.F.M. Obispo de Galapagos

**Acompañe este acto religioso con Disfraces
Globos y mucha devoción.**

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RIDGEWOOD, NY 11368

TEL: 718-821-5212

Fig. 47 The Brooklyn choruses invite the public to the coronation of the *Virgin of the Cloud*, Mother of the absent Ecuatorian, to the procession on Sunday May 27, 2001, which will take part at 2 pm in the churchyard of Saint Joseph. Mass will be preceded by Monsignor Manuel Valarezo, Bishop of Galapagos. Accompany this celebration with disguises and balloons.

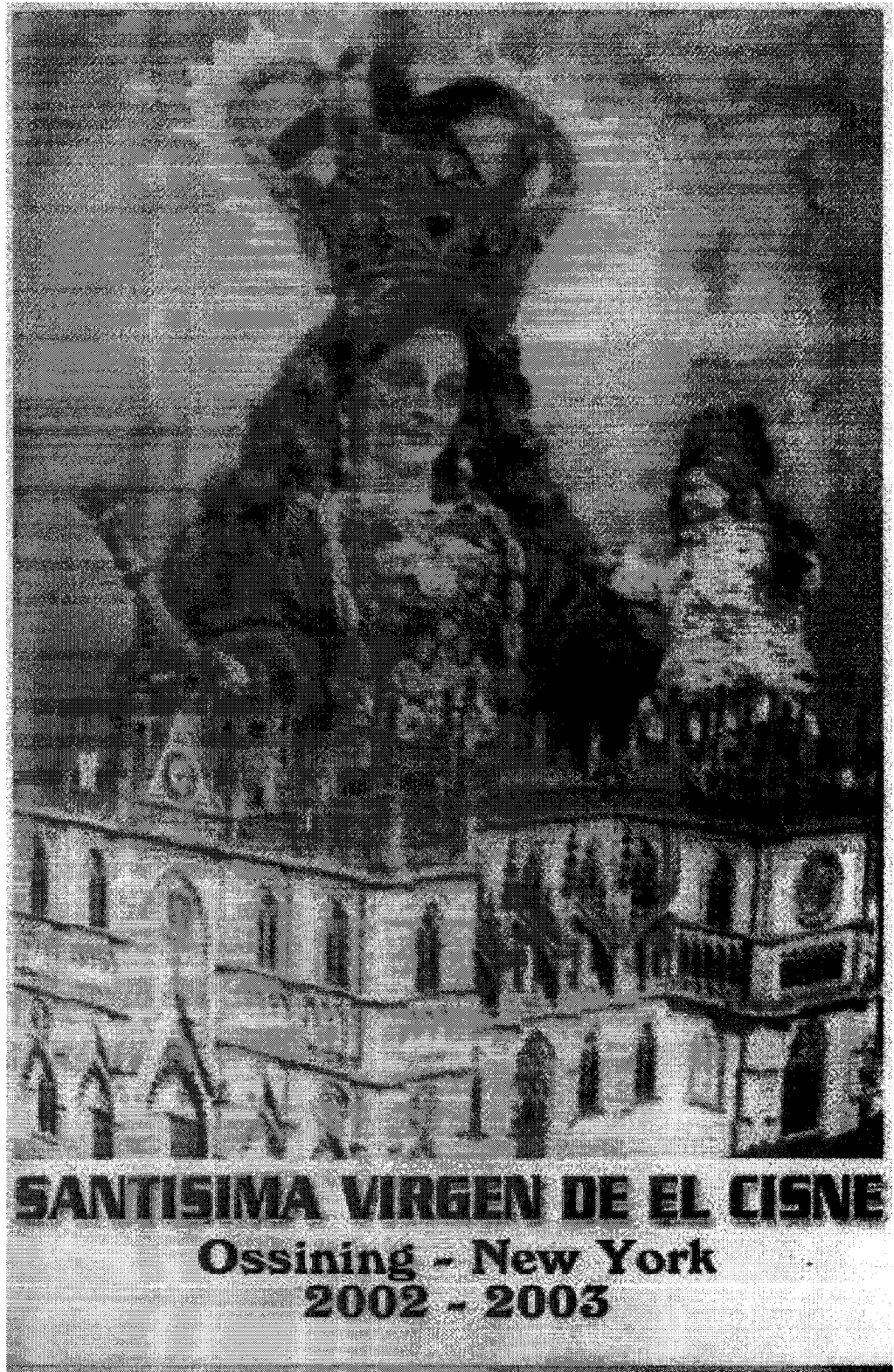


Fig. 48 Icon card with the image of the *Virgin of the Swan*.

ORACION

Oh Jesús, Salvador nuestro,
que quisiste que tu Madre,
la gloriosísima Virgen María,
fuera venerada en la hermosa
imagen de nuestra Señora de
El Cielo; concédanos, bonda-
dosos, que sepamos imitar
fielmente en este mundo el
testimonio cristiano de tan
santa Madre y Reina, cuyas
alabanzas esperamos cantar
en el cielo. Tú que vives y
reinas por los siglos de los
siglos.

Amen.

**Declarada el
13 de Agosto de 1905.
Como Patrona y Reina
de las Ecuatorianas
residentes en New York
Rd., Patricio Pintado
Guardian en los EE.UU.,
Canada e Inglaterra
Información (718) 494-3045**

Fig 49 Other side of the Virgin of the Cloud postcard with a prayer and pertinent information related to its circulation among followers

CONGREGACION AZOGUES NEW YORK
y los Coros Miembros de C.A.N.Y
invitan a la Misa Solemne en Honor de la
Madre del Ecuatoriano Ausente

Domingo 6 de
enero
2001

En memoria de los
 fallecidos el 11
 de Septiembre
 en el World Trade
 Center, New York

En San Patricio la Catedral de Nueva York
 11th Avenue y 10th St Manhattan

Su eminencia el Cardenal Jhon. O'Connor (+)
Padrino espiritual de C.A.N.Y.

De Ecuador: invitado especial, Rev. P. Victor Hugo Gonzalez
Superior del Convento Franciscano de Azogues

Liturgia Especial, Cantos Alegoricos, mucha fe y devucion
Tributo Musical de Artistas Ecuatorianos
Actuacion Especial del Coro Hispano de New York

Prostros 2001: **Neto de la entrada gratuita para el destino**
de la entrada gratuita para el destino

Fig 50 Invitation to a special New Year's mass in New York Cathedral for the *Virgin of the Cloud*.

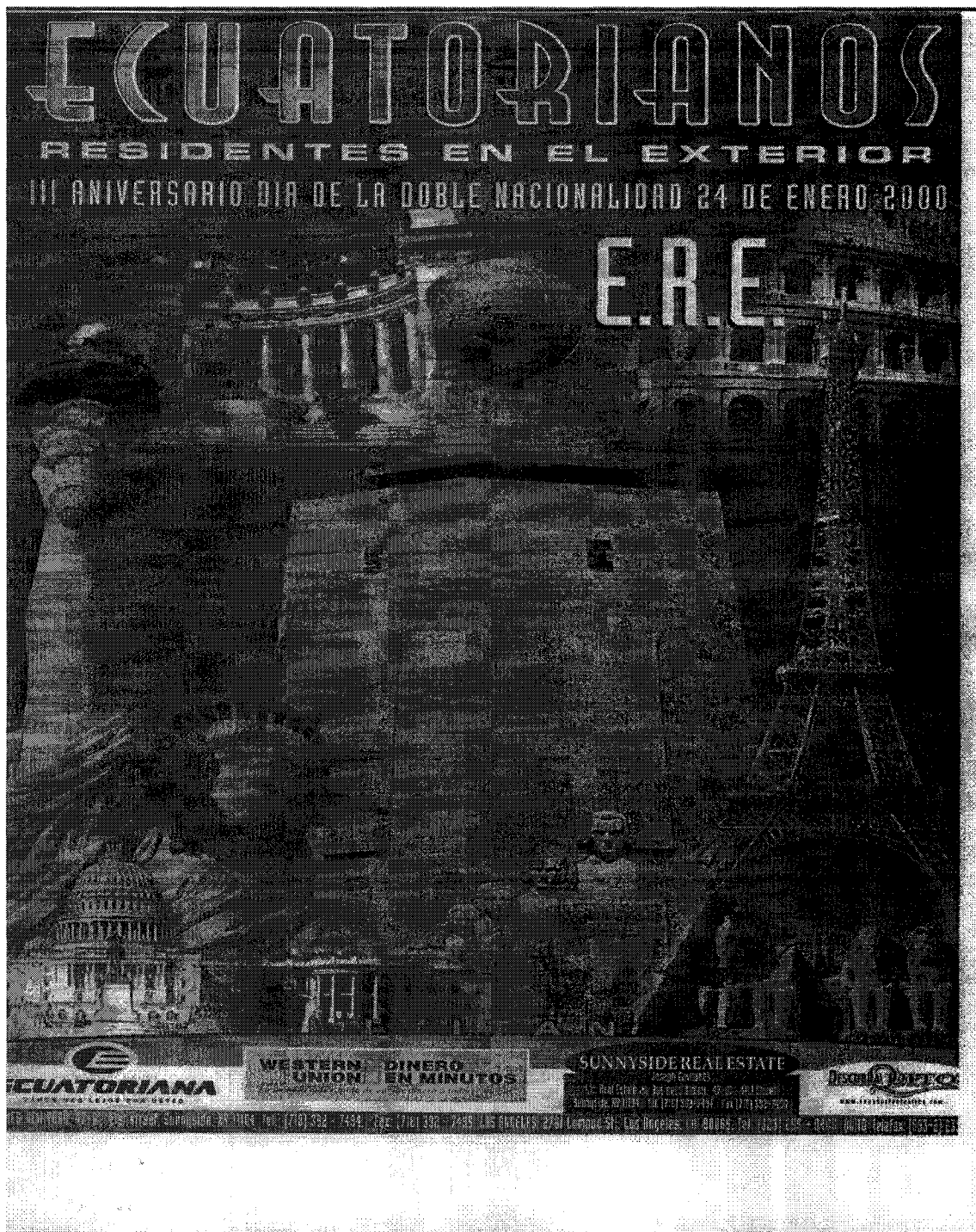


Fig 51 This poster is an invitation to a celebration of the right to a double nationality granted by the Ecuadorian government in 1997. Note the rather Postmodernist design of the poster, which includes Egyptian pharaohs, the Roman Coliseum, the White House and the Monument to the Equator situated in the outskirts of Quito.



Fig 52 CD cover, which portrays the Ecuadorian National Soccer Team, which took part in the World Cup that took part in Korea, 2000. The CD was a musical homage to the players.

Vuelve para quedarte.

Tres razones de peso para hacerlo: Todo lo que extrañas de tu tierra, todos a quienes quieres y una casa en Plaza Real.

Con el respaldo de IFR reconocida pionera de tu mejor vivir en Guayaquil, en las zonas de Samborombón y vía a la costa, Plaza Real te ofrece con:

- Seguridad 24 horas • 30 unidades de casa a elegir
- Elaboración en sitio a tu gusto, sin costo • Foco Votar
- Zonas de deportes • Pasarelas y Club social
- Ubicada en la zona residencial de mayor exclusividad y plusvalía
- Km. 1.6 Vía Samborombón - Av. de Río Centin

Casas desde US\$399.000

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 Telf: 606-300 • Fax: 606-046
 Email: ifr@plazareal.com
 2007, Av. Democracia No. 1115 y Victor Emilio Estrella
 Telf: 606-520 / 6100
 Guayaquil Ecuador

Plaza Real

Plaza Mayor (Ubicación)
www.plazareal.com.ec

Fig 53 The Ecuadorian Coat of Arms, used in a publicity campaign plays on nostalgia, which says, *Return to stay. Three reasons to do so: Everything that you miss from your land, the loved ones back home, and your own house in Plaza Real.* Note the house inserted in the middle of the coat of arms.

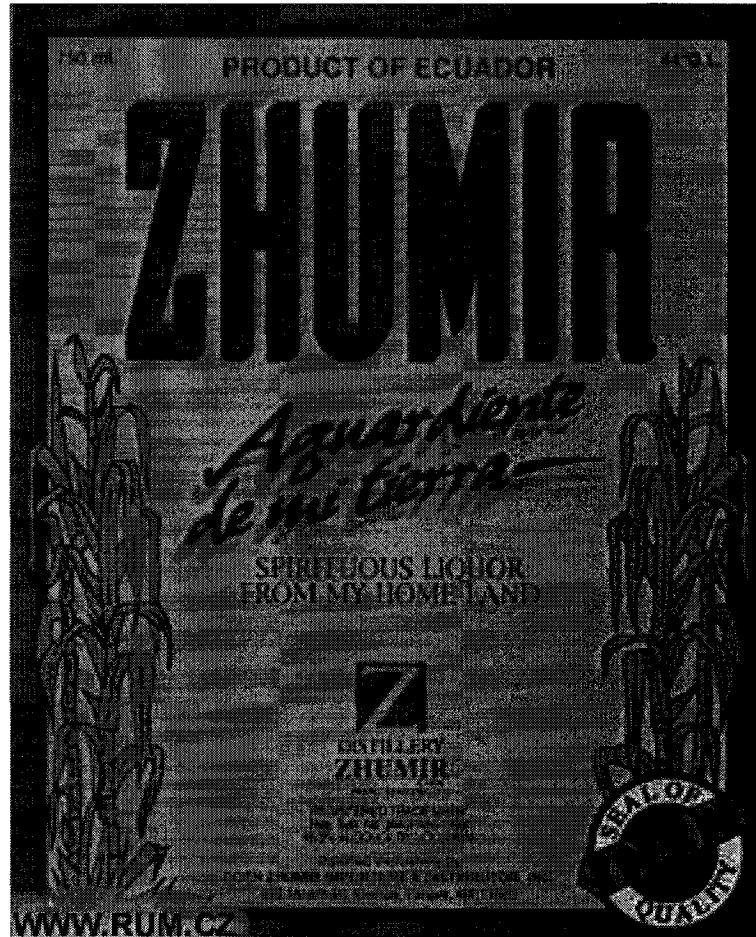


Fig 54 English label of Zhumir drink.

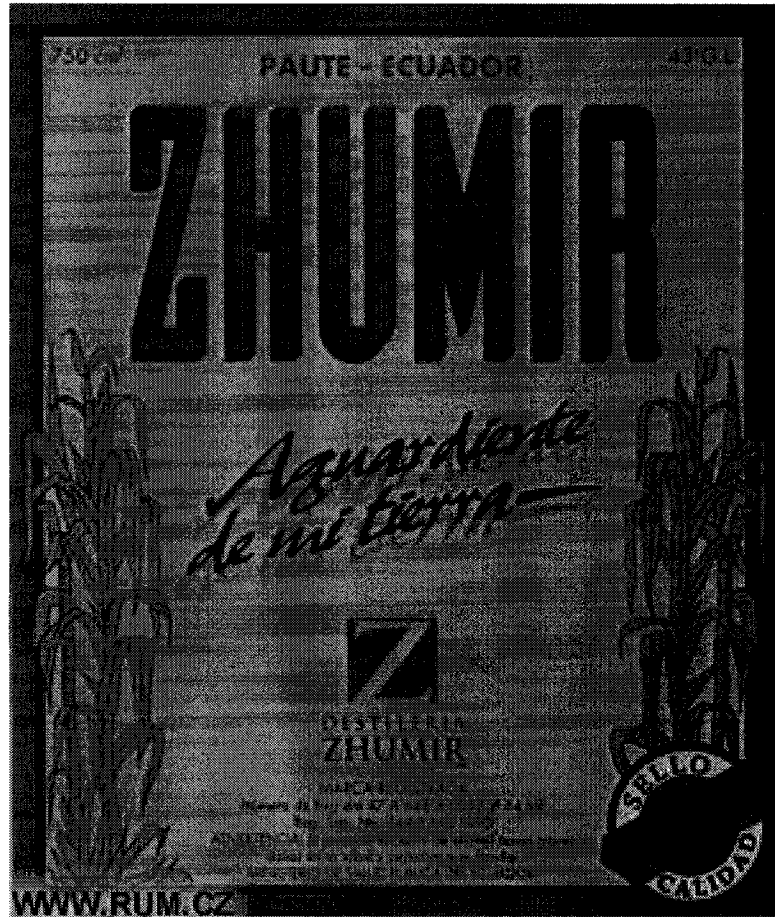


Fig 55 Spanish version of Label, which is preferred by many who consider this the 'authentic' drink, even though all Zhumir is made the same.

L'Enfer West District

454

Signature, Description and Residence of Informant	When Registered	Signature of Registrar	Baptismal name if added after Registration of Birth	No. of houses of Locality where born	Vaccination when Registered
<i>Philip Harry Despatching Clerk K.T.O. Guapo</i>		<i>L. J. Joseph Registrar</i>		<i>K.T.O. Guapo</i>	

Registrar General of the Colony of Trinidad and Tobago, do certify that the above is a true and correct copy of the

In Witness whereof I have hereunto set my Hand and affixed my Seal of

Office this *27th* day of *August* in the year
of Our Lord One Thousand Nine Hundred and *Fifty Five*.

[Signature]
Reg. Registrar General

Fig 56 Details from my birth certificate. Note District of L'Enfer (District of Hell) upper right-hand corner.

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Glossary of Terms

Achiote: Food colouring extracted from the *Bixa Orellana* tree.

Achiotero: Kitchen appliance in which *achiote* is kept.

Aguardiente: Alcohol drink made from distilled sugarcane juice.

Alpargatas: Knitted sandals tied at the ankles.

Ambato: Capital city of the Province of Tungurahua in the central Ecuadorian Andes.

Animalito: Small animal. Use of diminutive conveys respect or sentimental attachment.

Armadillo: burrowing nocturnal mammal with body covered with strong horny plates.

Atahualpa: Inca Monarch at the time of the Spanish Conquest.

Bacán: Colloquial for good, cool or excellent. Used in the Ecuadorian coast.

Ballet Folklórico Ecuatoriano: Ecuadorian Folkloric Ballet.

Banda de Pueblo: Village band of musicians that play during popular celebrations.

Bautizo: Baptism celebrations.

Bixa Orellana: Tree from the Tropical Rain Forest from *achiote* is obtained.

Blanqueamiento: Social process by which aboriginals transculturalize to white

Bocinas: Ancestral Andean instrument made from a long cane and an animal horn.

Bombo: Wooden drum, covered with cowhide.

Brea: Asphalt

Caldos de Gallina Maggi: Comercial chicken broth.

Casa de la Cultura: Official organization that promotes cultural activity in Ecuador.

Cayambe: Name of volcano and city situated to the north of Quito in the Ecuadorian Andes.

Charango: Stringed musical instrument made from the hide of an Armadillo.

Chht: Sound made to command silence.

Chicha: Drink made from fermented corn.

Chimborazo: Name of volcano and province situated in the central Ecuadorian Andes.

Chinucas: Woman dancers that take part in Andean folk celebrations

Chordeleg: Town in the province of *Azuay* in the southern Ecuadorian Andes.

Cocibolca: Lake in Nicaragua. The second largest in Latin America after Titicaca.

Conjunto Nacional Ecuatoriano de Herencia Popular: Ecuadorian Ensemble of Popular heritage.

Coyotes: Type of Wolf found in Mexico and North America. Term used to refer to middleperson who smuggles migrants over border crossings.

Cuando Canta el Gallo: Jacchigua's choreography, which translates to: When the rooster sings.

Deleg: Rural town in the Province of *Cañar* in southern Ecuadorian Andes.

Diablo Huma: Same as Haya Huma. Personage central to several Ecuadorian folk celebrations. Not an evil devil.

Don: Prefix used to show respect to elder men who have attained social significance.

Estampas: Printed icon of the Virgin Mary or Patron Saints.

Fiestas populares: Folk festivities.

Fogón: Rudimentary stove made with stones and fuelled with tree branches used to cook in rural areas.

Fritada: Typical dish in the Ecuadorian Andes made with pieces of pork fried together with plantain, potatoes and corn.

Gara: Colloquial for cool, excellent. Quichua word for male guinea pig.

Hacendado: Owner of the hacienda.

Hacienda: Large extension of land for agricultural or cattle production during colonial times owned by the white elite minority.

Haya Huma: Central character in Andean folk celebrations. Same as Diablo Huma. Not an evil devil.

Huasipichai: In Quichua, house-warming festivity in the Andes. Huasi: house. Pichai: celebration.

Huasipungo: Sharecropping system of land tenure among serfs who worked on the Hacienda.

Huasipungueros: Serfs who shared the huasipungo.

Humitas: Pies made with tender corn.

Imbabura: Name of volcano and Province in the northern Ecuadorian Andes. Indio: Indian. Used deceptively to refer to someone socially inferior

Inti Raimi: Celebration in honour of the Sun God during the summer solstice.

Jacchigua: Festivity to commemorate the abundance of the crop.

Kichwa: Same as Quechua, Pre-Hispanic language spoken in the Andes.

La Virgen de la Nube: Virgin of the Cloud

La Virgen del Cisne: Virgin of the Swan

Limosna: Charity

Llama: South American ruminant, member of the camelidae family, used by the natives as a work beast and to provide fine wool and meat.

Llamingo: In Ecuador same as llama.

Loja: Name of city and province in the southern Ecuadorian Andes.

Mama Quilla: Moon in Quichua

Manta: City in the Province of Manabi on the Ecuadorian coast.

Matrimonios: Wedding celebrations

Mayordomo: Manager of the hacienda.

Mestizaje: Process of the blending of cultures.

Mestizo: Person of mixed blood, usually Indian and White.

Metropolitan Touring: Renowned tourist enterprise in Ecuador.

Mil: Thousand

Mil-uso: Thousand uses. Person who performs any type of work to survive in North America

Minga: Collective work to benefit community or another person.

Mitimaes: People displaced during the Inca conquest.

Náhuatl: Meso-American Native language.

Oca: Goose in Italian and Spanish

Ocarina: Wind instrument that mocks the shape of a goose.

Otavaleño: Person from Otavalo.

Otavalo: City in the northern region of the Ecuadorian Andes.

Paila de bronce: Bronze pot used for cooking typical Ecuadorian dishes.

Paja Toquilla: Vegetable fibre used to knit hats and handicrafts.

Pantera: Panther. Model of Japanese sports utility vehicle.

Patrón: Master, Boss.

Pingullo: Wind instrument.

Pleno: Colloquial expression in Quito for cool, good, excellent.

Prioste: Person who offers and is responsible for a festive celebration.

Quechua: Native language spoken by several communities in Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru.

Quena: Wind instrument made from hollow cane.

Quinceaños: Celebration of fifteen-year birthday among girls.

Ronda: To gather to play music at night. To walk around in the same place. Part between the inside part of the wall and the houses in a walled community.

Rondador: Wind instrument similar made by tying several hollow canes together.

San Martin de Porres: Black Peruvian Patron Saint.

San Pablo Lake: Lake in the northern Ecuadorian Andes.

Saraguro: Natives believed to have been brought to Ecuador during the Inca conquest.

Se alquila disk jockey: Disk jockey for rent.

Señor de Andacocha: Religious icon of the Christ

Siku: Wind instrument same as sampoña.

Sombrero: Hat

Tenochtitlan: Ancient pre-Hispanic Mexican city.

Tepeyac: Hill close to Mexico City where the Virgin of Guadalupe made her appearance.

Tonantzin: Our revered mother in Náhuatl. Goddess of maternity among Meso-American pre-Hispanic cultures, represented by the moon.

Tostado: Toasted corn.

Universidad Central: State university of Ecuador.

Uso: Use

Vihuela: Stringed instrument similar to guitar.

Virgen de Guadalupe: Virgin of Guadalupe

Zampoñas: Ancient wind instruments made from tying several hollow canes

Zhumir: Commercial brand of alcohol drink made from distilled sugarcane juice.