



Special Feature: The Evolution of Chicano Literature

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MELUS, Vol. 5, No. 2, Interfaces (Summer, 1978), 71-110.

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THE EVOLUTION OF CHICANO LITERATURE

Raymund A. Paredes

Adiós, Guanajuato hermoso
mi estado donde nací
me voy para Estados Unidos,
lejos, muy lejos de tí

—Mexican *corrido*

I

The cultural forces that eventually gave rise to Chicano literature date from the late sixteenth century when the Spanish *conquistadores* moved northward from the Mexican interior and began the colonization of what is now the southwestern United States. These forces were, in the early colonial period at least, predominantly Spanish. Although the native Mexicans had developed sophisticated cultures, including impressive traditions of folklore and literature,¹ the Spaniards quickly imposed their own culture throughout this vast territory, particularly the institutions of language and religion. It should be pointed out that the Conquest occurred during Spain's greatest literary age, the era of Cervantes, Lope de Vega, and Góngora. Spanish drama flourished especially during this period, stimulated by the custom of the *teatro de corrales*, according to which dramatic groups would rope off available public space, set up a small stage, and perform. Another point that bears mention is that many of the Spanish officers were intelligent, educated, and cultured men, anxious to leave the imprint of their country's highest traditions in the New World. As for the foot soldiers and commoners, they too influenced the course of Spanish-American culture. Steeped in folklore, they deposited their legends, tales, and songs along the paths of conquest.²

It was thus in keeping with the spirit of the times that in 1598, Juan de Oñate and a contingent of over five hundred colonists entered New Mexico and promptly established a tradition of folk drama there. In celebration of Oñate's feat, Captain Marcos Farfán composed a play which described the Spaniards' *entrada* into New Mexico and their reception by gracious Indians anxious to hear the word of God.³

Farfán's drama, now unfortunately lost, was doubtlessly hurried and crude, but its performance within a fortnight of Oñate's arrival on the Rio Grande bears witness to the vigor of literary activity among a people struggling to conquer a continent. The colonists enjoyed at least one other play in 1598: the traditional Spanish piece, "The Moors and the Christians."⁴

Folk drama flourished in New Mexico—and to a lesser extent throughout the Spanish-speaking Southwest—until the late nineteenth century. The plays were composed anonymously, for the most part, and preserved primarily in oral tradition. Many dramas were simple and unpolished while others, like the celebrated "Shepherds" play, were sophisticated works, manifesting the influence of Spain's greatest dramatists.⁵ Most of the plays were *autos* (religious pieces), often composed by priests and used by them for instructional purposes among the Indians. Some works popular in the Southwest were imported from Spain, but these frequently underwent changes to conform to an American environment. One early drama from New Mexico, for example, featured the abduction of the Christ Child by Comanches.⁶ Other plays, like that of Farfán, were strictly southwestern creations. But the largest number of plays presented in the Spanish Southwest originated in the Mexican heartland and diffused northward.⁷

Other types of literary folklore prospered in the region. Legends, treating a variety of subjects such as witchcraft, miracles, and lost treasure, are of special significance.⁸ One of the oldest and most popular legends in the Spanish Southwest is that of *la llorona* (The Weeping Woman), who was first noticed in Mexico City in 1550, dressed in a white shroud-like garment, wailing along the streets.⁹ The source of her despair varies from one version of the legend to another. *La llorona* sometimes appears as a pathetic figure who, jilted by her lover, murders her bastard children and then, driven mad by the monstrosity of her action, runs wildly through the streets calling after her victims. In other accounts, she is a ghostly villain who, having been executed, returns to avenge herself on men and small children. A true synthesis of Spanish and Indian traditions,¹⁰ *la llorona* has become an important cultural symbol and the prototype of numerous female figures in Mexican and Chicano fiction.¹¹

The custom of folksong also contributed significantly to the establishment of a literary tradition among the southwestern Mexicans. Here again, the types of folksong that took root in the region—the *romance*, *copla*, and *décima*, for example—were originally Spanish forms modified by Indian and *mestizo* influences. This process took place with extraordinary speed: only thirty years after the Conquest, Mexican Indians were composing *romance*-like ballads of their own.¹²

The traditional forms of Spanish balladry thrived in Greater Mexico¹³ until they were superseded in mid-nineteenth century by a Mexican type, the *corrido*.¹⁴ The name derives from the verb *correr*—to run—and the *corrido* does just that; it is a fast-paced narrative ballad, usually with a theme of struggle, adventure, or catastrophe. It often appears in a stanza of four eight-syllable lines, but exceptions are common, for the story, not the form, is its key element.¹⁵ Nowhere did the *corrido* flourish more than in the lower borderlands of Texas. The animosity between Anglos and Mexicans, which coalesced in the Texas Revolution of 1836 and persisted well into the present century, created the perfect conditions for the emergence of a *corrido* tradition.¹⁶ Most of these ballads were composed anonymously in rural areas and made their way to city printing shops on both sides of the border. A few apparently first appeared as broadsides and were then transformed through oral transmission.¹⁷ Frequently, only the lyrics of the *corridos* were printed or transmitted, in which cases the ballads survived as a kind of folk poetry.¹⁸

The literary folklore of the Chicano, four hundred years in the making, is extensive, and comprises not only drama, legends, and songs, but such elements as tales and proverbs.¹⁹ This body of work—which is primarily in Spanish—serves as the repository of much of Chicano history and culture. Folklore thus ties the Chicano to his Mexican origins and serves as the core of his literary sensibility. As we shall see, a number of Chicano writers have employed folkloric materials as the building blocks of fiction, believing that the most distinctive and enduring cultural values are found not in genteel society but in the traditions of the common people. Legends and *corridos* have been especially fruitful sources of fictional themes. Legends are, perhaps, the most “literary” of folk narratives, since they are often infused with a sense of realism and evince such devices as plot, characterization, dialogue, and figurative language. The *corrido* has these qualities as well, being, in a sense, a legend set to music.²⁰ The *corrido*’s great attraction to the fictionalist lies in the proven appeal of its stories; no other type of folklore treats more vividly events that have stirred the imagination of the Mexican people.

This is not to say that the early settlers of the Mexican Southwest did not create literature in the conventional sense. Travel narratives, such as those of Cabeza de Vaca and Castañeda, appeared in the early colonial period. In 1610, Gaspar Pérez de Villagrà, a classical scholar from Salamanca and a companion of Oñate, published his *History of New Mexico* in thirty-four Virgilian cantos. During the next century, Francisco Palóu, a Franciscan priest, composed his four-volume *Historical Memoirs of New California*. Other residents of the

Southwest wrote a good deal, not belles lettres generally, but diaries, descriptive narratives, and light verse.²¹ Because of a long-standing negligence, our understanding of the literary culture of the Mexican Southwest is still extremely fragmentary, and awaits a thorough investigation of appropriate archives and the numerous Spanish-language newspapers and literary journals of the region. No doubt a large body of literature remains undiscovered.

II

The great divide in Chicano history is the year 1848 when the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended twenty-one months of warfare between Mexico and the United States. According to the treaty, Mexico ceded half its national territory to the United States: the present states of California, Nevada, Arizona, Utah, New Mexico, and half of Colorado. The Mexican residents of these areas had the choice of migrating southward across the new boundary or accepting American citizenship. Only two thousand people left their homes, while some eighty thousand remained, thus becoming, in the most literal sense of the term, Mexican-Americans. Although a distinctive Mexican-American literary sensibility was not to emerge for several generations, the signing of Guadalupe Hidalgo, more than any other event, required that the southwestern Mexicans begin to rethink their relationships to the old country and to the United States.

Given the histories of Anglo- and Mexican-Americans, no one could have expected affairs between the two peoples to be harmonious. The bitterness that characterized the relationship from its inception had its origins in the English-Spanish hostilities of the sixteenth century. The Anglos believed that Mexicans were lazy, priest-ridden, treacherous, and cruel, while Mexicans regarded Anglos as arrogant, ruthless, and avaricious.²² To arouse their suspicions further, southwestern Mexicans had watched the unfolding of an American scheme of penetration and appropriation in their territory since 1807, the year of the Zebulon Pike expedition. As the number of Americans in the country increased dramatically, particularly after the opening of the Texas settlements and the Santa Fe Trail in 1821, Mexican concern turned to alarm. The inevitable conflicts between the two groups soon became a major theme in the Mexican literature of the Southwest.

The southwestern Mexicans disliked Anglos in the lump, but the Texans were regarded as the worst of the breed. After their successful revolution of 1836, Texans sought to extend their domination over other Mexican territories. One result was the Santa Fe Expedition of 1841, an inept attempt to "liberate" New Mexico by some three hun-

dred Texans. The invaders set out from Austin and immediately fell into disarray, lost their bearings and supplies, and finally staggered into New Mexico, tired, hungry, and dispirited, with hardly a thought of conquest. The Mexican forces in the area, having gotten wind of the intrigue, quickly pounced upon the Texans. The episode was the stuff of low comedy, a point not wasted on a nameless New Mexico playwright who within five years of the expedition composed the play *Los Tejanos*. The surviving manuscript is incomplete but instructive nonetheless.²³

The play opens in the Texans' camp with a General McLeod attempting to gather intelligence for an assault on Santa Fe. An Indian prisoner leads the Texans to the hideout of Jorge Ramírez, a well-connected New Mexican who pretends to be a traitor. Ramírez offers to direct McLeod to Santa Fe, and the Texan accepts eagerly, never noticing the Mexican's obvious duplicity. Later, as the astonished McLeod is led away by his Mexican captors, Ramírez snarls at him: "Die, you dog! Now you are going to pay for all the evil you had planned. . . . This will teach you not to trust the New Mexicans. Whenever you hear them bark at foreigners they always bite them. There is no doubt about it."²⁴

We have in this play the outlines of a pattern which would appear, in several variations, in later Chicano works. Anglo and Mexican (or Chicano) are locked in conflict. The Anglo, usually a bully like McLeod, disdains his opponent and so takes the contest lightly. The Mexican, on the other hand, plans carefully, plays on his foe's prejudices and beats him, often through trickery. Such a sequence of events, of course, is not restricted to Chicano literature but occurs in virtually all minority writing. The member of a minority, deprived of material goods and sophisticated technology, relies on his wits to survive in an oppressive society. His key advantage over his adversary is greater understanding. The trickster knows his enemy intimately, while the oppressor, thinking in stereotypes, knows little of his.²⁵ A figure like Jorge Ramírez, created just as the Anglo-Americans were commencing their appropriation of the Southwest, was intended to assure Mexicans of their ability to survive the changing order.

Nowhere was the enmity between Mexicans and Anglo-Americans more intense than in the border regions of south Texas. Guadalupe Hidalgo had guaranteed Mexican-Americans full rights as citizens but, in fact, they were frequently stripped of their property and subjected to severe discrimination. The Mexican-Americans expressed their resentment of this treatment in the large number of *corridos* that sprang from the region. The ballad makers found one of their earliest heroes in Juan Nepomuceno Cortina, a member of an old Rio Grande family who endeared himself to the border Mexicans in 1859 when he shot the

Anglo marshall of Brownsville for pistol-whipping a *vaquero*. This incident stirred in Cortina memories of other Anglo outrages, and he consequently launched a campaign of reprisal.

All this was fine with the border Mexicans who admired any man who fought for his rights. Cortina thus became an instant hero. *Corridos* about him were apparently composed promptly after his Brownsville skirmish, and others appeared as he continued his war against the *gringos*. Here are verses from two separate ballads:

Ese general Cortinas
es libre y muy soberano,
han subido sus honores
porque salvó a un mexicano.

The famed general Cortinas
is quite sovereign and free,
The honor due him is greater,
for he saved a Mexican life.

Los americanos hacían huelga,
borracheras en las cantinas,
de gusto que había muerto
ese general Cortinas.

The Americans made merry.
They got drunk in the saloons,
Out of joy over the death
of the famed General Cortinas.²⁶

The folklore record provides ample evidence that the newly-created Mexican-Americans believed they would survive the Anglo challenge, whether by guile as in the case of Jorge Ramírez or through greater courage and physical superiority as with Cortina. But the unanswered question was: at what cost, measured not only in human life but in cultural terms? A *décima* from New Mexico, composed in the face of growing encroachment by Anglo-Americans, contains this lament:

Nuevo México infeliz
¿Qué es lo que nos ha pasado?

Unhappy New Mexico
What is it that has happened to us.²⁷

Here, then, are the components of a nascent Chicano sensibility: ethnic pride and a strong belief in the group's durability coupled with a vague but fearful realization that survival required cultural compromise, some as yet indeterminate loss of Mexican-ness.

Just as the seventeenth-century narratives of Indian captivity may be said to constitute the earliest examples of Anglo-American writing, so the *corridos* of border conflict may be said to compose an incipient form of Chicano literature. The forms and the language of the ballads are conventionally Mexican, but the themes, the intensity of sentiment, and the level of cultural awareness associated with these themes represent a departure from Mexican models. For instance, a striking feature of the folklore from central Mexico in the generation after Guadalupe Hidalgo is the relatively little attention given to the Anglo-American, the Mexicans presumably being preoccupied with such matters as the rebuilding of a defeated nation, the social upheavals associated with the *Reforma*, and the French occupation.²⁸ These issues were familiar to the

Mexican-Americans of "México de Afuera" (Mexico Outside), but their primary concerns lay elsewhere.

The oldest *corrido* from south Texas to survive in complete form expresses some of these concerns. Texas, like other Confederate states, suffered an economic depression after the Civil War, and Mexican-Americans had to scramble for work like their Anglo compatriots. One source of income was the cattle drive. The *Corrido de Kiansis* treats this experience in bittersweet fashion, articulating first the sadness and fear the *vaqueros* felt about traveling far from home to face unknown dangers: "Ah, what a long trail it was! I was not sure I would survive." Next, the ballad expresses exasperation with the arrogant Anglos who had forgotten that working cattle was a trade at which they were neophytes and the Mexicans veterans. Finally comes the conflict, which in this *corrido* takes shape as a competition between the Mexican-American and Anglo cowboys:

Quinientos novillos eran,
 todos grandes y livianos,
 y entre treinta americanos
 no los podían embalar.
 Llegan cinco mexicanos,
 todos bien enchivarrados,
 y en menos de un cuarto de hora
 los tenían encerrados.
 Esos cinco mexicanos
 al momento los echaron,
 y los treinta americanos
 se quedaron azorados.

Five hundred steers there were
 All big and quick;
 Thirty American cowboys could not
 Keep them bunched together.
 Then five Mexicans arrive,
 All of them wearing good chaps;
 And in less than a quarter hour
 They had the steers penned up.
 Those five Mexicans penned up
 The steers in a moment,
 And the thirty Americans were left
 Staring in amazement.²⁹

Bad feelings in the south Texas borderlands reached their peak after the turn of the century, and the *corridos* document these animosities fully. The best known ballad of the period is "Gregorio Cortez" which is still heard in Chicano communities throughout the United States. Cortez was a Mexican-born *vaquero* who in 1901 killed Sheriff Brack Morris of Karnes County. Morris had tried to arrest Cortez and his brother Romoldo for horse-stealing, a crime of which both men were innocent. Gregorio protested the arrest and Morris fired, wounding Romoldo in the mouth. Gregorio then shot the Anglo gunman dead. Realizing that his chances for a fair trial were slight, Cortez fled, walking and riding more than five hundred miles with hundreds of sheriffs, Texas Rangers, and civilian Mexican-haters in pursuit. Cortez made it to the border city of Laredo before he was captured.

Corridos are frequently reliable sources of history, but the Cortez ballads are more valuable for what they tell us about the psychology of border Mexicans. They express not only an intense resentment of

Anglos but also denounce Anglo views of Mexican character. In Anglo-Texan mythology, the Mexican is a poor marksman (a knife, preferably in the back, being his weapon of preference), and is stupid and cowardly: in sum, hardly a match for an Anglo-Saxon.³⁰ The Texas-Mexicans knew these attitudes well and were deeply stung by them. In the *corridos*, it is Cortez who is the crack shot, so expert a horseman that trying to overtake him is "like following a star." At one point in his flight, Cortez is surrounded by over three hundred Rangers, whose faces are "whiter than poppies":

Cuando les brincó el corral,
según lo que aquí se dice,
se agarraron a balazos
y les mató otro cherife.

When he jumped out of their corral,
according to what is said here,
They got into a gunfight,
and he killed them another sheriff.

Decía Gregorio Cortez
con su pistola en la mano:
—No corran, rinches cobardes
con un solo mexicano—.

Then said Gregorio Cortez
with his pistol in his hand,
"Don't run, you cowardly *rinches* [Rangers],
from a single Mexican."³¹

The Gregorio Cortez of the ballads is certainly a more interesting character than the historical figure, representing an attempt by Mexican-Americans to reclaim the most admired qualities of *vaquero* culture—horsemanship, marksmanship, courage, and endurance—which Anglo-Americans had appropriated. The *corrido* Cortez is, quite simply, a John Wayne in brownface.

Despite the cultural drift that Mexican-Americans in Texas were experiencing around the turn of the century, they still considered themselves "Mexicans" and were likewise designated by Anglos. The Rio Grande was regarded less as a political boundary which separated two countries than as a water-giving artery in an arid land which drew Mexicans on either side to its banks and held them in a common culture. In the days before the United States Border Patrol, travel across the river was an easy matter. Mexicans born on the southern bank could move to the other side and experience little change. But all the while, as we can see in the *corridos* after 1900, the pressures of Anglo-American culture were intensifying and the cries of Mexican allegiance occasionally turned shrill, a ballad-maker here and there trying too hard to make his point:

Nací en la frontera
de acá de este lado,
de acá de este lado
puro mexicano,
por más que la gente
me juzque texano

I was born on the border
though here on this side,
though here on this side
I'm a pure Mexican,
even though people
may think I'm Texan

yo les aseguro
que soy mexicano
de acá de este lado.

I now assure you
that I'm all Mexican
from here on this side.³²

The *corrido* ends, significantly, with a repetition of the same stanza. Throughout this period, Mexican-Americans were changing more than they knew or, rather, than they admitted; they clung to their culture in the face of forces that were inevitably altering it.

Many of these alterations were perceptible by the 1920s. Certainly, the Spanish of the Mexican-Americans had been modified—some said infested—by *pochismos* (Americanisms). Even worse, some Mexican-Americans preferred English altogether. This did not sit well with the tunesmith who composed “Los mexicanos que hablan inglés” (The Mexicans Who Speak English) with something less than sympathetic humor.³³ As many Mexicans saw it, the abandonment of Spanish was akin to pulling the finger out of the dike: the whole culture was bound to crumble. One of the frequent complaints among Mexican males in the United States concerned the domineering character of American women. This *canción* from New Mexico obliquely suggests that *pochis* (the term refers to Americanized Mexicans but usually appears as *pocho*) are likely to have absorbed more of American culture than merely the language;

Me casé con una pochi
Para aprender inglés
y a los tres días de casado
Yo ya le decía yes.

I married a *pochi*
so that I could learn English,
And after three days of marriage,
I was already telling her “yes.”³⁴

Some degree of acculturation was accepted as inevitable by most Mexican-Americans, but the ballads describe a character universally held in contempt: the Mexican who completely rejected his heritage. Here is a piece from Los Angeles in the 1920s entitled “El renegado” (The Renegade):

Andas por hay luciendo
gran automóvil
me llamas desgraciado,
y muerto de hambre
y es que ya no te acuerdas

cuando en mi rancho
andabas casi en cueros
y sin huaraches.
Así pasa a muchos
que aquí conozco
cuando aprenden un poco
de americano

You go along showing off
In a big automobile.
You call me a pauper
And dead with hunger,
And what you don't remember
is
That on my farm
You went around almost naked
And without sandals.
This happens to many
That I know here
When they learn a little
American

y se visten catrines
 y van al baile.
 Y el que niega su raza
 ni madre tiene,
 pues no hay nada en el mundo
 tan asqueroso
 como la ruin figura del renegado
 Y aunque lejos de tí,
 Patria querida,
 me han echado
 continuas revoluciones,
 no reniega jamás
 un buen mexicano
 de la Patria querida
 de sus amores.

And dress up like dudes,
 And go to the dance.
 But he who denies his race
 Is the most miserable creature.
 There is nothing in the world
 So vile as he,
 The mean figure of the renegade.
 And although far from you,
 Dear Fatherland,
 Continual revolutions
 Have cast me out—
 A good Mexican
 Never disowns
 The dear fatherland
 Of his affections.³⁵

This ballad serves as an interesting complement to the "corrido del norte." While the *tejano* ardently proclaims his allegiance to Mexico despite his American origins, the Mexican-born composer of "El renegado" recognizes the easy temptations of American life, particularly its materialism and status consciousness. The bitter denunciations of the "renegade" also help to explain the adamant patriotism of the "corrido del norte."

But "El renegado" is also interesting in its own right, expressing the pain of dislocation felt by many Mexicans forced to leave their homeland during the revolutionary period. Thousands of *campesinos* came north because the fighting had all but destroyed the country's agriculture. Other immigrants were political refugees. Many Mexicans, from every social class, left because they found the prevailing atmosphere of random violence intolerable. But in no sense did the immigration movement represent a widespread rejection of Mexican culture. These people saw themselves as exiles, and many dreamed of returning home. In the meantime, they held as best they could to their traditions and deplored those who did not.

The *corrido* declined in Greater Mexico after 1930, the victim of commercialism and over-exposure.³⁶ While *corridos* and other types of ballads are composed and played today, they generally lack the epic appeal of earlier versions.³⁷ Still, *corridos*, even more than other genres of folklore, played a critical role in the establishment of a Chicano literary tradition in a period when conventional literary works were relatively scarce. The most effective depiction of the *corrido* as a force in Chicano literary culture appears in a recent play by Luís Valdez entitled, appropriately enough, *El corrido*. The work deals with the experiences of a Mexican *campesino* who comes to the United States as a migrant worker. He leads a hardscrabble existence, encountering prejudice, the frustration of failed expectations, and the alienation of his

Americanized children. The dialogue is beautifully supplemented not by a narrator, but by a singer of *corridos*, which are referred to as "canciones de los pobres" (songs of the poor). One of the fine moments in the play occurs in the back of a truck as it carries migrant workers out to the fields early one cold morning. A young man is casually strumming a guitar when an older fellow slides next to him and asks for a *corrido*. The youngster, somewhat embarrassed, explains he is not sure he knows any. Retorts the *viejo*: "You're a Chicano, aren't you?" The boy plays.

III

For several generations after Guadalupe Hidalgo, the literary record of Mexican-Americans—or what we have of it—shows a considerably slower movement towards a distinctly Chicano perspective than does the folklore. The *corridos*, for example, as early as the 1860s focused on cultural conflict with the Anglos as the fundamental fact of the Mexican-American experience; much of the conventional literature, on the other hand, is nostalgic and oddly detached from contemporary issues, as if the present reality were too difficult to confront. Moreover, when writers did choose to treat current issues, their tone was not proud and defiant, but usually tentative and subdued, even submissive.

Although the southwestern territories were never as culturally isolated—either before or after the coming of the Anglo—as scholars have generally claimed, opportunities for formal education were scarce until well into the twentieth century. Before 1848, schooling, except in its most rudimentary form, was limited primarily to the privileged classes. After the region was absorbed by the United States, education for Mexican-Americans did not greatly improve for reasons of discrimination and differences over curricula and control of schools. But for those Mexican-Americans who had the tool of literacy, writing was a highly popular activity. Mexican-Americans kept diaries, journals,³⁸ and "books of personal verses" to which several members of a family might contribute.³⁹ For those writers interested in a larger audience there were Spanish-language newspapers throughout the Southwest that published creative works; in New Mexico alone, the period 1880-1900 saw the establishment of sixty-one such newspapers.⁴⁰

Of the published material, verse was by far the most popular form of literary expression. Mexican-American poets, clearly under the influence of prevailing Mexican literary conventions, demonstrated a taste for lyrical verse, especially in the generation after 1848 when romanticism was a powerful cultural movement in Mexico. Francisco Ramírez published love poetry in *El Clamor Público*, a Los Angeles

newspaper from the period 1855-1859. A few of his verses have been reprinted, but these are of little interest, burdened as they are by evocations of "angels of love" and "enchanting nymphs." Another poet from *El Clamor Público*, José Elías González wrote these lines:

Tu cabellera es de oro;
 Tu talle esbelto, ligero;
 Eres mi bien, mi tesoro,
 El ídolo que venero.

Your long hair is golden,
 Your figure well-shaped, lithe;
 You are my love, my treasure,
 The idol I venerate.⁴¹

The work of other Mexican-American poets of the period also suffers from sentimentalism and from an unwillingness to restrain romantic impulses. Undoubtedly, such verse was popular in its day, but it now seems precious, effete, and more than a little silly.

In New Mexico, where the literary record is less fragmentary than in other regions, several factors combined to create a distinctive Mexican-American perspective. Of all the southwestern states, New Mexico was the first colonized by the Spaniards, and its citizens took pride in the richness of their Spanish traditions. Of the three major centers of Mexican culture in the Southwest, New Mexico was the last to be affected dramatically by Anglo penetration. Texas began receiving large numbers of Anglos in 1822 and California in the 1840s, but New Mexico, with the exception of Santa Fe which prospered as a trading headquarters, was relatively undisturbed by Anglo influences until the arrival of the railroad in 1880. Consequently, the literature of New Mexico bears few signs of cultural conflict until the late nineteenth century. Even then, the prevailing tone was more accommodating than combative. Significantly, the *corrido* tradition, which flourished in the culturally-tense borderlands of south Texas, is undistinguished in New Mexico, dealing not with the exploits of *vaqueros* who defy Anglo oppression, but with more prosaic topics such as romance and family tragedy.⁴²

The custom of anonymous versifying, dating back to the earliest days of the Spanish colonization, remained vigorous in New Mexico long after the advent of the Anglo. Spanish-language newspapers were apparently inundated with this kind of poetry to the point where, in 1884, the exasperated editor of *La Aurora* in Santa Fe published an item entitled "Remedios para la Versomanía" (Remedies for Verse-mania).⁴³ This poetry, in many cases virtually indistinguishable from folk verse, generally followed traditional Spanish forms such as the *canción* and the *décima*. Not surprisingly, much of this verse was of low literary quality, flawed by a lack of originality and excessive romanticism. One poem, obviously derivative of the Spaniard Bécquer, is a religious piece entitled "A la Virgen." It rhapsodizes about the poet's deliverance of his

"affection, heart, and faith" to the Virgin "with all the trust of an innocent child."⁴⁴ Not all the anonymous verse was trivial, however. In New Mexico, as in Texas and California, Mexican-Americans lamented the erosion of their heritage and the intrusion of Anglo technology. One talented poet, who signed his work "X.X.X.," dealt with such issues as the quality of the territorial educational system and the impact of the Spanish-American War on New Mexicans.⁴⁵ The device of anonymity worked effectively for the New Mexican poets. It offered some protection from reprisal when they treated controversial subjects, but more importantly, anonymity gave their work a universal quality, as if each poem were a nameless cry from the collective consciousness.

Nothing exercised not only the poets but all the New Mexican writers like the question of Anglo prejudice. Writers particularly resented prevailing Anglo views that Mexican-Americans were backward and "alien," believing that these attitudes had postponed the admission of New Mexico to the Union for half a century.⁴⁶ The poet X.X.X. complained that the United States had treated New Mexico like a "ragged beggar," yet still held out hope that statehood would come. When the Spanish-American War began in 1898, the New Mexican writers quickly proclaimed their allegiance to the United States and their willingness to take up arms against the "mother country." One New Mexican essayist expressed the view that, cultural differences notwithstanding, all "citizens and those who reside in this country, whatever their nationality, race or blood ties may be, must remember that they are living under this government and enjoying its beneficent protection."⁴⁷ Certainly, there was plenty of room for debate about the quality and sincerity of the United States' "beneficent protection" of New Mexico, but still the writers rallied their people around the American flag.⁴⁸

As a group, the Mexican-American writers of New Mexico sought some sort of cultural compromise for their people. They encouraged the retention of Hispanic traditions and the Spanish language, but they also supported statehood, New Mexican participation in American wars, and the acquisition of English for practical purposes.⁴⁹ In effect, these writers advocated the creation of a culture that was neither Hispanic-Mexican nor Anglo-American, but a synthesis of the two. Later Chicano writers would also advocate movement towards this goal.

But such a cultural synthesis was not easily attainable, as Mariano Vallejo, a California writer, made clear. A member of one of the most prominent families in the region, Vallejo had early supported statehood for California, maintaining that Mexico had neglected its northernmost territory and that the United States was the "happiest and most free nation in the world."⁵⁰ His feelings began to change, however, after he

was swindled by *yanquis* in various business deals. When H. H. Bancroft encouraged Vallejo to write a history of California, he plunged into the project, anxious to tell the Mexican side. He submitted his manuscript in five volumes to Bancroft in 1875.

"What a difference" wrote Vallejo in 1877, "between the present time and those that preceded the usurpation by the Americans. If the Californians could all gather together to breathe a lament, it would reach Heaven as a moving sigh which would cause fear and consternation to the Universe. What misery!"⁵¹ And so went the theme of Vallejo's massive history. The Anglos, propelled by their greed, swarmed into California, trampling everything in their paths. Vallejo wrote of Anglo "malefactors" to whom human life had no value. Ultimately, he regarded the Americanization of California as the despoilment of the "true Eden":

When gold was discovered, the flag of stars already waved over Alta California. No longer were we ruled by the Mexican laws, under whose shadow some had advanced while others fell back, but under which no one had perished of hunger, and only two individuals had been by law deprived of their lives, a very common event during the early years of the North American domination in California.

The language now spoken in our country, the laws which govern us, the faces which we encounter daily, are those of the masters of the land, and, of course, antagonistic to our interests and rights, but what does that matter to the conqueror? He wishes his own well-being and not ours!—a thing that I consider only natural in individuals, but which I condemn in a government which has promised to respect and make respected our rights, and to treat us as its own sons. But what does it avail us to complain? The thing has happened and there is no remedy.

I ask, what has the state government done for the Californians since the victory over Mexico? Have they kept the promises with which they deluded us? I do not ask for miracles; I am not and never have been exacting; I do not demand gold, a pleasing gift only to abject peoples. But I ask and I have a right to ask for an answer.⁵²

Vallejo's history was an intensely personal work, written to show that the Californians "were not indigents or a band of beasts"⁵³ as they were so frequently depicted by Anglo-Americans. But he held little hope that the Mexican culture of California could withstand the collision with that of the United States. Instead, he foresaw a day when his people might "disappear, ignored of the whole world."⁵⁴

Vallejo was not exactly writing for the whole world, but he did want to bring the "true history" of California to Anglo readers.⁵⁵ In this endeavor he was exceptional, for in the nineteenth century, Mexican-American authors generally wrote for their own people. It was only

after the first decade of the twentieth century that a few Mexican-Americans begin to publish stories and poetry in large circulation American magazines. This difference in audience dramatically affected the character of the literature itself.

María Cristina Mena published a series of Mexican stories and sketches in *The Century* and *American* magazines during the 1910s. Mena was a talented story-teller whose sensibility unfortunately tended towards sentimentalism and preciousness. She aimed to portray Mexican culture in a positive light, but with great decorum; as a consequence, her stories seem trivial and condescending. Mena took pride in the aboriginal past of Mexico and she had real sympathy for the downtrodden Indians, but she could not, for the life of her, resist describing how they "washed their little brown faces . . . and assumed expressions of astonishing intelligence and zeal."⁵⁶ Occasionally, she struck a blow at the pretensions of Mexico's ruling class, but to little effect; Mena's genteelness simply is incapable of warming the reader's blood.

Her story-telling gifts are best displayed in "The Vine-Leaf."⁵⁷ The main character is Dr. Malsufrido (impatient of suffering), a Mexico City physician more interested in the sins of his wealthy patients than their ailments. He talks about his first patient, a woman who comes to have a birthmark in the shape of a vine-leaf removed from her lower back. The surgery goes perfectly but throughout the operation the patient remains veiled. Malsufrido immediately falls in love with this mystery woman but never probes her identity. Five years later, he discovers by accident that the woman is a murderer, but when he encounters her again, this time face to face, he cannot think of bringing her to justice. The woman, now a *marquesa*, is as beautiful as the doctor had imagined and so, loving her still after all this time, he accedes to her secrecy. And there Mena's story ends, a charming and well-told piece, but nothing more.

In trying to depict and explicate Mexican culture to an American audience, Mena was undone by a strategy that would enervate the work of other Mexican-American writers. She tried to depict her characters within the boundaries of conventional American attitudes about Mexico. She knew what Americans liked to read about Mexico so she gave it to them: quaint and humble *inditos*, passionate *señoritas* with eyes that "were wonderful, even in a land of wonderful eyes," a dashing *caballero* or two "with music in their fingers." All these characters in a country Mena described as "the land of resignation." Mena's portrayals are ultimately obsequious, and if one can appreciate the weight of popular attitudes on Mena's consciousness, one can also say that a

braver, more perceptive writer would have confronted the life of her culture more forcefully.

The fact that virtually all Mexican-American authors before 1900 wrote only in Spanish severely restricted their potential readership. Mena, of course, published in English although she tried, as later writers would, to capture in English the sound and feeling of Spanish;⁵⁸ her work signalled the possibility that a new generation of Mexican-American writers would reach a larger audience. In the mid-1930s, for example, Robert Torres published stories about the Mexican Revolution in *Esquire*.⁵⁹ A powerful writer in the Hemingway style, he focused on the pointless brutality of war. Roberto Félix Salazar also published in *Esquire*, but his stories are less interesting and less skillfully rendered than those of Torres; significantly, they have no ethnic content whatsoever.⁶⁰ Salazar was concerned with ethnic affairs, but his most effective statement on the Mexican-American condition appeared not in a general interest magazine but in the *LULAC* (League of United Latin-American Citizens) *News*. The piece is entitled "The Other Pioneers" of which this is the first stanza:

Now I must write
 Of those of mine who rode these plains
 Long years before the Saxon and the Irish came.
 Of those who plowed the land and built the towns
 And gave the towns soft-woven Spanish names.
 Of those who moved across the Rio Grande
 Toward the hiss of Texas snake and Indian yell.
 Of men who from the earth made thick-walled homes
 And from the earth raised churches to their god.
 And of the wives who bore them sons
 And smiled with knowing joy.⁶¹

Now this is a very mild expression of cultural affirmation and is characteristic of early Mexican-American work published in English. In learning the English language, Mexican-American writers invariably relinquished some part of their culture; their subdued tone when discussing their heritage suggests a certain cultural ambivalence or perhaps a lack of understanding of the extent of their cultural loss.

In confronting the prevailing Anglo stereotypes of their people, these writers tended not to demolish them but to assent to the least negative of such images. Mena's Mexicans are not swarthy, treacherous greasers, but charming—if artificial—creatures, very much in the popular tradition of Bret Harte, Helen Hunt Jackson, and Gertude Atherton.⁶² Undoubtedly, a good deal—if not most—of this sort of characterization can be attributed to popular taste and editorial con-

trol; it has only been in recent years, after all, that Americans have recognized honest expressions of minority consciousness.

Historically, the very term "Mexican" has had so harshly pejorative a connotation in the United States that a number of Mexican-American writers shrank from it and, ultimately, from their true heritage, creating in its place a mythical past of unsullied Europeanism.⁶³ The New Mexicans particularly venerated and exaggerated the Spanish component of their heritage. For example, the influential folklorist, Aurelio M. Espinosa, determined that the oral traditions of New Mexico were essentially Spanish and had survived virtually untouched by other influences, whether Indian, *mestizo*, or Negro.⁶⁴ It was only a short step to conclude that all of existing New Mexican culture was essentially Spanish: as one writer put it, "an echo of Spain across the seas."⁶⁵

The Mexican-American literature in English that emerged from New Mexico during the 1930s evokes a past that, while largely imaginary, is presented with rigid conviction. Much of the fiction is closely related to the oral traditions that Espinosa and his followers collected so assiduously. The writers described a culture seemingly locked in time and barricaded against outside forces. Here the New Mexican Hispanos passed their lives in dignity and civility, confronting the harsh environment with a religiosity and resolve reminiscent of the *conquistadores* themselves. But although the people struggled, they moved as if to a waltz and lived in villages with names like "Rio Dormido" (Sleeping River). A story by Juan A. A. Sedillo begins this way:

It took months of negotiation to come to an understanding with the old man. He was in no hurry. What he had the most of was time. He lived up in Rio en Medio, where his people had been for hundreds of years. He tilled the same land they had tilled. His house was small and wretched, but quaint. The little creek ran through his land. His orchard was gnarled and beautiful.⁶⁶

Other New Mexican writers also stressed the continuity of the culture. But like the old man's cottage, it had fallen into a decadence that was perhaps quaint, but irreversible.

There is something profoundly disturbing about this body of work. It seems a literature created out of fear and intimidation, a defensive response to racial prejudice—particularly the Anglo distaste for miscegenation—and ethnocentrism. The New Mexican writers retreated from the contemporary world into nostalgia, and it is a striking quality of their work that there are so few Anglos in it, as if each one were a gross impertinence. The problem is that their literary past is so pathetically unreal. Nina Otero Warren, a chief advocate of New

Mexico Hispanicism, defended the oppressive system of peonage by explaining that the peons "were not slaves, but working people who preferred submission to the *patrón* rather than an independent chance alone."⁶⁷ She went on to observe that Hispanos "lived close to the soil and to nature. They cherished their traditions, inherited from Spain and adapted to their new life. Theirs was a part of the feudal age, when master and men, although separate in class, were bound together by mutual interests and a close community of human sympathy. Much of this life remains today."⁶⁸ If some of the southern Anglo writers suffered from a plantation mentality, then we may say that New Mexican writers like Warren suffered from a *hacienda* syndrome.⁶⁹

In sum, the body of early Mexican-American literature that has survived—both in Spanish and English—is less interesting than the folklore and certainly less representative of the collective spirit. The vigor, the tone of defiance so typical of the *corridos* is lacking in the written materials. What we find instead, generally, is a rather ingenuous hopefulness, a submissiveness, and a contrived and derivative romanticism. Much of the early literature, especially that written in English, is so much persiflage. The reason for this dichotomy may be that until about 1940, most Mexican-American writers came from relatively privileged backgrounds, from families of position and property that had a considerable stake in cultural and political accommodation. The oral traditions in this period, on the other hand, were essentially a proletarian form of expression, articulating the sentiments of those who had little capital and few material goods to lose. These people sought to preserve their culture and were ready to defend it, as the expression went, "con pistola en la mano." All in all, an interesting twist to the stereotype of the humble Mexican as a docile, meek individual.

IV

A landmark in Mexican-American literary history was reached in 1945 with the publication of Josephina Niggli's *Mexican Village*, an unduly neglected work consisting of ten related stories that constitute a literary chronicle of Hidalgo, a town in the northern state of Nuevo Leon. The major character in the book is Bob Webster, an American-born product of a liaison between a Mexican woman and an Anglo who rejects his son when his Mexican blood manifests itself rather too clearly. Deeply hurt, Bob runs off to Europe, fighting with the Irish patriots and later with the French during World War I. But his loneliness is relentless, and in desperation he travels to Hidalgo, the village of the

Mexican grandmother who had raised him, to satisfy a "nostalgia of the blood." To the villagers, he seems an incongruity: his dark skin and fluent Spanish clash with the foreignness of his name. Yet, for the first time in his life, Webster feels a sense of belonging in Hidalgo, the stories of his grandmother running through his mind and tying him to the people and the land. He forms friendships unlike any he had known before, "that grew not so much from a meeting of minds as from a relationship of blood."⁷⁰ At the end of *Mexican Village*, Bob has been fully assimilated into the community, even to the point of taking his mother's name. He has reclaimed his cultural heritage—and thus his self-esteem—as Roberto Ortega Menéndez. Through Webster, Niggli suggests that few Mexican-Americans (or few people, for that matter) are truly detached from their origins. Their cultural memories—as in Bob's case, often received as folklore—reside in the back of their minds, ready to emerge. In Hidalgo, a town Webster had never visited save through his grandmother's stories, he feels as if he had come home.

But although Webster comes to understand that his essential self is Mexican, he knows too that, having been raised in the United States and inevitably touched by its culture, he cannot be wholly Mexican. His American qualities, as Niggli sees them, manifest themselves in several ways. Webster is impatient and restless and even in his most profound moments of tranquility in Mexico, he is troubled by an almost inexpressible feeling that his life must somehow be better still. Occasionally, he disdains the Indians of Hidalgo for their superstition, their provincialism, their fondness for subterfuge. Some of Webster's American traits are admirable, however, none more so than his irreverence for custom and ritual. Perhaps the most striking feature of the villagers is their blind allegiance to tradition, and they suffer for it. Webster, on the other hand, carries on with an individualism and an assumption of free choice that the villagers can only envy. In creating Webster, Niggli was pointing to the Mexican-American as a distinctive type, as someone apart from both the *mexicano* and the *yanqui* who could build his own identity on the foundation of two cultures. The process was not a painless one, but in negotiating the distance between self-hate and self-esteem and in rediscovering his Mexican past, Webster presages the contemporary Chicano spirit.

In treating Mexican culture, Niggli intended not only to describe it but to create a fictional ambience that itself imparts a sense of the culture to the reader. No device served this end more effectively than the extensive use of folkloric materials. For example, Niggli introduces each section of *Mexican Village* with a proverb which is related to the theme of the story; the characters themselves also have a fondness for *dichos*. Here are some examples:

When you talk, be friends. When you act, be enemies.
 A man fool enough to marry cannot expect to own the world.
 Though we are all of the same clay, a jug is not a vase.

In addition, Mexican folksongs reverberate throughout the book and Niggli recounts legends of noble bandits and buried treasure typical of the oral traditions of northern Mexico. One of the major characters in the book is Tía Magdalena, a *bruja* (witch) who can dispense a remedy or a curse for any occasion, depending on her inclination. Several of the fictional situations in *Mexican Village* are variations of well-known folktales. One episode features a daring young man who sneaks into a rival town to romance its prettiest girl, a modification of a Mexican tale in which the devil assumes a disguise, descends to earth, and dances with an innocent young woman.

Like María Cristina Mena, Niggli simulated the flavor of Spanish by reproducing in English its syntactical and idiomatic qualities. Although *Mexican Village* was composed in English, it intentionally reads like a translation. Sometimes Niggli uses literal translations such as "the family Castillo" to achieve the effect of Spanish; she also renders into English distinctively Mexican expressions: arrogant boys are called "young roosters"; Tía Magdalena speaks affectionately of "Grandfather Devil"; another character trying to emphasize his honesty swears by "the five wounds of God."

Niggli's work is also significant because, unlike earlier Mexican-American writers in English, she refused to accept conventional American views of her people. To be sure, some of her characters verge close to stereotypes: the swaggering *macho*, the haughty Spaniard, the long-suffering Mexican woman. But Niggli also presents strong men who are nonetheless sensitive and vulnerable, *gachupines* who treat the Indians decently, and women like the unforgettable Tía who truckle before no man. Niggli manipulates her large cast of characters with rare skill; in the end, the reader sees that the fictional citizens of Hidalgo represent the complexity and diversity of Mexico itself.

Mexico Village stands as a major transitional work in the development of Chicano fiction. In its sensitive evocation of rural life, its emotionalism, and affectionate portrayal of exotic experiences and personalities, the book culminated the romantic tradition in Mexican-American writing. But *Mexican Village* also pointed forward to an emerging school of realism, confronting such issues as racism, the oppression of women, and the failure of the Mexican Revolution. Before Niggli, no writer of fiction in the United States, with the possible exception of Katherine Anne Porter, had so vividly depicted the fundamental tensions in Mexican life: the sometimes volatile interaction of Spanish

and Indian cultures, the profound sense of history and traditionalism pulling against the fascination with that which is modern and vogueish.⁷¹ But Niggli's greatest achievement was to delineate an important aspect of Mexican-American experience and to create a distinctive ambience for its presentation.

V

The Second World War profoundly affected the Mexican people of the United States. In the first place, the War greatly increased their numbers. Shortages in the domestic labor force brought on by military demands were alleviated by the importation of thousands of Mexican workers, many of whom settled permanently in the United States. The War also triggered a shift in occupational and residential patterns. Mexican-Americans left agricultural work in small communities for factory and service jobs in large cities, particularly Los Angeles and San Antonio. The participation of Mexican-Americans in the military services provided many with their first intimate contact with Anglo-American culture. Military experience undoubtedly heightened the expectations of many Mexican-Americans. Having risked their lives for the United States, they demanded more of its institutions in return. In sum, the Second World War pulled Mexican-Americans closer to—although clearly not into—the American mainstream. By the late 1940s, Mexican-Americans had established a cultural identity distinct from that of their brethren south of the Rio Grande. Whereas an earlier generation had fought in Chihuahua and composed *corridos* about Pancho Villa, the present generation fought in the Philippines and composed *corridos* commemorating Douglas MacArthur.⁷²

In 1947, Mario Suárez began to publish a series of stories in the *Arizona Quarterly*. The stories are about the people of *El Hoyo* (The Hole), a barrio in Tucson, and Suárez describes the residents not as Mexicans or Mexican-Americans, but as Chicanos. Suárez explains that "Chicano" is simply the short way of saying *mexicano*, but it is clear the term suggests something more. His Chicanos are an embattled minority, in some ways reminiscent of Steinbeck's *paisanos* of *Tortilla Flat* but drawn less in caricature and with greater understanding and compassion. They are an assortment of individuals who combine Mexican and American characteristics with marvelous effects. Suárez himself best describes the varieties of Chicano individualism:

Perhaps *El Hoyo*, its inhabitants, and its essence can best be explained by telling you a little bit about a dish called *capirotada*. Its origin is uncertain. But it is made of old, new, stale, and hard bread. It is sprinkled with water

and then it is cooked with raisins, olives, onions, tomatoes, peanuts, cheese, and general leftovers of that which is good and bad. It is seasoned with salt, sugar, pepper, and sometimes chili or tomato sauce. It is fired with tequila or sherry wine. It is served hot, cold, or just "on the weather" as they say in El Hoyo. The Garcias like it one way; the Quevedos another. While in general appearance it does not differ much from one home to another it tastes different everywhere. Nevertheless it is still *capirotada*. And so it is with El Hoyo's *chicanos*. While many seem to the undiscerning eye to be alike it is only because collectively they are referred to as *chicanos*. But like *capirotada*, fixed in a thousand ways and served on a thousand tables, which can only be evaluated by individual taste, the *chicanos* must be so distinguished.⁷³

Although El Hoyo is physically a part of Tucson, culturally it is a world unto itself where different principles obtain. One of its leading citizens is Señor Garza, a barber who operates his business according to the unshakable conviction that "a man should not work too hard." Suárez explains that Garza's "day begins according to the humor of his wife. When Garza drives up late, conditions are perhaps good: When Garza drives up early, all is perhaps not well. Garza's Barber Shop has been known, accordingly to stay closed for a week. It has also been known to open before the sun comes up and to remain open for three consecutive days."⁷⁴ When business gets too heavy, Garza closes his shop and escapes to Mexico. Garza is not lazy but simply does not assign a high importance to the making of money. As Suárez writes: "Garza, a philosopher, Owner of Garza's Barber Shop. But the shop will never own Garza."

Suárez understood that the merging of Mexican and American cultures was a delicate process, particularly in a fast-paced urban environment with its bewildering array of institutions. In "Kid Zopilote," Suárez depicts the transformation of Pepe Garcia, a young man from *El Hoyo* who, during a summer in Los Angeles, is exposed to the zoot-suit craze and comes away much impressed. The Mexican zoot-suiters, or *pachucos*, had affected an elaborate life-style based on a bizarre combination of Mexican and American traits. They spoke a patois of English and Spanish, creating terms such as "returniar," "watchiando," and "styleacho." Pepe is especially impressed by the camaraderie of the *pachucos* and so becomes one himself, much to the horror of his tradition-minded mother. Under the influence of his new friends, Pepe takes to smoking and selling marijuana and is eventually arrested. In the jailhouse, the police destroy his zoot suit and shear his magnificent pompadour. When Pepe is released, his humiliation is so great that he stays at home and practices his guitar. He becomes a quite proficient

musician, but when his hair grows long and "meets in the back of his head in the shape of a duck's tail,"⁷⁵ he puts down his guitar and returns to the street. As Pepe's uncle observes, a *zopilote* (buzzard) can never be a peacock.

Suárez's most poignant treatment of the acculturation process appears in "Maestria." This story features Gonzalo Pereda, a "master" of the art of raising fighting cocks. One day he is presented with a young rooster from a friend in Chihuahua and Gonzalo nurtures the bird, called "Killer," with special affection. After a few victories in the pit, Killer is badly beaten. Gonzalo nurses the bird back to health, but ironically, sees Killer choke to death on a piece of liver. Writes Suárez:

Like Killer's plight, it might be added, is the plight of many things the *maestros* cherish. Each year they hear their sons talk English with a rapidly disappearing accent, that accent which one early accustomed only to Spanish never fails to have. Each year the *maestros* notice that their sons' Spanish loses fluency. But perhaps it is natural. The *maestros* themselves seem to forget about bulls and bullfighters, about guitars and other things so much a part of the world that years ago circumstance forced them to leave behind. They hear instead more about the difference between one baseball swing and another. Yes, perhaps it is only natural.⁷⁶

Suárez was the first truly "Chicano" writer. He was comfortable with the term itself—as many are not still—recognizing its symbolic importance and understanding its slight suggestion of self-depreciation. In Suárez's fiction, the Chicano is a truncated variety of Mexican in a cultural sense, but he is no less a dignified and individualized human being. Suárez portrayed sympathetically the *maestros* and their yearning for the old days, but did not himself linger long in nostalgia. He was compassionate towards those *pachucos* like Pepe Garcia who were badly confused by the process of cultural transformation and so lapsed into grotesque exhibitionism.⁷⁷ But Suárez's favorite Chicanos were characters like the barber Garza who retained their fundamental Mexicanness and yet thrived in American culture. These Chicanos were not marginal men, but cultural hybrids who prided themselves in their ability to function successfully in two worlds.

An interesting contrast to Suárez's work is *Pocho*, a novel by José Antonio Villareal, published in 1959. The work has the usual first-novel defects: a certain lack of control, an awkwardness of style. But *Pocho* is flawed in other ways, these owing to the fact that it was the first "Chicano" novel (*Mexican Village*, not properly a novel in any case, belongs to an earlier Mexican-American period). Villareal wrote essentially for an Anglo-American audience and understood, given the

prevailing ignorance of Chicano life in the United States, that he was working in something of a cultural vacuum. He had no antecedents, as it were, no one on whose work to enlarge, and so he tried to tell the whole of the *pocho* experience himself. Inevitably, the novel is thin in places, hurried in others. Occasionally, it bogs down in excessive explication.

The opening chapter of *Pocho* follows the movements of Juan Rubio, a colonel in the Mexican Revolution who, after killing a rich "Spaniard," is forced to leave the country and accept a life as a migrant farm worker in California. Here his son Richard is born. The Rubio family eventually moves to Santa Clara during the Depression; at this point, the novel becomes Richard's story.

Richard is a bright, curious child, but he quickly discovers that opportunities for "Mexicans" are not great. He is humiliated by a teacher for his accent and he finds the Catholic Church a suffocating force, the priests being concerned with little more than suppressing the assumed hypersexuality of their Mexican parishioners. Richard is not encouraged by his parents in his quest for knowledge: his mother's education is limited and she is, in any event, too much in the Church's thrall. Juan, the father, is preoccupied with the disintegration of his family's cultural values and with his own hopes of returning to Mexico. Richard is thus left to go his way alone, and the journey is a painful one. The basic conflict in the book is between Richard's powerful sense of individuality and the burden of ethnicity, imposed by himself, his family, and the community. The issue is complicated by the rapidity of cultural change that engulfs the Rubio family and finally destroys it: Juan runs off with a young woman while his wife, Consuelo, remains at home, vindictive and full of self-pity. The oldest daughter, Luz, becomes thoroughly Americanized and verges on outright rebellion. As for Richard, he finally realizes that his foremost responsibility is to seek his own identity; as a result, he joins the Navy, "knowing that for him there would never be a coming back."⁷⁸

Villareal's subject is important and sensitive, but his treatment is flawed by a habit of oversimplification. He attacks, for example, the Catholic Church and the oppression of women in Mexican culture, but he draws his targets in such a way that they are all too easy to hit. The reader discovers, for example, that the Church does nothing of redeeming value and that Mexican women are mindless automatons, created to fulfill man's pleasure and to raise children. Villareal simply lacked the insight to deal effectively with his materials. In treating Consuelo's pathetic effort at liberation, Villareal observes: "Although he loved his mother, Richard realized that a family could not survive when the woman desired to command, and he knew that his mother was like a

starving child who had become gluttonous when confronted with food. She had lived so long in the tradition of her country that she could not help herself now, and abused the privilege of equality afforded the women of her new country." Later, Villareal offers this analysis as Richard surveys the wreckage of his family life: "What was done was beyond repair. To be just, no one could be blamed, for the transition from the culture of the old world to that of the new should never have been attempted in one generation."⁷⁹

Although Richard is well-developed and credible, some of the other characters in *Pocho* are merely caricatures. From the moment Juan appears in the novel, we know we are in the presence of a true *macho*. He strolls through Ciudad Juárez, thinking back to his days with Pancho Villa and "carelessly wonders how many men he had killed there." Later the same day, Rubio kills another man, calmly shooting his victim as he lies writhing on the floor of a *cantina*. Consuelo, before her collapse, is the epitome of woeful Mexican motherhood. And finally, Villareal presents us with the Marxist who becomes "very middle-class" when he finds Richard in bed with his pretty wife.

Today, *Pocho* stands as a curiosity, notable for its evocation of an ingenuous expectation: that a young man of obvious Mexican heritage coming of age in California would be treated strictly as an individual without regard for his ethnicity. At the end of the book, Richard clings to his dream, but he is, after all, still a boy. Villareal seems to share Richard's hope and it is this lack of mature vision that most severely undermines his accomplishment as a novelist.

Until recently, the growth of Chicano literature has been hampered by the general unwillingness of American publishers to issue such works, on the assumption that they—particularly those pieces in Spanish—had too limited an appeal to be profitable. In 1967, however, Quinto Sol Publications was established in Berkeley, California to provide an outlet for Chicano writers. The success of Quinto Sol led to the opening of other Chicano publishing houses. The result has been an outburst of Chicano literary activity.

The writers of the Quinto Sol school manifested a literary sensibility that contrasts sharply with that of earlier writers such as Niggli, Suárez, and Villareal. The irony, the tone of controlled disappointment, were replaced by more intense emotions, sometimes by an almost violent sense of outrage. The careful explication, born of a desire to acquaint Anglos with the Mexican culture of the United States, is generally absent from the works of the Quinto Sol authors. They wrote primarily for an audience that shared their experiences; they felt no need, therefore, to justify their culture.

Although authors like Suárez and Villareal had written sensitively on

Chicano subjects, their styles and techniques were in no important ways different from those of Anglo-American writers. Indeed, Suárez's work, especially in its fascination with human eccentricity and its casual lyricism, reminds one of John Steinbeck. But Quinto Sol writers often rejected Anglo-American literary models and instead did what writers of Mexican heritage in the Southwest had done traditionally: they turned southward and did their literary apprenticeships in the works of authors such as Rulfo, Borges, and García Márquez. This new school of Chicano writers not only reaffirmed its cultural ties to the cultures of contemporary Mexico and Latin America but also rediscovered, as Mexican artists had earlier in the century, their aboriginal heritage. They invoked Aztec philosophy and metaphors⁸⁰ and were particularly attracted to the concept of Aztlán, the ancestral home of the Aztecs which lay somewhere in the vicinity of the American Southwest. Some scholars have quibbled that the concept of Aztlán is historically fraudulent but they miss the point: its importance is symbolic, in that it provides Chicanos with a deeper and more intimate sense of cultural continuity.

Finally, the Quinto Sol writers developed a variety of linguistic techniques with which to portray their cultural distinctiveness. In the past, Mexican-American writers had written in conventional Spanish or English while a few writers like Mena and Niggli (and Villareal to a lesser degree), tried to recreate the flavor of Spanish in English, occasionally employing the original Spanish for special effect. But these new authors aimed to reproduce Chicano speech exactly. They used not only conventional Spanish and English, but various regional dialects of both languages and combinations of all of these.⁸¹ They also used distinctive Chicano neologisms such as "wachar" (to watch), "lonche" (lunch), and "troca" (truck). The results have been gratifying, particularly in poetry. Here are some lines from "La Jefita" ("My Old Lady") by José Montoya:

When I remember the campos
 Y las noches and the sounds
 Of those nights en carpas o
 Bagones I remember my jefita's
 Palote
 Click-clok; klik-clak-clok
 Y su tocesita.

(I swear, she never slept!)

Reluctant awakenings a la media
 Noche y la luz prendida.

PRRRRRRINNNNGGGGG!

A noisy chorro missing the
Basín

¿Que horas son, 'ama?
Es tarde mi hijito. Cover up
Your little brothers
Y yo con pena but too sleepy,

Go to bed little mother!

A maternal reply mingled with
The hissing of the hot planchas
Y los frijoles de la hoya
Boiling musically dando segunda
A los ruidos nocturnos and
The snores of the old man

Lulling sounds y los perros

Ladrando-then familiar
Hallucinations just before sleep.

And my jefita was no more.⁸²

As a bilingual poet, Montoya greatly enhances the esthetic potentialities of his work, selecting words, phrases, sounds from two languages to achieve his desired effects.⁸³ Other poets use bilingualism not for esthetic effect but to denote a cultural situation. In "M'ijo No Mira Nada" (My Son Doesn't See Anything) by Tomás Rivera, a father talks to a son in Spanish but is answered, with one exception, in English:

-Mira, m'ijo, qué rascacielo.
"Does it reach the sky and heaven?"
-Mira, m'ijo. qué carrazo.
"Can it get to the end of the world?"
-Mira, m'ijo, ese soldado.
"¿Por que pelea?"
-Mira, m'ijo, qué bonita fuente
"Yes, but I want to go to the restroom."

-Mira, m'jo, qué tiendota de J. C. Penney,
alli trabajarás un día.

"Do you know the people there, daddy?"

-No,
vámonos a casa,
tú no miras nada.⁸⁴

Clearly, the boy not only understands Spanish but can speak it; he simply chooses not to, much to his father's distress. The different languages that father and son use, as well as the differences in perception about the world around them, indicate the cultural gulf that separates them.⁸⁵

Quinto Sol Publications, particularly in the first five years of its existence, was a tremendously invigorating force in Chicano literature. It challenged Chicanos to proclaim their cultural uniqueness, encouraged experimentation and innovation and awarded cash prizes to distinguished works. On the most fundamental level, the very fact of the firm's existence provided aspiring Chicano writers a sense of self-respect and an assurance that their subject matter was worthy.

No writer better exemplified the new sensibility than Tomás Rivera who won the first Quinto Sol literary award in 1970 for his work ". . . y no se lo tragó la tierra" (*And the Earth Did Not Part*). This collection of fictional sketches focuses on the Chicano migrant workers of South Texas during the 1950s. Whereas José Antonio Villareal described a culture that was all but crushed by assimilationist pressures, Rivera's work proclaims a people's vitality despite almost unspeakable hardships. The book opens on a note reminiscent of various Latin-American writers, particularly Borges and García Márquez, in that Rivera obscures distinctions between reality and fantasy:

That year was lost to him. Sometimes he tried to remember, but then when things appeared to become somewhat clear his thoughts would elude him. It usually began with a dream in which suddenly he thought he was awake, and then he would realize he was actually asleep. That was why he could not be sure whether or not what he had recalled was actually what had happened.⁸⁶

Imagined or not, the events described (primarily by an anonymous narrator) have the ring of painful truth. In the opening sketch, a young farm worker is shot through the head by his foreman; later, we see children searching for food in a garbage dump; still later, two children burn to death in a migrant worker's shack. Rivera describes these episodes in a spare, detached manner, very much after the style of Juan Rulfo in *El llano en llamas*.

Structurally, "*. . . y no se lo tragó la tierra*" consists of twelve loosely connected sketches (representing the months of the narrator's "lost year"), each introduced by a very brief vignette, and an introduction and closing. Together, the sketches offer a broad study of the Chicano migrant sub-culture, much after the fashion of a collage. The device of anonymity enhances the representational and collective qualities of the work; for the most part, Rivera is describing not distinctive individuals but human beings bound in a common experience.

"*. . . y no se lo tragó la tierra*" is a profoundly humanistic work. In one sketch, the nameless young protagonist of the book goes out at midnight to summon the devil, first by cajoling him, and then, in desperation, by hurling invectives. The devil never appears, of course, and in the child's mind, this proves his non-existence. In the succeeding title story, the boy is so embittered by a series of family tragedies that he curses God, a sacrilege which would result, or so his mother had told him, in his being swallowed up by the earth. But, instead, the earth feels firmer than it had before and the boy suddenly "felt himself capable of doing and undoing whatever he chose."⁸⁷

Rivera is no apologist for his fictional Chicanos, nor for their culture. In his remarkable sketch "*La mano en la bolsa*" (His Hand in His Pocket), Rivera presents don Laito and doña Boni, two grotesques of unsurpassed vulgarity and cruelty; in a later piece he introduces a Chicano con-man who collects money for portraits but never delivers them. Like other Chicano writers, Rivera vigorously attacks the Catholic Church for its exploitation of the poor, and its preoccupation with the human potentiality not for good but for evil. Still, Rivera's main interest lies in characters like the nameless boy who finally discovers that knowledge and wisdom can be salvaged from any experience:

Suddenly he felt very happy because . . . he realized that he hadn't lost anything. He had discovered something. To discover and to rediscover and synthesize. To relate this entity with that entity, and that entity with still another, and finally relating everything with everything else. That was what he had to do, that was all. And he became even happier. Later, when he arrived at home, he went to the tree that was in the yard. He climbed it. On the horizon he saw a palm tree and he imagined that someone was on top looking at him. He even raised his arm and waved it back and forth so that the other person could see that he knew that he was there.⁸⁸

Rolando Hinojosa-S. who won the Quinto Sol prize in 1972 for his volume *Estampas del Valle y Otras Obras* (*Sketches of the Valley and Other Works*) is another Chicano writer whose literary sensibility derives primarily from a Latin-American tradition. His work is similar

to Rivera's in other ways. Hinojosa too writes about South Texas in a combination of conventional and *pocho* Spanish and, like Rivera, his preferred literary form is the sketch. Hinojosa's sketches are particularly brief, sometimes no more than two or three paragraphs. In this regard, he seems a kindred spirit of Julio Torri who, in popularizing the *estampa* in Mexico, argued that the greatest defect in literature was excessive explication. In an opening "note of clarification," Hinojosa writes: "The people who appear and disappear in these sketches, as well as the events that occur in them, may or may not be real. The writer writes and tries to do what he can. Explaining all this is the function of others."⁸⁹

Again, like Rivera, Hinojosa presents a literary collage of Chicano culture but to somewhat different effect. Rivera's tone is serious, at times melancholy, while Hinojosa is humorous and ironic. Furthermore, Hinojosa sweeps over a broader range of Chicano experience than does Rivera, speaking through the voices of numerous characters, some named and others anonymous. Always in the background are the sounds of barrio living: family gossip, conversation about Anglos, children chanting Mexican rhymes. As one of the narrators describes the activity of the writer, Hinojosa, "without anyone's leave, goes out into the street and takes a little bit from here and there."⁹⁰

In the "Estampas," Hinojosa examines the manifestation of fatalism among his people, a quality widely considered to be intrinsic to Mexican and Chicano culture and often denigrated by Anglo observers. Hinojosa finds that fatalism is indeed a characteristic of Chicano life but not in any sense a defect. The lives of his Chicanos are difficult, marked by relentless economic and political oppression, yet they accept these conditions, knowing that in this world man is not the keeper of his destiny. While Rivera's themes—the triumph of human will over hardship, man's struggle to throw off cultural and psychological fetters—are existentialist, Hinojosa seems more the stoic, writing about human dignity in the face of adversity. This is not to say that Hinojosa's Chicanos do not struggle against capricious fate, but that they recognize their human limitations. In the sketch entitled "Thus It Was Fulfilled," the anonymous narrator, on the occasion of a friend's premature death, observes: "There are people born that way, branded and singled out as if someone were saying: you're going to be that way, you this way, and you this other way; in short, as always, man proposes and God disposes."⁹¹ Hinojosa's Chicanos aim not to conquer but to endure. And in the act of endurance, there is accomplishment and satisfaction and quiet courage.

Together, Rivera and Hinojosa exemplify many of the best tendencies in contemporary Chicano literature written in Spanish.⁹² Both

employ in their works, without apology and with considerable skill, the distinctive Chicano variety of Spanish, a significant achievement given the traditional view that Chicano Spanish is a linguistic barbarism. In embracing current Latin-American literary principles and techniques, they have reinforced the cultural ties between Chicanos and other *latinos*, while simultaneously rejecting the archaic romanticism of earlier Chicano writers in Spanish. But the major achievement of Rivera and Hinojosa is to reaffirm the primacy of the common people as the guardians and purveyors of Chicano cultural values. In communicating this idea to their readers, both writers infuse their stories with folkloric qualities. Their use of ordinary and proverbial language (especially in the case of Hinojosa), their focus on commonplace experiences, their technique of using alternating and anonymous narrators, and their deliberate de-emphasis of authorial participation give their works a spontaneous, proletarian quality, but one that springs from a proletariat with a distinctive ethnic consciousness. One of Hinojosa's sketches, appropriately entitled "Voices from the Barrio," ends with this observation: "The *barrios* can be called el Rebaje, el de las Conchas, el Cantarranas, el Rincón del Diablo, el Pueblo Mexicano—really, names don't matter much. What does count, as always, are the people."⁹³

It is a rather self-evident principle of Chicano writing that authors who compose in English generally follow Anglo-American literary styles and conventions while those who write in Spanish are more influenced by Latin-American authors. A Chicano novelist of the first group who nevertheless retains his ethnic distinctiveness is Rudolfo Anaya, another winner of the Quinto Sol prize. His first novel, *Bless Me, Ultima* (1972), is a moving study, reminiscent in some ways of Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, of a boy, Antonio Márez, coming of age during the 1940s in a remote village in northern New Mexico. The action of the novel centers on Antonio's attempt to forge his own identity in an environment of conflicting cultures and expectations as represented by the two branches of his family: his father's people who are ranchers and horsemen, a restless, powerful clan who cherish the rugged life on the high plains of New Mexico; and his mother's family—the Lunas—who are farmers, sedentary, tradition-bound, rigidly Catholic. Antonio is the last of four sons and the others have not turned out well, having gone off to war and returned jaded and contemptuous of their heritage. To guard against a repetition of this calamity, Antonio's parents entrust his care to Ultima, a *curandera*—a healer—of immense wisdom and compassion. Antonio discovers that Ultima's greatness derives from her accumulation of cultural knowledge, her understanding of her people's experience, their

values and customs. While other characters in the novel seem confused and disheartened, Ultima retains an unshakeable sense of identity and purpose. Her gift to Antonio is the lesson of honoring one's culture without being trammelled by it, of using one's cultural identity as the foundation for the development of an individual spirit. "Build strength from life," Ultima counsels Antonio and, indeed, his life under her tutelege becomes a storehouse of cultural riches. At the end of the novel, Antonio rejects the confining traditionalism of the Lunas in favor of the Márez's doctrine of personal freedom.

Like other Chicano writers, Anaya creates a distinctive cultural ambience primarily through the use of folklore. (The language of *Bless Me, Ultima*, except for an occasional word or phrase, is conventional English.) The narrator, Antonio, refers frequently to *cuentos* of witchcraft and to the legends of *la llorona* and the Virgin of Guadalupe that he hears throughout his childhood. He describes in great detail Ultima's healing powers which derive from traditional Mexican folk medicine. Occasionally, Anaya modifies conventional folk traditions or creates a kind of pseudo-folklore for his fictional purposes. For example, the owl is usually a symbol of evil in Mexican folklore, the *nagual* (companion) of witches. But in Anaya's work, the owl is the guardian spirit of Ultima. The effect is to dramatize Ultima's powers and the air of mystery surrounding her, for although she exercises her magic primarily for the good of the community, she is quite capable of pronouncing curses on her enemies. Anaya also creates the "legend" of the Golden Carp, a symbol of benevolent pantheism reminiscent of the Aztec god Quetzalcoatl. Anaya virtually immerses Antonio in oral tradition, by way of suggesting that for the Chicano, folklore is the foundation of a cultural identity. Antonio learns as much. "Ultima told me the stories and legends of my ancestors," he explains. "From her I learned the glory and the tragedy of the history of my people, and I came to understand how that history stirred in my blood."⁹⁴

Bless Me, Ultima is a deeply-moving work of genuine excellence, certainly one of the finest Chicano works published to date. Not the least of Anaya's accomplishments is his rejection of the contrived Hispanicism that so enervated the works of earlier New Mexican writers. Anaya portrays the *mestizo* component of New Mexican culture as a positive quality; it is precisely Ultima's ability to draw from the traditions of both Spanish and Indian cultures that provides her with extraordinary powers. One may hope that a result of Anaya's success will be to encourage other Chicano writers to confront their cultural heritage honestly and directly.

VI

In an age when the literature of the United States is marked by a profound pessimism and a retreat from the national culture, Chicano writing is notable for its celebration of ethnic values and traditions; Tomás Rivera described Chicano literature as a "fiesta of the living."⁹⁵ Like most contemporary authors, Chicano writers see modern industrial culture as a destructive and dehumanizing force, but while others detect no sanctuary against it, writers like Niggli, Suárez, and Anaya find relief in their Mexican-Chicano heritage.

Now a number of scholars and critics argue that this outburst of Chicano literary activity—this "fiesta of living"—is, ironically, the parting gesture of a dying culture. The argument continues that Chicano culture will undergo the same fate as all ethnic and immigrant cultures in the United States: it will be flattened by American assimilationist pressures, leaving only a few Spanish words and phrases, an obligatory orgy of drunkenness on the *cinco de mayo*, and a recipe or two for *enchiladas*. There is no doubt that immigrant cultures have not thrived in the United States, but Chicanos represent a special case. Most live relatively close to the Mexican border so that cultural transfusion occurs regularly. And then there is the intensive immigration—both legal and illegal—from Mexico to the United States which shows no sign of abating. Finally, there is the basic principle mentioned earlier in this essay: that for many Chicanos, the political boundary between the United States and Mexico has no real significance, that it is an impertinence arbitrarily separating people of a common cultural heritage. The point is simply that the Chicano in no sense lives in isolation; culturally and physically, he receives constant reinforcement from Mexico. In a remarkable essay about the durability of Mexican culture in the United States, John Rechy writes: "Because only geographically the Rio Grande . . . divides the United States from Mexico. Only geographically. The Mexican people of El Paso, more than half the population—and practically all of Smeltertown, Canutillo, Ysleta—are all and always completely Mexican, and will be. They speak only Spanish to each other and when they say the Capital they mean Mexico DF."⁹⁶

The real threat to Chicano literature is not the pressure of cultural assimilation but the attrition brought on by exploitation and imitation. The exploitation I speak of is of two varieties, the first economic. We live in a time when ethnicity is fashionable and ethnic literature saleable. The upshot has been that in the rush to satisfy this interest,

publishers issue works that are crude and inept and undeserving of publication.⁹⁷ This practice is not only distracting but discourages writers from giving the proper time to cultivate their art. The second type of exploitation is practiced by those who use literature strictly for political purposes. Political literature, of course, is a tradition in Latin America and among Chicanos, but the danger lies in the abandonment of esthetic principles for purely political considerations. It is one thing to be a poet who writes about politics and quite another for a political activist simply to use poetry as a polemical device.

The dangers associated with imitation in Chicano literature are the result of the widespread praise—often condescending or offered out of a limited knowledge of the subject—lavished on only a few writers such as Anaya and Rivera. Unestablished writers sometimes hope to duplicate the acclaim by imitating its source. Lately, for example there has been a spate of works treating the magic/mysticism of Chicano folk culture after the fashion of Anaya, none with much success. On the other hand, critics sometimes stifle creativity by rigidly defining what a Chicano work must be or by expecting young authors to match the achievement of established writers.

Which leads us to a final question: What exactly is Chicano literature? I offer here not so much a definition as a characterization: Chicano literature is that body of work produced by United States citizens and residents of Mexican descent for whom a sense of ethnicity is a critical part of their literary sensibility and for whom the portrayal of their ethnic experience is a major concern of their art. Obviously, any attempt to categorize literature presents serious difficulties. The work of Oscar Zeta Acosta is problematical here because Acosta wants so desperately to retrieve his ethnic heritage. But the reader is struck by the superficiality of his quest and the flimsiness of the foundation on which Acosta hopes to build his ethnic identity.⁹⁸ In the end, his books seem indistinguishable from numerous other works that lament the destruction of ethnicity in America. Another problem related to labeling literary works is simply that authors frequently shift interests from one work to another. John Rechy's essay, "El Paso del Norte" certainly should be considered Chicano literature, but his novel, *City of Night*, which is virtually devoid of ethnic content, should not. Finally, because the Chicano experience is essentially cultural rather than racial, the question arises: Can a sense of Chicano ethnicity be acquired by a person of non-Mexican heritage? The case of Amado Muro is instructive here. During the 1950s and 60s, Muro wrote a series of sensitive and expertly-wrought stories about Chicano life, some of which have been collected in anthologies of Chicano writing.⁹⁹ After the writer's death, it

came out that Muro was really Chester Seltzer, an Anglo newspaperman from Ohio who had married a Chicana named Amada Muro and settled in El Paso. He had immersed himself in Chicano culture and finally wrote about it with great understanding. Obviously, anyone characterizing Chicano literature has to allow for the rare exception like Seltzer who can bridge a wide cultural gulf and overcome traditional Anglo-American ethnocentrism. I do so happily.

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Notes

1. The literature on the pre-Columbian cultures of Mexico is voluminous. Some of the best accounts in English are Miguel León-Portilla, *Aztec Thought and Culture* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963); León-Portilla, *Pre-Columbian Literature of Mexico* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969); and Laurette Séjourné, *Burning Water: Thought and Religion in Ancient Mexico* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1957).
2. It was, in fact, a foot soldier, Bernal Díaz del Castillo, who wrote one of the best accounts of the Spanish conquest including numerous references to Spanish folklore. See his *The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico* (New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 1956).
3. Gaspar Pérez de Villagrà, *History of New Mexico*, trans. Gilberto Espinosa (Los Angeles: Quivira Society, 1933), p. 129.
4. John E. Englekirk, "Notes on the Repertoire of the New Mexico Spanish Folk Theater," *Southern Folklore Quarterly*, 4 (1940), 227.
5. M. R. Cole in *Los Pastores* (Boston: American Folk-Lore Society, 1907), p. xx, traces some lines in a late nineteenth-century version of the "Shepherds" play to Calderón and Góngora.
6. As was the case in early Anglo-American literature, hostility toward the Indian was a major theme in Spanish-American letters. See Gilberto Espinosa, "Los Comanches," *New Mexico Quarterly*, 1 (1931), 133-146, as another example of New Mexico drama, this piece possibly dating from the late eighteenth century.
7. The question of the origins of the folk culture of the Spanish-speaking peoples of the Southwest has been hotly disputed. One camp argues that much of this culture, especially that in New Mexico, was transmitted directly from Spain and has retained its Spanish characteristics. A second group argues that southwestern culture is essentially Mexican, which implies far greater Indian and *mestizo* influences. The problem is that traditions among the Spanish-speaking in the Southwest, having been transmitted orally to a great extent, are difficult to trace. It is clear, however, that proponents of the Mexican position have the stronger case. For a good discussion of the controversy as related to drama see John E. Englekirk, "The Source and Dating of New Mexican Spanish Folk Plays," *Western Folklore*, 16 (1957), 232-55. For a broader consideration of the issue, see Paul Radin, "The Nature and Problems of Mexican Indian Mythology," *Journal of American Folklore*, 57 (1944), 26-36; and George M. Foster, "Some Characteristics of Mexican Indian Folklore," *Journal of American Folklore*, 58 (1945), 225-35.

8. See William Bascom, "The Forms of Folklore: Prose Narratives," *Journal of American Folklore*, 78 (1965), 3-20, for a treatment of differences among folk narratives.
9. Bacil F. Kirtley, "'La Llorona' and Related Themes," *Western Folklore*, 19 (1960), 156.
10. See Robert A. Barakat, "Aztec Motifs in 'La Llorona,'" *Southern Folklore Quarterly*, 29 (1965), 288-296.
11. The other great figure of sixteenth century Mexican legendry is the Virgin of Guadalupe, the patron saint of Mexico and another example of early Spanish-Indian cultural synthesis. If *la llorona* is a symbol of suffering, guilt, and fear, the Virgin represents the highest qualities of love and consolation and is herself an important force in Mexican and Chicano letters. For a provocative discussion of these two feminine symbols in Mexican life, see Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, trans. Lysander Kemp (New York: Grove Press, 1961), pp. 65-88.
12. See Américo Paredes, "The Mexican *Corrido*: Its Rise and Fall" in *Madstones and Twisters*, ed. Mody Boatright (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1958), pp. 91-105.
13. A term coined by Américo Paredes to refer to the presently-defined nation of Mexico plus the adjacent areas of the United States where Mexican culture is still strong.
14. There are a number of important folksong collections from the Spanish-speaking Southwest. Among the best are Aurelio M. Espinosa, "Romancero nuevomejicano" *Revue Hispanique*, 33:84 (April, 1915), 446-560; 40:97 (June, 1917), 215-227; 41:100 (December, 1917), 678-680; Espinosa, "Los romances tradicionales en California" in *Homenaje ofrecido a Menéndez Pidal* (Madrid: Casa Editorial Hernando, 1925), I, 299-313; Terrence L. Hansen, "Corridos in Southern California," *Western Folklore*, 18 (1959), 203-232, 295-315; Arthur L. Campa, *Spanish Folk-Poetry in New Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1946); and Américo Paredes, *A Texas-Mexican Cancionero* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976).
15. Hansen, p. 204.
16. Américo Paredes, *"With His Pistol in His Hand"* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1958), pp. 132-150.
17. Paredes, "The Mexico *Corrido*," p. 101.
18. For a discussion of the differences between folk poetry and "sophisticated" poetry, see Américo Paredes, "Some Aspects of Folk Poetry," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 6 (1964), 213-225.
19. A useful guide to the folklore of Chicanos is Michael Heisley, *An Annotated Bibliography of Chicano Folklore from the Southwestern United States* (Los Angeles: Center for the Study of Comparative Folklore and Mythology, UCLA, 1977). A good sampling of Chicano folklore may be found in Richard Dorson, *Buying the Wind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), pp. 415-495.
20. I am indebted to Professor Stanley Robe for his helpful comments on the relationship between the legend and *corrido*.
21. For further discussion of this early writing, see Philip D. Ortego, "Backgrounds of Mexican American Literature," Diss. University of New Mexico, 1971.
22. See my essay "The Origins of Anti-Mexican Sentiments in the United States," *New Scholar*, 6 (1977), 139-65. For a discussion of general Mexican attitudes toward the United States in the period, see Gene Brack, *Mexico Views Manifest Destiny, 1821-1846* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1975).

23. Aurelio M. Espinosa, and J. Manuel Espinosa "The Texans," *New Mexico Quarterly Review*, 13 (1943), 299-308.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 308.
25. In folklore, the trickster frequently assumes the form of an animal. See, for example, the consideration of Br'er Rabbit as a trickster in black American culture in Houston A. Baker, Jr., *Long Black Song* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1972), pp. 11-27.
26. Verses and translations from Paredes, *A Texas-Mexican Cancionero*, p. 48. Translations are provided simply for the convenience of readers. No attempt has been made to retain lyrical flavor of original Spanish.
27. Campa, p. 163.
28. See Américo Paredes, "The Anglo-American in Mexican Folklore" in *New Voices in American Studies*, ed., Ray B. Browne, Donald M. Winkel, and Allen Hayman (Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1965), pp. 113-128. See also Merle E. Simmons, *The Mexican Corrido as a Source for the Interpretive Study of Modern Mexico, 1870-1950* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1957), esp. pp. 419-460.
29. Paredes, *A Texas-Mexican Cancionero*, p. 55.
30. The popular writer Joseph Holt Ingraham succinctly depicted the prevailing Texan disdain for Mexicans in his potboiler of 1846, *The Texas Rangers*. At one point in the story, a company of seventy rangers encounters three hundred Mexicans; the ranger captain, relishing the odds, throws his men into the fray with predictable results. The scene ends with the Mexicans careening toward the nearest sanctuary and the captain explaining the mathematical implications of the affair to his troops. "Now, my boys," he laughs, "never after this say one and one make two, but five and one make two. One Texan and five Mexicans. This is Rangers' arithmetic."
31. Paredes, *Cancionero*, pp. 65-66. Paredes treats the Cortez ballad fully in *"With His Pistol in His Hand."*
32. "El corrido del norte" in Hansen, p. 312.
33. Paredes, *Cancionero*, pp. 163-164.
34. Campa, p. 214.
35. "El renegado" in Manuel Gamio, *Mexican Immigration to the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930), pp. 93-94. See also Paul S. Taylor, "Songs of the Mexican Migration" in *Puro Mexicano*, ed. J. Frank Dobie (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1935), pp. 221-245.
36. Paredes, "The Mexican Corrido," p. 102.
37. See, for example, Rumel Fuentes, "Corridos de Rumel," *El Grito*, 6 (1973), 4-40.
38. Some of which turn up in strange places. Andrew Garcia was a Texan who finally settled among the Nez Perce in Montana. He began to record his memoirs about 1878 and eventually accumulated several thousand pages of manuscript. These were discovered in 1948 packed in dynamite boxes. See Garcia, *Tough Trip Through Paradise* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967).
39. For a study of one Mexican-American's book of personal verses, see T. M. Pearce, "What is a Folk Poet?", *Western Folklore*, 12 (1953), 242-243.
40. Doris L. Meyer, "Anonymous Poetry in Spanish-Language New Mexico Newspapers (1880-1900)," *Bilingual Review*, 2 (1975), 259-275. For a bibliography of these newspapers, see Herminio Ríos and Lupe Castillo, "Towards A True Chicano Bibliography: Mexican-American Newspapers: 1848-1942," *El Grito*, 3 (1970), 17-24. and *El Grito*, 5 (1972), 40-47.
41. José Elías Gonzáles, "A C... V...", *El Grito*, 5 (1971), 26.

42. See, for example, the *corridos* collected in Aurora Lucero-White Lea, *Literary Folklore of the Hispanic Southwest* (San Antonio: Naylor Co., 1953), pp. 134-150.
43. Meyer, p. 267.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 268. Educated New Mexicans of the period were familiar with recent developments in Spanish-language literature. Newspapers, for example, published the works of contemporary Mexican poets like Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera and Justo Sierra. See Doris L. Meyer, "The Poetry of José Escobar: Mexican Emigre in New Mexico," *Hispania*, 61 (1978), 24-34. I am indebted to Professor Meyer for providing me with several unpublished manuscripts dealing with the development of Mexican-American literature in New Mexico. My comments on the subject rely heavily on her work.
45. Meyer, "Anonymous Poetry," pp. 270-274.
46. Meyer, "Early Mexican-American Responses to Negative Stereotyping," *New Mexico Historical Review*, 53 (1978) 75-91.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 8, trans. Meyer.
48. For further comment on this issue, see Miguel A. Otero, *My Nine Years as Governor of the Territory of New Mexico, 1897-1906* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1940), pp. 35-39.
49. See Doris L. Meyer, "The Language Issue in New Mexico, 1880-1900: Mexican-American Perspective," *The Bilingual Review*, 4 (1977), 99-106.
50. Madie Brown Emparan, *The Vallejos of California* (San Francisco: University of San Francisco Press, 1968), p. 43.
51. *Ibid.*, pp. 139-140.
52. Mariano G. Vallejo, "At Six Dollars an Ounce" in *California: A Literary Chronicle*, ed., W. Storrs Lee (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1968), p. 183.
53. Quoted in Leonard Pitt, *The Decline of the Californios* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), p. 280. This work provides a discussion and bibliography of other historical works by Mexican-Americans in California.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 280.
55. Vallejo's manuscript, except for an occasional excerpt, has gone unpublished. Bancroft regarded Vallejo as a valuable source but also a writer who often mistook his imagination for his memory. See Vallejo's reaction to Bancroft's charges in *Emparan*, p. 171.
56. María Cristina Mena, "Marriage by Miracle," *Century Magazine*, 91 (March, 1916), 727.
57. Mena, "The Vine-Leaf," *Century Magazine*, 89 (December, 1914), 289-292.
58. By the 1920s, Mexican-American authors were writing in both Spanish and English. See Meyer, "Felipe Maximiliano Chacon: A Forgotten Mexican-American Author," *The New Scholar*, 6 (1977), 111-26.
59. See Robert H. Torres, "Mutiny in Jalisco," *Esquire*, 3, No.3 (1935), 37ff; "The Brothers Jimenez," *Esquire*, 5, No.6 (1936), 90ff.
60. See Roberto Félix Salazar, "She Had Good Legs," *Esquire*, 8, No. 4 (1937), 106ff; "Nobody Laughed in Ylde," *Esquire*, 9, No. 3 (1938), 84ff.
61. Salazar, "The Other Pioneers," in *We Are Chicanos*, ed., Philip D. Ortego (New York: Washington Square Press, 1973), pp. 150-151.
62. It is noteworthy that in depicting the Mexican revolutionaries, Torres is careful not to lend credence to the *bandido* caricature. His revolutionaries, violent and crude as they are, exist not as specifically-defined Mexicans, but merely as men utterly debased by the experience of war.

63. The dynamics of this phenomenon are effectively portrayed by Willa Cather in *The Song of the Lark*. The novel features a Mexican named Juan Tellamantez who is so esteemed by the Anglo residents of Moonstone, Colorado, that they decorously avoid reference to his correct ethnicity; rather he is known as "Spanish Johnny." Notice, too, the name of a Mexican-American political organization started in 1929: League of United Latin-American Citizens.
64. See Aurelio M. Espinosa, "New Mexican Spanish Folklore," *Journal of American Folklore*, 27 (1914), 211.
65. Nina Otero Warren, *Old Spain in Our Southwest* (1936; rpt. Chicago: Rio Grande Press, 1962), p. 64.
66. Juan A. A. Sedillo, "Gentleman of Rio en Medio," *New Mexico Quarterly*, 9 (1939), 181.
67. Otero, p. 10.
68. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
69. For other examples of New Mexican writing of this type, which are engaging and skillful despite the narrow sensibility, see the works of Fray Angélico Chávez, particularly *New Mexico Triptych* (Paterson, New Jersey: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1940); also Sabine Ulibarri, *Tierra Amarilla* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1971).
70. Josephina Niggli, *Mexican Village* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1945), p. 60.
71. At one point in the book, the railroad makes a special stop in Hidalgo, an event that occasions a large celebration. The local orchestra is engaged and it does well enough until its members disagree on the next selection. Suddenly, the orchestra splits into two sections, both presumably still on the same platform, one group "playing a sad ballad of an illegitimate child to whom no one would speak because of his misfortune, and the other half concentrating on 'My Blue Heaven'." Such, as Niggli sees it, is the paradox of Mexico.
72. See "Douglas MacArthur" in Hansen, pp. 314-315.
73. Mario Suárez, "El Hoyo," *Arizona Quarterly*, 3 (1947), 114-115.
74. Suárez, "Señor Garza," *Arizona Quarterly*, 3 (1947), 116.
75. Suárez, "Kid Zopilote," *Arizona Quarterly*, 3 (1947), 137.
76. Suárez, "Maestria," *Arizona Quarterly*, 4 (1948), 373.
77. For a fascinating discussion of the *pachuco's* relation to the Mexican, see Paz, *Labyrinth*, pp. 2-28.
78. Jose Antonio Villareal, *Pocho* (1959; rpt. New York: Anchor Books, 1970), p. 187.
79. *Ibid.*, p. 135.
80. The term "Quinto Sol" itself refers to the Age of the Fifth Sun, which, according to Aztec belief, was to be the era of greatest achievement and prosperity.
81. A good general study of Chicano language is Eduardo Hernández Chávez, et al., *El lengua de los chicanos* (Arlington, Virginia: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1975).
82. José Montoya, "La Jefita" in *El Espejo*, ed., Octavio Romano V. (Berkeley: Quinto Sol Publications, 1969), p. 188.
83. An excellent study of this type of poetry is Guadalupe Valdés Fallis, "Code-Switching in Bi-Lingual Chicano Poetry," *Hispania*, 59 (1976), 877-886.
84. Tomás Rivera, "M'ijo No Mira Nada" in *El Espejo*, ed., Octavio Romano V. and Herminio Ríos C. (Berkeley: Quinto Sol Publications, 1972), p. 244.

85. For a good general survey of Chicano poetry, see Joel Hancock, "The Emergence of Chicano Poetry," *Arizona Quarterly*, 29 (1973), 57-73, and Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, "The Chicano Movement and the Emergence of a Chicano Poetic Consciousness," *New Scholar*, 6 (1977), 81-110.
86. Tomás Rivera, ". . . y no se lo tragó la tierra," trans. Herminio Ríos C (Berkeley: Quinto Sol Publications, 1971), p. 3.
87. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
88. *Ibid.*, p. 177.
89. Rolando Hinojosa-S., *Estampas del Valle y Otras Obras*, trans. Gustavo Valadez (Berkeley: Quinto Sol Publications, 1973), p. 54. See also introductory comments to volume by Herminio Ríos C. (no pagination). A later collection of sketches by Hinojosa, *Generaciones y Semblanzas*, appeared too late for comment in this essay.
90. *Ibid.*, p. 137.
91. *Ibid.*, p. 139.
92. Another Chicano writer in Spanish of considerable skill is Miguel Méndez. See his *Peregrinos de Aztlán* (Tucson: Editoriales Peregrinos, 1974).
93. Hinojosa, p. 88.
94. Rudolfo Anaya, *Bless Me, Ultima* (Berkeley: Quinto Sol Publications, 1972), p. 115.
95. Tomás Rivera, "Chicano Literature: Festival of the Living," *Books Abroad*, 49 (1975), 439-452.
96. John Rechy, "El Paso del Norte," *Evergreen Review*, 2 (1958), 127. "DF" stands for Distrito Federal (Federal District), a designation equivalent to "District of Columbia."
97. Two Chicano novels are notable in this regard, complete with snappy title for instant identification: Richard Vásquez, *Chicano* (New York: Doubleday, 1970), and Edmund Villaseñor, *Macho!* (New York: Bantam Books, 1973).
98. See Acosta, *The Autobiography of a Brown Buffalo* (San Francisco: Straight Arrow Books, 1972), and *The Revolt of the Cockroach People* (San Francisco: Straight Arrow Books, 1973).
99. See, for example, Amado Muro, "Cecilia Rosas," *New Mexico Quarterly*, 34 (1964), 353-364.

This essay contains material introduced in two previous articles of mine: "Exclusion and Invisibility: Chicano Literature Not in Text-books," *Arizona English Bulletin*, 17 (1975), 213-19; and "The Promise of Chicano Literature," *Minority Language and Literature*, ed. Dexter Fisher (New York: Modern Language Association, 1977), pp. 29-41. I want to thank the American Council of Learned Societies for providing me a research fellowship during 1976-77 which allowed me to complete this study.