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The Shade of the Saguaro /
La sombra del saguaro

Essays on the
Literary Cultures
of the American
Southwest /
Ensayos sobre las
culturas literarias
del suroeste
norteamericano



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- 18 -

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Segreteria editoriale

Arianna Antonielli, caporedattore

Laboratorio editoriale open access, via Santa Reparata 93, 50129 Firenze

tel +39 0552756664 - 6616; fax +39 0697253581

email: bsfm@comparate.unifi.it; web: <<http://www.collana-filmod.unifi.it>>

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The Shade of the Saguaro /
La sombra del saguaro

Essays on the Literary Cultures of the
American Southwest /
Ensayos sobre las culturas literarias del
suroeste norteamericano

edited by

Gaetano Prampolini and Annamaria Pinazzi

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For Gianni Spera,
sine quo non

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A FEW WORDS FROM THE EDITORS

“The Southwest,” wrote an eminent regional geographer over forty years ago, “is a distinctive place to the American mind but a somewhat blurred place on American maps, which is to say that everyone knows that there is a Southwest but there is little agreement as to just where it is.” A no less eminent regional historian had already written: “There are regions in the United States — New England, the South, and the Great Plains, for example — which have fixed and obvious boundaries and therefore exactness of meaning. But the term Southwest ... is by contrast a variable which has meant almost all things to all men ... And, although there is a Southwest to and for which Nature does certain things differently than for other parts of the United States, its geographical boundaries are blurred rather than sharp, and ordinary maps do not make it clear.” We find both passages quoted at the beginning of James W. Byrkit’s thorough and thought-stirring essay, “Land, Sky, and People: The Southwest Defined,” which took up a whole 1992 issue of *Journal of the Southwest*.

While the debate may go on ad infinitum as to whether it would make more sense to conceive the Southwest as a sort of “Greater Southwest,” spreading from the Sabine to the Pacific shore, or, more modestly, as the land circumscribed by the Pecos on the east, the Mexican Border on the south, the South Californian sierras on the west, and the Grand Canyon and the Mesa Verde on the north, it appears reasonable to think that the Southwest as we see it today is essentially the result of the last five hundred years of history. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Native American peoples who had lived in the land for such a long time that even the relatively late comers among them could indicate some place on their territory as the sacred place of their origin, had their first contact with those Europeans who had been apportioned the invasion and conquest of that part of the Americas. The introduction of the horse changed their locomotion, that of the sheep their diet, but they had to submit to Spanish rule (not without fierce outbursts of resistance) and to forced Christianization (without ever renouncing their traditional rituals and beliefs). As long as the Southwest (not yet called “the Southwest” but *el Norte*) was the northernmost huge portion of the Spanish colonial Empire and then of Mexico, it remained a still vastly unknown and faraway periphery, where the Hispanic presence did not leave, for the moment, more than skin-deep and rather sparse

traces. It was, in fact, only long after the American-Mexican war (the first practical application of the Manifest Destiny ideology) had implanted in the Southwest the Anglo-American cultural component, that Hispanic culture began to massively exert its influence in the region — an influence so impressive and ever-growing today. Tri-cultural, at least, and multi-lingual, the Southwest presents therefore a complex stratification and coexistence of different cultures, the equal of which would be hard to find elsewhere in the United States.

The Southwest is the common horizon, when not the specific subject, of the writings collected in this volume, whose bilingual title winks at a story in the oral tradition of one of the Native American peoples of the region. While the majority of these writings are concerned with aspects and authors of the literatures of the Southwest, still a good third of them fall into the fields of history, art history, ethnography, sociology or cultural studies. Our partition of the matter intends, with the first three sections, to reflect the chronology of the stratification of the three major cultures; with the fourth, to highlight one of the most sensitive topics in and about contemporary Southwest: the border/la frontera. But, of course, as is always the case in like undertakings, a number of alternative partitions might be deemed shrewder and more elegant than this one.

Revised and, when needed, updated by their authors, the contributions to this volume originate all from papers presented at the Forum for the Study of the Literary Cultures of the Southwest, a project hatched in the course of a conversation which, on a bright April morning in 1999, took place in the cloistered courtyard of the Faculty of Arts of the Università di Firenze, among teachers of this university and visiting colleagues from the University of Arizona. As it turned out that the Southwest — obviously of prime importance as an object of study and research at Arizona — had also a prominent place in the scholarly concerns of many of the Florentine Americanists, everybody saw immediately how mutually beneficial and stimulating conferences on the topic of common interest, to be held on a regular basis, could prove. The first session of the Forum took place in Florence in May 2000. Seven more followed, one in each of the subsequent seven years, alternating Florence and Tucson as their venues, and with the participation of scholars from other American and European universities as well. As can be noticed by glancing at the sessions' programs, the range of the themes discussed at our Forum is quite impressive, although we were but skimming the surface of this monumental topic. It is regrettable that the Forum had to be discontinued when there were already plans to upgrade it — for instance, to change the format of its sessions from panoramic to monographic. And all the more pungent is our personal regret since the discontinuation of the Forum depended entirely on a shortcoming of the Università di Firenze. In 2006 it had been very hard to put together the money necessary to defray the cost (far from exorbitant, after all) of the session scheduled in Florence, and we had been very grateful to the colleagues of the Università di Verona who offered to organize it — as it finally was — in their beautiful city. In

2008, with the Università di Firenze in even direr financial straits, we were unable (or, maybe, not academically influential enough) to obtain any funding, and that tolled the end of our Forum.

By inscribing this volume to Professor Gianni Spera we are sure to voice the gratitude of all the participants in the Forum, for the man who has been the impeccable organizer of all the sessions held in Tucson and, as a consultant in those held in Florence, generous not merely in giving shrewd advice.

We most gratefully thank all the contributors for patiently bearing with us during the preparation of this volume for the press, which proved more laborious, and therefore longer, than it was expected.

Our no less grateful thanks go, finally, to Marco Fill, Director of QuiEdit, Marike Schipper, Director of Leuven University Press, and Joseph C. Wilder, Editor of Journal of the Southwest, for their permission to include in this volume essays earlier versions of which had been published elsewhere.

Florence, December 31, 2012



Università degli Studi di Firenze
Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia



The University of Arizona
College of Humanities

1st Forum for the Study of the Literary Cultures of the Southwest

Firenze, May 5, 2000

Program

Sala del Consiglio della Presidenza Nuova, Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia
Piazza Brunelleschi, 3

10:00 *Opening Addresses:*

GIANCARLO ZAMPI, Pro-rettore of Università di Firenze
PAOLO MARRASSINI, Preside of the Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia

10:30

1st Session

Chair: GIANNI SPERA, University of Arizona

10:40

MICHELE BOTTALICO, Università di Salerno:
"Writing Another History: Divergent Trends in Chicano Testimonial Literature"

11:10

MARIO MATERASSI, Università di Firenze:
"New Mexico, the Land of Enchantment - and of Detective Fiction"

11:40

CHUCK TATUM, University of Arizona:
"Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage Project"

12:10

Discussion

13:00

End of the session

Sala Ricci, Dipartimento di Studi Storici e Geografici
Palazzo Fenzi, via S. Gallo, 10

15:30

2nd Session

Chair: MARTHA CANFIELD, Università di Firenze

15:40

GAETANO PRAMPOLINI, Università di Firenze:
"Native American Literature As Seen from Across the Atlantic"

16:10

ANNAMARIA PINAZZI, Università di Firenze:
"A European Glance at Native American Drama"

16:40

LARRY EVERS, University of Arizona:
"Native American Literature in the Regional Context"

17:10

Discussion

18:00

End of the session

For further information:

phone 055.2757860 (Mondays, Wednesday and Fridays, 9-12) - e-mail: soccerlet@unifi.it (attn. G. Prampolini)



Università degli Studi di Firenze
Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia



The University of Arizona
College of Humanities

**2nd Forum
for the Study of
the Literary Cultures
of the American Southwest**

Tucson, November 9, 2001

**Arizona Inn, Safari Room
2200 E. Elm St., Tucson**

Morning Session, 10:00 a.m.

- MICHELE BOTTALICO**, Università di Salerno:
"Illness in Alejandro Morales's *The Rag Doll Plagues*"
DANIEL COOPER ALABCON, University of Arizona:
"Mexican Heaven? The Erosion of Tradition in the Short
Stories of Mario Suárez"
DOUG CANFIELD, University of Arizona:
"Chato's Lament"
JOHN WARNOCK, University of Arizona:
"Pecos National Historical Park: An Interpretive Vortex"
MARIO MATERASSI, Università di Firenze:
"Doubles: Strategies of Sense Production in Rudolfo
Anaya's 'The Man Who Found a Pistol'"
Discussion

Afternoon Session, 2:00 p.m.

- GAETANO PRAMPOLINI**, Università di Firenze:
"Reclaiming History through Fiction: Storytelling and
Story-writing in Linda Hogan's 'That Horse'"
ELIANA RIVERO, University of Arizona:
"Border Islander: A Cuban Latina in the Southwest"
ANA PERCHES, University of Arizona:
"Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz in Recent Chicana Literature"
JUDY TEMPLE, University of Arizona:
"From Visual Legend to Voice: Entering the Dream World
of 'Baby Doe' Tabor"
Discussion

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Larry Evers, Head, Department of English;
and especially the

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between the University of Arizona and the University of Florence.

For further information:

email jhearne@u.arizona.edu, phone 621-1836



Università degli Studi di Firenze
Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia



The University of Arizona
College of Humanities

In memory of Rolando Anzilotti (1919-1982)
*The 3rd Forum for the Study
of the Literary Cultures
of the Southwest*

Firenze, May 3-4, 2002

Sala del Consiglio della Presidenza Nuova, Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia
piazza Brunelleschi, 3

May 3

- 9:30 *Opening Addresses:*
AUGUSTO MARINELLI,
 Rettore della Università di Firenze
PAOLO MARRASSINI,
 Preside della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia
MARIA GRAZIA PROFETI,
 Direttrice del Dipartimento di Letterature Neolatine
MARIO DOMENICHELLI,
 Direttore del Dipartimento di Filologia Moderna
- 10:20 GAETANO PRAMPOLINI, Remembering Rolando Anzilotti
- 10:40 *1st Session*
Chair: GIANNI SPERA, University of Arizona
CRISTINA GIORCELLI, Università di Roma III:
 "Willa Cather and Puvis de Chavannes"
JOHN WARNOCK, University of Arizona:
 "Creating the American Southwest As a Site for
 Military Industry Adventure"
- 11:40 Discussion
- 12:15 End of the session
-
- 15:30 *2nd Session*
Chair: LARRY EVERS, University of Arizona
MICHELE BOTTALICO, Università di Salerno:
 "Illness in Alejandro Morales's *The Rag Doll
 Plagues*"

MARDIA CANFIELD, Università di Firenze:
 "Escritura y cuerpo femenino: reflexiones en
 torno a un texto chicano de poesia amorosa"
MARIO MATERASSI, Università di Firenze:
 "Doubles: Rudolfo Anaya's *The Man Who
 Found a Pistol*"
CHUCK TATUM, University of Arizona:
 "Reclaiming Cultural Space: Jimmy Santiago
 Baca's *A Place to Stand*"

17:30 Discussion

18:15 End of the Session

May 4

- 9:30 *3rd Session*
Chair: CHUCK TATUM, University of Arizona
OFELIA ZEPEDA, University of Arizona:
 "More Than Just Words: Stages of American
 Indian Language Revitalization"
JUDY NOLTE TEMPLE, University of Arizona:
 "Mary Austin and the Challenge of Capturing
 Western Rhythms"
ANNAMARIA PINAZZI, Università di Firenze:
 "The Role of Setting in Hanay Geigunah's Plays"
LARRY EVERS, University of Arizona:
 "Poetics and Politics: On the Idea of
 Sovereignty in Contemporary Native American
 Literature and Culture"
- 11:30 Discussion
- 12:15 End of Session

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phone 055.2757860 (Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, 9-12) - e-mail soccerlet@unifi.it (attn. G. Prampolini)



Università degli Studi di Firenze
Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia



The University of Arizona
College of Humanities

4th International Forum for the Study of the Literary Cultures of the American Southwest

Tucson, October 30 - 31, 2003

University of Arizona Foundation and Alumni Building, Room 205
1111 North Cherry Avenue

October 30

9:00 to 11:30 a.m.

Susan Castillo, *University of Glasgow*

"In Rhetoric of Many Colors": Performing Creole Identity in Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's *Love for the Divine Narcissus*

Daniel Cooper Alarcón, *University of Arizona*

"Literary Syncretism in Ana Castillo's *So Far From God*"

Martha Canfield, *University of Florence*

"De México a Aztlan a través del arquetipo del padre"

John Warnock, *University of Arizona*

"The Pinnacle on the Pinnacle: The American Southwest as Rhetorical Topos"

1:30 to 4:00 p.m.

Malcolm Compitello, *University of Arizona*

"Nations, Borders and Identities: The Question of Scale"

Javier Durán, *University of Arizona*

"My Border, Not Yours": *Autobiography and Representation in Contemporary U.S. - Mexico Border Narratives*

Glenn Martínez, *University of Arizona*

"The Invention of Tex-Mex: Language and Racialization in 19th Century South Texas"

October 31

9:00 to 11:30 a.m.

Annamaria Pinazzi, *University of Florence*

"Historicizing in Wallace Tucker's Plays"

Hans Bak, *University of Nijmegen*

"Seeking Balance Through History and Community: The Presence of the Past in LeAnne Howe's *Shell Shaker* (2001)"

Geta LeSeur, *University of Arizona*

"Black Okies, Migrant Dreams: The Realities of Life with Cotton in the Casa Grande Valley"

Gaetano Prampolini, *University of Florence*

"The Growth of Luci Tapahonso's Poetic Voice"

N. Scott Momaday, Luci Tapahonso and Sherwin Bitsui will read from their works

Special thanks to

Charles Totum, Dean, College of Humanities

Gianni Spera, Director, International Studies Program UA/UF

Larry Evers, Head, Department of English

Malcom Compitello, Head, Department of Spanish and Portuguese

and especially the

Daniele Cracchiolo Fund

which supports international academic exchanges in the humanities

For more information:

email: dstolton@u.arizona.edu, phone: 621-9294



Università degli Studi di Firenze
Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia



The University of Arizona
College of Humanities

The 5th Forum for the Study of the Literary Cultures of the Southwest

Firenze, October 28-29, 2004

Sala del Consiglio della Presidenza Nuova, Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia
piazza Brunelleschi, 3

October 28

9:30 *Opening Addresses*

10:00 *1st Session*

Chair: **GIANNI SPERA** (*University of Arizona*)

MALCOLM COMPITELLO (*University of Arizona*)
"Ideas of Community on Film: From Cabrera's
La estrategia del caracol to de la Iglesia's *La comunidad*"

MARTHA CANFIELD (*Università di Firenze*)
"Hacia las raíces contra viejos mitos: elementos
de poetica chicana"

DANIEL COOPER ALARCON (*University of Arizona*)
"Pocho: A Reconsideration"

12:00 Discussion

13:00 End of the session

15:30 *2nd Session*

Chair: **MARIO MATERASSI** (*Università di Firenze*)

MANUEL PLANA (*Università di Firenze*)
"Etnicidad y historia social en los estudios
recientes sobre la frontera de México hacia
mitad del siglo XIX"

JAVIER DURÁN
(*University of Arizona*)
"Border Voices: Transnational Identities and
Life Writings of the U.S.-Mexico 'Frontera'"

ROBERTO SERRAI (*Università di Firenze*),
"One step ahead of his doom": Larry McMurtry,
Rudolfo Anaya & Billy the Kid"

GETA LESEUR (*University of Arizona*),
"Gun and Cotton Stories: Narratology, Orality
and the Romance of Eloy, Arizona"

18:00 Discussion

19:00 End of the session

October 29

10:00 *3rd Session*

Chair: **MARTHA CANFIELD** (*Università di Firenze*)

ANNAMARIA PINAZZI (*Università di Firenze*)
"N. Scott Momaday's *Indolent Boys*: A Matter
of Balance"

GAETANO PRAMPOLINI (*Università di Firenze*)
"Observations on Ofelia Zepeda's Verse"

LOUISE K. BARNETT (*Rutgers University
Program in Florence*)
"*Gardens in the Dunes* and the Perversion of
Nature"

11:30 Discussion

12:30 End of the session

For further information:

phone 055.2757860 (Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, 9-12) - e-mail: soccrlet@unifi.it (attn. G. Prampolini)



Università degli Studi di Firenze
Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia



The University of Arizona
College of Humanities

The 6th International Forum for the Study of Literary Cultures of the American Southwest

The University of Arizona, November 17-18, 2005

Thursday, November 17

9:00 a.m. – Noon (*Student Union Ventana Room*)

Welcome **JUAN GARCIA**, *Vice Provost, Academic Affairs*
CHARLES TATUM, *Dean, College of Humanities*
GIANNI SPERA, *Director, International Studies Program*
University of Arizona - University of Florence

Chair: **CHARLES TATUM**, *University of Arizona*
FRANCESCO MARRONI, *University of Pescara*
"William Eastlake's Trilogy: The Southwestern Landscape as Truth and Revelation"

MARIBEL ALVAREZ, *University of Arizona*
"Curious Curio Landscapes: Notes for a Border Arcades Project"

EMANUELA JOSSA, *University of Calabria*
"Los colores de la tierra"

CARLOS GALLEGO, *University of Arizona*
"Between Borders and Margins:
Reconceptualizing Alterity"

Lunch break

1:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Chair: **MALCOLM COMPITELLO**, *University of Arizona*

MANUEL PLANA, *University of Florence*
"La revolución mexicana y la frontera con Estados Unidos:
historiografía y perspectivas de investigación"

LAURA GUTIERREZ, *University of Arizona*
"Sexing Guadalupe in Transnational Double-Crossing"

YOLANDA BROYLES-GONZÁLEZ, *University of Arizona*
"Chelo Silva in Borderlands Perspective: Music's Powers"

NORMA MENDOZA-DENTON, *University of Arizona*
"Smile Now Cry Later: Memorializing Practices Linking Language, Materiality and Embodiment Among California Latina/o Youth"

JAVIER DURÁN, *University of Arizona*
"Life as Fiction, Fiction as Life: Ricardo Aguilar and his Border Writing"

Friday, November 18

9:00 a.m. – Noon (*Student Union Tubac Room*)

Chair: **GIANNI SPERA**, *University of Arizona*

MICHELE BOTTALICO, *University of Salerno*
"Echoes from the Ancestral Homeland: Hybridity and Cross-cultural Trends in Chicano Murals"

GETA LESEUR, *University of Arizona*
"Mo and Margaret: Migrant Subjects Seeking/Finding Voice"

CELESTINO FERNÁNDEZ, *University of Arizona*
"The Role and Meaning of Border Coeridos:
The Case of Narcoctidos."

MARIO MATERASSI, *University of Florence*
"Women in the Desert:
A Study of Three Stories by Rudolfo Anaya"

Special thanks to

CHARLES TATUM, *Dean, College of Humanities*
GIANNI SPERA, *Director, International Studies Program UAUF*
and especially
THE STEELE FOUNDATION,
DANIEL CRACCHIOLO, *PRESIDENT*
which supports international academic exchanges in the humanities

For more information:
email daoison@u.arizona.edu, phone (520) 621-9294



Università degli Studi di Firenze
Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia



The University of Arizona
College of Humanities

The 7th International Forum for the Study of the Literary Cultures of the American Southwest



November 2-3, 2006
Facoltà di Lingue e Letterature Straniere
Università di Verona

Thursday, November 2 - Sala Barbieri

- 3:00 p.m. Welcome
GIAN PAOLO MARCHI, *Presidente, Facoltà Lingue e Letterature Straniere, Università di Verona*
CHARLES TATUM, *Dean, College of Humanities, University of Arizona*
GAETANO PRAMPOLINI, *Università di Firenze*
M. CECILIA GRAÑA, *Università di Verona*
- 3:30 p.m. Chair: **GIANNI SPERA**, *Director International Studies Program, University of Arizona, University of Firenze*
CARLOS GALLEGO, *University of Arizona*
 "Re-Cognizing the Borders of Chicano/a Studies: Notes on the Future of a Discipline"
MARIBEL ALVAREZ, *University of Arizona*
 "The Sleeping Mexican Phenomenon: Convoluted Tales of (Mis)Representation"
 Discussion
- 5:00 p.m. **LAURA GUTIÉRREZ**, *University of Arizona*
 "Es Mi Gueto": Working-Class Aesthetics and Transnationalism in Contemporary Chicano Music"
YOLANDA BROYLES-GONZÁLES, *University of Arizona*
 "Borderlands/Cambia Movements"
STEFANIA TIBERINI, *Università di Roma "La Sapienza"*
 "Arte e gender: le artiste native del Sud Ovest"
 Discussion

Friday, November 3 - Sala Barbieri

- 9:00 a.m. Chair: **CHARLES TATUM**, *University of Arizona*
MARTHA CANFIELD, *Università di Firenze*
 "Naturaleza reflejada y simbólica en la literatura chicana"
ERMINIO CORTI, *Università di Bergamo*
 "Modelos identitarios en la narrativa de Sandra Cisneros: entre cultura de masas y cultura popular"
AN VAN HECKE, *University of Antwerp*
 "Sobre tamales y taquitos: los contextos culinarios en la obra de Sandra Cisneros"
 Discussion

10:30 a.m. Coffee Break

- 11:00 a.m. **WALTER PANTALEO**, *Università di Lecce*
 "Las funciones del code-switching en la poesía de Tato Laviera"
FRANCESCO FAVA, *Università di Verona*
 "Yo, myself and I. Pronombres personales e identidad bilingüe en un 'poema largo' chicano"
M. CECILIA GRAÑA, *Università di Verona*
 "Del cine al poema largo: *Scene from the Movie GIANT - Escena de la película GIGANTE*"

Discussion

1:00 p.m. Lunch break

- 3:30 p.m. Chair: **MARTHA CANFIELD**, *Università di Firenze*
MANUEL PLANA, *Università di Firenze*
 "Mexicanos en los Estados Unidos: consideraciones demográficas y sociales en la segunda mitad del siglo XX"
CELESTINO FERNÁNDEZ, *University of Arizona*
 "Immigration Reform 2006: Mexican Bashing Revisited"
MALCOLM COMPITELLO, *University of Arizona*
 "The Border Runs through Lavapiés: Local Consequences of Global Spatial Practices"
NORMA MENDOZA-DENTON, *University of Arizona*
 "Reimagining North and South: Geopolitics and Memory among California Latino/a Gang Affiliated Youth"

6:00 p.m. End of the session

Special Thanks to:

Dipartimento di Romanistica, *Università di Verona*
 Centro Linguistico di Ateneo, *Università di Verona*
 Relazioni Internazionali, *Università di Verona*
 International Studies Program *University of Arizona*,
Università di Firenze

For more information: cecilia.grana@univ.it

francfavag@hotmail.it

Dipartimento di Romanistica, Univ. Verona: 045 8028321



Università degli Studi di Firenze
Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia



The University of Arizona
College of Humanities

The 8th International Forum for the Study of Literary Cultures of the American Southwest

The University of Arizona, November 15-16, 2007

Thursday, November 15

9 a.m. – Noon (*Student Union Sabino Room*)

Welcome: **JUAN GARCIA**, *Vice Provost, Academic Affairs*
CHARLES TATUM, *Dean, College of Humanities*
GIANNI SPERA, *Director, International Studies Program*
University of Arizona - Università di Firenze

Chair: **MALCOLM COMPITELLO**, *University of Arizona*

FRANCESCO GURRIERI, *Università di Firenze*
"European Late-Renaissance Roots in Southwestern Arizona
Architecture"

LAURA GUTIERREZ, *University of Arizona*
"Sneaking into the Media (in Style!): Art, Illegal Immigration,
and Global Labor"

MARIA CECILIA GRAÑA, *Università di Verona*
"El poeta chicano y la ciudad"

CARLOS GALLEGO, *University of Arizona*
"Oscar 'Zes' Acosta and the Politics of Non-Identity"

DISCUSSION

Lunch break

1:30 p.m. – 4 p.m.

Chair: **CELESTINO FERNÁNDEZ**, *University of Arizona*

MARTHA CANFIELD, *Università di Firenze*
"Poética y naturaleza en la literatura chicana"

JAVIER DURÁN, *University of Arizona*
"The Post-NAPTA U.S.-Mexico Border and the Politics of
Representation"

YOLANDA BROYLES-GONZALEZ, *University of Arizona*
"Healing California His/History: The Chamash Native People"

ANNAMARIA PINAZZI, *Università di Firenze*
"Momaday's *Children of the Sun*: Many Stories in One Play"

GAETANO PRAMPOLINI, *Università di Firenze*
"About the Gene(s) of Irvin Mottis' *From the Glittering World*"

Friday, November 16

10 a.m. – 1 p.m. (*Student Union Mesquite Room*)

Chair: **GIANNI SPERA**, *University of Arizona*

STEFANO TANI, *Università di Verona*
"Mystery in the Mystery: The Case of William Hjortsberg
and Walter Satterthwaite"

ADELA LICONA, *University of Arizona*
"Borderlands Rhetoric as Material Narratives"

ABRAHAM ACOSTA, *University of Arizona*
"Thresholds, Borders, and Others: Sign-Cutting in L.A.
Urrea's *The Devil's Highway*"

MARIO MATERASSI, *Università di Firenze*
"Stanley Crawford's Composite Identity: Anglo Majordomo/
Postmodern Novelist and Singer of the Tierra of New
Mexico"

DISCUSSION

Closing Remarks:

Special thanks to

CHARLES TATUM, *Dean, College of Humanities*
GIANNI SPERA, *Director, International Studies Program UAUUF*
and especially

THE STEELE FOUNDATION,
DANIELE CRACCHIOLO, *PRESIDENT*
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I

Native American

SEEKING BALANCE THROUGH HISTORY AND COMMUNITY: THE
PRESENCE OF THE PAST IN LEANNE HOWE'S *SHELL SHAKER*

Hans Bak

LeAnne Howe's debut novel *Shell Shaker* (2001) is grounded in a firm belief in the power of Native story, not just as a means of sustaining and empowering Native people to create identity, history and community in mutual interaction, but also as a means of affecting and transforming American culture and history at large. "Native stories are power," she has argued in an essay entitled "The Story of America: A Tribalography": "They create people. They author tribes. America is a tribal creation story, a tribalography" (Howe 2002, 29). In the essay Howe advances a revisionary view of history as a symbiosis of Native and mainstream (his)stories, emphasizing how the interconnectedness and mutual interaction has in effect transformed American history. Her argument is sophisticated and multi-leveled. It focuses in part on the familiar contention that without the assistance of Native tribes the early white settlers would not have stood a chance of survival, but underlines the significance of *story*: "creation stories gave birth to our people," she says, but goes on to emphasize that "our stories also created the immigrants who landed on our shores," in effect making the immigrants into Americans. "When the foreigners arrived and attempted to settle in the upper Northeast, they had nothing to eat, nothing to sustain them but their faith in biblical stories. Indigenous people told them new stories of how to live in our world. ... Natives told stories of how to plant their crops, corn, beans, and pumpkins (squash), which sustained the newcomers and taught them how to experiment with their daily diet by adding variety. As a result, native foods were traded internationally and changed the food cultures of the entire world. ... Thanksgiving is the holiday in which Americans give thanks to indigenous people for such extraordinary and versatile foods" (29-30). Her most compelling argument, however, is that it was the power and persistence of a tribal story over centuries that effected the creation of America: "when the European Founding Fathers heard the stories of how the Haudenosaunee unified six individual tribes into an Indian confederacy, they created a document, the US Constitution, that united immigrant Europeans into a symbiotic union called America" (37). Howe offers powerful historical evidence for her ar-

* An earlier version of this essay appeared in *The Challenges of Native American Studies: Essays in Celebration of the Twenty-Fifth American Indian Workshop*, Barbara Saunders & Lea Zuijderhoudt (eds), Leuven: Leuven University Press 2004.



gument that a Native story served as “a kind of cultural template for the New World,” the Founding Fathers in effect using and respecting Indian ideas as the building of the new US government unfolded. The tribal confederation, brought together around 1500 through the diplomatic efforts of “a great visionary leader, Degenawidah,” later known as the Peacemaker, was founded on the core values of “freedom, respect, tolerance, consensus, and brotherhood” (38) and intended to “achieve peace between differing tribes and thwart the cult of death and warfare by forming a confederacy.” The historical event persists today in the tribal “Ritual of Condolence,” “designed to heal the community and make it a peaceful whole” (37). Howe’s intention is not so much to demonstrate the direct or indirect influence of the Indian paradigm of confederacy on the drafting of the US Constitution but rather to argue that “the Haudenosaunee’s *story of their union* created an image so powerful in the minds of colonists that they believed if ‘savages’ could unite they ought to be able to do the same thing” (41-42). American Indians, she claims, are in effect the “ghost writers” (42) for “the story of America” and deserve recognition as such.

Howe’s argument is partly rooted in a scientific theory of symbiogenesis (advanced by Lynn Margulis) which holds in essence that evolution is the result less of competition among life forms (a popular distortion of Darwin’s survival of the fittest) than of “continual cooperation, strong interaction, and mutual dependence” (34). Howe transposes this insight into the cultural realm and applies it to the process of “contact” as not so much a form of conflict as of dialogic “networking,” in which both sides permanently transformed and interacted with each other. She also exposes “the prejudice inherent in the belief” that tribal stories are forms of myth, folklore, or fiction (36), demonstrating that in effect many tribal insights and forms of knowledge have recently been “proven” to be rooted in historical “fact” by scientific research: thus, birds (which figure prominently in the Choctaw world view) have been demonstrated to possess forms of memory not unlike humans. “This is big news to white people,” she says, “or people educated in mainstream institutions, but not to American Indians who have been telling stories of birds as creators, birds as tricksters, birds as healers, and birds with long memories” (32). Howe quotes Susan Power, author of *The Grass Dancer* (1993), as saying: “We are American history, we are American literature. Every track and trace of the American experience runs through our communities. We have been the transformers so much more than we are ever credited to have been” (45).

Stories thus have the power to make connections across human cultures and cultural divides. It was Howe’s grandmother who, by passing on tribal stories, taught her the power of story to “create:” it “brings forth knowledge and inspires us to make the eventful leap that one thing leads to another” (32). She also underscores the function and nature of storytelling as a communal, not an individual act; in the words of Louis Owens, “For the traditional storyteller, each story originates and serves to define the people as a whole, the community” (43). Storytelling, she advances, is “a cultural bias” of tribal people: “tribalography comes from the na-

tive propensity for bringing things together, for making consensus, and for symbiotically connecting one thing to another” (42) over time; “our stories are unending connections to past, present, and future” (47). Storytelling thus locates identity at the junction of history and the future: “textual space” becomes “a contemplative reflection of identity” (44). It may even become a way of “expanding our identity” as it holds the possibility of working a symbiosis, a cross-cultural connection between Indians and non-Indians: thus “tribalography creates a literary and literal past” (46) for both Natives and non-Natives. Consequently, continuity is guaranteed: in the words of Craig Howe, former director of the D’Arcy McNickle Center at the Newberry Library in Chicago, “*Tribalism will not die, even if all the Indians do*” (47).

Howe’s novel fully enacts the ideas on story and history embedded in her essay. Her vision of “American” history is exemplified by characters’ pronouncements and enactments in the novel. Thus, Red McAlester, the controversial chief of the Choctaw nation, sprinkles his speeches with the reminder that “the threads of American history were interwoven in Choctaw history, not the other way around” (Howe 2001, 20). While Auda, a Choctaw historian and activist supporter of McAlester, virulently denounces the “propaganda ... taught in the colonizer’s schools” (44). The novel’s structure likewise enacts Howe’s belief that stories have the power to make connections over time, as past and present are presented in counterpoint and analogies and continuities between historical events in the eighteenth century and the early 1990s are given dramatic shape. Through a generic fusion of the traditions of western crime fiction/courtroom drama (there is a clear who-dunit? dimension to the plot) with the features of “tribal realism,” by interlarding her English with phrases from the Choctaw language, Howe has written a truly hybrid or amphibian book. She leads us deeply into Choctaw culture and consciousness, and carries us into a mode of feeling and thinking that strains the limits of western consciousness and language: as Carolyn Steeves has observed, we are asked to trust the force of ritual, ceremony, dream, and spirit voices in a way that “challenges the associated epistemology of the native-English speaker” (Steeves n.d.).

1. *The past: eighteenth-century Choctaw history ...*

In the novel’s powerful and dramatic opening chapter, set on the Autumnal Equinox of September 22, 1738, in Yanabi Town, Oklahoma, we are introduced to Shakbatina, the Ishmael of her tribe. “Call me Shakbatina, a Shell Shaker,” she says. “I am an Inholahtha woman, born into the tradition of our grandmother, the first Shell Shaker of our people. We are the peace-makers for the Choctaws” (Howe 2001, 1). She relates the mythical story of the first grandfather, Tuscalusa, “a great leader, robust and dynamic” who on hearing of the imminent approach of the whites, the Hispanic de Soto — a *Osano* (“bloodsucker” or “horsefly,” a man possessed by the spirit of corruption, greed and destruction) — gathered his warriors together to

lead the enemy into a trap, only to be brutally slaughtered. Grandmother, by contrast, strapped empty turtle shells around each ankle and for four days and nights danced around a fire, until her feet and ankles were swollen and bleeding, and until at long last *Miko Luak*, fire's spirit, took pity and carried grandmother's silent prayers up to *Itilauichi*, the spirit of Autumnal Equinox, who granted her wish: "Through your sacrifice of blood you have proven yourself worthy. The things you desire for the people will be given" (2). Grandmother survived the ensuing horrors of warfare and became the first peacemaker for her tribe, the first in a long line of women descendants: "Because Grandmother shed blood for the people's survival, our women continue to honor *Itilauichi* by shaking shells" (4).

In the Autumnal Equinox of 1738 Shakbatina feels called upon to tread in the footsteps of her grandmother's blood sacrifice, as her daughter Anoleta, mistress to Red Shoes, tribal leader of the Choctaws who has fallen prey to the spirit of Osano, stands accused of having murdered (presumably out of jealousy) Red Shoes' first wife, a Chickasaw woman from the Red Fox village. The death of this woman has brought on tribal warfare between the Choctaws and the Chickasaws, and Anoleta must be brought to death. Shakbatina (who considers herself partly responsible for the disaster at Red Fox village) decides to sacrifice herself by taking the place of her daughter and so re-establish peace between the tribes. Her decision, however, to honor the tradition of the first Shell Shaker, Grandmother of Birds, must be supported by the tribal community: "They must also publicly say that Anoleta is innocent of killing the Chickasaw woman. This will guarantee that in the future she will be thought of as an honorable leader" (5).

Shakbatina's story is shot through with hatred of white encroachment. Not only is she suffering from the disease of the "evil" Inklisk Okla (the English) which has infected her skin and "knapped her body like a piece of flint" (10), she also suspects that the English are the real murderers and violators of the Red Fox woman, hoping to sow discord among the tribes and so confiscate their lands: "How could this be?" she ponders, "Women were the land. *Intek aliha*, the sisterhood, controlled the rich fertile lands that sustained the people. Killing a woman for land would be like killing the future" (10). Despite the fact that the Choctaws are peacemakers, she cannot prevent herself from feelings of revenge and often dreams of "hanging Inklisk Okla intestines in the trees so everyone could see their shit."

When negotiations, moderated by the Alibamu Conchatys, fail, Shakbatina gives herself up to die, knowing that "What I am, my essence, will live inside my daughters" and asking Anoleta to request her friend Jean Baptiste Bienville to fight Red Shoes and the English (14). In her final gesture, she intends to show her "true self" to her people, dressing in white as a sign of peace, but painting her face vermilion red as a sign of war, calling to her Grandmother: "I will make the peace for you, but in my heart I want a war!" ... "My message to my people is that we must fight to survive" (15). By thus splitting herself, she means to honor both her ancestors, peacemaker Grandmother and warrior Tuscalusa, and "make

things even.” The moment of her death — she is clobbered to death by a huge club — is one of several blood curdling incidents in the novel, but the manner and message of her death will reverberate through the ensuing Choctaw generations.

Later, her daughter Anoleta will seek to take revenge on Red Shoes for the death of her mother. Her early adulation of Red Shoes (she had hoped he would be the great leader who could bring unity to the tribes and drive out the French and English) has given way to disgust and hatred for the way he had allowed himself to become corrupted: “All you have ever proven is that you will fight in the pay of anyone who gives you muskets” (128). But her feelings for Red Shoes are complicated by irresistible sexual attraction and her first attempt to use “her knowledge to kill rather than to cure” (she aims to lure him into her tent and poison him) fails (130).

Indeed — as we shall see, much like his twentieth-century analogue Red McAlester — Red Shoes has fallen prey to the spirit of *Osano*, and become a traitor to his tribe. Once an admirable leader but now in the grip of greed, corruption and power-lust, Red Shoes has put tribal survival at risk through fanning intertribal warfare. Sadly, a once-noble intent has gone terribly awry. As Bienville warns Anoleta: “You are in great danger. ... For no matter what Red Shoes is telling you, he conspires to kill us all. The man is a demon. I believe he would slice you in two if it meant he could profit from each half” (135). By 1747 Red Shoes has become the relentless murderer envisioned by Bienville: he is running rampant, killing brutally and indiscriminately (we now also learn it was he himself who killed the Red Fox woman for whose death Anoleta was blamed), but is still dreaming of reunification with Anoleta. The dream will make him vulnerable to deceit, and to his death. As tribal warfare, supported on opposite sides by French and English forces, erupts into bloody massacre — killing Anoleta’s father Koi Chitto — Anoleta is determined to make good her failure of nine years ago and this time fulfill the promise of revenge to her mother: “For an Indian woman at war, there is no tender mercy” (187). Entering “the place of blood revenge,” she approaches Red Shoes and, masking her deceit, manages to have her sister push him fatally into the flames. Shortly after, she herself is killed (split in two) by the ax of Red Shoes’ companion, the English trader Elsley (200).

Shell Shaker richly documents and imagines Choctaw history. A well-researched novel, it is imbued with a strong and pervasive sense of the pain of history. It presents brutal scenes of violence and massacring, intertribal warfare being interlaced with conflicts between the English and the French, and gives a galling picture of the forced extinction of tribal life and culture at the hands of whites. Some scenes of violence, murder, and rape may be shocking in their graphic explicitness.

In the historical sections of the novel LeAnne Howe brings to life the whole complex Choctaw cosmogony, while in the contemporary sections we are made to understand its continuance in the present. We learn about its attitudes to love (cf. “Rarely do Indians say ‘love’ to a partner the way

whites do. It is a rhythm they feel continuously, unto death" [45]); to solidarity and community (cf. "It's a belief that Choctaws have — that almost everything in life is meant to be shared. Especially tragedy." [89]); and to sex (women here are active sexual agents, "taking" the men they fancy and following the call of eros as necessity). We learn about the centrality of women: "Women are the essence of Mother Earth. We create life and, during green Corn, we shake shells to reconnect with all living things" (152). We also witness its complex range of rituals and ceremonies and are made to understand the Choctaw propensity for peacemaking and their insistence on communal consensus and public democratic debate. As Uncle Isaac explains to his young cousins in the 1990s: "[C]ouncils talk about a problem openly, and they debate and debate until they reach consensus ... A long time ago, Choctaw councils believed that everyone had to agree but, more important, they discussed things openly in public" (74-75). Above all, we learn about its attitude to death, in particular as evidenced in a bone-picking ceremony enacted by Koi Chitto, husband of Shakbatina, in a state of near frenzied madness: a gruelling and chilling "dance" of love and death, mingling Eros and Thanatos in a horrific symbiosis of erotic necrofilia and an ecstatic celebration of life and rebirth, which pushes western consciousness to (and perhaps beyond) the limits of the endurable. As Howe has explained in her essay, the eighteenth-century Choctaws "saw their bodies as food for the animals and earth once they were dead." Thus, "in the early Choctaw worldview, not being returned to the earth by a bone picking ceremony would be a kind of heresy. [...] Things are made right when we are returned to the earth as food for the planet. Life continues" (36).

Howe also presents a compelling image of the degree to which French colonial history — mostly through the presence of white French clergy — was intertwined with Choctaw tribal history, in particular through the figure of Jean Baptiste Le Moyne Sieur de Bienville, founder of the city of New Orleans, later governor of the colony, and a confidant and friend of the Choctaws. He had played a crucial role in the tribal wars between the Chickasaws and English on the one hand, and Choctaws and French on the other, trading muskets to the Choctaws and asking for political and military support in return. At one point he was adopted into one of the Choctaw tribes and had Choctaw women living in his house. His presence is still acutely felt by the contemporary Choctaws: Auda comes across Bienville in her historical researches and feels almost a personal connection with him: "certain episodes that dealt with her tribe and Bienville felt more like memories than mere historical events" (121). Later she discovers that Bienville must have been a personal friend (possibly pet-like lover) of her ancestor Shakbatina and almost an adoptive member of the Billy family. She has named her pet rabbit after him, Bienville.

Another French priest, Father Renoir, records his witnessing of Koi Chitto's Bone Picking ceremony in a diary document which serves as his justification for leaving his God and religion behind and committing him-

self to the Choctaw ways. “I am convinced now,” he notes, “that Chahtas pay more respect to their dead than any other race. To them the bones of their relatives are holy. Proof that they existed in the past as they will exist forever. They are extraordinary people, so beautiful with their long flowing hair, I can hardly believe that it is my destiny to live among them” (178). Preaching among the Choctaws, Renoir has lapsed into an existential dilemma: he is prepared to doom himself in the eyes of a searingly absent Christian God and to commit himself to following the impulse of love for an Indian woman, Neshoba, the sister of Anoleta. “He reasons that it is best for France and the Church not to know that the greed of their faith is causing the demise of Indian tribes” (179). Having embraced love and culture among the Choctaws, he hopes to “*faire peau neuve*, try and grow new skin and believe as they do, knowing that ‘his God is asleep’” (180).

But the moment of Choctaw history which reverberates most traumatically through the story is the forcible removal of Choctaws from their tribal lands east of the Mississippi to Indian Territory, under the Indian Removal Act of 1830, passed by President Andrew Jackson. On this, the Trail of Tears, 4000 Choctaws died from exposure, disease and starvation as they were driven west of the Mississippi to foreign land. Then, in 1907, when Indian Territory was incorporated as the state of Oklahoma (“home of red people” [148]) and the land was taken away from the tribe through allotments, “the spirits moved away, shed their skin that bound land and people together.” At the Autumnal Equinox of 1991, however, this moment of brutal severance is bound to be undone, as the spirits return, “pulling stars down from the sky, causing a fifty-mile-long prairie fire,” searing the land “black like a piece of burnt toast” — “It’s a sign. They’ve come back to pick a fight” (17).

It is this charred and burnt-over wasteland of the present which provides the symbolic backdrop to the drama of retaliation, reunification and absolution that will come to a head on the Autumnal Equinox of September 22, 1991, when, as Shakbatina says, “Earth and spirit and story are reunited” (138).

2. ... versus the present: the Choctaws of Oklahoma in 1991

At the center of the novel is the female line of the Billy clan (descendants of Chunkashbili, the daughter of Anoleta): mother Susan Billy — “the seventh daughter of a seventh daughter. Powerful medicine.” (85); she is the direct descendant of Shakbatina, a shell shaker in the present — and her three daughters, Auda, Adair and Tema Billy. (Father Presley War Maker is mentioned briefly but is mostly conspicuously absent.)

All three daughters are successful in life as intelligent, college-educated Indians in a white world (no Welch-ian dazed and alienated Indians here):

Auda is a PhD-degree carrying historian of the Choctaw tribe in Oklahoma — she is “the first Choctaw academic to write on the tribe’s early interactions with the French” (43). As the oldest daughter, she was sup-

posed to take the place of her mother (giving birth to new Billys) but she has preferred to strike out on her own, choosing a career in history (“to correct the tribe’s eighteenth-century record”) over traditional motherhood. She is also an idealist activist in behalf of the Choctaw cause and close assistant, inspirator, and lover of Red McAlester, a much admired leader of the Choctaw tribe, a man once selflessly determined to restore the tribe to its rightful position but rapidly falling into the evil ways of power, greed, and corruption, as he allowed his vision of power for the tribe to become confused with the attainment of personal power. Together, Red and Auda form a strong team of leadership. Though much good is achieved for the tribe, partly through gains from the Casino of the Sun, McAlester has allowed himself to be sidetracked into connections with the mafia (intending to double trick them by siphoning off money which he ultimately wants to use for the good of the tribe). Auda, in the estimate of one character, has “the makings of a true leader” (48).

Adair, the middle sister, is a successful business woman with a MBA degree; she has become a securities investment broker in New Orleans, where she is known as the “Wall Street Shaman” (who operates by her adage “Balance is everything” [39] but manages to avoid becoming “predatory” [40]). Her secret of successful investment is the advice she receives from voices she hears and spirits she sees in vision. Adair becomes involved with Gore Battista, a successful Indian lawyer of Alibamu Conchatys descent (a tribe that traditionally mediated conflict for the Choctaws), a man who “felt secure enough to mingle easily with whites while still keeping certain Indian traditions” (45).

Adair’s seat of operations, New Orleans (the city founded by Bienville), is the place “where so much Choctaw history occurred. Yet there remains no trace of her people. Amazingly, nothing” (41). Adair feels she is following in her ancestors’ traditions: after all, “Indians were the first commodity traders of the New World” (42). As “the true hunter of the family” (50), Adair may well be “her ancestors’ toehold in New Orleans, the one to re-establish a Choctaw power base” (42).

Tema is a successful actress, shining in a performance of Nora in Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* in Dallas, Texas, where she has settled to be close to her Oklahoma family. She is determined to become “a serious actress, not an Indian Barbie doll” (35). She has a son Hopaii or Hoppy (“Little Prophet”), a green-haired punk as well as a promising young “warrior” who may be destined to be a new leader. She is married to an English actor, Borden Beane, who has adapted his life to hers in love. A man “truly English to his bone marrow, with a family tree as long as hers,” he cannot understand the spirit voices speaking to her: “The only ghosts he’s ever seen have been onstage” (34). Despite English resentment (“The English have had Shakespeare for five hundred years and it didn’t stop you from colonizing the world” [36]) Tema and Borden have a congenial relationship, based on a sincere attempt to understand and respect the other’s culture.

All three sisters have successfully made careers for themselves without compromising their Choctaw identity or their female autonomy. Yet they

remain aware of the dilemmas and pitfalls of cultural adaptation: Auda, in particular, realizes that the pursuit of individual happiness (self-realization, careerism) puts survival of the tribe and tribalism at risk (“Individual Indians can do whatever they want, but not without a price. We, the Choctaw people, are the assets of our tribe — not the buildings, not the HUD houses, not our tribal bank accounts. Chances are, though, if all the Indians are off doing their own thing, tribalism will die” [112]). She is convinced that only by sticking together will the Choctaw tribe last. Tribal values will need to be protected and reaffirmed. For this reason she puts her faith in Red McAlester.

LeAnne Howe is sensitive to the (wry) ironies at stake in this hybrid, cross-cultural existence. Thus, all three sisters recurrently face the ironies of being light-skinned, black-haired Choctaws. Auda could easily pass for Italian (“With your beautiful hair and eyes you could pass for Sicilian” [26]); Adair is “the daughter who can most easily pass for white if she wants to. Her light complexion helps people mistake her for French, Lebanese, Spanish, Mexican, or Italian” (83); while Tema is not always recognized as Indian; as an actor she “can pass for anything” and has played Italians, Greeks, Spanish, and Polynesians (31).

Similarly, Auda’s room holds Motown’s Greatest Hits and Elvis memorabilia, as well as a quilt sown by her aunts featuring the traditional Choctaw designs (18). Uncle Isaac wears a pair of thick black-framed glasses which are jokingly dubbed his “Buddy Hollys” (58). And Tema presumably plays Norma in Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* so well because “Torvald Helmer’s relationship with Nora was very much like the federal government’s paternalism of American Indians” (30).

Still, there is no attempt to soothe over cultural collision in the present: at one of her lectures Auda (who has imbibed more alcohol than is good for her) loses control and lets all the repressed anger and sense of injustice explode onto the surface; she blurts out her resentment at the way in which whites have distorted the history of Indians and then have “the gall to explain our history to us” (44); and she further infuriates her white audience with the story of Choctaw women smearing their bodies with menstrual blood to prepare for war. While Carl Tonica observes: “whites want to believe that Indians get rich off casinos. It relieves their guilt for stealing all the Indians’ land” (141).

A more complex case is provided by the lives and careers of Dovie and Delores (elderly aunts related to the Billies in the Indian way). Runaways from Indian boarding school, they joined a Wild West show and made successful careers as Hollywood Indians, where they were billed as “The Love Maidens of the Five Civilized Tribes:” “How their long black hair must have whipped in the wind as they rode bareback on Paint ponies, parading their history in skimpy loincloths” (117). Old posters show them in the company of Will Rogers and suggest they had “attained the most American of ideals — wealth and fame. But, as they all would learn in the coming years, it came at a high price” (117). The price, as Adair later explains, was

to become victim of a form of “internalized colonialism. If you think foreigners’ things, ideas, and religions are better than what your own culture has, then you’re internally colonized” (162). Still, the aunts have outlived their “double-faced” Hollywood life (149) and have crucially committed themselves to the tribe and its customs: Delores has become a legendary singer of death songs at tribal funerals, a heritage that has been passed on in the female line (147). After her own mother’s death, she had learned the tribal songs from Susan Billy’s grandmother, Nowatima, a woman who had walked the Trail of Tears (148). She became a much asked-for funeral singer and started a revival of Choctaw music and traditions. Carrying on these old traditions, she now feels that “her role as a modern *foní miko*, bone picker, is the only useful thing she’s ever done” (146).

The echoes of ancient cultural conflict strongly persist. Uncle Isaac, in particular, still holds strong resentments towards white (especially English) people, and thinks back on the “strict disciplinarians” who were his instructors at Boarding School as fat and sadistic. Though he is “grateful that he learned to read and write English so he could earn a living in the white world,” sometimes at night he still is haunted by the dark faces of his teachers: “A ghost banquet of mottle-eyed strangers trying to nibble their way inside of him” (56). But Uncle Isaac has learned to exploit the white man’s stereotypes and knows the advantage there can be in posing as “a dinosaur of another era” (60). When he is stopped on the streets by a female British journalist from CNN, he cannot help but feel all the historical Choctaw resentment of the English boil to the surface: “Typical Brit, he thinks. Feeding off the misery of Indians has always been their greatest joy” (53). His response is to feign ignorance and perform like “a John Wayne Indian, something he learned at boarding school” (54). With Indian humor he manages to outwit the woman, whom he mentally marks as Fergy, the Duchess of York: “He wonders how the English outsmarted Indians” (55). “Choctaws never liked the English,” he ponders; “they’ve always preferred *Les Français*. Better food.” (Dixon DuRant, the founder of Durant, Oklahoma, where most of the novel is set, was half Choctaw, half French.) In reality, Uncle Isaac holds a respected position as “editor in chief” of the local Choctaw newspaper, where, following Woody Allen, he conducts a weekly column called “Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Choctaws, But Were Afraid to Ask.” Having suffered personal disappointment in love (his relationship with the one true love in his life, Delores, was never consummated), he has become known as “The Indian Ann Landers” through a second column in which he offers “Advice to the Choctaw Lovelorn.”

Howe likewise manages to avoid stereotyping. Whites (even Englishmen like Borden) can be sensitive, considerate, and compassionate with tribal welfare; Indians can be as vulnerable to power, corruption, and greed as whites (esp. Italians, who *are* stereotypically cast in the role of mafia gangsters, ruthless, violent). Auda is resentful of stereotype (even as she herself succumbs to it when during her lecture she drinks too much): she

resents being looked upon as “one of those perverse William Faulkner Indians, a mute character of the Southern literati” (46).

Instead, Howe introduces us to the full complexity of tribal issues in the present: how to regain a sense of tribal wholeness and find surcease of the historical split among the Choctaws; how to reestablish tribal justice and find retaliation for the wrongs suffered at the hands of white civilization? The complex story involves Mafia involvement in exploiting the Indian Casino (the Italians are the ones who really make the money intended for the tribe); federal investigations into the misuse of tribal revenues (and the possible role of the BIA in this); rumors on Wall Street about a tribe channeling large sums of money into foreign bank accounts. The Indian situation is here viewed (ironically) in an international post-colonial perspective: Red McAlester, it turns out, channels money from Casino gains to underwrite IRA bombings of the British: he feels the Irish and the Choctaw have a common fate (the famine vs the trail of tears) and common enemies (English). Thus, the fate of the tribe has become complexly linked to both the national and the international situation; the tentacles of McAlester’s corruption (of *Osano*) spread to Washington and New York, to Ireland and London, and are even linked to the Middle East: Auda compares the removal of all American Indians in the Southeast to the removal of Palestinians from their homes in Jerusalem (45).

Such aspects are prevented from becoming didactic or overly heavy-handed by a relativizing sense of humor and irony. Thus, there is a dog named George Bush, an Irish secret agent of IRA named James Joyce, a cat named after the eighteenth-century Jesuit Bienville; and a New Orleans teenager strangled by his eleven-foot pet python, Pocahontas.

A brief glance at the *plot* may further help us understand Howe’s thematic concerns.

Tragedy strikes when Red McAlester (as later appears to prove to the Italian Amato brothers that he is still in control of Auda, who has been suspected, rightly, of stealing documents with which she intends to prove Red’s corruption) bullies Auda into sexual submissiveness (he in effect rapes her in his office) and brings her to the point of ultimate despair where (the next morning, dressed in the red Italian dress Red had bullied her into wearing) she sets out with a gun to kill her rapist in a mingled act of love and hatred; she does so dressed in the Choctaw color of war, her red Italian dress, wearing red lipstick, as well as seven bracelets. “She is Auda the Redeemer” (27). Shortly after, Red is found dead in his office chair in a position of post-sexual arousal (his pants dropped to his ankles, a bullet through his head, red lipstick on his face). When the tribal sheriff runs in, he finds Auda crumpled on the floor, unconscious, without clear memory of what has happened. Although no fingerprints of hers are to be found on the weapon, the conclusion is drawn (by herself as well as the authorities) that Auda killed the seventh Chief of the Choctaw Nation. As Auda says, “I tried to do what the spirit wanted” (28). Just on the point when

all hell is about to break loose, Auda's mother steps in to claim it was she who murdered McAlester, not her daughter — thereby re-enacting in close analogy the blood sacrifice of Shakbatina for her daughter Anoleta. Both moments take place on September 22 (in 1738 and 1991), the Autumnal Equinox (the Choctaw word used by LeAnne Howe means "to even"), equinoxes beings days when important things tended to happen for the Choctaw people (Red Shoes was assassinated when the sun went down on the vernal equinox of June 21/22, 1747).

Chaos and anger erupt in the Choctaw community, as the Acting Chief of the Choctaws, Carl Tonica, acting in collusion with the two Amato brothers Hector and Vico, declares the entire Billy clan "de-tribed" (57) and hence deprived of all tribal rights and privileges, of healthcare and protection. From here on the Billys, declared virtually scot-free, will be in perpetual danger of mob violence. Tonica's gratuitous act infuriates Isaac — "How could this ignoramus think that a piece of paper could dissolve Indian blood?" (57) — but also draws him out of his long political inactivity and propels him into action. Even when McAlester had become involved with the mafia and had abrogated all democratic procedure in tribal council, Isaac had preferred to "take refuge at his ranch and talk to his cattle. [...] For years he'd been shirking his duty, no denying it. Now he will have to make amends for failing his family" (59).

Isaac realizes that whatever ensues "must revolve around Indian women." After all, he reflects, this is "*Tek unhashi!* Girls Month is a time when things break open. Major changes happen during this time. The old is sloughed off and discharged, the new begins" (62). Isaac seeks help and instruction from an old Indian woman living in an Indian nursery home set up by Casino money (not, as his young cousin stereotypically expects, in a shack deep in the woods). Divine Sarah (after Sarah Bernhardt) is a Shakespeare-quoting tiny old woman dressed in a blood-red evening gown and gold-sequined shoes, who presumably played in *Last Tango in Paris*. A redoubtable shape shifter and trickster (she is Grandmother Porcupine), she reconnects Isaac to the tribal past in a dream vision about the traitor Red Shoes and impresses upon him the continuity between past and present: "Red Shoes started the war that continues even now, two hundred and fifty years later." She also announces his tribal obligation: "I've come to tell you — what is in the past has not passed. The time has come ... for you to fulfill your destiny." Feeling "a dark, pulsating energy" flowing between himself and his past, Isaac is in both at once, "seeing all that is happening then and now," and is empowered to act. Shortly after, Isaac (who never for a moment believed that either Auda or his sister Susan committed the murder) is granted a vision of the true goings on in the office: he sees two Italians hovering over Auda as she lies unconscious at the feet of Red McAlester (75). A renewed clarity of understanding comes to him: "The gate in Isaac's head has finally opened. The wind has blown away the smoke and soot caused by the prairie fire, and the Oklahoma skies are clearing. The world has a roof of clouds turning pink and yellow" (78). After his visit to

Divine Sarah he also realizes that “we’ve gotten away from our traditions” and that they should long before have stopped McAlester from usurping all power to himself, in violation of the Choctaw traditions of public debate and democratic consensus: “The Choctaw councils met for nearly twenty years before deciding to move against Red Shoes. They waited until everyone agreed. When twenty-two Choctaw towns allied against Red Shoes, he was assassinated, on June 22, 1747, the longest day of the year. A very sacred day for the old-timers” (75).

Thus moved to act out his destiny, Uncle Isaac sets out to bring the family together: this crisis (for the family as well as for the entire Choctaw Nation) can only be met by all in community. Tema receives a Choctaw spirit’s communication while she is on stage in the middle of a performance; Adair is re-called by telegram from her business dealings in New York; Hoppy accompanies his mother Tema; Dovie and Delores are called in from Poteau, OK. In addition, all must make personal sacrifices for the good and survival of the whole — only community, love and family can be a restorative counterforce to greed, corruption, and murder.

What ensues is the complex unwinding of a tale that weaves together many of the thematic strands and counterpointings between past and present that make this novel so intriguing. Ultimately it is revealed (partly through historical analogy; partly through revelations made by spirits or elderly people in psychic communication with ancestors) that Auda has actually been framed by the mafia and that the murder of McAlester has been perpetrated by Hector D’Amato. Justice is established in court, by a last-minute testimony of Sarah Bernhardt (the incarnation of the spirit of Grandmother Porcupine) who has a *deus-ex-machina* tape recording of D’Amato swearing he will blow McAlester’s brains out. In what appears to be a courtroom resolution written for a movie-version, the tribal judge (acting on the evidence gathered by Battista but mostly on the old woman’s testimony) comes to the remarkably quick verdict that the murder has been committed by D’Amato (meanwhile conveniently dead, killed by a eighteen-ton truck which, thanks to malicious interference of Choctaw spirits, he had not seen coming at him) and that Auda can be acquitted of the crime. In the end the promise is held out that she may be destined to be the new leader of the Choctaw nation.

In the process of establishing justice we have come to intimately know the Billy family, their internal frictions and tensions, the way they support and sustain each other, helped by knowledge of a shared tribal history and set of values. Here the role of women is crucial: it is the women — grandmothers to mothers to daughters — who pass on the necessary knowledge of the past across the generations (“Never steal from your family. Never wear the vermillion unless you plan to kill or seek revenge” [8]; “Never think too much of yourself.” “If you have a special gift, others must be the ones to point this out.” [42]). It is the women, also, who realize that only through knowledge of the past can the wisdom be tapped that is necessary for survival in the present. Such historical consciousness is as often

as not an unconscious force inspiring and motivating people to act in the present. It asserts itself through the voices of spirits, animals, ancestors, speaking in dreams, visions, or comatose states of mind. Only by accessing the Choctaw traditions will the community be able to unravel the mysteries of the present (including an understanding of how and why a noble leader can fall into abuse of power) and know how to move to the future.

We have likewise witnessed Auda's tormented struggles with her contradictory feelings for McAlester — from idolizing love to destructive hate — and we have seen her grieve over the loss and corruption of what once was a noble man. As she puts it to the Indian lawyer during a long confessional interview: “No, in the beginning Red was not *Osano*; he was a hummingbird, a necessity of nature, impeccably beautiful, devouring all that is sweet in life to stay alive” (93). Once she has finally come to terms with what she has done, she insists on her right to a full confession in court, and demands (and receives) the respect of lawyer Battista, who will allow her to publicly confess to a crime of which he meanwhile has established she is innocent. “To Auda, it’s a gesture as sacred as if they’d signed a treaty” (95).

Auda's personal feelings for McAlester are profoundly intertwined with her commitment to the well-being and survival of the tribe. A Dartmouth graduate, McAlester had “a poor Indian’s good luck;” he was sent to college to “learn the white man’s ways” and after Harvard Law School went to work in Washington, DC, consorting with congressmen, senators, and high-powered businessmen. Hearing him speak in public, Auda fell for McAlester’s ideals: to reunite the people in Oklahoma and Mississippi, and to fight the federal government for tribal sovereignty. “Slowly she came to believe that she’d found a leader, someone to believe in” (20). She is also erotically attracted to him: “his slick black hair glistened like a halo.” As a consequence, Auda surrenders her job as assistant professor of history at Southeastern Oklahoma to manage McAlester’s campaign, feeling she is “following a family tradition” in choosing leadership in the community (21). Writing his campaign speeches, she disregards early signals of a change (he begins to quote from Nietzsche’s *The Will to Power*). She enlists the support of the women to get him elected and “in the end, it was the women . . . who collectively breathed Red McAlester into existence as a warrior chief” (21). Women, however, also “fed his hunger for power with their support” (21). Gradually McAlester had fallen prey to the spirit of *Osano*, his administration riddled with lies, corruption, double-dealings with outsiders, brutal bullying of his own people, and dubious strategies like eliminating his opponents by simply having them “de-tribed.” By 1991 McAlester was “gorged with bad medicine. Beauty became obese” (22).

As Auda had been responsible for creating his image with the tribe (sending flowers and baskets of food in his name), she feels deeply implicated in his deterioration, “until finally she’d given up. Abandoned all hope, like she’d abandoned her struggles to correct history” (22). She stopped believing he could ever be “*Imataha Chitto*, the greatest giver.” Now, “she saw him for what he was, a true *Osano*, what Choctaws abhorred most.

A predator of his own people. Her mother had been right all along” (24).

McAlester has become involved with the mafia and the IRA. The Italians (“the strangers in dark Armani suits who traveled in controlled chaos” [26]) are determined to use the Choctaw land for Casino gain, enriching themselves in the process. They set up Shamrock Resorts, the management company financing the Casino of the Sun and the adjacent hotel. Despite Auda’s warnings, McAlester becomes deeply involved with the mafia: “He was already transforming himself into what the foreigners wanted: a front man” (26). McAlester has become horny for publicity, cynically using tribal lore and history for commercial gain. Capitalizing upon the fact that Choctaw chiefs had sent \$700 to starving Irish in 1847, McAlester now proposes to send a Choctaw delegation to Ireland to help reenact the Great Irish Potato Famine of 1847 conjointly with the Trail of Tears, with Auda dressed up in traditional Choctaw garb to turn Irish heads and gain worldwide publicity for the tribe. He intends to transfer ten million from the Casino gains (money that the Italian mafia is entitled to) to the IRA (through a secret agent named James Joyce), taking out a share for himself and for his collaborator Carl Tonica. As Auda later remarks during confession: “Red appreciated historical ironies: Helping the I.R.A. get their revenge on the English was his own little joke” (94).

The novel presents power, greed and corruption as human weaknesses that are universal and timeless: they affect the Choctaws in the eighteenth and twentieth centuries, as well as Italian *mafiosi* and white authorities. LeAnne Howe thus undercuts any easy notions of victimization at the hands of a corruptive white civilization, though there is no doubt that much of the sufferings of native people is to be attributed to the Inklisk and Filanche Okla. As Carolyn Steeves has noted: “Howe problematizes simple notions of corruption and evil, demonstrating that these themes are cross-cultural phenomena. Corruption is not an inherent attribute of money because as the character Adair exhibits, money can be acquired appropriately and used for good things. Nor is corruption necessarily a condition of Americans and American society overall, and if it is, then American Indians are participants, not exempt” (Steeves n.d.). The same is true of positive emotions like self-sacrifice (as witness both Shakbatina and Susan Billy) and respect for cultural difference (as witness Borden Beane).

Most importantly, understanding the present in all of its disorienting complexity — violence, corruption, greed mixing with compassion, respect, love, and community — cannot be attained without being in touch with the past. Between past and present there is, ideally, no break but continuity and ultimately fusion and merger, past and present becoming one seamless continuum. Isaac knows himself supported and sustained by the many stories he has been told by his great-grandmother Nowatima: “But the real truth of my stories is that nothing ever dies” (79). Though the past resonates directly in the lives of Choctaws in the present — like Isaac, “Auda and her sisters have been raised in a house filled with ancestors, and

their stories" (85) — the past is not easily accessed. As Delores says: "You have to understand a lot of codes to be Choctaw," and most of those codes are not written down, but passed down through experience and storytelling: "We have to live the life to know the ways" (145). Interaction with the (spirits of) ancestors stirs "older memories" (18), bringing to the forefront of consciousness what Gerald Vizenor has recurrently called the "stories in the blood." Throughout the novel, in both the eighteenth and twentieth century, we are witness to the magical interference of voices from the past in the present. Auda, being raped by Red McAlester, hears the Shell Shaker spirit of Shakbatina speaking in her and summoning her to kill by giving her a vision of Anoleta's murder of Red Shoes (by pushing him into the fire) (18). Later, still dazed from the experience of rape, she has dreams in which her own experiences with McAlester fuse with those of Anoleta and Red Shoes (80-82), about whom she knows through her historical researches, and finds herself enigmatically speaking out loud words once said by her historical analogue (81). The power of vision thus manifests itself in the lives of contemporary Choctaws, as in the eighteenth century. Thus, in the 1730s Koi Chitto is given warning by an "animal spirit" that the time for his bone picking ceremony has come and he is presented with a prophetic vision of his daughter Anoleta's death (98-99). In similar fashion, in the 1990s Uncle Isaac "sees" the truth of the situation (Red was killed by an Amato not by Auda) in a vision, halfway through the novel. Auda "sees" the death of Isaac and Delores in (comatose) vision before we readers learn about the truth: they are shot by Vico D'Amato shortly after the funeral of Red in Mississippi. At times the spirits of ancestors will actively intervene in the present, as when Shakbatina, in the guise of an old woman, lures Carl Tonica out of his office with the promise of revealing where the missing ten million is to be found, only to have him overrun by an eighteen-wheeler truck he failed to see coming at him (143). The women, likewise, have transformed themselves into "warriors" for the sake of peace (Tema stalks Hector D'Amato and kills him in vintage warrior style, helped by a spirit panther), thus enacting Shakbatina's early controversial mingling of the symbols of war and peace: in 1738, going against the tribal conviction that the Choctaws are peacemakers and do not dress up for war, she dresses up in the colors of both war and peace at her sacrificial death, sending a message across the generations to the Billy sisters in 1991 that sometimes warrior means are necessary to achieve the ends of peace.

In three chapters towards the end of the novel, when Auda (as a result of a criminal attempt to eliminate her) is in a comatose state (a bow to realism?), she finally finds herself in a zone of timelessness (i.e. if we understand time in its western linear sense), where effortlessly past and present merge and she becomes Anoleta and Auda at once, involved with Red McAlester/Red Shoes. It is only in this fused zone of history and the now that she can reach the balance necessary to come to terms with her contradictory feelings for "Red," can find the equilibrium between her personal torment and the fate of the Choctaw community, and hence the

evenness of mind and heart to decide upon a public confession and absolution, of Red's crimes against the tribe, of her betrayal of the man she once loved beyond all doubt.

The novel in the end thus moves towards balance, forgiveness and wholeness. Yet it avoids sentimentality: there is always the acute awareness of the cost of pain, suffering, injustice, violence, loss. Balance and forgiveness are restored on both a *personal* and a *tribal* level: Auda and her mother suspend their old hostilities over Red McAlester and make peace; Isaac and Delores finally lay aside their old grievances and sadness, and get married after what they jokingly refer to as a fifty-year courtship ("we just wanted to be sure" [195]); Adair finally accepts Gore Battista's wedding proposal, in mid-flight, a "trad[ing of] hearts" (204) that will unite symbolically Choctaws and Alabama Conchatys, historical friends and trading partners; and Tema and Borden (fired as actors in Oklahoma) will embark on a new cooperation on the London stage.

Isaac becomes convinced — through "a sign from our ancestors" (165) — of his tribe's destined duty to bury Red McAlester in the tribal sacred place: a mound in Mississippi, the sacred site of the Choctaw nation before their traumatic journey of dispossession to Oklahoma. The Billy family overcome their resentment at the irreparable damage Red has done to the Choctaw people and make their feelings subordinate to the larger well-being of the tribe: they "know that Choctaws are deeply reverent about the dead. And forgiving. A traditional funeral would bring the community together so they could begin the healing process. ... 'Making peace with the dead is something we must do'" (120). Obedient to a vision experienced by Delores, they are convinced no healing and no peace will be possible unless McAlester is brought home to Mississippi ("the cradle of the Choctaw civilization" [161]) and buried with as many of his belongings (including the nine million dollars he has stolen from the mafia, supposedly for the wellbeing of the tribe) as they can carry on their expedition back from Oklahoma to Mississippi — an ironic reversal of the original Trail of Tears. At the mound in Mississippi, the eastern and western Choctaw communities are finally reunited, across the two-century gap of time, and tribal wholeness is restored. As Delores says: "It takes a sacred place ... to heal a troubled spirit" (161). "Each of us has only half a heart until we're rejoined" (166). As Carolyn Steeves has observed: The story thus comes to an end in a place "where things are made even and can rest, in a sacred place, at the center, the *Nanih Waiya*. *Nanih Waiya* literally means 'Productive Mound' and is often referred to as 'The Mother Mound' in Choctaw" (Steeves n.d.). As Shakbatina says, halfway through the novel, "our beloved Mother Mound" (138). Having reunited the Choctaw communities, Delores "feels a miraculous new beginning as she and the other Chahta women of the Southeast join hands and sing" (197).

In the end, as a coda, Susan Billy (the direct linear descendant of Shell Shaker Shakbatina) bestows the Choctaw legacy upon her daughters by presenting them with the symbolic tribal gifts of Uncle Isaac's good luck

stone (to Hoppy as a sign that he may one day become a powerful leader), Shakbatina's porcupine sash which has woven into it the stories of the Seven Grandmothers (12) (to Auda) and her turtle shells (divided between Adair and Tema, who also receive the burden baskets that once belonged to Haya and Anoleta), as a sign of hope that the old traditions of the Choctaw may, with luck, "survive another generation or two" (220). The mother, in a symbolic act of family unity, tribal community and temporal continuity thus, in accordance with tribal lore (cf. 6), distributes her "true essence" over her three daughters. In the end, "despite the sorrow they've suffered, the Billys seem once again full of hope" (221). Auda — who has been given to understand by Battista: "Your family needs you, and the Choctaws need a leader who knows how to fight and how to compromise. ... [You are] determined to finish McAlester's story" (218) — experiences a moment of personal renewal and, supported by the legacy of the porcupine sash, of renewed confidence in the future, of herself as of her people, as she looks into the mirror and sees a new face staring back at her, "radiant and bright with anticipation" (221). Could it be Shakbatina, the Shell Shaker, acting through Auda Billy (even to the point of killing Red McAlester?), who concludes the novel with a vision of "life everlasting," a vision of the continuity of tribal knowledge through the generations of Choctaws, of a time when "day and night were in perfect balance and Indians had all the luck?" (222). After all, Shakbatina had surmised (if teasingly) at an early stage that the next *Imataha Chitto*, "the greatest giver, the one who would one day unite the tribes" (11), was "most likely a woman" (12).

The novel thus reaffirms the value of love, community, family and individual sacrifice as a possible means of restoring balance and offering a counterweight to war, death, violence, misuse of power, greed and corruption. For such force to become active, however, what is needed is a personal willingness to place whole over self, to make the individual pursuit of happiness subordinate to the future destiny of the community (of family, of tribe). For this to become possible, in turn, we need to be in tune with history as a guide to benevolent action in the future — a lesson resonant with significance not merely for tribal people but for humanity at large. If, as Steeves has suggested, Howe offers "a culturally suitable solution to a problem within a specific culture" (Steeves n.d.), she also lets it richly resonate for each and all of us.

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GARDENS IN THE DUNES AND THE PERVERSION OF NATURE

Louise Barnett

Gardens in the Dunes (1999) answers a question that must have occurred to more than one reader of Leslie Marmon Silko's previous novel, *Almanac of the Dead* (1991); namely, what would she do for an encore to her apocalyptic vision of late twentieth-century America? *Almanac* concludes with the invasion of the United States by an army of the dispossessed, spearheaded by Mexican Indians, and the paralysis of communications brought about by the destruction of computer networks, a possibility that seems all too real today. The only thing missing from the imminent finale of Euroamerican culture on the North American continent is anthrax. In *Almanac* the most flagrant crime against nature is squandering the precious resource of water, a theme continued in Silko's polemical novel, *Gardens in the Dunes*. *Gardens* contrasts the culture of a small band of Sand Lizard Indians with that of mainstream Americans, whose attitude of predatory appropriation focuses exclusively on a selfish use of resources.

Many non-Native American readers who loved Silko's first novel, *Ceremony* (1977), were shocked by *Almanac's* representations of American decadence and commodification, and — above all — by its uncompromising position on those of European ancestry. Anticipating the post-September 11 puzzlement of many Americans about people they had barely thought of until then, these readers wondered why Silko's Indians and their allies hate us so much.

The offended response of early reviewers suggested that Louis Owens's description of what non-Native readers want from the literature of indigenous writers is accurate. "What do Euroamerican readers want to see in works by American Indian authors?" he asked in *Mixedbloods and Mixed Messages*, and then answered: "They want what they have always wanted [...] Indians who are romantic, unthreatening, and self-destructive. Indians who are enacting, in one guise or another, the process of vanishing" (Owens 1998, 82). Clearly, the Indians of *Almanac*, working so energetically to end the Euroamerican presence on the North American continent, violated every tenet of acceptability as formulated by Owens. And apart from the sensibility of Euroamerican readers, *Almanac* had reached an endpoint in contemporary history unless Silko wanted to write science fiction.

Arnold Krupat has usefully called attention to a disconnect in some Native American writers, including Silko, whom he describes as writing

from within a colonial context while living in a postcolonial world (Krupat 1996, 54). And, he might have added, a postmodern world. By setting *Gardens* in the late nineteenth century, Silko does away with these difficulties. In this time period soldiers still man Western frontier forts, and bureaucrats forcibly remove Indian children from their parents and place them in special schools. But the chief concern of the text is the contrasting way that Indians experience and interact with nature.

In *Gardens* Silko remains within the same ideological frame that readers of *Almanac* and her nonfiction will recognize. Working in a smaller space with a handful of characters, rather than on the more ambitious terrain of *Almanac*, with its dozens of busy operatives, she has anchored her message more firmly in individual lives. The supernatural presence so prominent in her earlier novels is subdued in this text, and death, which was omnipresent in *Almanac*, is a less frequent occurrence. The chief representative of the Euroamerican culture, Edward Palmer, must die, but Silko generously spares Big Candy, the black man who has adopted a white ethos of work and gain — so much so that he is willing to risk his life to get his stolen money back. Possibly his minority status caused the author to keep him alive in spite of his total commitment to the accumulation of money. Candy was far from being the dark-skinned tool of his white boss, Wylie. He became a successful entrepreneur in his own right, wholeheartedly devoted to the values of the dominant culture, although, since this is the nineteenth century, he is excluded from all of that culture's privileges.

Since *Gardens* takes place in an earlier era, it does not expose the full effects of capitalistic greed and consumerism, which fueled Silko's portrait of American life at the end of the twentieth century. But in the Palmer siblings it does inscribe these excesses in the text, and they take the form of a wanton exploitation of nature. The novel is structured around a polarity of attitudes toward nature embodied by Euroamerican and indigenous people. And this time, rather than baldly preaching that all things European will eventually disappear, Silko simply has her white protagonist, Hattie, return to the Europe from which her forebears came.

On the naturalistic rather than the apocalyptic scale, *Gardens* might be read as an exemplification of one of Silko's repeated pronouncements. At the conclusion of *Almanac*, the Indian Sterling contemplates the juxtaposition of the uranium mine and the stone snake: "The snake didn't care about the uranium tailings; humans had desecrated only themselves with the mine, not the earth. Burned and radioactive, with all humans dead, the earth would still be sacred. Man was too insignificant to desecrate her" (Silko 1992, 762). This is a key principle for Silko. In her brief essay, "Fifth World: The Return of Ma Ah shra true ee, the Giant Serpent," she invokes tradition as the source of the belief: "The old people laugh when they hear talk about the 'desecration' of the earth, because humankind, they know, is nothing in comparison to the earth. Blast it open, dig it up, or cook it with nuclear explosions: the earth remains. Humans desecrate only themselves. The earth is inviolate" (Silko 1996, 125). This idea recurs

in her recent memoir, *The Turquoise Ledge*: “The Earth doesn’t cease her blessings just because humans foul Her” (Silko 2010, 171).

Gardens does not anachronistically show nuclear explosions, but it is full of white people blasting and digging the earth for a self-enrichment that has nothing to do with survival and everything to do with greed and accumulation. In the dialectic of the novel the indigenous culture critiques these large-scale efforts, which alter the landscape and ruin the environment for other forms of life. Gardens are “very political,” as Silko claims she discovered when she began writing the novel: “I had actually stumbled into the most political thing of all — how you grow your food, whether you eat, the fact that the plant collectors followed the Conquistadors” (Arnold 2000, 164). Any garden is, of course, a human artifact, an arrangement of nature that does not occur naturally, but the Indians’ garden, with its modest agricultural digging, destroys nothing and nourishes the earth and its creatures.

For Silko, the term *desecration* is appropriate for its religious meaning. However, what is done in *Gardens* goes beyond diverting from a sacred to a profane use to embody a more radical kind of misuse, one that sees nothing beyond its own ends and is indifferent to the havoc created, as when the dam under construction in the latter part of the novel starves the vegetation along the riverbanks and floods reservation fields. Such images in the text are always violent and evocative of death: “The poor cottonwood trees and willow were ripped out and plowed into mounds of debris, where their roots reached out plaintively like giant skeleton hands” (Silko 1999, 218). The pathetic fallacy has rarely been more effective than in passages of this sort in *Gardens*. For Silko, these examples of suffering nature carry a moral weight.

The text offers one site of natural perfection, the old gardens of the title where the Sand Lizard Indians live in harmony with nature. The novel begins with a family group of these Indians in which two girls, Sister Salt and Indigo, learn from their Grandma Fleet the proper way to approach nature. “Always greet each plant respectfully,” she tells them (16). Their Edenic garden is juxtaposed to the world of Edward Palmer, a typical white explorer/expropriator, whose attitude to nature is as predatory as his manners are impeccable. Significantly, neither Edward nor his wife Hattie truly belongs anywhere. They are not rooted in their home places as the Indians are: Edward roams purposefully, Hattie in tow, wherever economic enterprise takes him, despoiling other areas of the globe of their resources. Their marriage introduces a feminist subtext: Hattie is a dutiful wife transported here and there according to her husband’s plans while the Indian girls remain independent of men. Sister Salt, the elder of the two, enjoys an untrammelled and guilt-free sexuality; Hattie and Edward have a sterile marriage with no physical relationship — yet another instance of the perversion of nature.

The paralleling of the two cultures in terms of nature is, in fact, omnipresent and oppressive. Silko is nothing if not didactic: everything is part of the lesson. Long and intricate descriptions of plants go beyond naturalistic detail to make the novel turgid. Both Grandma Fleet and Edward

are interested in strange plants, but the basis of their interest could hardly be more different — or more predictable. Grandma tells the girls that the Indians have never found a plant they couldn't use for some purpose; Edward's greatest desire is "to discover a new plant species that would bear his name" (80). The orchids he pursues are valued according to their rarity, regardless of their beauty. When it turns out that competing specimens of *Cattleya labiata* are all genuine, "the price of an individual plant fell from \$20 to \$1 and a number of private investors were ruined" (134).

Edward may not be entirely indifferent to beauty in nature, but he never loses his appraising eye. He is uninterested in the Italian *professoressa's* gardens whereas Indigo is so struck by the beauty of the hybrid black gladioli that she dreams of them, although her dream — because it surrounds the black flowers with the more ordinary colors of red, purple, pink, etc. — is a subtle critique of the penchant for altering nature frivolously.

In the plant collectors the novel offers abundant documentation of the extremes Euroamericans will go to in order to make money from nature or to shape it to their will. Here as elsewhere in the dominant culture, the labor is performed by those with dark skins, who are flogged and tortured if they fail to provide the requisite plants. When Edward is on a South American expedition to collect commercial specimens, another man sets fire to the habitat of the orchids in order to drive up the price. Ultimately, Edward is arrested for attempting to smuggle cuttings out of Corsica. His reaction is not to feel shame for having broken the law, but to regret not having broken it more effectively by bribing customs officials or hiding the cuttings better.

The novel also condemns those who buy as well as those who sell. Edward's sister Susan, an adulteress who could hardly be more antipathetic, is a prime consumer who destroys a beautiful garden simply to replace it with a more fashionable one. As Terre Ryan observes, "Through the character of Susan James, Silko constructs gardens of domestic imperialism and subversion" (Ryan 2007, 123). The creation of Susan's blue garden, where the community's biggest social event of the year is held, is entirely artificial: "Drought or no, Susan refused to give up the *Delphinium belladonna* because its blue was more pure than any other" (Silko 1999, 196).

Transplanting two mature copper beech trees to the new garden is the culmination of Susan's disregard for what is natural. The arrival of the trees is seen from Indigo's shocked perspective: "Wrapped in canvas and big chains on the flat wagon was a great tree lying helpless, its leaves shocked limp, followed by its companion; the stain of damp earth like dark blood seeped through the canvas" (185). Indigo believes that she hears the trees groaning. The trees are so large that electrical and telephone wires must be taken down to accommodate their passage. Indeed, the need to disrupt modern technology intensifies the violation of nature.

After seeing Susan's guests in their elaborate Renaissance costumes, Indigo dreams that she and her sister were running naked in the high dunes, their unchanging locus of value. Functioning like an example of Eisensteinian dialectical montage, these juxtaposed images pointedly contrast the Indians'

natural state and the artificial and excessive clothing of the party guests, finery designed to display wealth.

The dominant culture's perversion of nature is all-embracing. Whereas Edward names the monkey Linnaeus, evoking the Western discipline of science that he has put to the service of commerce, Indigo seeks a name for her parrot in nature, calling him Rainbow. The parrot is Susan's bribe to Indigo not to speak of an episode of adultery that Indigo has inadvertently witnessed, but the text has already made clear that Susan doesn't want the parrot anyway. "I bought two of them," she tells Hattie, "because I thought they'd be handsome in that lovely gilded cage in the conservatory among orchids, but one died and now the whole look is spoiled" (189). Indigo loves the parrot for itself, respecting it as a being rather than a material accessory to enhance an effect.

When the arid, selfish, and consummately greedy Edward dies, his last thoughts are of all the money he will make from another rape of the earth, his mining enterprise. This imagined "wall of silver and gold" matters more than the humiliation he suffered in Italy when customs officials confiscated his citron cuttings and more than his impending separation from his wife. His partner, the Australian Dr. Gates, is even greedier. He kills Edward with an experimental treatment of his illness and disappears with Edward's, actually Hattie's, money.

Although Hattie has shown compassion to the Indians and sensitivity to nature, the text also disposes of her harshly. Attempting to return to Indigo, she is attacked by her white driver — raped, robbed, and beaten to the point of death. Ironically, but again predictably, the white settler community believes that the Indians are responsible for this assault. By her association with Indians, Hattie has forfeited a protected place in the dominant culture and will be assimilated to the powerless and dispossessed. Her return to the Old World is presented as restorative, but it is difficult not to be reminded of Henry James's habit of punishing his transgressive characters by exiling them — in his case, to America. Silko does not invalidate Hattie's love of gardens and proper attitude toward the natural world. It is simply that America is not her land, not her garden to cultivate.

Eventually, the two Sand Lizard sisters are reunited and journey to the old gardens, a tiny corner of all the land that once belonged to the Indians. Even this is not safe from white depredation. The sisters find that the site has been wantonly destroyed, but it is also regenerating: green shoots are growing out of the base of one of the chopped down apricot trees, and the sisters' careful stewardship of the earth will soon produce crops. There is, once again, strength in the old ways, the muted coming home to a traditional society that characterizes Tayo's experience in *Ceremony* and Sterling's in *Almanac*. In *Gardens* we have no dramatic victory over witchery or the appearance of a symbolic stone snake — only a real snake, the daughter of the dead Grandfather Snake, who has returned to the old gardens to make her home there.

We may read these endings optimistically, but each novel significantly qualifies this optimism. In *Ceremony*, the witchery has only been defeated temporarily.

In *Almanac*, Sterling remains marginalized in the community he comes home to. Both he and Tayo have acquired valuable insights, but these will not necessarily protect them in the future. Finally, in *Gardens in the Dunes*, strangers gratuitously destroyed the old garden site once before. There is no assurance that they, or others like them, will not return. There will be no protection as long as the dominant Euroamerican culture remains entrenched on the North American continent. The hardy Sand Lizard sisters will probably survive future incursions, but — as we know from our vantage point of more than a century later — the perversion of nature in this country will continue apace.

Yet, in spite of the confrontational stances imaged in Silko's fiction, American and Native American perspectives end up in the same place, the idea that nature can be saved. The paths to this end, however, express the profound differences of these two cultures. For Americans, salvation will occur through the application of new technology and by changing behavior from profligacy to conservation; for Native Americans, nature is ultimately more powerful and enduring than any changes that humankind brings about. In *Gardens*, the protagonist thinks that the ravages of the construction company would eventually disappear because nature can repair itself: "Even their dam would fill up with sand someday; then the river would spill over it, free again" (220).

In *Sacred Water* Silko observes that the datura, "sacred plant of the Pueblo priests," has the power to purify even water contaminated with plutonium because, "for the datura, all water is sacred" (Silko 1993, 75). This faith in nature to overcome anything, even radioactivity, is one of Silko's firm beliefs. She has said many times that humans cannot destroy the world: "The land has not been desecrated; human beings desecrate only themselves. The Mother Earth is inviolable" (Silko 1996, 95).

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HEALING CALIFORNIA HER/HISTORY: THE CHUMASH NATIVE PEOPLE

Yolanda Broyles-González

Ned Blackhawk describes US historiography's trend to minimize the violence directed at Native populations, and he regards that trend as complicit with the celebration of US nationhood:

Despite an outpouring of work over the past decades, those investigating American Indian history and U.S. history more generally have failed to reckon with the violence upon which the continent was built. Violence and American nationhood, in short, progressed hand in hand. (Blackhawk 2006, 9)

California historiography provides a case in point. The extreme violences of colonization beginning in the 1770s and their attendant genocide in what is now the state of California is slowly being documented, but it has never been documented through the words of an Indigenous Chumash person. The American holocaust effectively exiled most members of the Chumash tribe into a deep underground existence, from which they began to emerge in numbers during the 1970s.

As part of that Chumash re-emergence and healing I have collaborated with a Chumash elder Pilulaw Khus to publish a book whose central focus is the Chumash struggles for self-determination of the last 50 years. That book is now forthcoming as *Earth Wisdom. California Chumash Woman* with the University of Arizona Press. Pilulaw Khus is a traditional Native American elder and activist in California, descended from a Native people who thrived for tens of thousands of years in what today is California's vast central coast area. After the European invasions her ancestors resisted (and suffered) Spanish missionization beginning in the 1770s, a brief period of Mexican statehood (1830s to 1840s), and then the devastations of the Anglo-American invasion of the 1848 Gold Rush and California statehood in 1850, and into the present.

Pilulaw Khus carries a memory and commitment to a decolonial Indigenous vision of the Americas. Among her people she is a medicine keeper, a carrier of traditional Chumash wisdom. She is also a gifted storyteller. Pilulaw Khus is widely recognized for her numerous activist struggles around Native American religious and human rights issues. In the 1970s she took part in the struggles to protect the sacred site known as Point



Conception the Western Gate (near Santa Barbara) from becoming an oil refinery site. Those struggles included a yearlong occupation of that site. In this volume she narrates the nitty-gritty dailiness as well as the spiritual dimensions of that experience. The Point Conception Occupation marked a turning point in her life which she dedicated primarily to Chumash social justice and spiritual rights struggles. In 1993 she was on the front page of the *Los Angeles Times* when she organized a lawsuit to successfully challenge Wal-Mart's efforts in Paso Robles to build a store over Chumash sacred burial grounds. Pilulaw Khus was also featured in the national Turner Broadcast Series entitled "Native Americans."

In the world of academic book publishing this volume centered on a traditional Chumash woman elder will be a first. Pilulaw Khus's testimony will become the first such book emanating from the vast Chumash ancestral homeland which extends between California's Monterey County in the north to Santa Monica in the south. The Chumash ancestral homeland also includes the Channel Islands visible from the Santa Barbara coast. Pilulaw Khus's narrative focuses on a number of different issues, events, and, above all, spiritual philosophies. She narrates her recollection of Indigenous struggles to preserve sacred sites and the ceremonial cycle. She speaks to a wide range of topics, engaging an Indigenous philosophical and life wisdom to deliver a Chumash vision and critique of society from ancient times to the onset of colonization in the 1770s and into the present and future. Her life telling significantly includes the narration of a number of Chumash origin stories, such as the Story of the Rainbow Bridge. In my analysis of her narration I argue that Indigenous historiography (unlike print historiography) includes origin stories because they directly tie Native peoples to ancestral lands and to the original covenants concerning life on that land. Indigenous historiography is not predominantly human-centered, while it does position humans in a relational panorama with all other life forms. Chumash origin stories, for example, map a history of longstanding connection to the land, the ocean, to all living things. Those origin stories also map a history to the reciprocal relationships between humans, animals, landscapes, bodies of water, and the life values they generate together. Keith Basso, in his studies of Apache stories and land, also draws a similar connection between the Native elders' stories of place and the construction of Indigenous history (Basso 1996). Khus puts it succinctly: "The history of our people is of Earth herself."

I collaborated with Pilulaw Khus since the mid-1990s collecting, transcribing, and now publishing her spoken words. As a body of thought they represent a strong and almost unique contribution to various academic disciplines, including Native American Studies, Chicana/o Studies, Women's Studies, history, environmental studies, and anthropology. More importantly, this is an important document of what I call the Chumash Re-emergence.

Here I can just bring forward three focal areas from my introduction/analysis to the book: first, I critique sectors of Chumash anthropology in

the face of a fundamentally contrasting Native science and Native epistemology. As a direct outcome of colonization, the preponderance of materials published on the Chumash people come to us from anthropologists and not from the Chumash people themselves. Pilulaw Khus indicates that “[s]tudying a people is an act of power over them.” That power dynamic has profound consequences in shaping the relationship between Chumash peoples and public institutions such as schools and museums, most notably the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History. As such I examine those power relationships. Second, gender and sexuality are important pivots, both within my introduction and in Pilulaw Khus’s narrative. She critiques social phenomena through an Indigenous womanist spirituality and knowledge-base. That spiritual knowledge-base provides the foundation for her vision of an alternative society. Third, the entire volume is driven by the vision of a movement towards healing from the wounds of history and towards a decolonization. One step towards that healing is the publication of a document that centers Chumash voice and agency. This volume is a contribution to community self-healing through self-narration.

I would like to elaborate on each of these three topics:

1. In the introduction to this book I examine the interface of two very different forms of knowledge about the Chumash tribe and Native peoples in general. On the one hand, I address the ideological limitations of what is knowable in the Western human sciences, governed largely by the limited Cartesian rationality of “I think therefore I am” and by conventions of discipline and print culture. On the other hand, there is what is knowable through a Chumash epistemology, which I refer to as ceremonial epistemology, manifest in part through “I dream therefore I am” and carried largely through oral tradition. Scientific knowledge in Native America arises from a broad spectrum of human faculties in strong alliance with non-human natural forces, not just from the human left-brain. “Knowing” can be transmitted from dreamworld to humans; animals are considered among the best teachers; a trance can bring needed medical diagnosis and cure; an exchange between spirit world and the denser frequencies of energy on “this side” can convey illumination. Knowledge circulates throughout all participants in the life force. As has been variously shown, there is a deep connection between Native Science and Quantum Physics in their understandings of the Universe of Energy.¹

Pilulaw Khus’s narratives are infused with knowledge ways that are largely marginalized or excluded within the “Western” educational system that disables various human powers and faculties. In Pilulaw Khus’s

¹ Of positive note is the work of White theoretical quantum physicists F. David Peat and David Bohm who have “proposed an alternative view of science, a view that is based on the realities quantum physics implies and that is inclusive of the central views of Native science” (Cajete 2000, 79).

life the technologies of Native science and knowledge abound. These technologies strengthen human faculties and powers that involve a full body interaction with the physicality of the natural world and universe. The curriculum of Pilulaw's Native American university ranges from ceremonial or ritual consultation with spirits, to interrogating dream and dream-world in drawing guidance and instruction. Chumash knowledge ranges from prophecy and divination to the profound lessons of the Sweat Lodge. That knowledge has many branches, which summon the living universe beyond what is commonly regarded as the visible material plane. Those multiple branches can include trance, song, incantation, intuition, ceremonial dance, prayer, musical instruments or other means such as the ability to work productively with hallucinogens. I would also highlight attentiveness to the teachings of our relatives who inhabit the oceans, the skies, the trees, the earth; it is a science where animals observe humans and vice versa; where animals take initiative in bestowing powers to humans. Native science always involves an examination and cultivation of the relationships of our bodies to the planet/solar system; not to mention the vision quest process; it involves the effort to move harmoniously with the rhythms of the universe, a knowledge at once highly intuitive, emotional, physical, and intellectual. In sum, Native science involves the exercise of spiritual powers and a sense of how spirit manifests in the physical world.

Pilulaw Khus lives, knows, sees, and speaks beyond the discursive boundaries of a largely Cartesian Western anthropology. As such she interrupts and contradicts a predominant white supremacist Chumash historiography and anthropology.

This volume puts a twentieth- (and twenty-first-) century face, name, identity, humanity, personality and living voice, on the term Chumash. It is a healing Indigenous woman-voiced moment quite beyond the many existing male-centered anthropological appropriations and historical mediations. As part of the challenge to existing oppressive knowledges about the Chumash I highlight also the new cadre of university-trained emergent Chumash scholars who are bringing forward what I call the New Chumash Research. Central to their studies, which critique the politics of representation, is the concern for healing living breathing communities that are affected by the representational politics of leading institutions such as museums. Deana Dartt-Newton, for example, indicates,

Today the Native communities of the Central Coast resemble so little the representations made of them that Native people hardly recognize themselves there. This disconnection contributes to continued marginalization as well as to experiences of sustained historical trauma. (Dartt-Newton 2009, 186)

2. A second focal area of this book has to do with women's social powers in Native Chumash culture and thinking. Healing colonial history also involves feminizing a largely masculinist written history, bringing gen-

der relations and herstory to the fore. Pilulaw Khus's voice, narrative, and footprints have a long and deep womanist lineage, one that flows from a Chumash woman-centered understanding of the Universe. Pilulaw Khus's voice and narrative set forth a long and deep womanist Chumash Indigenous lineage. That womanist lineage and powers, although largely obliterated and fragmented within print culture and much of conventional academic writing, flows amidst the stories, anecdotes, ceremonies, the land and ocean, as well as the bodies, dreams, and songs of countless Chumash women throughout history. It flows within all aspects of woman spirit, such as within *Hutash* (Mother Earth), and with the feminine spirit of the sweat lodge. As Antonia Castañeda reminds us,

[t]hat colonialism for all its brutal technologies and distorted narratives, could not completely destroy Native women's historical autonomy is something native peoples have always known, but scholarly researchers are just beginning to learn. Native oral traditions have preserved the histories, telling and retelling women's identities and remembering across time, space, and generations. Through oral and visual traditions, and other means of communicating counter-histories, Native women's power, authority, and knowledge have remained part of their peoples' collective memory, historical reality, and daily struggles of "being in a state of war for five hundred years." (Castañeda 1998, 238)

When Native women struggle for their human rights in contemporary society, they often do so with an ingrained sense of the gender/sexual equality and complementarity that characterizes Native societies both prior to colonization and, in some cases, to this day. Pilulaw Khus rejoices in the respect and honor that she enjoys as a woman, and the increased honor accorded her as a Chumash woman elder. Among many of today's Indigenous tribes, gender equality and matrilineal heritage are a continuing reality and not just a distant historical memory. Strong elements of women's institutionalized social power and authority can be seen today in tribes as far-flung as the Pueblo, the Haudenosaunee (or Six Nations in New York), the Diné (or Navajo in Arizona), or the Zapotec (in Mexico's Isthmus of Tehuantepec), just to name a few examples.² In many ways these largely egalitarian Native societies have historically served as an inspiration and model to the White feminist movement.

How do we explain women's institutionalized authority and power within Indigenous societies in times before colonization or in contemporary times wherever colonization did not succeed in implanting its pa-

²There are a number of recent writings on Indigenous women's institutionalized power and authority within their respective tribes. For example, Diné writer Laura Tohe "There is No Word for Feminism in My Language," *Wicazo Sa Review: A Journal of Native American Studies* 15, 2 (2000), 103-110, describes the social power and authority of Diné tribal women.

triarchal system? One answer is to be found in Native origin stories, which tend to place woman at the center of creation processes. The Indigenous understanding of what is commonly called gender is very different from Euroamerican concepts and understandings, which tend to reduce gender to binary oppositional anatomical categories. The Native understanding of what many Western societies today call “gender” is tied to what is regarded as a person’s divine energy (a vibratory quality); each person is an expression of the larger universe of energy or what Pilulaw Khus calls Life Force. The Indigenous conceptualization of gender links the human species (along with all aspects of nature) not merely to visible society but to the entire universe of energy and its movement. “Gender” has to do with what kind of energy or Life Force you carry, or the nature of your connection to the flow of Life Force or the universe of energy. Within a classical Indigenous understanding, feminine energy in humans is an extension and expression from that larger universe of energy. The feminine, like the masculine, expresses itself in many different ways or energy forms. Within Native science — indistinguishable from Native spirituality — all movement, from the smallest in subatomic particles to the larger visible and invisible manifestations of Life Force, is said to happen through the dialectics of feminine energy (comparable to what in Western science is the atom’s electron or negative charge) in conjunction with masculine energy (comparable to what in Western science is the atom’s positively charged nucleus).

Early colonial eyewitnesses also describe how the pre-colonial Chumash society respected and valued all sexual orientations, and sexual activity had not devolved into the now widespread category of sexual neurosis. As Daniel Fogel indicates,

Indeed the Chumash are the most sexually free culture on California’s anthropological record. Sexual activity among the unmarried was openly accepted. So was homosexual activity among men. Some men worked and dressed as women. (Fogel 1988, 102)

The categories of “man-woman” and of “woman-man” were socially accepted and even highly regarded. It was colonization and missionization that brought upon California Natives the institutionalization of sexual violence, prohibitions, body shame, previously unknown diseases, sexual relementation, homophobia, and heterosexism.³

3. The third topic that concerns me has to do with questions related to the process of healing from historical trauma, of constructively dealing with genocide and a prolonged history of oppression. One question I examine is whether there can be truth and reconciliation when, in fact, for many Cali-

³ For a discussion of Indigenous sexualities see Walter L. Williams (1986) or Deborah A. Miranda (2010).

ifornia Native peoples, the violent past is still present. I am nonetheless intrigued by the possibility of measures that might in time heal generations of racialized, gendered and sexualized, economic, and environmental violences.

The life-affirming truth and reconciliation concept of restorative justice has developed into an effective global strategy for dealing with war crimes and other human rights abuses. One technique of truth and reconciliation — as we witnessed it after the end of apartheid in South Africa — has to do with giving victims, witnesses, and even perpetrators a chance to publicly tell their stories without fear of prosecution. There is also the concept of confronting the past as a necessary step in the movement from conflict, resentment, and tension to peace and connectedness. The approach of “restorative justice” differs from the customary adversarial and retributive justice, which seeks to assign guilt and punish. Restorative justice seeks to heal relations between opposing sides by uncovering all pertinent facts, distinguishing truth from lies, and allowing for acknowledgement, appropriate public mourning, forgiveness and healing. There is a healing movement from that dialogue and towards mutual acknowledgement. Truth and reconciliation promotes the belief that confronting and reckoning with the past is necessary for successful transitions into a positive non-violent future. Thus far, the United States has been very slow, as a nation, to address the long-term and enduring effects of its violent ways. Pilulaw Khus’s narrative is a constructive engagement between Chumash Native peoples, with the broader central California coast communities, and with so many anthropologists; her narrative resumes conversation between Chumash and today’s landowners who dispossessed them; between Chumash and local, state and national US governments.

In my study I place great emphasis on the need for systematically pursuing healing practices, as a mean to both acknowledge and address genocide, slavery, and decades of oppression. In some measure I highlight the dynamic triggered by the Northern California story of a Native American named Ishi. Ishi’s story spans three decades, beginning in 1911 when this Native man was arrested and then released to anthropologists Alfred Kroeber and T.T. Waterman who “held” Ishi as a living museum artifact or spectacle. To this day, almost 100 years after his death, Ishi draws anthropology into question as his life sheds light on the dark sides of anthropology and California history. His story bears re-visiting as a healing dynamic pertinent to Chumash anthropology and Chumash communities.

Eight decades after anthropologist Alfred Kroeber became complicit in separating the deceased Ishi’s brain from his body, Northern California Native peoples waged a struggle to repatriate the bodily remains of fellow tribal member Ishi from the Smithsonian. Although I will not recount all twists and turns of that decades-long drama here, it is noteworthy that — as a step in the direction of healing — UC Berkeley’s Anthropology Department ultimately issued an official apology to California’s Native peoples:

What happened to Ishi's body, in the name of science, was a perversion of our core anthropological values [...] We are sorry for our department's role, however unintentional, in the final betrayal of Ishi, a man who had already lost all that was dear to him at the hands of Western colonizers. We recognize that the exploitation and betrayal of Native Americans is still commonplace in American society.⁴ (Scheper-Hughes 2003, 121)

The relationship of "exploitation and betrayal" pertains not only to Ishi's human remains but to the human remains of thousands of Indigenous human remains held captive in the warehouses of today's museums, private collections, and universities, including the University of California Santa Barbara which was built upon a Chumash village and burial grounds. Lest we forget, for example, the infamous Indian Crania Study, a collaboration between the Smithsonian and the US Army, collected thousands of Indian skulls in order to conduct "scientific" study using brain measurements. To this day, the Smithsonian holds 18,500 Indigenous human remains that await repatriation under NAGPRA (Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act). Although UC Berkeley's Anthropology Department later retracted portions of their initial apology, they issued something less explicit which includes this invitation:

We invite the peoples of Native California to instruct us in how we may better serve the needs of their communities through our research related activities. (Brandes 2003, 87)

Pilulaw Khus's testimony most assuredly instructs all concerned.

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⁴ Scheper-Hughes read the full statement of the original apology into the record of the California state legislature repatriation hearings in Sacramento on April 5, 1999.

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LA TIERRA Y SUS COLORES: NATURALEZA Y PAISAJE EN LA POESÍA DE JOY HARJO Y HUMBERTO AK'ABAL

Emanuela Jossa

El propósito de este estudio es trazar un camino de ida y vuelta alrededor de los colores de la tierra — considerados como metáfora de la relación con la naturaleza — evocados por los versos de dos poetas de la América indígena, y de la misma generación: Joy Harjo de etnia creek, nacida en Tulsa, Oklahoma en 1951, y Humberto Ak'abal de etnia maya k'iche', nacido en Totonicapán en 1952. En una primera etapa se van a analizar los colores de la tierra como figura del paso metafórico y metamórfico entre la sustancia humana y la sustancia telúrica del ser, proceso de identificación que une a los dos poetas; luego, se examinará desde un punto de vista lingüístico el tropo de los colores de la tierra en una selección de poemas de ambos los poetas: a través de esta investigación, el tropo pasa a convertirse en un elemento disyuntivo de los dos autores. Pues, la relación entre naturaleza y lenguaje que se establece en los poemas de Ak'abal es armónica, mientras en los poemas de Joy Harjo es conflictiva, hasta angustiada.

Para introducir estas reflexiones acerca de los colores de la tierra, se puede empezar por dos citas: la primera es una cita del poema “Remember,” de Joy Harjo, procedente de *She Had Some Horses*, colección en la que se centra este estudio:

[...]

Remember the earth whose skin you are:
red earth, black earth, yellow earth, white earth
brown earth, we are the earth.
Remember the plants, trees, animal life who all have their
tribes, their families, their histories, too. Talk to them,
listen to them. They are alive poems.
Remember the wind. Remember her voice. She knows the
origin of this universe. [...] (Harjo 1997, 37)

La segunda cita es el poema “Embarazada” de Humberto Ak'abal:

“Cuando yo estaba embarazada,
esperándote,

* An earlier version of this essay appeared in English in *Journal of the Southwest* 49, iv (Winter 2007).

sentía muchas ganas de comer tierra,
 arrancaba pedacitos de adobes
 y me los comía...”
 Esta confesión de mi madre
 me desgarró el corazón.

Mamé leche de barro
 Por eso mi piel
 Es de color de tierra. (Ak'abal 2004, 87)

Ambos los poetas desarrollan un doble proceso de identificación, ideológica y poética, con la tierra y sus colores: pues, al definir unos rasgos comunes de las comunidades indígenas del continente americano, surge de inmediato la relación íntima y profunda con la naturaleza, tanto a nivel cosmogónico, como a nivel cotidiano, — dos niveles al parecer lejanos, en realidad la existencia del indígena es precisamente la realización de su cosmovisión en la vida diaria. Los escritores, los poetas nativos, pues, comparten esta relación tan intensa con el medio: por supuesto, la naturaleza puede constituir el principio de inspiración poética, pero sobre todo puede representar el principio de la búsqueda de la identidad, tanto individual como colectiva. Esta peculiaridad de la literatura indígena está relacionada con el contexto histórico y social de marginación en que vive el indígena en casi todo el continente, marginación enlazada a soledad, violencia, hasta negación del mismo ser: de aquí la necesidad de la búsqueda de la identidad. Por lo tanto, la relación con la naturaleza se constituye en cuanto diálogo entre seres pertenecientes a un mismo universo: aún más, cuerpo, mente y espíritu sin esta relación íntima con la naturaleza, aparecen inacabados, fragmentados, sustancialmente infelices. Así pues, en los poemas de Joy Harjo y Humberto Ak'abal, la naturaleza no representa sólo y escuetamente el fondo de la representación o un objeto de contemplación, sino un interlocutor, un testigo, fuente de consuelo y de auténtica belleza. Esta reflexión no es tan obvia y evidente como pueda parecer: mejor dicho, considero la relación con el medio un tema fecundo de avances críticos, porque es precisamente en esta relación similar con la naturaleza donde luego surgen las peculiaridades de cada poeta.

En *She Had Some Horses* la relación con el paisaje se configura concretamente como diálogo entre dos seres: la poetisa busca en la naturaleza su ser, su propia identidad. Se nota, en los versos de Joy Harjo, una percepción angustiada de lo inacabado, una falta existencial y espiritual que sólo una refundación de su propia vida en armonía con la naturaleza podría recompensar. Para alejar la sensación de desplazamiento, de fragmentación de su ser, el universo espiritual de la poetisa se refleja en la morfología de la tierra Americana.

El lenguaje, y luego la metáfora, se convierten así en vehículo de transformación del cuerpo, del paisaje, de la ciudad. Se realiza un proceso de modificación del ser en busca de conexiones misteriosas entre todas las criaturas de la tierra. Ellos son objeto de un procedimiento constante de

metáforización que, como hemos visto, lleva consigo otro procedimiento: la transformación. La metamorfosis se convierte así en fundamento de la identidad. En la citada poesía "Remember," la poetisa establece el intenso vínculo de cada ser con las estrellas, la familia, las plantas, el viento; la humanidad se configura como un ser en movimiento incesante, y los componentes de la naturaleza adquieren configuraciones antropomórficas. Para el viento, la poeta no utiliza el género neutro sino el pronombre femenino "she" y el adjetivo femenino "her."

Sin embargo este proceso de identificación resulta dificultado por la incertidumbre: pues la configuración, la sustancia de la naturaleza aparecen vagas, problemáticas, el paisaje no "se da ya hecho" sino que tiene que ser re-construido a través de una mirada cuidadosa, como se dice en los versos de "Remember," y a través de un lenguaje capaz de evocarla. Es decir que en los poemas de Joy Harjo está representado no sólo el camino de re-construcción de la identidad de la mujer indígena, sino también el camino de re-creación del paisaje que debe volver a nacer a través de la palabra poética. En muchos versos la naturaleza aparece sumergida bajo el ambiente urbano (blanco, cristiano), en una relación conflictiva donde la ciudad a veces parece "tapar" la energía explosiva de la tierra; otras veces, por ejemplo en "Anchorage," se muestra frágil, a merced de la fuerza del aire, del agua, del fuego:

Once a storm of bowling earth cracked open
the streets, threw open the town.
It's quiet now, but underneath the concrete
is the cooking earth,
 and above that, air
which is another ocean, where spirits we can't see
are dancing joking getting full
on roasted caribou, and the praying
goes on, extends out. (Harjo 1997, 6)

En muchos poemas, el conflicto parece configurarse como dialéctica entre estancamiento (ciudad) y movimiento (paisaje natural): "la tierra sigue hablando debajo de la cal y el cemento," dice la poetisa. Y precisamente del movimiento, dice Joy Harjo, nace el lenguaje.

A través de la palabra y de su sonido, la poesía dispone la renovación de la humanidad y de la tierra (tema central de las visiones de los indios norteamericanos) produciendo una ecuación entre cuerpo y tierra, una compenetración de geografías que anula tiempo y espacio. La tierra y la mujer dan a luz con explosiones en un ciclo ininterrumpido de creación y destrucción: la imagen es fuerte y desciende de los mitos de gestación, propios sobre todo de Pueblo, Navajo, y Apache, que establecen el paralelo tierra-ventre maternal primordial. El rescate del paisaje se produce a través de la memoria, es precisamente el recuerdo de los antepasados, de la tierra habitada por los indígenas que permite la recuperación de la conciencia de pertenecer a los lugares. La voz poética busca una interacción creativa y regeneradora con el paisaje de Arizona o de Oklahoma a

través de imágenes que infundan en los lugares una entidad mítica; esta búsqueda caracteriza por ejemplo “Skeleton of Winter:”

I am memory alive
 not just a name
 but an intricate part
 of this web of motion,
 meaning: earth, sky, stars circling
 my heart

centrifugal. (Harjo 1997, 25)

La poeta descubre y revela hondas conexiones entre el mundo animal, vegetal, telúrico, astral y humano: de este modo trata de crear una armonía nueva, que reintegre a la mujer creek en su universo negado. Sin embargo su identidad sigue mostrándose fragmentada, continúa siendo una “intricate part,” o, en otro lugar, una mujer hecha de “pieces,” pedazos. Por lo tanto, el proceso de identificación con los colores de la tierra se configura como un intento que difícilmente es llevado a cabo: en muchos poemas, resulta ser solamente un deseo, mientras se mantiene la fragmentación tanto de la mujer como de la naturaleza. El camino de recuperación y afirmación de la identidad es dolido, incierto, acongojante: a veces es el miedo lo que impide el rescate de los colores de la tierra. El poema “Call It Fear” es construido alrededor de la palabra “edge” que en inglés tiene varios significados, tanto concretos como abstractos (véase también Coltelli 1996, 12-13): en el poema la palabra adquiere colocaciones y luego sentidos distintos, es el espacio de la geografía humana y del paisaje:

There is this edge where shadows
 and bones of some of us walk
 backwards.
 Talk backwards. There is this edge
 call it an ocean of fear of dark. Or
 name it with other songs. [...]

“The edge” puede ser un océano de miedo, pero también un lugar de ensueño por donde andan huesos y sombras. La esencia de “the edge” depende, pues, de los nombres que le dan los cantos. Vive dentro de la poeta:

There is this edge within me
 I saw it once [...]

Ya no es el barranco de rocas, huesos de tierra volcánica, es por fin

[...] a string of shadow of horses kicking
 and pulling me out of my belly [...]. (Harjo 1997, 5)

“The edge” está adentro y afuera, es paisaje interior y exterior: pero los dos niveles quedan separados, la búsqueda de la memoria en el paisaje parece detenerse precisamente frente al límite. En el poema “The Woman Hanging from the Thirteenth Floor Window,” la mujer “sees the lago Michigan lapping at the shores of herself” (Harjo 1997, 16): la mujer siente el paisaje como si penetrara adentro hasta lamer sus partes más escondidas; sin embargo la naturaleza no consigue ayudarla: la escisión permanece. En el poema la falta de un desenlace (¿suicidio o salvación?) parece derivar precisamente de la inconexión con el paisaje, de la incapacidad de recibir consuelo: de ahí el final incierto y dramático con la mujer colgando del piso 13. En cambio, es ineludible aprender a escuchar la naturaleza, transformarse junto a ella: la naturaleza es develamiento de la verdad, o por lo menos manifestación de algo más profundo, una visión que revela y trasmite el significado de la belleza.

El paisaje se manifiesta a través de un halcón, como en el poema “Connection,” o a través de la luna y del viento, dos elementos que ocupan un lugar muy especial en la poesía de Joy Harjo. Luna y viento pueden consolar, pueden ser interlocutores o testigos en “The Friday Before the Long Weekend:”

[...]
 I can't do anything
 But talk to the wind,
 to the moon [...]. (Harjo 1997, 30)

Y en “September Moon:”

[...]
 Wind blowing my hair was caught
 in my face. I was fearful of traffic,
 trying to keep my steps and the moon was east,
 ballooning out of the mountain ridge, out of smoky clouds
 out of any skin that was covering her. Naked.
 Such beauty.

Look.

We are alive. The woman of the moon looking
 at us, and we looking at her, acknowledging
 each other. (Harjo 1997, 56)

Aquí las imágenes del paisaje agrandan el mundo, se vuelven “mediadoras de inmensidad” (Bachelard 1970, 281), y el poema propaga olas de placidez, a pesar de todo, y más allá de su mundo descompuesto. Sin embargo, si en los versos ahora citados la inmensidad ha sido ampliada por la contemplación, como dice Bachelard, si aquí realmente se realiza una confortadora compenetración con la luna, es cierto que en otros versos justamente la luna resulta destrozada, hasta deforme, desfigurada. En “Backwards” la luna es arrojada por el puente, y cuando regresa al cielo aparece “torn at the edges” (Harjo 1997, 13). En los últimos, trágicos versos, la luna revela el fracaso del sueño frente a la realidad histórica: la poetisa, cuando niña, sueña con cabalgar sobre la luna, pero el hombre blanco despedaza la luna.

El camino de reconstrucción tiene pues salidas inciertas, por lo tanto los elementos nombrados en los poemas difícilmente adquieren el papel de figura. Todo eso aclara la imagen de los caballos, que en toda la colección no logra cristalizarse en un símbolo. Los caballos adquieren connotaciones distintas, a menudo contradictorias: tienen un cuerpo de hielo galopando en el fuego, son mudos y son la palabra, es decir, la relación entre concepto y sujeto signico cambia al fluir de la evocación del animal.

She had some horses.

She had horses who were bodies of sand.
 She had horses who were maps drawn of blood.
 She had horses who were skins of ocean water.
 She had horses who were the blue air of sky.
 She had horses who were fur and teeth.
 She had horses who were clay and would break.
 She had horses who were splintered red cliff. [...]. (Harjo 1997, 59)

Si interpretamos los caballos como metáfora del pueblo indígena, la enumeración revela la complejidad de su historia, muestra contradicciones y pulsiones que no se anulan mutuamente, sino configuran un enredo irresoluble, que es el nudo de la memoria colectiva. En la lectura crítica propuesta por Laura Coltelli, en su hondo e intenso comentario a los poemas de Harjo, la construcción paralela y opuesta del poema "She Had Some Horses" parece encontrar una salida en el final:

She had some horses she loved.
 She had some horses she hated.

These were the same horses. (Harjo 1997, 60)

En su análisis, el último verso podría expresar la resolución de la lógica binaria "para volverse acumulación paradójica y tal vez dolida riqueza" (Coltelli 2001, 193). No comparto esta lectura. Más bien la poesía me parece la admisión de la imposibilidad de superar aquella lógica, de conciliar las oposiciones, de reducir la realidad a una visión única y simplista; los versos expresan la conciencia de la extrema dificultad de diálogo con el pasado, con la naturaleza que lo encierra. El empuje hacia la fusión con el paisaje parece obstaculizado, hasta inmovilizado por la disgregación de la percepción de sí misma y del mundo.

En cambio, la vinculación armónica y vivificadora con la naturaleza está plenamente realizada en la poesía de Humberto Ak'abal: heredero de la cultura maya, nieto de chamán, Ak'abal sabe y siente que todos los componentes de la naturaleza están vivos, son manifestación de armonía cósmica de la cual el hombre es parte. De este modo, la relación que se establece con el paisaje es sensorial, móvil pero sobre todo recíproca, una relación entre dos seres. Esta reciprocidad nos conecta con el diálogo poético de Joy Har-

jo, orientado hacia la construcción de otra geografía, tanto del cuerpo como del paisaje. Pero, ahora sí, el paisaje “se da ya hecho:” el poeta maya no tiene la necesidad de re-construir la naturaleza, el paisaje está presente adentro y afuera de Ak’abal, sus sensaciones vibran al unísono con las del mundo animal y vegetal. El poeta encuentra su identidad reflejada en el paisaje de Guatemala: su conciencia no aparece fragmentada, desplazada, no es necesario recomponer fracturas o re-construir espacios: los lugares se presentan íntegros en su majestuosidad o en su sencillez, porque se trata de lugares pertenecientes al poeta, a los maya. Frente a la alienación, a la pérdida de sí mismo (“hoy amanecí fuera de mí/ Y salí a buscarme” recita el poema “Hoy” [Ak’abal 1996, 53]) la naturaleza otorga respuestas ciertas:

Color de agua

Busco mi sombra
y la encuentro en el agua.
Tengo ramas
tengo hojas
soy árbol...
Y miro el cielo
como lo miran los árboles:
color de agua. (Ak’abal 1996, 211)

Según la cosmovisión de los Mayas, la plenitud del ser humano reside precisamente en su capacidad de metamorfosis. En la poesía de Ak’abal, que comparte esta visión del mundo, se produce un proceso ininterrumpido de transformación que involucra mutuamente a todos los seres, y esta transformación es parte de un sistema cosmológico conocido, es parte de la vida y luego de la poesía. Las múltiples metamorfosis propuestas por Ak’abal, que se vuelve árbol, pájaro, nido, no sirven para volver a establecer la unidad perdida, sino para reconocerla. El diálogo poético con la naturaleza nace y se fortalece en esta reciprocidad, peculiar de todos los pueblos indígenas. Todos los seres se mueven según un ritmo cadencioso, siempre están dialogando y por eso también están vinculados sentimentalmente. Así, en los poemas de Ak’abal los elementos naturales asumen características emotivas, cognitivas y comunicativas. Retomamos pues la imagen de la luna: como hemos visto, en los poemas de Joy Harjo sólo a ratos el astro logra tener un papel confortador, mientras en los atroces versos finales de “Backwards” la luna participa como víctima en una escena de dolor atónico:

The moon came up white, and torn
at the edges. I dreamed when I was
four that I was standing on it.
A white man with a knife cut pieces
away
and threw the meat
to the dogs. (Harjo 1997, 13)

Sobresale el sentimiento trágico de la injusticia sufrida. La crueldad es inexorable, ningún consuelo es posible. En los versos de Ak'abal, en cambio, la luna entra en las casas y se sienta en el piso, y ella misma se vuelve refugio infantil:

Regaño

La luna era una casa grande
Sentada sobre el espinazo del cerro.

Cuando mi papá me regañaba,
yo me iba para la luna
y allí dormía. (Ak'abal 1996, 99)

La intimidad entre la luna y el niño maya resulta impracticable para la niña creek, porque hasta luna ha sido violada, es irreconocible. Permanece en los versos de Joy Harjo una noción apenada de la violencia, de despojo y expropiación de lugares donde guarecerse. Una falta de espacios, que corresponde a su historia de indígena creek: expulsados de sus tierras en 1832, los creek fueron deportados a Oklahoma; al descubrir petróleo, fueron expropiadas las tierras que antes les habían sido otorgadas. De tal forma, al principio del siglo XX sólo quedaba una minoría empobrecida de creek.

Por supuesto, Ak'abal también sufre la discriminación, la marginación, la violencia genocida. En la sección *Hojas rotas* de *Tejedor de palabras* expresa toda la tragedia del pueblo maya, pero al mismo tiempo muestra la fuerza de su resistencia. Componente básica de esta resistencia es la permanencia lingüística. El mismo Ak'abal no sólo habla k'iche', sino escribe en k'iche' y luego se auto-traduce al español. Esta representa la discrepancia principal con Joy Harjo: ella nos dice que en Muskogee "caballo" es "vokko," pero en sus poemas escribe "horse." Para Ak'abal, en cambio (retomando Jossa 1998 y Rogachewskij 1994), el idioma k'iche' constituye la base epistemológica de su relación con el mundo, la identificación con la naturaleza ya está escrita en su gramática.

La originalidad de la lengua maya, debida a la yuxtaposición de las palabras, a la construcción metafórica de las oraciones, a la traducción de la cotidianidad, se manifiesta tanto en los antiguos textos como en la poesía de Ak'abal. A través de la utilización de fórmulas emparejadas, del paralelismo, de la iteración, en el texto se crea un universo armónico, fundamentado en las hondas relaciones entre todos los seres. Asociaciones, sinónimos, ecos crean un recorrido semántico en que desde lo vegetal se llega a la noción de dios, desde lo animal a la noción de moral... Por eso, todo lo que rodea a los mayas adquiere connotaciones familiares y una honda conciencia de pertenencia a un espacio determinado. Mientras Joy Harjo, al escribir en inglés, primero debe deshacer la estructura mental subyacente a ese idioma: una *forma mentis* que obedece a la idea occidental según la cual el lenguaje se constituye en oposición a lo natural, y con el propósito de poder apropiarse de la naturaleza (Rogachewskij 1994, 26). La poeta se muestra hondamente consciente de ese "drama lingüístico" al publicar una antología de poetas nativas titulada emblemáticamente

“Reinventing the Enemy’s Language” (véase Coltelli 2001, 17); y en una de sus obras sucesivas, *In Mad Love and War*, se apela a su propio idioma cuando quiere expresar la tragedia de su mundo aniquilado:

[...]

How do I say it? In this language there are no words for how the real world collapses. I could say it in my own and the sacred mounds would come into focus, but I couldn’t take it in this dingy envelope. (Harjo 1990, 5)

Por el contrario el lenguaje k’iche’, como dice Rogachewskj, “se constituye como parte de un universo natural altamente comunicativo — expresivo y reflexivo a la vez — y por consiguiente el lenguaje humano se manifiesta como un diálogo *con* y no una apropiación *de* la naturaleza” (Rogachewskj 1994, 25). El idioma k’iche’ y luego Ak’abal tienen una perspectiva interna a la naturaleza que reclama su capacidad de sentimiento y conciencia, y por lo tanto su necesidad de un lenguaje poético que sirva para dar expresión a lo que se siente, pero también para reflexionar sobre la experiencia vivida. Este lenguaje se expresa muy a menudo a través de la onomatopeya. Según el poeta la onomatopeya es un lenguaje que no capta los sentidos sino directamente el espíritu, porque a través del sonido comunica la esencia de su significado. Este proceso no atañe solamente a los animales (“utiw” es el coyote, “sotz” el murciélago, “tu kur” el búho): “proj” reproduce el ruido de las llamas, y es “incendio,” “tish” es el ruido de los granos al regar, es decir “riego,” “tun” es el sonido del tambor y por lo tanto el nombre del mismo... Por encima de todo, la onomatopeya recalca la idea de poner un nombre a lo experimentado a través de la comunicación sonora, es decir, una vez más, a través de un diálogo con la sustancia de la naturaleza, y no a través de la apropiación de un objeto mudo e inerme. Vemos así que para los mayas el nombre no es simplemente un instrumento de identificación, sino es la misma esencia de la persona (de la cosa, del lugar): mientras Joy Harjo no quiere ser “just a name” (“Skeleton of Winter” [Harjo 1997, 25]), para Ak’abal decir el propio nombre es afirmar la propia identidad y la propia existencia sobre la tierra: el tambor percutido suena “tum ab’aj,” o sea repite su nombre, asevera su estar en el mundo, “yo soy, yo soy” (Ak’abal 1996, 46). Y por consiguiente, perder el nombre es morir:

Sin nombre

No podré olvidar
El ladrido de los chuchos
Cuando comían
A los muertos
Que se quedaban tirados
En los caminos.

Los chuchos
También se comieron mi nombre. (Ak’abal 1997, 137)

Nombrar los lugares con los topónimos k'iche' quiere decir evocar su esencia y su significado para el pueblo k'iche'. "P sùn" quiere decir "lugar donde hay música de viento," mientras Tulá y otros nombres de ciudades son integrados por el sufijo "já" que es "casa," es decir que el nombre de los lugares a menudo ya abarca la noción de casa, de acogida (Chávez 1969, 186-87). Y la casa, *ja*, se representa a través de la figura humana, en un juego metamórfico que una vez más configura una profunda relación de reciprocidad entre todos los seres:

Ri ja-la casa

Uchi' ja
(boca de la casa),
puerta.

Ub'oq'och ja
(ojos de la casa),
ventanas.

Uwi' ja
(cabellos de la casa),
techo.

Raqan ja
(pies de la casa),
corredor.

Utza'n ja
(nariz de la casa)
esquinas.

Upam ja
(estomago de la casa),
interior.

Ja,
casa. (Ak'abal 2002, 63)

El poeta es el dueño de la palabra, y el antiguo texto maya *Popol Vuh* nos enseña que la palabra no es sólo evocadora, sino también creadora. Frente al despojo de los lugares sagrados, de los ríos y las montañas, el poeta maya puede crear el paisaje interior en contigüidad con el paisaje exterior porque posee la palabra k'iche':

Oficio

El poeta
Debe llenar vacíos
Y crear espacios.

El poema estará completo. (Ak'abal 2000, 50)

Esta función alentadora del nombre y esta utilización consoladora de la onomatopeya, en fin, esta función del lenguaje, hacen falta a la poeta creek:

despojada de los lugares y de sus nombres, Joy Harjo busca nuevas sonoridades para recomponer lo perdido. A través de la utilización de una técnica de composición dirigida a desquiciar con violencia el verso, a componer textos con aceleraciones y pausas, Joy Harjo crea “una lengua inglesa plasmada en un concepto tribal del lenguaje” (Coltelli 2001, 17). Así pues, a través del lenguaje la poeta empieza el camino de recomposición de su imagen. Porque, como dice Scott Momaday en su bellissimo trabajo “The Man Made of Words” (1995), a través de la expresión verbal, tanto oral como escrita, el hombre alcanza la más completa realización de su humanidad.

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THE ROLE OF SETTING IN HANAY GEIOGAMAH'S PLAYS

Annamaria Pinazzi

A consideration of setting — the place and time of action — in the work of a Native American author implies touching on two crucial elements in Native American culture and literature: it is through opposite attitudes toward place and time that fundamental differences between White and Indian frames of mind find expression. This widely explored issue will not be discussed here: for our purpose it will be sufficient to consider what Jeffrey Huntsman states, when finding common features in the great variety of forms of Native American theatre. Among the distinctive traits of traditional dramatic events, he mentions “a nonlinear time” and “a dimensionless sacred place” (Huntsman 1983, 359); the same traits he finds also in contemporary theatre, namely in Hanay Geiogamah’s plays. As for this distinction between older and contemporary theatre, it might be worth reminding ourselves that if a variety of dramatic forms are among the components of Native American ceremonies (religious or not), theatre, in the Western sense of the term, as an independent form of art, separate from a religious, ceremonial context, is a recent addition to Indian cultural experience, covering the last quarter of the past century. It is an experience that necessarily branches off from Euroamerican theatrical tradition and, to a certain extent, is moulded on Western professional standards and criteria. Geiogamah is an excellent case in point, given his own training at the Café LaMama Experimental Club, the New York theatre company host and mentor of the Native American Theater Ensemble (NATE), the first all-Indian troupe that Geiogamah assembled in 1971-1972.

My assumption is that an analysis of place and time in Geiogamah’s plays is particularly useful as evidence that:

1. ascribing single features to one or the other cultural tradition, establishing neat, clear-cut distinctions can be a slippery path, especially in Geiogamah’s case, an author and director primarily concerned with the theatricality of the results, consciously and openly drawing on both Indian forms and Western-style theatre.

2. his place of origin, Kiowa land, has a pivotal role in his theatre, a role that at first sight can appear unimportant, because expressed through indirection — another strongly felt notion in Geiogamah’s idea of an Indian theatre.

Geiogamah’s plays include what he himself labels “traditional” and “modern” (Geiogamah 1980b, 44-45): if “traditional” defines a precise cat-



egory — applying only to the dramatization of legends, myths (cosmogonic myths, stories of culture heroes, of Coyote etc.) — “modern,” significantly, has a less clear-cut meaning, since any other story set in historical times can be included, regardless of whether the action happens nowadays or in a more or less distant past.

I will refer here to Geiogamah’s modern plays only, namely the *Three Plays* which were published first as a collection in 1980 and have been reprinted in 1999, in two anthologies of Native American playwrights. *Seventh Generation*, edited by Mimi D’Aponte, includes *Body Indian*; while *Foghorn* and *49* appear in *Stories of Our Way*, edited by Geiogamah himself and Jaye T. Darby. My selection is dictated by the conviction that these three examples cover the whole typology of setting in Geiogamah’s plays.

In the first play, *Body Indian* (1972), Bobby Lee, an alcoholic and a cripple (he lost a leg when he was hit by a train while laying unconscious on the railroad tracks) visits his friends and relations and joins the party that has been going on for days; actually he is the one who keeps the party going, since every time he passes out, the group takes turns to search his body for money (more money, more booze), the money he had set aside in order to start a rehabilitation program. When all the money is gone, even that concealed in Bobby Lee’s artificial leg, his kin do not hesitate to unscrew the leg and pawn it. On awakening, Bobby realizes that their offer to help him out is actually a way of keeping him bound to them in a self-destructive process.

The action is set in the present, with a perfect correspondence between time in the story and time in the performance; it develops with an effect of crescendo in the pace of its five episodes; and has an ending that parallels the beginning: with sad awareness the protagonist repeats to himself the hypocritical greetings of the company on his arrival.

Spatial details reinforce this sense of circularity: the *locus* on stage is reproduced in a realistic style, according to the stage directions that open the text: it is a one-room apartment, a small and crowded room, with a large bed in the middle and another mattress on the floor; blankets all around; a kitchen sink, a stove, a table. The sense of confinement is accentuated by messiness and neglect: everything is dirty and greasy, the floor is crammed with empty wine bottles — “so many [...] that the performers must stumble over and around them to make their way throughout the action” (Geiogamah 1980a, 6), an operation all the more problematic for Bobby who is on crutches. These realistic details have quite obvious symbolic implications; and there is more. Not only is the space closed and restricted, it is also isolated, cut off from the outside: “*there is no indication [...] that there is a world beyond the shabby walls*” (17). That there is also an outside only transpires from incidental remarks in the dialogue: the characters mention Norman, Darko and Carnegie, geographical names revealing that the outside is Oklahoma, Kiowa land; other spatial indications (the hospital, downtown, the rock music concert) denote an urban setting — possibly the outskirts of Oklahoma City — where these char-

acters drift along, living the degraded life of poor, displaced Indians. The only counterpart to the bleakness of this room, the only moment of relief from the dreariness of the present is provided by memory, when women recall the old, happy days when their families would go camping for summer fair, clear the dance grounds, and put up the arbor (scene 3). With the memories comes dance, comes movement, the only exception to the static gestures of drinking and the repetitive rolling of Bobby's body: the women do a round dance to the music of a 49 tune, then force Bobby Lee to join them; it is a clumsy dance of drunken people, even clumsier in the case of Bobby Lee whose crutches fly across the floor.

Through dance, communal past encroaches into the present of the performance. Another past, the protagonist's past, makes its appearance on stage: the sound of a train opens and concludes the action, the train whistle and slides of the tracks mark the end of each scene. Obsessive reminders of the accident in which Bobby Lee was maimed, these sounds and images break the naturalistic style of the play, superimposing present and past, inside and outside, real and imagined.

Another infraction of the realistic mode is the metatheatrical detail of the youths jumping and touching the slides and commenting on the buzzing noise of the train. Significantly, the happy and harmonious past emerges through live movement which, though clumsy, is still expression of the one spark of vitality left in those maimed bodies; on the other hand, the past of disaster and illness comes through an irritating use of mechanical devices, icons of the machine threatening the health of the "body Indian."

An even greater use of audiovisual devices as a means to amplify the dimensions of place and time is found in *Foghorn* (1973). The action's eleven separate scenes are stages of "a journey through time and space [...] spanning the centuries from 1492 to the present and stretching geographically from the West Indies to Alcatraz Island" (Geiogamah 1980a, 51). Scene 1 (the discovery) and scene 2 (Alcatraz 1969) are followed by a series of eight heavily farcical episodes illustrating the common mistakes, prejudices and stereotypes that characterized the relationship between Whites and Natives since the Contact: the nun wants to save the Indians' souls; the schoolteacher forces them to learn the beauty of civilization; Captain Smith fails in proving to Pocahontas the Whites' superiority as lovers; and the Lone Ranger is outwitted and eventually murdered by Tonto. The final scene restores the tone and the time of the two opening episodes, hinting both at the 1973 Wounded Knee incidents between federal officers and the American Indian Movement (AIM) militants, and at Columbus's discovery.

The wide span of time, the loose sequence of episodes that does not respect chronological order, the switching from one to another of a variety of places require a non-realistic rendering: as suggested in the stage directions, the stage can reflect the places — the prison yard on Alcatraz Island, the terrain around Wounded Knee, an Indian reservation, the Jefferson Memorial — using slides and film. Basic, allusive scenery, symbolic props of larger-than-life dimensions, the blurring between the actor's

and audience's space are all traits of any agitprop piece, of guerrilla street theatre, but with the important detail of the parallelism between beginning and end.

The conclusion of this play has other interesting implications. Scene 10 closes with the bodies of all the actors lying on the floor, while the sound of rifle fire is heard and the image of a marshal aiming at the performers and the audience is projected onto the background. In scene 11, the actors rise from the floor, form a semicircle around the drummer shot by the police, and start a funeral procession: the “*single heavy beat*” of the drum, and the AIM Song are the only live music; all the rest is recorded, and is loud and disturbing, including the noise of a drill that ends each episode. One by one the youths are arrested, raise their handcuffed hands and come forward, stating their identity, claiming their innocence of the crime of not being what the Whites supposed them to be:

VOICE OF SPANISH SAILOR

(*on tape*) ¡Capitan! ¡Capitan! ¡Dios mio! ¡Muchas gracias! ¡Madre mia!
¡Los indios! ¡India! ¡Ellos son los indios!

NARRATOR

(*very compassionately*) I am ... NOT GUILTY!

The statements: “We move on. [...] Back to our homes, our people. ... To the land ... To the sky” (Geiogamah 1980a, 81-82) accompany the choreographic movement. It is a real and symbolic occupation of a place through rhythmic movement.

In the rendering of time and space, the referential and symbolic dimensions of the previous scenes yield to the ceremonial dimension — in European theatrical lingo we pass from a Brechtian to an Artaudian mode. The threat coming from the marshal is purely theatrical fiction, whereas the actor claiming his innocence and dancing toward the audience is physically taking a stand and entering the audience's space and time, space of the heart, of the mind, and of the body.

This leads us to consider the last play, 49 (1975). The title refers to an informal social gathering, following a ceremony, usually a powwow, which Geiogamah poignantly describes in an interview with Darby as: “a big, wild, sprawling party ... a knock-down, drag-out, hell's-a-poppin', let-it-all-hang-out event to which mainly young people go. And they sing and they dance and they fight and they make love” (Darby 2000, 196). It is also, as the author himself notes, one of the rare moments when their racial identity is fully recognized: “While taking part in a 49, young Indians are in an extremely heightened state of awareness of their ‘Indianness’ ” (Geiogamah 1980a, 87).

The action of the play develops on two spatial and temporal levels: “a ceremonial ground in circa 1885, the same ground in the present” (85). The episodes set in the present (the 49 gathering) reveal tension, confusion and barrenness inside the 49ers' group itself; more tension and pressure come

from outside, from the police patrolling the roads around the area (their harrasing presence is only suggested through the sound of their voices and the lights of their cars). The young 49ers reach a stronger awareness as a group, thanks to Night Walker, the religious leader and medicine man who defines himself as “the oldest” and “the youngest” of the tribe at the same time (96-97). His living in an atemporal dimension enables him to create “the tie between the young people’s past and their present and future. He can move supernaturally between both eras and speak directly to both generations” (88). Night Walker has a leading role in the episodes set in the 1880s — which alternate with those set in the present: after announcing times of sorrow and death to his tribespeople, he warns them that their hope of survival lies only in treasuring their cultural heritage and keeping it alive. Therefore he makes sure that young people have a knowledge of craftsmanship but also of the spiritual value of traditional art forms, such as weaving, creating songs, dancing and storytelling. The two time levels converge when Night Walker, from being just an observer of his “modern” young tribespeople, takes up an active role as a healer: he “resurrects” a girl who had a car accident; banishes division and violence still existing in the group of young people; and entrusts the future of the tribe into the hands of each of them.

The stage directions define the place itself in detail: “*a dance area of tightly packed earth with trees, grass and bushes growing alongside. There are brush arbors in the background and a roadway extends out of the area. A high embankment rises above the roadway, and more trees are in the back of this.*” There is another indication: “*a much-used site with a long history of many tribespeople coming and going*” (Geiogamah 1980a, 91) — not a proper stage direction, but certainly a meaningful suggestion to the actors and to the reader, conveying a sense of repetition and continuity. The location is not given in the stage directions, but can be identified as the area around Anadarko, Oklahoma, through the names of roads and towns dropped into the dialogues of the youths and the police: Apache Y, Whitehorse Road, T-Bird Hill, Moonlight, all sites with which Geiogamah, in his youth an assiduous 49er, is very familiar. (Darby 2000, 203-204).

Background images and slides do not provide more exact geographical references, but focus on details endowed with symbolic connotations, such as the “*field littered with buffalo skeletons and bones*” (Geiogamah 1980a, 103) envisaging the future of loss and death that Night Walker announces in scene 6; or the arbor around which in scene 1 Night Walker summons the people, and under which he and other leading figures, Singing Man and Weaving Woman, instruct the youths in scene 8; the same arbor that “*comes blazingly alight*” (125) when Night Walker reminds them to have all the people gather and pray under it in scene 10; and that “*is left with a special glow*” (133) after the whole group reacts defensively against the police in the last scene. The glowing arbor is the final image of the play, both sign and instrument of cohesion, a cohesion and strength that are enacted by the very bodies of the actors when, in scene 11, they move to

create a line of defense: “to a powerful drumbeat and in gymnastic movements they form an elaborate barricade with their bodies, allow the image to strike, then dismantle and form another;” from Night Walker’s exclamation, “A beautiful bird is flying!,” we infer that the second barricade of bodies takes the shape of a soaring powerful bird (129). Again, with dance movements the young people accompany Night Walker’s words in “his final incantation” (132) until they leave the stage “in formation” (133), still singing and dancing: the circle closes, but with a step forward, an opening toward the future.

If a ceremonial dimension characterizes the ending of *Foghorn*, 49 can be considered a ceremonial theatre piece as a whole, not reproducing a ritual but actually creating one: mythical time and mythical space enter the here and now of theatrical performance.

To conclude, what I believe emerges from an analysis of setting in Geiogamah’s three plays is first of all the variety of styles (realistic, symbolic, epic, ceremonial), a variety that gives evidence of both his acquaintance with Western theatrical tradition and his strong links with traditional Indian modes. As for Western tradition, I mentioned already some possible references such as Brecht and Artaud; others can be added, namely the Theater of the Absurd (for the circularity of plot, the absence of climax, and the repetitive structure) and the 1960s-1970s Anglo-American avant-garde, outstanding representatives of which (Ellen Stuart, John Vaccaro and Peter Brook) collaborated with the playwright.

As for the links of Geiogamah’s theatre with Indian tradition, what Huntsman points out regarding time (past, present and future merging into a kind of eternal present) certainly applies to at least *Foghorn* and 49. I would also emphasize the importance of dance (another fundamental component of traditional Indian drama) in defining the setting. In all three plays considered here, dance and choreographic figurations are employed to express moments of harmony and balance, so that these concepts do not remain abstract entities but are set concretely in a dimension of place and time, translated in terms of measure, pace, rhythm, of “beat” — Geiogamah would say: “I hear the beat all the time. [...] When I say I hear the beat, I’m not saying that I hear that Mother Earth drum, that ceremonial drum and the powwow drum [...]. There’s a beat that’s constantly going for you, so you can always hook into it and tune into something. And it provides a rhythm. And it provides a kind of structure for ... the interior of your mind and your thinking capabilities. [...] It helps you do a lot of things. ... A sense of timing. A sense of correctness. A sense of order. A sense of proportion. A sense of spacing. All of this is encompassed into a kind of rhythmic sense — a beat, connecting” (Darby 2000, 199-200).

This statement helps to clarify one point I made earlier, when I remarked that Oklahoma, the Kiowa places, have a pivotal role in Geiogamah’s theatre, even though not represented on stage: in 49 — like in *Land Sale* — Kiowa land is the actual setting, but what appears on stage is a dance ground, an arbor; in *Body Indian* — like in *Grandpa* and *Grandma*

— Kiowa land is a place emerging from memory; a “remembered earth” in Scott Momaday’s words. Significantly, Momaday, a Kiowa like Geiogamah, and a painter, in that famous passage from *Way to Rainy Mountain* uses visual imagery, stressing shapes and colors (Momaday [1969] 1984, 83). Geiogamah, one of whose main activities is directing a dance group, speaks in terms of movement and beat. Also for Geiogamah, living in Los Angeles, Whitehorse Corner and Apache Y, like Momaday’s Rainy Mountain, are remembered earth, a place of the mind, and “the beat” not only gives rhythm, order and proportion to the chaos of experience, but gives dimension to space, gives body to that place of the mind.

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HI/STORYTELLING IN WALLACE H. TUCKER'S PLAYS

Annamaria Pinazzi

The purpose of this essay is to explore the role of storytelling in the works of Wallace Hampton Tucker, whom I consider one of the most interesting representatives of contemporary Native American drama, although his name is certainly less well-known than others, such as Hanay Geiogamah, Tomson Highway, Diane Glancy, Spiderwoman Theater, or William S. Yellow Robe, Jr. The reason for this inconspicuousness might be ascribed to the fact that playwriting is not Tucker's main activity.

Allow me a brief digression: in 1984 I happened to spend a year in California, on an exchange program between the University of California at Davis and the University of Florence. I had just started my research project on Native American playwrights and was trying to track down information in the Departments of Literature, Performing Arts, Anthropology and Sociology; to my dismay, nobody seemed to have heard of such a thing as Native theater; well, I was just looking in the wrong places: had it occurred to me to drop in at the School of Maths and Physics I would have found a professor of Astrophysics, Wallace Tucker, who had been writing plays since the 1970s, plays that had won competitions and had been performed.

Tucker still considers himself primarily a scientist. He has widely published in the scientific and environmental fields, often in collaboration with his wife, Karen (*Revealing the Universe: The Making of the Chandra X-Ray Observatory*, 2001); however, he has not turned his back on creative writing, and contemplates going back to plays. He shares his time between Harvard, where he teaches, and Bonsall, Southern California, where he completed his studies, started his teaching career and has been living for thirty years. Occasionally, he goes back to visit friends and relations in McAlester, Oklahoma, where he was born and raised within the Choctaw nation. His Indian lineage runs through his paternal side, while his mother is of Scottish-English descent. His grandfather, half-Choctaw, was sent away to Roanoke College, Virginia, and later to Washington, DC, where he took a law degree in about 1900; once back in Oklahoma, he was active in the politics of his tribe. As a legal advisor and a trustee in Washington, he helped return coal and oil rights to the Choctaws. Tucker admits that from his relatives he did not learn much about Choctaws: his grandfather was too old when he met him, and his father (also a lawyer) was more determined to fit into White society than curious about his Indian heritage.



On his own admission, Tucker resorted to reading books, documents and chronicles in order to know more. Something in the past of all the Five Civilized Tribes intrigued him:

[...] what impressed me was that they were trying to evolve a different style of life [...] they did what they could to take the best of both worlds; they led what I'd call a low impact life and yet they were not averse to taking on new techniques. [...] They developed their own technique of farming; they had a system of government which I think was preferable to most of what we have now; [...] they quickly learned the importance of a written language and of the American laws; and this led to an interesting situation: when they were removed to Oklahoma they insisted that they were given title to the land in the very same way that the Americans were given title—with a written patented title—and they gave it to the tribe rather than to the individual, [...] which made it a lot more difficult to steal the land from them. All these tribes in the Southeast [...] took this attitude (showed this ability to take a sort of a middle path) and that always appealed to me as a very sensible way to do things, a way that makes a stronger society as a result. (Tucker 2001)

The necessity to satisfy his curiosity through documentary sources might account for Tucker's preference for writing historical plays, the only exception being *Bonesmoke* (1981), set in present times. His original intention was to write a play about each of the Five Tribes, a project not yet completed: the very first one, *Micco's War* (1974), is about the Creek Indians; of the others, *At the Sweet Gum Bridge* (1976; published 1999) focuses on the life of Choctaw chief Apushmataha; *Now! Walk Through the Dawn* (1980) is the Cherokee play, about Sequoya, and *Fire on Bending Mountain* (1992), set in Oklahoma at the beginning of the 1900s, has Choctaws as the main characters but involves the other Native tribes that expected to be granted a State of their own.

At the Sweetgum Bridge is the only play published so far — included in the anthology of Native playwrights, *Stories of Our Own*, edited by Hanay Geiogamah and Jaye Darby; the same play and “Fire on Bending Mountain” won the Five Civilized Tribes Museum Best Play competition in 1976 and in 1992 respectively.¹

In writing his plays, Tucker assumes the role of both a modern storyteller and a modern historian. A modern storyteller for at least two reasons: the first and more obvious one is that playwriting can be considered (like the writing of a novel or a short story) just another form of storytelling. A non-Indian playwright — David Mamet — would endorse this

¹ It is worth remembering that among the winners of this biennial contest are also Linda Hogan (in 1980 with *A Piece of Moon*) and Diane Glancy (in 1984, and in 1988 with *Stick Horse*).

notion; only instead of “around the Campfire,” as he puts it (Mamet 1982, 22), people gather in a theatre, and the story is expected to be performed according to stage conventions. The second reason has to do with the importance that storytelling proper has in Tucker’s plays, as the following examples illustrate.

In *Fire on Bending Mountain* (act 1, scene 8) Jincy, an elderly Choctaw woman, tells the story of the boy and the rattlesnake to two young mixed bloods, the promising lawyer Wade Folsom, Choctaw, and his friend Alex Posey, Creek, a poet, more reluctant than Wade to accept compromises. The story of the boy who trusts the snake, agrees to help him to get a drink of water and as a reward is bitten by the snake, is told at a crucial point in the action, just before Theodore Roosevelt’s appearance among the ‘aristocracy’ of Muskogee. After the preliminary exchange of courtesies and idle talk about the pleasures of a hunting day in the company of Jack Abernathy, the President comes to the point and bluntly reveals his intention to recognize only one State: the Indian nations will have to accept joint statehood with Oklahoma Territory. To emphasize the analogy between what is happening now and the legend, the sound of a snake rattle opens and ends the act.

Two other stories are told toward the end of the play, when Wade — who feels responsible for the betrayal of his people (having naively fallen into the Whites’ trap), for the death of his friend Alex, and for the failure of his own marriage — is yielding to despair and about to commit suicide. He, sadly, recalls the story of the sacred pole that indicated where the ancient Choctaws should stop and build their nation, a nation now destroyed (Tucker 1992, 111-112). Jincy forces him to listen to another story, regarding Bending Mountain, the place where they are sitting at that very moment: on their arrival in Indian Territory, the people who had survived the Trail of Tears built campfires on that mountain as a beacon to all those who had been forced to leave the old country: “that is my point, you thick-headed Choctaw,” says Jincy, “We are going to have to do it over again. No Great Spirit ever promised the Choctaw that they wouldn’t have to make a new country more than once” (114-115).

The traditional stories told in this play are *exempla* set in thematic relationship with the plot; signalling the symbolic correspondence between events, they mark a continuity between past and present; still endowed with power, they are sources of wisdom and strength.

More directly entwined with dramatic action are the stories told in *Now! Walk Through the Dawn*. In the “Author’s Note” that opens the play, Tucker admits having “taken certain liberties with history in striving to capture the spirit of Sequoya” — first of all having him speak English. He also emphasizes the conflict between Sequoya’s attitude toward life and that of his family and tribesmen, not to speak of White missionaries. Unsatisfied with the ordinary pleasures of family life, with his excellent achievements as a silversmith and blacksmith, Sequoya not only is determined “to catch the wild Cherokee language and tame it” — in his son’s

words — (Tucker 1980, 32) but has a more ambitious dream, to create one Indian country welded by one language. The reason why Indians lack a writing tradition is expressed in two contrasting stories told by Sequoya himself and by his tribesman Turtle:

TURTLE: I heard a man talk one time. A very wise man. He said that, in the beginning, the Great Spirit placed a book in the hands of the Indian, but the Indian was not interested. He left the book lying around while he practiced with the bow and arrow. One day the white man came and stole the book from the Indian. He kept it and made good use of it, so that today it is his by right. And his alone.

SEQUOYA: (*sarcastically*) And the Indian is stuck with the bow and arrow! Ha! You have been talking too long to the black coats. Now! Let *me* tell you a story, about the Fire. It was first lit a long way from here to the south and the west, and the brown people had in those days the creations of man's hands and the imagination of his heart: the crafts of gold and silver, of working precious stones, of carpentry and sculpture, of featherweaving and painting, and yes, of writing. He had it all in those days. It was the work of the Birdsnake Man. Then there came a time when the Birdsnake Man looked into the water and saw his image. He saw that he was growing old and would die if he stayed there. So, he began a long journey, toward the northeast, toward the country of Red Daylight. The journey ended on the rim of some great sea. It ended with a journey to Death's Kingdom with his body changed to light, with his heart and mind changed into a star, that burns forever in the sky. [...] Now! There he is. The evening and the morning star, shining bright. A reminder of the glory that once was and can be anew. [...] (*Mumbling to himself*) Mor-ning star. Star. Star. (32-35)

Sequoya realizes the word is not on his list, and adds it to the syllabary that he is compiling.

In this case, the stories are instrumental to characterization, they shed light on the conflicts between the *personae*, and give direct motivation to the development of action. This last function is confirmed by the ending of the play: even after his success, after his invention of the alphabet has been accepted by everybody (missionaries included — happy that the Bible can be translated into Cherokee), old, weak, and limping, Sequoya proceeds to Mexico to find the roots of the language he believes ancient Indians used to have in common. It is historically proven that he was lame, and died in Mexico, not that his project was carried on by his, until then, skeptical son. Announcing: “the Birdsnake man is rising again” (Tucker 1980, 117), the young man takes upon himself his father's mission but also the role of the mythical figure mentioned in the story of the fire.

The same play offers an example of a further function that storytelling can assume in the plot. At the opening and at the end of the play Sequoya's son-in-law, The Worm, uses his skills as a storyteller to escape danger: by virtue of his capacity to weave stories (no matter what the subject is) he ap-

peases both Whites (Tucker 1980, 15-17) and Comanches (106-107), who from potential enemies are turned into jolly buddies.

A more complex case in point is provided by *At the Sweetgum Bridge*, where the deceased Pushamataha is facing final judgment by Hushookwa, the guardian of the bridge, who has to decide whether to let him cross and reach the Place of Happiness, or send him to the Land of Punishment.

At first sight one might assume that storytelling has no conspicuous role in this play; actually the whole action is set out by Pushamataha's vain attempts to tell the story of his life in his own way, every time stopped by the guardian, who wants to know a different story, in order to find out whether he was a "white man's Indian" (Tucker 1999, 237). The action consists predominantly of a series of flashbacks, in which Pushamataha appears as the brave warrior, the prudent chief, and the loving husband; alternating with episodes showing his friendship and respect for some Whites, President Jackson and the trader John Mack; to end up with his growing disappointment and the sad acknowledgment that he should have been less trustful and tolerant. Also in this play Tucker bends the historical facts: invented are the characters of John Mack and Pushamataha's wife, Tallasha, and some episodes that see Jackson and the Indian chief face-to-face. The central episode (act I, scene 4) is taken up by speech, not storytelling proper, nonetheless an excellent example of rhetorical skill: Tecumseh and Pushamataha challenge each other with their opposite claims, in favor of and against waging war on the Americans. Pushamataha's sensible arguments in favor of peace win against the Crouching Panther's inflamed exhortations to unite and fight.²

Pushamataha's gift is confirmed at the end of the play, when his ability as a storyteller decides his fate. By then, the guardian of the bridge is convinced that "the greatest of the Choctaws" deserves to go to the Place of Happiness, and encourages him to get across the bridge; but Pushamataha stops halfway, claiming the same right that the Great Spirits enjoy — to enter and exit the underworld — so that he can be useful to his people. To the disconcerted guardian, outraged by this immense ambition, Pushamataha calmly proves he is entitled to that honor, not having been born of a woman and a man; and there goes the story of his birth:

Once upon a time, a dark cloud rose from the West. Across its angry face the lightning played while thunder rolled from hill to hill. The

²Well known examples of Indian oratory, both speeches in the play are based on historical reports, especially on those by H.B. Cushman, who in turn relies on the words of an eye-witness, Colonel John Pitchlynn (Cushman [1899] 1999, 248-260). Tucker's other main source for the history and culture of the Choctaws is John R. Swanton (*Myths and Tales of the Southeastern Indians*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, [1929] 1995; and *Source Material for the Social and Ceremonial Life of the Choctaw Indians*. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, [1931] 2001).

cloud climbed in the western sky and spread his blanket over the sky, shutting out the light of the sun. All nature stood apart as this cloud wrapped the earth in midnight gloom. ... Then burst the cloud and rose the wind. Amidst howling winds and driving rain a blinding bolt of lightning hurled itself across the sky and struck a mighty live oak tree. The tree split from top to bottom, and lo!—out sprang Pushamataha, chief of the Choctaws!

“Does not prove you are a Great Spirit. Proves you are a good storyteller,” replies Hushookwah, who has one more piece of evidence that the old chief may have lost his vigor and physical strength, but has certainly preserved all his rhetorical mastery. So much so that to win Hushookwah’s reluctance it is sufficient for him to hint: “Don’t worry about those scoundrels that crossed while you slept. I’ll explain everything to Shilup Chitoh” (Tucker 1999, 285). Hushookwah has no doubts whatsoever that Pushamataha would be able to spin a very interesting story about his negligence, and convince even the Supreme Being, so does not take the risk: Pushamataha will have it his way, and be allowed to remain at the crossing between the upper and the underworld.

In conclusion, Tucker himself proves to be a skillful storyteller because of the varied and effective use of stories in his plays, but he is also a modern historian since his method shows clear links with the prevailing trends in recent historiography. In his ample discussion of the connections between history and fiction, A.S. Byatt has pointed out how biography can be a “hybrid” form, where documentation about real characters and real events does not exclude the insertion of fictional characters and events (Byatt 2001).

To Tucker’s plays we can apply what Hayden White states when drawing distinctions between historical narrative and chronicle, namely that historical narrative stresses time connections — between past, present and future — connections neglected by chronicle; and that chronicle can help explain events, but only historical narrative can lead us to understand the meaning of the past, and this by virtue of the imagination (White 1987). For both these reasons Tucker’s plays can be ascribed to historical narrative.

In his Preface to *Citizens*, Simon Schama remarks that: “to write history without the play of imagination is to dig in an intellectual graveyard” (Schama 1989, xix), a crime which Tucker is certainly not guilty of: he mines a rich seam of evidence and brings the past to life through the exercise of imagination, the first instrument of the writer and the historian, and, perhaps, of the scientist as well.

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N. SCOTT MOMADAY'S *INDOLENT BOYS*:
A MATTER OF BALANCE

Annamaria Pinazzi

The Indolent Boys is Scott Momaday's first experiment with theatre, though not his only one, since it was followed by *Children of the Sun* (first performed at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, in 1996, then in various theatres in the United States) and the eight dialogues between Urset and Yahweh, the "Bear-God Dialogues," making up the first part of *In the Bear's House*, published in 1999.

About his decision to write a play, Momaday comments: "I like writing in different forms. I like trying things I have never tried before. I have wanted to write a play for a long time, and always enjoyed reading plays and seeing plays performed" (Momaday 1994, 28). He acknowledges that his friend, playwright Bernard Pomerance, and director Gitta Honegger had a major part in his decision. Thanks to the latter's initiative, *The Indolent Boys* was given a stage reading in February 1992 at Harvard, sponsored by the Harvard Native American Program. On that occasion, Momaday not only attended the reading but took an active part in it, agreeing to stand in for the actor who should have read Emdotah's part. Two years after that reading, the play premiered at Syracuse Stage in Syracuse, New York, under Honegger's direction. Since then, it has been performed various times in the Southwest, with the author often attending the event.¹

Momaday's attention to the staging of his play stems from the importance he attaches to hearing in the work of a theatre author. In his discussion with the students of the University of Arizona participating in the seminar on "Native American Poetics," organized in 1992 by the Departments of English and Linguistics, Momaday stated: "The reading is actually

¹ In 2002, as a result of the collaboration between the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture, and the Southwest Repertory Theater Company, *The Indolent Boys* was presented during the Santa Fe Indian Market (August 22-25 and 30-31) at the University of New Mexico Rodey Theater, in Albuquerque, with Michael Horse as Emdotah, Leilani Taliaferro as Mother Goodeye and Noah Watts as John Pai; later, at the Kerr Cultural Center, September 19-20 (Arizona State University). On September 13, 2003 in Los Angeles, Wells Fargo Radio Theatre presented a one-hour radio adaptation written by Lori Tubert, starring Michael Horse as Emdotah, Arigon Starr as Mother Goodeye and Zahn McClarnon as John Pai, with a special introduction by Momaday himself.

for the playwright: because hearing [the play] read on stage by professional actors generally is very helpful to you in terms of revision.” As a result, what makes writing a play different from writing a novel is: “you never finish a play” (Momaday 1992). William S. Yellow Robe, Jr — one of the most prominent Native dramatists — would strongly agree with him that playwrighting is a never ending work of revision. On the same subject, Momaday added later a more specific remark: to write for the theatre is different because “you are aware when you’re writing of spacial limitations and of what is possible to get into a single scene. [...] And then you’re aware of the principle of dialogue which is more important in theatre, obviously, than it is in other media” (Momaday 1994, 28).

I would like to emphasize this awareness of the *medium*, since in my opinion — the opinion of a reader who only tries to imagine how the piece works on stage — it is this awareness that accounts for the results Momaday achieves in his first experiment with theatre. At the very end of the play, he has one of the characters commenting:

There was crying, you see, and then there was laughter. And one was not greater than the other, neither more unaccountable or appropriate. When I think about it, you see, I believe it is a matter of balance. Even the stars are balanced, you see, and when they stray or fall, it is all right, for they will seek and find their balance in the great wheels of light. Well, for us, in the camps, that is how to think of the world; *eh neh neh neh!* (Momaday 2007, 71)

My purpose is to illustrate how this concept of balance — here employed to express the Kiowa view of life — is also the pivotal principle underlying the plot’s structure, in a complex pattern that combines Western theatrical tradition, from classical to modern and contemporary drama, with forms distinctive of Native culture.

The play enacts a story based on historical facts that Momaday found documented in the National Archives of the Oklahoma Historical Society but, as he emphasizes in his prefatory note “About the Play,” his main source is Kiowa oral tradition, in which this story “is deeply and ever more dimly embedded,” a story “I have heard [...] from the time I was a child.” In the same introduction to the play, he gives poignant summary of the story:

In 1891 three young boys ran away from the Kiowa Indian Boarding School at Anadarko, Oklahoma, then Indian Territory, after the eldest boy had been whipped by a teacher for fighting. They headed for the camps where their families lived, some forty miles away. Overtaken by a terrible storm, they froze to death. Their frozen bodies were found by their relatives on a small bluff south of present-day Carnegie, Oklahoma. They were buried in the Indian way, simply and without ceremony.

The Kiowas, when they discovered the bodies, were enraged and grief-stricken. To signify their sorrow, the people cut off their hair or parts of their fingers or otherwise scarified themselves. They marched

upon the school, beat up the superintendent, and threatened war. The teacher and “disciplinarian” who administered the whipping hid in the rafters of the school and then disappeared. Mother Goodeye, an aged Kiowa woman with one eye, searched for him. Armed with a knife, she meant to kill him. (5)

In the play it is Mother Goodeye who introduces the matter in the Prologue and draws conclusions in the Epilogue. Actually, the Prologue contains very little information about the action that will follow: only a vague hint at the whipping, whereas most of the old woman's remarks regard the boys' original names, which were meaningful and appropriate, always placing the subject at the center of an intricate net of connections with the present and past experience of the tribe. These Indian names — Mosatse, Koi-khan-hodle, Seta — are compared with the names imposed at school, meaningless and, what's worse, sounding offensive to the ear: “[...] Mosatse is a nicer name than [...] *Jack*, how he is called at the Kiowa Boarding School. *Jack!* It's like a tree cracking, or someone trotting on old, crusty snow. It's not a name, it's a cough.” And about Seta:

Neither a child nor a man—but somehow, it is a strange thing, an *old* man. Think of it! Fifteen years old and an old man! It is a holy thing, you see. An original boy, a boy priest, perhaps too a warrior, a dog soldier like his namesake Set-angia, Sitting Bear. Brave. Brave beyond belief. Brave to madness. And like Set-angia he has white hair! Imagine! Fifteen years old, and he has white hair. Oh, and he has a hole in his head, here. Even Set-angia had no hole in his head—but only the one eye, like me. *Eh neh neh neh*. I never thought of that! Seta and Set-angia, and I. We have holes in our heads, you see. Surely that is a great sign and a powerful medicine. And Seta talks like an old man, foolish and wise like Saynday, like a medicine man. (11-12)

The three children are never a live presence on stage: only the bundles of their bodies will be visible. Never characterized through present action or flashbacks, they are only evoked through the words of other characters, starting from this very beginning, with the old woman pronouncing, explaining, calling their names. Breaking the conventional fourth wall of realistic drama, Mother Goodeye directly involves the audience in this assertion of the boys' existence, asking them to pronounce their name: “Say it, why don't you?” (10).

The dramatic action proper, unfolding between Prologue and Epilogue, is divided into two acts, each consisting of four scenes; most of the scenes are organized according to the principles of the so called well-made play, in which dialogue has first of all to carry out exposition, that is give information about preceding facts, about characters, about the conflicts that will cause action to develop. Such is the case with the first two scenes of act 1. After touching on the exceptionally cold weather and on their worries about the destiny of the escaped children, Barton Wherritt and G.P.

Gregory, a teacher and the superintendent of the school, respectively, express their views about their own 'mission' among the Indians. Wherritt is a staunch supporter of duty, discipline and punishment as means to turn this people of lazy "children" into proper "Americans:" "Indians are children. Children all [...] those indolent thieves and beggars, those dreamers out there in the camps, those poor, *befathered*, war-painted Ghost Dancers are *children!*" He has a very clear-cut purpose: "I want to teach them [...] to figure and keep accounts, to buy and sell. I want them to earn a decent living, earn it, I say. I want to teach them to paint and carpenter and husband and farm. I want them to be, by God, *Americans*, Mr. Gregory! I want them to feel at home in America!" Not aware of the irony in what he is saying, Wherritt seems genuinely surprised by the Indians' opposition: "It is our time, America's time. A time of greatness. Oh that is so clearly, excitingly true! Why can't they see it? Why do they resist that glorious destiny? Why do they resist?" Gregory's disarmingly simple answer: "Because they are different ..." (20), does not imply a deeper understanding on his part. Gregory's view of his role as a teacher is possibly more idealized than that of his colleague: he praises the beauty and goodness of the "whole scheme," of "the beautiful quilt" (22) that is going to be woven throughout the Nation, thanks to the work of people like his model figure, Henry Pratt, the founder of the Carlisle Indian School, whose motto was: "kill the Indian and save the man." But he does not have a higher opinion of Indians, and when he voices his "bitter disappointment and frustration" he uses the most common and cruel stereotypes:

[...] even as I looked in their dark, expressionless faces, they fell short. They couldn't live up to my most modest dreams. [...] It is not in them to be farmers; they have not, in all their generations on the earth, had an agricultural tradition. How can they be doctors, when sickness is their natural state and they fall like flies to every disease they are exposed to? They know nothing of money, they had rather deal in beads and bottles. To them a horse is the difference between rich and poor. (21)

The two teachers also refer to the obsessive interest that their female colleague, Carrie, is showing for Indian matters, and to the great achievement of their best Indian student, John Pai, somebody who could become "apostle to the Indians, the Kiowa messiah," as they mockingly call him (19).

John Pai and Carrie appear in the second scene, where a lively dialogue — John Pai loves playing with words — reveals their reciprocal understanding and attraction. Carrie enthusiastically informs the young man that he has been accepted at a seminary in New York. She is convinced that thanks to his eloquence he "will make a fine preacher," but is also baffled by his deftness with words:

CARRIE

I love to play at words with you. You know that. I love you to play with me ... at words. But sometimes I think I've been wrong to encourage you.

JOHN PAI

I love you to encourage me. (28)

Appropriately, Momaday has John Pai, the young eloquent man who loves playing with words, explain the various nuances in the meaning of the word that appears in the title of the play: "Mr. Wherritt has used the word "indolent" in speaking of the children. It means insensitive to pain, slow to develop, indulging in ease, lazy" (57). The etymology of "indolent," *non dolens*, sounds bitterly ironical when applied to children that have been more than sensitive to pain both physical and psychological, and suffered beating, cold and humiliation before their untimely death.

After the boys' death is reconstructed in the opening scene of act 2 through Mother Goodey's imagination and the official reports that Mr. Gregory and Mr. Wherritt write to the Indian Affairs officers, action develops in scene 2, where Gregory and Wherritt on the one hand and Carrie on the other confirm the different attitude they have toward their charges. The superintendent is convinced that the School dealt with the boys' incident in the best possible way: "We have been thorough, we have been candid and direct, we have been entirely professional, in a word." In an aside, Carrie replies: "We have been unimaginative and insensitive, in two words" (53). After Wherritt's decision to take leave of absence and move away, Carrie refuses to follow him and quit the Southwest which he considers "an unnatural place for a woman. [...] I'm talking about women, womenfolk, Carrie, not about squaws" (50-51). Action ends in scene 4, where the unfortunate superintendent, beaten up by enraged Kiowas, is found by Carrie who reveals the main flaw in her personality. Although an honest, well meaning and sensitive young woman, she is moved more by excitement than by deep reasons:

Have you seen them—the Kiowas? My God, some of them are still milling around the Agency!—raising dust and shouting, breaking things up, oh, it's, it's *wonderful!* We are quite under siege! Oh, I've never seen anything like it. Maybe they will take captives. Do you know that danger tastes something like cracklin' corn bread? (64)

The few words of goodbye that Carrie and John Pai exchange mark the growing distance between them.

So far we have considered dialogue as a means of exposition. To represent the characters' thoughts, their inner conflicts, their secret emotions, theatrical tradition resorts to monologue; so does Momaday in this play, but with interesting devices that tend to preserve the dialogical structure of dramatic speech. He shrewdly gives the speaker an interlocutor, though imaginary: in act 1 scene 2, John Pai voices his sense of alienation, addressing the picture of President Lincoln:

School here, Mr. Lincoln, is a camp where memory is killed [...] Here at the Kiowa Boarding School at Anadarko, Oklahoma, on the banks of the

Washita River, I am taught not to *remember* but to *dismember* myself. Well, Mr. Lincoln, I am beside myself, and I see my reflection in a pool of water or a pane of glass, and I wonder who I am. Was it so with you, Mr. Lincoln? Did you see your reflection and wonder who you were? (24)

In scene 3 of the same act, Carrie confesses her dreams, her hopes, her doubts, reading aloud the letter she's writing to her mother:

When I came here, mama, I was moved by an uncommon zeal. I wanted—and want—so much, more than I can say, to save the Indians. But from time to time my zeal declines, and I become confused. [...] And then, mama, there is a part of me that is, how shall I say, sometimes excited. Do you know what I mean? I'm sure you do, though we've never talked about it. I am a grown woman, and I am hale and alone and restless. (35-36)

A somewhat opposite solution is the use of tableaux, of silent scenes, such as when John Pai, after his talk to Mr. Lincoln, expresses his divided self through a mimed action, first paying respect to the medicine wheel, then, after a sudden change of attitude, standing to attention as if he were inspected at school (25). A similar case occurs in the second act, at the conclusion of scene 2, when John Pai points with a stick to his first name, that he has just written on the blackboard surrounded by other names imposed on the Indian boys; as he explains to Carrie, he is “counting coup,” that is killing his white identity (58).

A more substantial use of mime is the parallel, independent action that two schoolchildren carry on throughout the play. Unnoticed by the other characters, seen but not heard by the audience, they mostly sit at their desks without taking part in the main action, just observing events with more or less interest — not bothered by what the white characters do; involved when their tribesmen are around. “Conspicuously absent” (64) at the beginning of the last scene, when Carrie and Mr. Gregory report on the Kiowas' violent reaction and Wherritt's escape, the children reappear only when John Pai comes on stage ready to take the train to New York. They are still present throughout the Epilogue, a silent chorus accompanying the chorus leader, Mother Goodeye, who sums up the aftermath of the violent reaction and sets facts in a wider perspective: more terrible tragedies followed the case of the escaped boys; when she mentions the epidemic of measles, the children appear with red spots on their faces. Finally, after Mother Goodeye's recollection of the accident that happened to the driver of the hearse and caused laughter during the funerals, the children follow her, dancing and cackling like her, in a sort of confirmation, in terms of performance, of what she has just stated about life: life is sorrow and laughter, and the play combines tragedy and humor.

Apart from the presence of a prologue, of an epilogue (a proper *exodos*), and of a chorus, there is at least another aspect to this play that reminds us of Greek tragedy: the crucial episodes are never seen, they are

told: the death of the children, the Kiowas' reaction and John's final decision to leave the train and run away to the camps are all events that are only reported. Momaday comments: "things like these are things that you can show, things in words. It's not necessary to project an image, a physical image, so long as you build one in the mind" (Momaday 1994, 28).

The possibility of showing things in words and the creative role of imagination lead us to consider two major elements relating this play to recent Native dramatic art, namely storytelling and ceremony.

As for the first element, Mother Goodeye is a storyteller. The opening words of her prologue, "They were camping . . .," are the conventional formula with which Kiowa begin telling a story — as Momaday attests in *The Names* and *Children of the Sun*. She is a compulsive storyteller: with difficulty she restrains herself from threading one story after another. She's repeatedly forced to recognize: "but that's another story. I tell it to you sometime." The stories told by her, by John Pai and by Emdotah, though brief (another case of awareness of the *medium*) and without disrupting the rhythm of action, have the important role of relating the present experiences of a particular individual to the past and communal experience of the tribe. Instances include the story that John tells President Lincoln of the gaming wheel and the twin brothers, Kiowa cultural heroes (24); the story about the origin of the Kiowas told by Mother Goodeye (60); the story of Set-angia, the great warrior chief of the *Kaitsenko*, the dog soldiers, told by the three characters together (60); finally, told by Emdotah, the story of Set-angia's son (61).

As for the ceremonial element of drama, two scenes in this play are exemplary: one in each act, interrupting the flow of action, they are set in a different dimension — "a dream dimension," stressed by the sound of "flute and voices echoing" (38, 59). In both scenes, while John Pai is asleep, dreaming, and the bodies of the three dead children lie on the floor, wrapped in blankets, "like mummies," Emdotah and Mother Goodeye take it in turns to recite verses that have the rhythm and repetitious pace of a prayer. In the first one (act 1, scene 4), like in the Prologue, they are mainly statements of the boys' eternal presence, made possible by the creative power of imagination:

MOTHER GOODEYE

I cannot see them [...] But they are here, aren't they?

EMDOTAH

If they are not here, grandmother, then neither are we.

The speech takes on more and more the tone of a chant:

MOTHER GOODEYE

Here is Seta, your favorite son, Emdotah.

EMDOTAH

Here sleeping. I cannot see his face, whether or not it is sweet and peaceful, his white, wounded head. Oh, my son!

MOTHER GOODEYE

Here is the son of Territory Horse and the son of Muchacho. Here sleeping. Oh, my grandsons! (38-39)

until the children join in Emdotah's invocation of Darkness, and with Mother Goodeye and John Pai repeat "thanks" in Kiowa:

Darkness,
 You are, forever.
 Aho.
 You are, before the light.
 Aho.
 You stain the long ledge above the seep at Leaning Walls.
 Aho.
 You are the smoke of silence burning
 Aho.
 Above, below, beyond, among the glittering things, you are.
 Aho.
 The days descend in you,
 yesterday,
 today,
 the day to die.
 Aho.
 Aho.
 Aho.
 Aho. (40)

Parallel to this scene is the grieving done in the traditional way in scene 3 of the second act which follows the same pattern — the same dreamlike atmosphere, the same repetition of concepts by rote. What is added is the detailed description of the death of the three boys, particularly the death of Seta, on whom the teachers had put all the blame. Accused by them of being a coward, here, through his father's imagination, he is given back his dignity:

EMDOTAH

And then, stiffening, the words like twigs and dead leaves in his mouth, he taunts the night and the death that are upon him. "Come," he says, beckoning, "come on! I have no shield and no weapons, but I have the name of the bear, and I have words of scorn and shame to heap upon you. *Haw!* I sing my death song: I am ashamed for you. You killed my brothers so easily, without sorrow, without asking their forgiveness, and now you would kill me without honor or dignity or sorrow. Shame! You do not beg my forgiveness. But *haw!* I forgive you and make you ashamed. You are forgiven!"—And my son lies down and dies in the snow. (63)

What I trust emerges from this survey of the formal aspects of *The Indolent Boys* is Momaday's achievement in the craft of writing a play; but

I am sure that whoever is familiar with his work cannot fail to recognize also that constellation of motives whose masterful interweaving is so typically Momadayan: the role of words, of sound and silence; the value of names; the link between present and past kept alive by memory, between individual and tribal experience; above all, the strict correlation between facts and imagination, reality and dream.

Moreover, if we consider the text of *The Indolent Boys*, its very layout, numerous other similarities with the rest of Momaday's writings can be found, such as a dedication, notes with anthropological explanations or references to personal experience, in a game of innovation and continuity that is so characteristic of Momaday's whole work; but probably Mother Goodeye would say: "that is another story."

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MOMADAY'S CHILDREN OF THE SUN:
MANY STORIES IN ONE PLAY

Annamaria Pinazzi

Scott Momaday's first play, *The Indolent Boys*, is based on a tragic event that happened in the winter of 1891, when three boys who had escaped from the Kiowa Indian Boarding School at Anadarko, Oklahoma, were found frozen to death. To the children of that school, among them his grandmother, Momaday has dedicated his second play, *Children of the Sun*, first performed in 1997. The typescripts of both texts were kindly made available to me by the author before their publication. In the case of *Children of the Sun*, I was intrigued by its subtitle, "a story and a play." Storytelling is a common feature in Native American drama, and it plays an important role also in *The Indolent Boys*, but in the typescript of *Children of the Sun* the whole text is introduced as a hybrid form between tale and drama.

In the typescript an "Afterword" announced Danièle Laruelle's French translation of the "story and play." Published by Seuil in 2003, *Les enfants du soleil*, appeared four years before its English text. In the volume, *Three Plays*, published by Oklahoma University Press, *Children of the Sun* is sandwiched between *The Indolent Boys* and *The Moon in Two Windows* (a screenplay that on its dust jacket Bernard Pomerance, author of *The Elephant Man*, rightly calls "simply a masterpiece"), a companion piece to *The Indolent Boys* which explores the complex, contradictory, certainly not easily dismissible experience of the Carlisle Indian School.

As a result of this publication history, three different versions of *Children of the Sun* were available to me, and I think a comparison between the three makes an interesting story in itself — one more, to be added to the "many" I refer to in the title of this essay that deliberately echoes the Prologue to *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, where Momaday defines the journey of the Kiowas from Montana to Oklahoma as "many journeys in the one" (Momaday [1969] 1984, 4).

But between these two works there is a more substantial connection. In *Children of the Sun*, Momaday weaves together two sets of stories: a story written by his daughter Cael — that tells of Aila, the girl who brought color into the world — is intertwined with stories belonging to the Kiowa oral tradition. Aila dreams of a world of colors, and from her dream brings the tools to transform the gray world into which she was born: she dips her long hair into different pots and uses it as an all-reaching multicolored paintbrush. Then, she is identified with the beautiful baby girl who, in the Kiowa cosmogonic myth, is chosen to become the Sun's wife and



mother of the boy who, playing with his gaming wheel (the same toy-weapon that killed his mother), splits himself in two. He becomes the Twins, the hero protectors of the Kiowa, and will forever assist his people — also “children of the sun” — in the form of the Talyi-day, the Boy-Medicine. These traditional stories are familiar to the reader of Momaday’s works, in particular *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, where they correspond roughly to sections IV–XI. There are slight changes: in the play (scene 2), the baby girl’s cradle is taken outside by Grandmother Spider instead of “by a friend of the family” (Momaday [1969] 1984, 22). After the killing of the snake, that they later learn to have been their grandfather, the twins bury him by the river, covering him with leaves — and “this is their coming of age,” comments Grandmother Spider (Momaday 2007, 95). In *The Way to Rainy Mountain* it is the Grandmother who is buried in the same way (34). With the trait that is so typical of Momaday’s work, and that could be summarized as continuity and variation, the same story is given new life by a different context or medium. The story of the Twins appears also in *The Indolent Boys*, where it is briefly referred to by John Pai (Momaday 2007, 24) but here it is the main subject matter, the kernel of the plot.

Children of the Sun, in its typescript form, and *Les enfants du soleil* have the same basic content and structure, with a few significant differences. The typescript opens with a note “About the Kiowas” comprising pieces of information about their history, and the role of the sun, the buffalo, the horse, the dog, the spider and the snake in their culture. In a short “Prologue” an unknown narrator then pronounces the set formula, the usual beginning of a Kiowa story — the way in which *The Indolent Boys* and *The Names* also begin: “Akeah-de. Listen! They were camping.” After this he introduces the official narrator, announcing: “And always, Grandmother Spider tells the story” (typescript, 2).

The action develops in six episodes, called Chapters and separated by Page Breaks. The chapters have a title: “The Sun Will Do Her Such Good,” “The One Who Brings the Light,” “Aila and the Sun,” “The Boy Twins,” “The Children of the Sun” and “The Boy-Medicine.” A Postlogue, almost an exact repetition of the Prologue, ends the play symmetrically: the last words to be heard are the onomatopoeic lines of the same nursery rhyme Grandmother Spider recites at the beginning:

Crangie, crangie, spit and spangie,
 Coola, coola, coola coo,
 Windy, windy, cold and sandy,
 Blowtha, blowtha, blowtha, BOO! (typescript, 2, 16)

All action is announced, described, summarized by Grandmother Spider, who also comments on it and directs it, as when she cuts across the expressions of endearment Aila’s parents use towards their child: “This is a kind of yuckiness, isn’t it? I mean, lovey-dovey, sweetsie-neatsie, cute-sie-tootsie. Eck! Let’s get on with it, shall we?” (typescript, 3). Her narrating is interrupted by speech and action from other characters only when she decides to give them the floor: “Tell us, Aila, about your dream,” and again: “Aila, tell us your story” (typescript, 5).

As in other plays by Native authors based on traditional myths, for example in Hanay Geigamah's *Coon Cons Coyote* [1973] and Gerald Bruce Miller's *Changer* [1976], the narrative structure of storytelling is preserved: the narrator is a constant, dominant presence on stage, with the additional role of one or more characters, and of director.

The French translation also includes the Introductory note ("À propos des Kiowas," with drawings of each of the six animals mentioned) and all the other sections: each episode retains its title ("Le Soleil lui fera le plus grand bien," "Celle qui apporte la lumière," etc.) but the generic definitions (Prologue, Postlogue, Chapters) are missing. The result is a marked sense of *continuum*, reinforced by the absence of page numbers. It is the story form that has priority, the fluency of the tale; the medium is a book, an illustrated book for children, with only a few words or lines per page. Different type-settings and different fonts indicate that words are to be spoken by different characters, and distinguish the dialogue from the summaries and the invitations to the characters to speak. To the figurative quality of the printed words one must add the strong impact of the drawings by the artist Federica Matta: of various sizes and textures, they range from sketchy black and white figures to full page and double page illustrations in bright, primary colors. The effect is of words in movement and dancing images, of action developing under the eyes of the reader-spectator, a play on the stage of a whirling, multidimensional page.

Coming to the final, or at least the most recent, version, the title of the volume in which it is included, *Three Plays*, is itself significant. In the text of *Children of the Sun*, the subtitle "a story and a play" no longer appears; then, after a black and white reproduction of an acrylic by Momaday himself, representing the Talyi-dai, we find the sections that one expects to see at the beginning of a written play. Instead of the introductory note about the Kiowas, we find one "About the Play," followed by a "Performance History" and a list of "Characters." The note "About the Play" (77) focuses on the "principles of performance" and finds them in "wonder, delight, beauty, and fantasy" — principles that Momaday finds necessary to meet the "imagination of children." More specific directions are reserved for the setting and the music: "There is a central tree, a bush to one side, two or three tepees." A special place is assigned to Grandmother Spider, "a kind of podium, from which she sings, prays, tells stories, mimes." To mark it as her site, a web can be drawn across it. The music should be flutes and drums (and it is worth noting that in the play's première at the Kennedy Center in 1997 it was composed by the eminent musician and flute-player Carlos Nakai). The performance history also informs us that in a more recent presentation of the play at the Barter Theatre, Abingdon, Virginia, in 2000, dance had an important role. The list of characters in a play is an additional means to convey directions; here it contains scanty information about their traits: only their approximate age is given, with the exception of Grandmother Spider, defined also as "crotchety, clownish, and wise." Instead, the list includes further suggestions about the use of voice-over for Aila's parents and the possibility for the same ac-

tor to play more roles, such as the Sun and the First Twin, or, regardless of gender, Aila and the Second Twin (79).

Like the introductory sections, the body of the text respects the conventional layout of a play. The action is divided into twelve scenes: the original six episodes are doubled by splitting some of them into two or three. Moreover, a new episode is added, scene 10, that adapts to the plot of the play one of Momaday's favourite stories, included in *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (section XIII). It is the story of the arrowmaker who saves himself and his wife, by deducing that the man outside his tepee is an enemy, because he doesn't understand the arrowmaker's warning words in Kiowa. But, instead of the husband and wife of that story, the characters in the play are Grandmother Spider and First Twin.

Each scene opens with proper stage directions, as, for example, those for scene 1, which replace *incipit* and prologue of the preceding versions: "*The curtain comes up on a Kiowa camp at early morning [...] There are sounds of birds and activity, the Kiowa language. The form of a giant spider appears in the indefinite light at the back of the stage. Grandmother Spider appears*" (80). The first words to be pronounced are those of Grandmother Spider chanting her nursery rhyme and calling for the children's attention before she starts to tell Aila's story: "*Eh neh neh neh. Listen, children. I will tell you a story.*" At this point Momaday introduces a variation that occurs again further on: Grandmother's narration is taken up by other characters (here just the voices of Aila's parents) who either alternate or say the same line simultaneously, with a chorus effect:

GRANDMOTHER SPIDER:

Well, there was a handsome couple ...

WOMAN'S VOICE:

a young man

MAN'S VOICE

and his wife. The wife gave birth to a beautiful child

WOMAN'S VOICE:

a girl child whose skin was very clear and whose eyes were very bright.

WOMAN'S and MAN'S VOICE:

She was the most beautiful child in the camp. (80)

The three characters take it in turn to speak throughout the scene. The same pattern can be found in scene 8, where the task of telling the story is not shared with Grandmother Spider but is wholly given over to the twins.

More often than not, Grandmother Spider's summaries are turned into stage directions. For example:

I made my way to the opening of their tepee, and raised the flap, and looked in. [...] And the baby gurgled at me, and her mother exclaimed, "She knows you, Grandmother!" (typescript, 4)

becomes:

Grandmother Spider angles her way to the opening of the prominent teepee. She raises flap and looks in. [...] Baby squeals, gurgles.

WOMAN'S VOICE

See, she knows you, Grandmother! (81)

When, like in this case, the earlier scripts contain dialogue, this is kept unaltered; if it is introduced or prompted by Grandmother Spider — “This is Aila’s story,” or “Aila, tell us your story” (typescript, 5) — her words are crossed out and simply replaced by the name of the speaker (84). In a few instances the dialogue is enlarged by short additions, fillers typical of colloquial speech: “Yes, it’s true;” “oh, I don’t know” (82); in other cases, deictics are added; for example, in the First Twin’s speech before dying: “As you see [...] I am no longer here. I am here (*Indicates bundles*)” (102). All these changes tend to enhance the dialogic structure, the interplay of voices.

In keeping with this general principle of dramatizing the tale, some of Grandmother Spider’s summaries are cut (usually when connecting two scenes), and the effect is to increase suspense. This happens in scene 4, which opens with Aila standing before the Sun, without Grandmother Spider’s explanation of how she gets to meet the Sun in her dream (typescript, 7). Likewise, scene 5 ends dramatically with the Sun’s scream after he has struck Aila dead with the gaming wheel. In the typescript this is followed by Grandmother Spider’s explanation of the consequences of her loss:

There was darkness everywhere, hiding the light and the colors Aila had brought to the world. But you know, in the darkness, the Moon rises, right where Aila had fallen. [...] The Moon is Aila, softer than the Sun and more beautiful to behold. The Sun follows her, and brings her bright colors back to the world every day, but he can never catch her. (typescript, 10)

Finally, the Postlogue becomes scene 12, which provides the connection between myth and reality: Grandmother Spider’s explanation about Aila having become the Moon is inserted here, before the twins confirm their role as protectors of the Kiowa people. The shift to the present, instead of through a simple change of tenses (as in the typescript and French translation) is brought alive by a boy, to whom Grandmother Spider addresses her explanations: “Look, little one. The moon, the full moon. [...] That is Aila, you know. Don’t you know? The one who brought the light, who gave color to the world” (103).

To conclude, I am convinced that the three texts of *Children of the Sun* put together would make a perfect crash course to teach how to transform narrative into drama, and vice-versa. On the other hand, my first contention that *Children of the Sun* is a text challenging definition seems to apply to both the typescript and the two published versions: a pliable ghost script, the typescript is the source for both tale (the children’s book) and play. With few changes it becomes a story — but a story in action — and a play — but a play that incorporates storytelling.

What is certain is that Momaday's commitment to memory and imagination will give us ever new surprises, as the end of *Children of the Sun* implies. Before leaving the stage, Grandmother Spider remarks:

It happened a long time ago, when dogs could talk. And as you and I know, little one, they still do. Why, this very morning my little dog Sim-sim said to me ... oh, but that is another story, don't you know? Tell it to you sometime. (104)

Like all his grandmothers, a born storyteller, Momaday always has up his sleeve another story, to tell us sometime. We can only try to guess whether it will be in printed words, drawn in black and white, painted in full color, or brought alive by a human voice.

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RECLAIMING HISTORY THROUGH FICTION: LINDA HOGAN'S "THAT HORSE"

Gaetano Prampolini

In Chickasaw poet, fiction writer and essayist Linda Hogan's *Red Clay. Poems and Stories* (1991) the text of an early, seven-page long story titled "That Horse" is preceded by an almost as long paratext comprising Hogan's less than three-page long "Introduction. My Father's Story: The Black Horse" and the text, four-and-half-pages long, of her father's, Mr Charles Colbert Henderson's, story.¹ This essay originates from our perplexity at reading in Hogan's "Introduction" that, through their respective stories, "together [she and her father] created an illustration of how the oral becomes the written" (Hogan 1995, 43). We will briefly discuss this declaration before examining the two stories in order to see how "That Horse" carries out Hogan's intention, which, as she recalled in an interview, was "to show the history of the time. [...] My father's story was personal. I wanted to expand his story to show the historical circumstances" (Schöler 1988, 113-114).

A characteristic aspect of American Indian writing — one that has undoubtedly concurred in creating the keen interest this luxuriant branch of contemporary American literature has elicited worldwide — is, as we know, its strong connection with "primary orality, the orality of cultures untouched by literacy" (Ong 1982, 6). While evincing the author's ease with and, quite often, mastery in handling Western literary forms, modes and genres, an American Indian writer's work may in fact owe a great deal of its effectiveness and significance to the writer's use — more or less overt, more or less extensive — of materials (and/or forms) which usually belong to the cultural heritage of the nation he/she is a member of or descended from, and which, preserved through oral transmission, he/she assumes either directly "by word of mouth" (as, for instance, is the case with at least some of the Kiowa stories N.S. Momaday wrote down in *The Way to Rainy Mountain*) or indirectly, through some written rendition (as, for instance, with the stories of the Northwest Indians that D'Arcy McNickle wove into

¹ Hogan had first published the two stories in 1985; see Hogan, Linda and Charles C. Henderson, *That Horse*. Acoma, NM: Pueblo of Acoma Press. Whether this publication already included Hogan's "Introduction," we have been unable to find out.

his novel, *The Surrounded*). Nothing of the sort, though, no connection with the pristine orality of Chickasaw (or any other Indian nation's) culture, is evident in either of the stories we are dealing with.

Nor, in our view, is there anything that could be taken as illustration of a transition from "the oral" to "the written" in Hogan's "That Horse," which — her "Introduction" makes it very clear — came into being as a *written* story, alternative to another *written* story, her father's "Black Horse." It is, then, only to "The Black Horse" that "the oral" Hogan is referring to might apply. And it does. Not a few, in fact, are the indications of an oral matrix that may be culled from the text we read: repetitions of the just-said,² homely vocabulary, absence of anachronies and, among the several characteristics of orally based expression described by Walter J. Ong, the "additive rather than subordinative" style and (arguably) the "situational rather than abstract" thinking (Ong 1982, 37-38 and 49-57).

Mr Henderson, as we know from what Hogan said to an interviewer, was "a good storyteller, he [would] spend all of his time telling stories once he [was] given the opening. Any story. Army stories. Childhood ones ..." (Bruchac 1987, 128). On turning writer, however, he appears to have been quick in realizing that "The Black Horse" could not be a sheer transcription of one of his oral performances, that his new medium had requirements of its own to be met. To suggest this is not only his awareness that some notions and actions familiar to his audiences were unlikely to be so to his readers,³ but also what can be inferred from something his daughter says in her "Introduction."

"[My father]," says Hogan almost at the outset, "wrote down the story of the black horse, and turned it over to me. I suspect it was to make sure that I got it right at least once, because [...] I have my own memory of the stories and how I heard them," and a little farther on, "He thought," she adds, "I would 'fix' [his story] for him." (Hogan 1995, 41). However, it is not at the slight inconsistency of the two statements where we want to pause. Nor at the fact that the daughter did neither of the things her father expected from her, since she "laid aside [his] story in order to get close to what [she] wanted to say" and did refrain from "fixing" it, feeling that "[The Black Horse] was whole in itself" (Hogan 1995, 42 and 41). What inspires attention here is the decision of entrusting one's story to *writing*, made by someone who had grown up in rural Indian Oklahoma (which at the time was, in all likelihood, still a largely residual oral milieu), someone we know to have been a good and irrepressible storyteller.⁴

² On one page (Hogan 1995, 46), along with an interjection so frequent in speech as "Well," we find two quasi-*verbatim* repetitions: "[Shorty] got gentle" / "he was very gentle;" "When it came time to break Shorty to ride" / "The time came to ride Shorty."

³ Hence the explanations of what "Boot" and "Halter Broke" meant in the Oklahoman horse lexicon of the 1920s — both words curiously capitalized (as also are "Buck and Pitch," two characteristic predicates of horses) (Hogan 1995, 45 and 46).

⁴ It will not seem too far-fetched to recall, by way of contrast, Sherwood Anderson's father, a spellbinding storyteller in comparably residually-oral communities

By writing his story down and, furthermore, by wishing it to be “fixed” (which we take to mean “cosmetically touched-up, given an appropriately literary decorousness”) by his writer-daughter, Mr Henderson has crossed the boundary line between a cultural environment where the customary way to keep a story alive is through the incremental process of repeated storytelling and one where a story can be preserved through *one* writing. From a milieu in which stories are communal heirlooms he has stepped into the land of authorship — and of literary ownership, something here endorsed by his daughter’s, a published author’s, words: “His story is his. My story is mine” (Hogan 1995, 43).

We will tackle the other transition in our topic — the transition from the father’s “personal” to the daughter’s historically oriented story — by turning once more to Hogan’s “Introduction,” for an important clue as to why she felt she had to write “That Horse.” To prove her point that “fiction” tells (or approaches) truth as mere “fact” does not (a point not unlike the one about the truth of art beautifully made so long ago by St. Augustine, with the paradox of the painted horse, false and true at the same time, and true on the strength of its being a false horse⁵), Hogan reviews the several strands of inspiration she interwove in her story to create a fiction that “would make truth out of [fact]” (Schöler 1988, 111): her father’s story of the black colt named Shorty, which was the very spark to her imagination, but also her recollections of places cherished as a child and an adolescent in Oklahoma, her memories of her father’s bronc riding and her uncle’s being a farrier for rodeo horses, as well as what she remembered hearing inside and outside her family circle about the intimidations and acts of violence suffered by Oklahoma Indians during the oil-boom of the 1920s.

Mr Henderson’s “Black Horse” is about something that happened to its autodiegetic narrator as a boy.⁶ “At the age [he] thought [he] was pretty good and in control of everything” (Hogan 1995, 47-48), he made bold to ride Shorty, the “stocky and strong” little black horse, “slick and shiny like silver” (46 and 45), that his father had got in a barter with a horse trader, raised with the most loving care, broken to ride without the least

of late nineteenth-century rural Northern Ohio, to whom, his son regrets in one of his autobiographies, “it never occurred in all his life [that his stories] might have been written” (Anderson 1924, 73).

⁵ *Soliloquia* 2 (10). In *Patrologia latina*, edited by J.-P. Migne, 32.895. Paris: Garnier 1844-1864.

⁶ Although the story leaves no doubt as to its autobiographical, true-to-fact, nature, the term “narrator” stresses not unduly, we think, Mr Henderson’s distancing himself from his story by having his narrating self addressed by another character not as “Charles, Charlie or Chuck,” but as “Pete” (Hogan 1995, 49). It is worthwhile noticing, at the same time, that the naming of the narrator is performed not by a fictive character, but by a real person Hogan mentions in her “Introduction” (Hogan 1995, 48).

resistance, and indeed with the promptest docility, on the part of the creature, and elected as his own, personal, “working and riding horse” — the only horse on the farm, underlines the narrator, that “[dad] wouldn’t let us kids [or anybody else] to have anything to do with” (47 and 46). What the narrator discovers, though, when he gets on Shorty to ride him, probably to emulate his oldest brother, the best “bronc rider and horse trainer as there was in that country at that time” (46), is that the “one man horse” (47) is possessed of a very different disposition from the absolutely gentle one he has shown all his life. Shorty soon gets out of his control, and it is only his father’s timely intervention that extricates him and Shorty from the frightful predicament. Back in the barn, the narrator takes “as a man should” the thrashing dad applies with Shorty’s reins to the seat of his pants because, he remembers, “I knew I deserved [it].” And that he had well learned his lesson is made clear in the next paragraph:

Later on we were moving a herd of cattle from the river bottom during a flood. We had been gathering them since four in the morning. We had them all and were moving them to higher ground and dad rode up beside me and smiled at me and said, “Would you like to ride Shorty?” I knew it was supposed to be funny, but somehow it was not. I told him that I would never ride Shorty again. He laughed and rode on up the side of the cattle. (48)

This paragraph rings as a perfect closure to the story of Shorty and his reckless young rider: what it says and how it says it make the story sound complete. But Mr Henderson’s text continues for four more paragraphs. The consolatory and/or encouraging words, “Everything is all right, Pete,” addressed to the boy by the man who is helping with the cattle and has just heard the exchange between father and son, are taken up by the narrator: “Everything was all right.” This evaluation concerns the successful driving of about 400 head of cattle out of the bottom before the flood arrived, but, at the same time, encompasses the nostalgic recollection of that entire period of his life the narrator goes on with: although work on the farm “got harder and the hours got longer,” he and the other kids would never be denied by dad the things they liked, fishing, hunting and swimming, provided they were back at the set time. Which they always were — as close as they could, since nobody on the farm owned a watch (this being, let’s notice in passing, the only detail revealing, perhaps unwittingly, that not exactly “everything was all right” on that Chickasaw farm). The text’s last sentence shifts the focus back on Shorty, to inform us that he “lived a long life and died of old age” (Hogan 1995, 49).

We wonder if this final half-a-page of Mr Henderson’s text is not a rather irrelevant coda to the story he set down to write. Having in mind a dictum by such a fine master of the shorter forms of fiction as Katherine Anne Porter — that any story worth its while should have a meaning, a point and a shape — it is certainly neither meaning nor point we will find

lacking in “The Black Horse.” We actually enjoy how deftly Mr Henderson succeeds in making his story an illustration of several points, such as, in turn, understanding and cooperativeness between men and animals, equine amenability and volition, youthful unruliness and recklessness justly corrected. As to shape, however, the story can hardly be found satisfactory: its half-a-page long coda will be felt to be somewhat irrelevant — even when we will have taken it to mean something else beside the narrator’s self-indulgence in the pleasing recollection of olden days.

The ending of “The Black Horse” gave pause to Hogan as well. What perplexed her, however, was not the possibility of its being an inert addition to the story. What she noticed, she remembers in her “Introduction,” was that “in the end there was a difference in what my father said and what I had heard in the past” (Hogan 1995, 42) — namely, that not “everything,” but actually very little, “was all right” for Indians at that time in that part of the country.

Hogan’s observation opens the possibility for a different reading of the ending of “The Black Horse,” one corroborated by what Hogan herself has remarked more than once,⁷ on the way oppressed, exploited, marginalized people take their condition. Led to believe that their lot is the outcome of their own several inadequacies, they take it fatalistically, for granted and as unchangeable, and prefer to keep silent about it. Or, we suggest, they euphemize it, as Mr Henderson might have been doing at the end of his story, which might then reflect the remotion or suppression (we cannot say whether conscious or unconscious) of his memories of those very bad times.

One pivot of Hogan’s poetics is her firm belief in the “connectedness” of day-to-day events and history. She thinks of “[her] work as part of the history of [her] tribe and as part of the history of colonization everywhere” (Hogan 1987, 233) — a definition the reader of her novels, from *Mean Spirit* (1990) to *Power* (1998), will find altogether fitting. No wonder, then, that her aim in “That Horse” was “to expand [her father’s] story to show the historical circumstances ... to show the history of the time.”

To this effect, Hogan devises a narrative strategy which consists in timing the reader’s understanding on Will’s, the young protagonist’s, gradual realization of what a deadly dangerous thing being an Indian has become in that part of Oklahoma during the 1920s — a strategy in which an essential role is played by the internal focalization through Will almost uninterruptedly adopted by the heterodiegetic narrator, but also by this *in medias res*, enigmatic beginning:

The dream men wore black and they were invisible except for the outlines of their bodies in the moonlight and the guns at their sides. Will walked slowly behind them until their horses turned and began to pursue him. He could not run and they had no faces in the dark. (Hogan 1995, 51)

⁷ See, for instance, Hogan 1987, 237.

Will has seen armed riders, clad in black, stop by night at his place and his father feed and talk with them but, when he has his nightmarish dream, he does not know who they are and what they are up to. Nor does the reader, until Will has discovered that adult males of the Indian families (his own included) have turned night riders to protect their properties and their persons from those whites who are stopping at nothing to make the Indians give up their land rights so they can have a free hand in the exploitation of the oil fields. Only then can the reader also see how Will's nightmare is a consequence of the anxiety building up in the boy's waking hours, as he perceives what a nightmare life has become for Indians.

A much rounder character than Pete, his counterpart (and, presumably, age-peer) in Mr Henderson's story, Will shares some typical traits with a host of adolescent characters in world and, particularly, American fiction, that are facing a momentous crisis, usually the first in their lives. Will is sensitive to the world around him and articulate in rendering his impressions, as suggested, for instance, by tropes such as: on awaking from his dream, "his heart was pounding like the horses' hooves," as he goes outdoors, "mist was snaking over the land between trees and around the barn [...] ghosts were flying from the breathing mouth of horses" (Hogan 1995, 51). Confined by his young age to the role of spectator, he is as keen an observer as attentive (if often unintended) a listener. He may not grasp as yet why, to persuade his father to take Shorty, the horse trader reminds him that "[a]n Indian around here has need of a black horse" (52), but what was meant by the man becomes clearer and clearer to Will as he keeps hearing of the murderous horrors perpetrated against the Indians and of the nightly patrolling and the daylight watches by which the Indians are trying to prevent them. After the disgraceful outcome of his act of "pride and vanity" on the "beautiful summer day" he decides to appear at the rodeo riding Shorty (the horse that has been "raised to be invisible in the dark" [56]), "Will sat over his schoolbook and thought what his act might have cost" (56 and 57). How different is the import of the lesson learned in the two stories by each protagonist needs no stressing. Will, says the narrator, "was learning too young about fear and hatred" (57) and he weighs his prank on the scale of the historical circumstances. How heavy a burden must he have found it is suggested by the ending, when his father offers him to ride Shorty. We are not told (and it is not important to know) whether Will accepts the offer, but the fact that everything around him immediately takes on a smiling countenance might signify a conscience relieved of a tormenting sense of guilt.

"That Horse" is by no means a remake of "The Black Horse." Hogan has every reason for saying "His story is his. My story is mine." We may add that the two stories fall into quite different narrative subgenres: the father's is an anecdote, the daughter's a short story fitting squarely within the tradition of American fiction writing.

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THE GROWTH OF LUCI TAPAHONSO'S POETIC VOICE

Gaetano Prampolini

"Writing a poem," said Luci Tapahonso in an interview, "is a lot of work for me. [...] for] I really want to make it succinct and powerful" (Moulin 1991, 16). Documenting the fastidious workmanship implied by these words will be the first object of our observations, whose overall purpose, however, is to outline the main variations in form and style that this poet's work presents through the six books she has published to date.¹

Tapahonso's first book, *One More Shiprock Night*, consists of fifty-seven poems, eight of which (among them two of her most deservedly famous, "Hills Brothers Coffee" and "Seasonal Woman") reappear in one or more of her subsequent books, but in forms that keep being revised till a satisfactory trim is reached.² Even if it may be judged rather raw work on some accounts, *OMSN* has served as a rich lode to draw ore from, and one may wonder why the author did not revive a larger number of its poems in her later books. As the following examples ought to show, even if the revisions do not affect the overall meaning of a text, they are far from being insignificant.

Let's begin by comparing the text of "It Was a Special Treat" in *OMSN* with its new version in *SD*:

Trips to Farmington were a special treat when we were children. Sometimes when we didn't get to go along,	Trips to Farmington were a special treat when we were children. Some- times when we didn't get to go along, we
---	--

¹The titles of Tapahonso's books will be henceforward abbreviated as follows: *One More Shiprock Night* as *OMSN*, *Seasonal Woman* as *SW*, *A Breeze Swept Through* as *BST*, *Sáanii Dahataa! The Women Are Singing* as *SD*, *Blue Horses Rush In* as *BHRI* and *A Radiant Curve* as *RC*.

²"It Was a Special Treat" (*OMSN* → *SD* → *BHRI*), "Willie and Me" (*OMSN* → *BST*), "Misty Dawn at Feeding Time" (*OMSN* → *SW*), "Hills Brothers Coffee" (*OMSN* → *SW* → *BST* → *SD*), "Shepherd Blues" (*OMSN* → *SW* → *BST*), "Seasonal Woman" (*OMSN* → *SW* → *BST*), "Independence" (*OMSN* → *SW*) and "A Summer Poem" (*OMSN* → *SW*).

Fewer are the texts in later books that undergo revisions of this kind: "Raisin Eyes" (*SW* → *BTS* → *SD*), "Last Year the Piñons Were Plentiful" (Smith-Al-len, 1997 → *BST*), "Blue Horses Rush In" (*SD* → *BHRI*), "Sometimes on Summer Evenings" (*SD* → *BHRI*), "They Moved over the Mountain" (*SD* → *BHRI*).

we cried so hard that we finally had to draw straws to decide fairly who got to go. Always my oldest brother went because he drove, my other brother went because he helped carry laundry, my father went because he was the father, and my mother went because she had the money and knew where to go and what to buy. And only one or two kids could go because we got in the way and asked for stuff all the time.

We got early on the Saturdays that we were going to town, getting ready, sorting laundry and gathering up pop bottles that we turned in. My father always checked the oil and tires on the pickup and then he and my brothers would load up the big laundry tubs, securing the canvas covers with heavy wooden blocks. We would leave and the unfortunate ones who had to stay home waved goodbye sullenly and the dogs chased the truck down the road a ways before going home.

In Farmington, we would go to the laundry first. It was always dark and clammy inside. We liked pulling the clothes out of the wringer even though my mother was nervous about letting us help. After that, we went downtown and parked in the free lot on the north side of Main Street. [...] Someone always had to “watch” the truck and usually the one who made a nuisance of himself at the laundry had to sit in the truck for two or three hours while everyone else got to “see things” around town. If my father didn’t go to the library — he stayed in the truck and read the “Reader’s Digest” and the kids were off the hook, naughty or not. [...] After the groceries were packed in securely, under the canvas and blocks, we loaded up again and started west to Shiprock. [...] and by the time we stopped at the Blue Window gas station, everyone but my father was sleepy and tired.

He would start singing in Navajo in a clear, strong voice and once in a while, my mother would ask him

cried so hard that we finally had to draw straws to decide fairly who would get to go. My oldest brother always went because he drove, my other brother went because he helped carry laundry, my father went because he was the father, and my mother went because she had the money and knew where to go and what to buy. And only one or two kids could go because we got in the way and begged for things all the time.

We got early on the Saturdays that we were going to town -- we would get ready, sort laundry and gather up pop bottles that we turned in for money. My father always checked the oil and tires on the pickup, and then he and my brothers would load up the big laundry tubs, securing the canvas covers with heavy wooden blocks. We would drive out of the front yard, and the unfortunate ones who had to stay home waved goodbye sullenly. The dogs chased the truck down the road a ways before going home

In Farmington, we would go to the laundry first. It was always dark and clammy inside. We liked pulling the clothes out of the wringer even though my mother was nervous about letting us help. After that, we drove downtown and parked in the free lot north of Main Street.

[...] Someone always had to “watch” the pickup and usually the one who was naughty at the laundry had to sit in the truck for two or three hours while everyone else got to “see things” around town. If my father didn’t go to the library, the kids were off the hook, naughty or not, because he waited in the pickup and read “the Reader’s Digest.”

[...] After the groceries were packed in securely under the canvas and wooden blocks, we talked about who we saw, and by the time we reached the Blue Window gas station, everyone but my father was sleepy.

He would start singing in Navajo in a clear, strong voice and once in a while, my mother would ask him about a certain song she heard once

about a certain song she heard once
 "Do you know it, it was something like this ..."
 and she would sing a little, he would catch it
 and finish the song while we listened half-asleep.

I whispered to my sister,
 "He sings like those men on Navajo Hour,"
 "It's so good," she said and
 we went back to sleep until we reached home.
 (OMSN, 14-15)

"Do you know it, it was something
 like this ..." and she would sing a bit,
 he would catch it and finish the song.
We listened half-asleep. I would
 whisper to my sister, "He sounds like
 those men on Navajo Hour." "I know.
 It's so good," she'd answer, and we'd
 sleep until we reached home. (SD,
 15-16)

What immediately catches one's eye is the transformation of a poem into a prose sketch — a step Tapahonso took perhaps in consideration of the subject matter, or because she had grown dissatisfied with the prosy (at times, plodding) *allure* of the poem's too long lines. On a closer look, one also realizes how consistent and apt her retouches have been so as to achieve a more precise and graphic realism as well as a leisurely and naturally fluent prose rhythm.

The changes undergone by the text of "Willie and Me" in its migration from *OMSN* to *BST* concern primarily the versification:

these are the times
 i'm just content
 with willie nelson
 and a can of beer.

his albums,
 i mean,
 she said smiling.

just turn down the lights
 as you go

and i'll flow even
 into his hard, sure voice
 until the background drums
 become the rhythm of my pulse.

ah yes.

we glide easily around
 this early morning room — willie and me
 and the music is a low moaning
 in this empty space and I know

that quiver in his voice
 is almost a cry.

So just leave me here
 in willie nelson sounds
 and the light echo of this
 almost-empty beer
 against the coffee table

is what she told me then.
 (OMSN, 17)

these are the times i'm just content
with willie nelson and a can of beer.
his albums, i mean, she said smiling.

just turn down the lights as you go
and i'll flow even into his hard, sure voice
until the background drums become
the rhythm of my pulse.

ah yes.

we glide easily around
 this early morning room — willie and me
 and the music is a low moaning
 in this empty space and I know
 that quiver in his voice
 is almost a cry.

So just leave me here
 in willie nelson sounds
and the light echo of
this almost-empty beer can
 against the coffee table

is what she told me then.
 (BST, 29)

The changes do no less than create effective lines out of segments that at times it is difficult to hear as lines, while the reduction of the blank spaces in the new layout concurs in making the speaker's bluesy abandon more convincing. The layout of the former version (as well as of several other poems throughout *OMSN*) may lead one to think that Tapahonso as a young poet (and not unlike quite a few twentieth-century poets at the start of their careers) was using free verse as if free verse could allow unbound liberties.³ But there might also have been another, and more important, reason for these variations. As Tapahonso has very clearly stated on several occasions and in different contexts, most of her work begins in Navajo, which is her first language, and ends in English.⁴ "Most of the pieces [in *SD*]," she says in the "Preface" to this volume, "originated in Navajo, either orally or in thought, and the English translation appears here" (Tapahonso 1993, x-xi). Besides, she grew up in a culture where "there's a song for everything. There are songs for nothing and there are songs for anything" (Bruchac 1987, 279). Therefore, quite understandably, poetry in her perception "is an oral kind of expression" (Moulin 1991, 14). The variations, then, can be seen as gradual adjustments required by the transition not only from one language to another, but also from the domain of orality to that of literacy.

An interesting example is offered by "Raisin Eyes," in its double passage from *SW* to *BST* and from *BST* to *SD*.⁵

³ Actually, as Charles Wright, one of today's finest American masters of the free verse form, reminds us: "All the great masters of free verse in this country — Whitman, Williams, Pound, Stevens, Eliot — came to that form from traditional meters. This meant they already had an idea of what a line was, and its integrity. They therefore tended to think of lines as lines, and not as a series of breaks. They had a sense of the measure, the music, of the linguistic energy that a true line can generate. ... If you write in a free verse line, you'd better know *why* you do so. Merely because it's in vogue is not enough. Your line has to be as good as the traditional one, and you'd better have a reason for using it." (Wright 1988, 6).

⁴ E.g., "Most of my work begins in Navajo; the original ideas [...] most of the time [are] in Navajo. Then, when I write them down, I write them in English." (Penner 1996, 7).

⁵ The text of the poem as it appeared in *SW* coincides with that in *BST*, but for four changes in punctuation and capitalizations in the third stanza, which we quote here (supplying a full stop at the end of the third line): "O Luci, she said (I knew what was coming.) / It's terrible. He lives with me. / And my money and my car[.] / But just for a while. / He's in AIRCA and rodeos a lot. / And I still work." (40)

I saw my friend Ella
with a tall cowboy at the store
the other day in Shiprock.

Later, I asked her
Who's that guy anyway?

O Luci, she said (I knew what was coming).
It's terrible. He lives with me.
And my money and my car
But just for a while.
He's in AIRCA and rodeos a lot.
And I still work.

This rodeo business is getting to me
you know and I'm going to leave him
because I think all this I'm doing now
will pay off better somewhere else
but I just stay with him and it's hard
because

he just smiles that way you know
and then I end up paying entry fees
and putting shiny Tony Lamas on lay-away
again.
It's not hard.

But he doesn't know when
I'll leave him and I'll drive across the flat desert
from Red Rock in blue morning light
straight to Shiprock so easily.

And anyway
my car is already used to humming
a mourning song with Gary Stewart
complaining again of aching and breaking
down-and-out love affairs.

Damn.
These Navajo cowboys with raisin eyes
and pointed boots are just bad news
but it's so hard to remember that
all the time.

She said with a little laugh.
(BST, 38-39)

Here Tapahonso is clearly striving to find, and is quite successful in finding, the punctuation and the layout that can best suggest the intonations and pauses in the speech of the woman for whom Navajo cowboys with "raisin eyes" are so irresistible.

I saw my friend Ella
with a tall cowboy at the store
the other day in Shiprock.

Later, I asked her,
Who's that guy anyway?

"O Luci, she said (I knew what was coming.)
It's terrible. He lives with me
and my money and my car,
But just for a while.
He's in AIRCA and rodeos a lot.
And I still work.

This rodeo business is getting to me, you know,
and I'm going to leave him.
Because I think all this I'm doing now
will pay off better somewhere else,
but I just stay with him and it's hard
because

he just smiles that way, you know,
and then I end up paying entry fees
and putting shiny Tony Lamas on
lay-away again.
It's not hard.

But he doesn't know when
I'll leave him and I'll drive across the flat desert
from Red Valley in blue morning light
straight to Shiprock so easily.

And anyway, my car is already used
to humming a mourning song with Gary
Stewart,
complaining again of aching and breaking,
down-and-out love affairs.

Damn.
These Navajo cowboys with raisin eyes
and pointed boots are just bad news,
but it's so hard to remember that all the time,
she said with a little laugh.
(SD, 41-42)

Our next example is drawn from “Blue Horses Rush In,” one of Tapa-honso’s most anthologized poems, and the one that, by figuring as the first text in *SD* and as the last in the book to which it gives the title, is made to frame, so to say, her two most mature works up to 1997:

For Chamisa Bah Edmo, Shisóí aláqjǰ naaghígíí

Before the birth, she moved and pushed inside her mother.
Her heart pounded quickly and we recognized
the sound of horses running:

the thundering of hooves on the desert floor.

Her mother clenches her fists and gasps.
 She moans ageless pain and pushes: This is it!

Chamisa slips out, glistening wet and takes her first breath.
 The wind outside swirls small leaves
 and branches in the dark.
 Her father’s eyes are wet with gratitude.
 He prays and watches both mother and baby — stunned.

This baby arrived amid a herd of horses,
 horses of different colors.

White horses ride in on the breath of the wind.
White horses from the east
 where plants of golden chamisa shimmer in the moonlight.

She arrived amid a herd of horses.

Blue horses enter from the south
bringing the scent of prairie grasses
from the small hills outside.

She arrived amid a herd of horses.

Yellow horses rush in, snorting from the desert in the west.
 It is possible to see across the entire valley to Niist’áá from Tó.
 Bah, from here your grandmothers went to war long ago.

She arrived amid a herd of horses.

Black horses came from the north.
 They are the lush summers of Montana and still white winters of Idaho.

Chamisa, Chamisa Bah. It is all this that you are.
 You will grow: laughing, crying,
 and we will celebrate each change you live.

You will grow strong like the horses of your past.
 You will grow strong like the horses of your birth. (*BHRI*, 103-104)

In the later version (the one we have just quoted), two very long lines (“Her heart pounded quickly and we recognized the sound of horses running” and “bringing the scent of prairie grasses from the small hills outside”) have been wisely broken in two, and one verb has undergone a quite effective shift from the past into the present tense (“clenched [...] and gasped” → “clenches [...] and gasps,” l. 4). Moreover, the changing of three of the four directions from where the herds of horses bring their gifts to newly born Chamisa Bah restores the congruence between the colors of the horses and the color associated in Navajo religion with the direction each of the herds comes from. Finally, the second part of the inscription, which in the earlier version was “*who was born March 6, 1991*,” is now in Navajo, attesting Tapahonso’s growing inclination to use her native language in her writings. The parallelism closing “Blue Horses Rush In:”

You will grow strong like the horses of your past.
 You will grow strong like the horses of your birth,

along with the fourfold other:

This baby arrived amid a herd of horses (l. 11)
 She arrived amid a herd of horses (ll. 16, 19 and 23),

points out another kind of stylistic variation we would like to draw attention to and that, in our opinion, marks a very important development in Tapahonso’s poetry.

Iteration, whether involving single sounds (alliterations and assonances) or syllables (rhymes of whatever kind), words, phrases and sentences, is, as we well know, one fundamental element of the language of poetry and a powerful factor of its rhythms. No wonder, then, that we find iterations in Tapahonso’s poems ever since the first poem in *OMSN*, “Feathers,” and that we keep finding them throughout the first two books of hers, albeit not in large number in either.⁶ What we do not find there as yet, is the kind of iteration of which the closing lines of “Blue Horses Rush In” offer a most clear example — namely, iterations which echo the language of the Navajo songs and prayers Tapahonso grew up with. The closing dystich of “Blue Horses Rush In,” placing Chamisa Bah within the continuity of

⁶ Cf. “Misty Dawn at Feeding Time,” “Hills Brothers Coffee,” “Running Horses” and “I Couldn’t Do Anything” in *OMSN* and “Her Daughter’s Eyes,” “Dear Buddy,” “Shifty Eyes and Earth Women,” “You’re Not Supposed to Call,” “No Particular Reason,” “There Have Been Nights” and “A Prayer” in *SW*.

Diné life, is both a song and a prayer. Likewise, the fourfold affirmation that “she arrived amid a herd of horses” inscribes the present-time event into mythical timelessness.

It is in the third and fourth books, *BSW* and *SD*, that this kind of iteration begins to figure as a steady feature — a definitive acquisition enriching Tapahonso’s poetic voice. Another good example of it is offered by the final four lines of “A Breeze Swept Through,” at the opening of the homonymous collection:

She is born of damp mist and early sun.
 She is born again woman of dawn.
 She is born knowing the warm smoothness of rock.
 She is born knowing her own morning strength. (*BSW*, 2)

This enrichment, it is worthwhile noticing, goes hand in hand with the increasing presence of bilingualism in the texts. None in *OMSN* and just two in *SW*,⁷ the occurrences of Navajo are more frequent in *BST* (where Navajo, for instance, has an essential role in the exchanges among the protagonists of the conjugal crisis humorously dramatized in “Yáadí Lá” [30-31]), and then in *SD* (where, for instance, what the uncle of “Hills Brothers Coffee” is called in Navajo is no longer “little father” but, more convincingly, “shidá’í” [27]). Borrowing from among Tino Villanueva’s neat definitions of the functions of bilingualism, it can be said that in Tapahonso’s work bilingualism serves, in turn,

to be more vividly direct in conveying untranslatable concepts, to underscore a sensory state, a psychological or emotional attitude thought best described by a connotatively charged word or idiom, to render cultural experience identifiably native [...and/or] to grant fidelity to the persona of a poem. (Villanueva 2000, 693 and 695)

Iterations and bilingualism, however, are neither the only nor the most striking elements that incline us to distinguish in Tapahonso’s work an earlier and a later phase. The divide, so to say, runs between her third and fourth books, *BST* and *SD*, since it is in the latter that two very significant innovative elements, as far as form and style are concerned, come to the fore.

The most obvious is signaled in the second part of its title: the “Poems & Stories” tag (which is used again in the titles of *BHRI* and *RC*) declares Tapahonso’s recognition of two different creative stances producing two

⁷Just two short sentences in “Dear Buddy” (16) and one in “Hard to Take” (17), both followed by their English translations (as the Navajo inlays will continue, as a rule, to be in the poet’s subsequent works).

The various functions of bilingualism in Tapahonso’s verse have been intelligently discussed by Susan B. Brill (Brill 1997).

different kinds of texts. *Diné* “are made of prayers,” we are reminded in “A Birthday Poem” (*BHRI*, 80) and, again, in the closing poem of *RC* (89), but no less, perhaps, they are made of, or subsist on, stories:

There is such love of stories among Navajo people [-- we read in the “Preface” to *SD* --] that it seems each time a group of more than two gather, the dialogue eventually evolves into sharing stories and memories, laughing, and teasing. *To be included in this is a distinct way of showing affection and appreciation for each other. So it is true that daily conversations strengthen us as do the old stories of our ancestors that have been told since the beginning of Navajo time.* (*SD*, x. Italics ours)

And the “Preface” to *BHRI*, beginning with the recollection of “a bright Sunday afternoon” at Tapahonso’s parents’ home in Shiprock, when “[w]e sat for hours — talking, laughing, and sharing family memories and stories. The conversation switched easily between *Diné* and English and, at times, a rhythmic blending of the two,” goes on to point out that

inherent in *Diné* storytelling is the belief that, indeed, the events or the story did occur at some time in the past. There is no insistence on ‘facts’ or ‘evidence’. The understanding is that the function of stories is to entertain and that they usually involve some teaching as well as the exploration of possibilities, beside which they all require a vivid imagination and a non-judgmental mind-set. (*BHRI*, ix and xiv)

All of this heralded and justified the advent of prose in Tapahonso’s work. Let us recall that it is in *SD* that “A Special Treat” takes on its prose vest and let us notice that, from *SD* onward, the presence of poems which can be defined as “narrative” decreases dramatically.⁸ However substantial the number of “narrative” poems that can be counted among the best achievements in the three books preceding *SD*,⁹ prose must have offered to Tapahonso the advantage of a more leisurely pace, more suited to render the modulations of storytelling, and — not infrequently taking on the lyrical compression of the prose poem — it was to become the favorite medium of her narrations. (It may be noticed, in passing, that in *BHRI* the prose pieces exceed in number the poems).

⁸ We define as “narrative” those of Tapahonso’s poems which satisfy the minimal requirements for any text to be considered a “story” that Ian Reid derives from Gerald Prince’s *A Grammar of Stories* (1973), i.e., that at least “three [...] events [be] conjoined, with at least two of them occurring at different times and being casually linked.” (Reid 1977, 5). (Julius Caesar’s proverbial “*Veni, vidi, vici*” could thus qualify as a narrative poem).

⁹ For instance, “A Slow Ride,” “Hills Brothers Coffee,” “Shepherd Blues” and “Too Navajo” in *OMSN*, “A Rough Life,” “Pay Up or Else,” “Raisin Eyes” and “No Particular Reason” in *SW*, or “The Lightning Awoke Us” and “Yáadí Lá” in *BST*.

At the same time, as a development perhaps not unconnected with the favor she was according to prose, Tapahonso was hitting her stride in the handling of the line. Starting with *SD*, her lines are, on average, longer than they used to be, but, more importantly, they do look, sound and breathe like lines — lines crafted to possess an integrity of their own, as often, in our view, it was not the case with earlier poems.¹⁰

Finally, what we consider the later phase of Tapahonso's work, is also characterized by the poet's experimentations, on the one hand, with closed forms of such complexly formalized structure as the villanelle ("Near-to-the-Water," in *RC*) and the sestina (from "A Birthday Poem" in *BHRI* to the six specimens dotting *RC*); on the other, with visual poetry, as in the six short poems in *RC*, the first two and the last of which are, at the same time, prayers to the Holy Ones who have created the *Diné* world, and the others are in praise of such distinctive features of the same world as the *ts'aa'*, the cradleboard and the *hooghan*.

While fully aware of the simplification as well as the farfetchedness of resorting to categories such as Romanticism and Classicism, one is still tempted to view Tapahonso's creative journey as a transition from the Romantically fervid and rather unruly expressions of "the restless years of [her] youth" (*OM-SN*, 25) to the Classical order and composure of the writings of her maturity. A transition made necessary, perhaps, by the responsibility Tapahonso might have felt called to take up — that of the custodian, remembrancer and transmitter of the ways appointed to the *Diné* by the Holy Ones. Celebratory and didactic are, in fact, the accents, now distinct, now blended, that more and more powerfully resound in the later phase of the work of this Navajo Hesiod.

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ASPECTS OF OFELIA ZEPEDA'S POETRY

Gaetano Prampolini

In the several years during which the name of Ofelia Zepeda was for me just that of the author of the "Foreword" to the 1993 reprint of Ruth M. Underhill's *Singing for Power: The Song Magic of the Papago Indians of Southern Arizona*, I could not imagine how fitting, and helpful, that foreword and, of course, the anthropologist's masterly and delightful book would turn out to be as a preliminary to my reading of Zepeda's poems. This, however, became clear (as it would, I believe, to any reader happening to repeat my experience) as soon as I had gone no farther than the first section of her first book, *Ocean Power. Poems from the Desert*.

Under a bilingual (O'odham and English) title, "I-huđiñ g Cewagi / Pulling Down the Clouds," this section consists of eight poems dealing with what for the Tohono O'odham (the "Desert People") has always been the most vital concern: how to bring about the rainfalls indispensable for life to continue in the vast desertic area lying on both sides of the border between southern Arizona and northern Sonora, Mexico, they have inhabited from time immemorial.

The reader's response to such a poem as "Black Clouds:"

Black clouds lay off in the distance.
Like black buzzards, flying, far away.
Making noise, rumbling,
Black clouds
Drifting off in the distance.
Like black buzzards, flying, so far away.
Rumbling, thundering.
Suddenly they descend. (Zepeda 1995, 20)

— or to "Na:nko Ma:s Cewagi / Cloud Song," "Cewagi" and the first six lines of "Pulling Down the Clouds" — is undoubtedly made keener (and his/her enjoyment enhanced) by knowing not only that with the traditional Tohono O'odham "song was not simply self-expression. It was a magic which called upon the powers of Nature and constrained them to man's will," but also that "all that was necessary to make [a song's] magic prevail [was] a description of the desired thing" (Underhill 1993, 5 and 15) — a description as vivid as the singer was able to make it. And that descriptions should be so in order to produce the desired effect is further stressed by Underhill when she deals with



the animal songs. Animals have power and give power. “Whether [the songs] praise or ridicule” their subject, “the point is to visualize the animal with all the peculiarities which are to evoke him and make him real.” The outcome is what Underhill defines as “vignettes of desert life, humorous, exquisite, and friendly” (1993, 50), the perfect counterparts of which are offered by Zepeda in the little desert bestiary closing *Jeweḏ ‘I-Hoi Earth Movements* (1997, 31). Here are two specimens, chosen so as to invite a comparison with the traditional songs about the same animals quoted by Underhill (1993, 51 ff.):

Cemamaḡi

Pi ṣa:muñhim an oimeḏ.
Sikolim, s-kowk, s-muhadagī.
S-na:k g ñ-ha:l hiosig.

Horned Toad

A silent traveler.
Thickly round, unflattering colors.
Squash blossoms await you.

Hujuḏ

S-wepegihim e-ñeñigid.
S-weḡi totoñ.
Cuk totoñ.
To:ta totoñ.
Wo’o kc ha-ñeña, ‘e-ñeñigid.

Lizard

With lightning strikes.
Red ants.
Black ants.
White ants.
Lying in wait, lightning strikes.

Writing her foreword over sixty years after Underhill’s first visit to the people she still knew by the name they had been labeled with by the Spaniards, “the Papagos” — writing, that is, when cultural and societal changes among the Tohono O’odham had affected also rituals, causing further alterations and adaptations of the sort Underhill was already noticing in the 1930s, Zepeda expresses gratitude to the Euroamerican anthropologist because her work “has helped the [Tohono O’odham’s] collective memory,” and praise too for her being so “sensitive to the importance of the language in [their] rituals” and for “striv[ing] to capture the power of the words” in her English translations (Underhill 1993, viii and xi). More important, though, for the reader of *Ocean Power* is what the title of her foreword, “Still Singing Down the Clouds,” adumbrates and its opening sentences make explicit:

Rituals and ceremonies must be continued. This is especially true of the ritual known as the *rain ceremony*. The Tohono O’odham [...] believe that this ceremony and many others must be continued in order that everything be right. Should the ceremonies end, we believe that the world as we know it would not be the same. (Underhill 1993, vii)

— precisely as do these lines of “O’odham Dances:”

It is the time for the ritual.
To dance, to sing so that rain may come,
so that the earth may be fixed one more time. (Zepeda 1995, 12)

Even if Zepeda sounds a bit skeptical at her mother's affirmation that summer rains would never fail to come "*because* the O'odham always performed the ritual," or may, with her characteristically subdued humor, observe that the power of nowadays songs, "just as beautiful as they perhaps were in the 1930s, [...] is not exactly the same" (Underhill 1993, vii [italics ours] and xii), for a corroboration of her strong commitment to the continuance of rituals the reader needs just to turn to the fourth section of *Ocean Power*.

This section goes under the same title as that of the entire book, which in turn is the same as that of the chapter in which Underhill described at length the "third way, besides killing an eagle or an enemy, for [an O'odham] man to get dream power," and in dream deserve to be given songs. That way was the "arduous pilgrimage to fetch salt from the Gulf of California," that

four days' [...], almost waterless journey [that] traverse[d] some of the most sinister country on the North American continent and the Papago name for the south is "the direction of suffering." But they [...] have made [suffering] the cornerstone of their philosophy and the passport to dreams [...] and the sight of the ocean is amazing enough to bring a man into contact with the supernatural.
[...] It [was] an arduous duty undertaken for the sake of the kindred, and the reward [was] rain. The ocean, say the Papagos, [...] is the source of rain, which is brought by the ocean wind. But they go on to say that the wind will only blow if men have been to the ocean and given it gifts. And men must take back with them those white kernels which the "outspread water" deposits on its shores and which resemble corn. (Underhill 1993, 111)

In "Under the Sea," which Zepeda inscribes to her daughter, between the five lines, at the beginning and the end, that sound like a nursery rhyme or an ancient charm, the speaker reminds the young dedicatee of how one must behave in the presence of the ocean:

If you take three seashells
because they are pretty,
throw back two.
If you go into the water
make sure that you smile.
If you turn your back to the ocean,
say "excuse me."
If you happen to have desert flowers in hand,
put them on the ocean waves and let them ride to sea.
If you leave the ocean water,
make sure you are grateful for being safe,

and goes on listing the beneficial effects that may derive from a ritually correct meeting with the ocean waters:

If you are so inclined,
 you may create a poem.
 If you are so inclined you may
 dream a song.
 If you are so inclined and you feel ready,
 you may ask for something from the ocean.
 If you are so inclined you may not discuss this with anyone
 except the power of the ocean. (Zepeda 1995, 79-80)

Titled (once more) “Ocean Power,” the poem strategically placed at the end of this section (and of the book), “is about two O’odham men,” explains Zepeda in the “Afterword,” “who came too close to the ocean as they were being deported back to Mexico from Arizona” (Zepeda 1995, 86). Accustomed to be crossed over on inland routes, they are terrified at the unexpected sight of the waters, all the more so because they have not appropriately readied themselves for this experience:

We are not ready to be here.
 We are not prepared in the old way.
 We have no medicine.
 We have not sat and had our minds walk through the image
 of coming to this ocean.
 We are not ready.
 We have not put our minds to what it is we want to give to the ocean.
 We do not have cornmeal, feathers, nor do we have songs and prayers ready.
 We have not thought what gifts we will ask from the ocean.
 (Zepeda 1995, 84)

The aim of the preceding observations, arcing from Part 1 to Part 4 of *Ocean Power*, was to foreground Zepeda’s reverent empathy with her people’s beliefs, rituals and, in particular, their concern with the rain cycle — sure enough, a most important aspect of her poetry.¹ But those very sections of the book also present another, by no means less important, aspect, which we begin to recognize as soon as we notice that the lament of the two O’odham deportees in “Ocean Power” occurs within the frame of a predicament created by one of the unnatural borderlines that colonization has drawn all over the globe, or as soon as we notice how the description (not unrelieved by humor) of the havoc wrought by “The Floods of 1993 and Others” counterpoints this poem to all the others of Part 1, where rain, so eagerly waited-for, is a life-giving blessing. This other aspect reflects more closely Zepeda’s life experience, as the poems spring from her memory of the world she grew up in or her awareness of the world she lives in.

¹ “Cloud(s),” “rain,” “moisture,” “wind,” “ocean,” “mountain(s)” are in fact cardinal words in the vocabulary of Zepeda’s poems and probably among those occurring most frequently.

How much memory counts in Zepeda's poetics is made clear in her introduction to *Ocean Power*, aptly titled "Things That Help Me Begin to Remember:" early morning lights and shadows, sounds and silences, smells, as the household wakes up and the women tend their chores before heat becomes too strong for any pursuit; the women talking of the weather, scanning the summer sky for clouds, laughing "at the delight of the wetness;" everybody's exhilaration at the coming of a thunderstorm, olfaction quick to catch the least premonition of rain, "breathed in deeply" and felt as an event of beauty; the fear of flash-floods and drowning in the irrigation ditches ... This is the stuff from which quite a number of the poems of *Ocean Power* originate — sparked by memory as, after all, also are those that tell "stories about [my] people" with the purpose of "help[ing] capture some of our collective memory" (Zepeda 1995, 1-5).

To increase the cohesiveness — and the poignancy — of *Ocean Power* Zepeda resorts to two noteworthy strategies of which we become aware as we enlarge the scope of our observation to Parts 2 and 3.

One consists in having a poem tackle a subject, a theme, a motif and, then, shrewdly timing its reprise in subsequent poems. Thus, water as a dangerous element, the subject introduced by "The Floods of 1993 and Others" near the end of Part 1, is taken up by the first poem of Part 2, "The Man Who Drowned in the Irrigation Ditch," which ends with the arrival of the mourning women on the spot of the fatality, a scene so graphically powerful as to recall a Deposition from the Cross:

In slow motion,
 weighted down by the heat,
 the women begin to slide across the bench of the pickup truck.
 They slowly step out of the cab, appearing as a single long strand of
 woman, emerging.
 In cautious unison they walk toward the edge of the ditch.
 My mother, as if connected to them by an invisible string,
 is pulled toward them from the opposite side.
 Their movement is dreamlike. They peer into the muddy water.
 And as if with a shared nervous system, their hands motion the
 towel each is carrying,
 motion it to just above their eyes, covering their faces.
 With a single vocal act they release from their depths a hard, deep,
 mournful wail.
 Their sound breaks the wave of bright summer light above the green
 cotton fields.

This very poem, by recollecting the

[r]ows of cotton my family and I know so well.
 In early summer we walk the rows to thin out the growth,
 and later we walk to chop the weeds somehow immune to chemicals.

And in winter, at least before the machinery, we pick the cotton
 from their stalks.
 Now I can't begin to imagine how many miles we have all walked,
 Up and back, up and back along these rows. (Zepeda 1995, 31-33)

opens, in turn, the way for the glimpses on the kind of life Zepeda's family led in the farming camps and on the cotton fields of Central Arizona when she was growing up, offered in "Musical Retrospective" ("the drudgery of such work softened by music" [Zepeda 1995, 55]) as well as in "Ba:ban Ganhu Ge Ci:pia" and "People on Wayward Journeys," where the coyotes "running along the foothills" and the tumbleweed rolling "across streets / in Chandler, Mesa, Coolidge, / and other cotton-infested towns" (Zepeda 1995, 59 and 57) are exquisite metaphors for the seasonal field workers always on the move from place to place. Similarly, the stanza of "The Floods of 1993 and Others" humorously devoted to the bear grass — whose "meticulously groomed hair. / Hair, just so. / Every strand in place" has been disheveled by the rushing waters so that

[t]he groomed hair is now tangled, matted,
 indistinguishable shapes.
 Those sitting in a row, having the appearance of Diana Ross and the
 Supremes of the '60s.
 Stiff, bouffant hair,
 All pointing in the same direction.
 Redundantly saying: "The one that did this to us went that way."
 Some gathered along the rocky borders,
 posing possible solutions.
 How to fix the hair.
 Another flood perhaps, going in the opposite direction. (Zepeda 1995, 22)

serves to tune us in to the cluster of five poems in Part 2 centering on hair as a distinctive feature of O'odham female beauty.²

The other strategy consists in grouping poems together, in a sequence-like order, on the basis of the affinity of their subject, as happens with the "hair poems" we have just mentioned, but also with the four which make

²For precision's sake, the preparation of the hair motif linking "Her Hair Is Her Dress," "Hair Stolen," "Don't Be Like the Enemy," "Long Hair" and "Hairpins" may be seen to start already on p. 17, in l. 22 of "Wind" ("It settles on my skin and fine hairs"). To the "hair sequence" harks back the closing poem of Zepeda's second book, *Where Clouds Are Formed*, "Smoke in Your Hair," which also reasserts the poetics of memory through lines such as "[t]he scent of burning wood holds / the strongest memory. [...] The smoke travels deep / to the seat of memory. [...] we are brought home" (Zepeda 2008, 72), adding two more items to the inventory of "Things That Help Me Remember."

up Part 3, all dealing with “S-ke:g S-he:pi / The Pleasant Cold” of their common bilingual heading (and for which the reader is prepared by the last poem of Part 2, “Dog Dreams,” where a dog, partially covered by the grass “bending and blowing against him in a cold winter wind / [...] curls inside himself for warmth” [Zepeda 1995, 61]).³

One of them, “Kitchen Sink,” deserves particular notice: when, winter approaching, the afternoon sunlight “starts to edge out of the sink,”

³ Both strategies are also at work in the organization of *Where Clouds Are Formed* — the first more widely and intensely than the second, of which we may point out two instances: “Pain of Speaking” and, following at its heels, “Walking with Language,” on a subject (language — its importance, its uses and abuses) of expectably particular interest to a poet who is also a linguist, a subject somehow akin to that of two contiguous poems of *Ocean Power* (“Uncle Stories” and “One-Sided Conversation”); “Hopi Blue” and “Squash Under the Bed,” where a corn plant reduced to “a large disfigured shadow” of itself by the searing heat and the squash preserved to be eaten in winter (so that “[w]e swallow the warmth of summer” [Zepeda 2008, 50 and 51]) figure as two opposite ways of “How to End a Season,” such being the title of Part 3 of the book.

As to the first strategy, it would be difficult to miss the recurrence of “moisture” (the word and/or the notion) virtually from beginning to end — from the first poem (“The Place Where Clouds Are Formed”) to the last but two (“Seeing Red”) and, in between, in contexts as diverse as those of “Lost Prayers,” “Dirt,” “Music Mountains,” “Proclamation,” “Words on Your Tongue.”

Two of these poems (“Lost Prayers” and “Music Mountains”), along with “Crossing Mountains” and “Do’ag Weco,” compose another significant series, centering on how to relate to the O’odham sacred mountains so as to have them listen to one’s prayers: the syncretism of the wayfarer setting out with power bundle and rosary in “Crossing Mountains” is refuted by the opening lines of “Lost Prayers:” “Passing below the sacred peak, / here prayer signified by rosary beads are futile. / Calling the Virgin Mary is useless. // Instead, one must know the language of the land. / One must know the balance of the desert. / One must know how to pray / so that all elements of nature will fall into rhythm. / These are the kinds of prayers that will work. / Once uttered, the sacred mountains respond with coolness, / with gifts of wetness, / with gifts of civility of climate.” (Zepeda 2008, 15); for these mountains, “the sound of spoken words is not enough,” admonishes “Music Mountains,” “They will only hear us / if we come with melody, rhythm, / pitch, and harmony. / To these circling mountains / we must speak with voices / in songs, rhythmic speeches, orations, and prayers.” (Zepeda 2008, 31 and 30); “We sit *below* the mountain and look *upward*” (Zepeda 2008, 58-59. Italics ours) is the refrain of “Do’ag Weco.”

But no less significant is the set of poems which can be seen to articulate an “our world / other worlds” opposition. “Our world” is “[t]his place of sands, rocks, mesquite, / rattlesnakes, lizards, and little rain” (Zepeda 2008, 27), some of whose features provide the subject for “Sounds of Ceremony,” “How to End a Season,” “Redefining Home,” “Watto/Ramada” (in all of which description shades into celebration) and “Sunset,” that imagistic jewel: “She hurriedly rushes by. / We turn our heads, / catch a glimpse / of a multi-colored skirt / disappearing beyond the horizon. / Red, orange, yellow, toxic pink, / finally a glint of white.” (Zepeda 2008, 62). The “other worlds” figure in the several poems dealing with or touching upon a variety of “elsewheres,” geographical, temporal or cultural ones.

I pretend the sunlight is going down the drain.
 The light cannot be stopped by the plug in the drain.
 It seeps down around the inner seal where water cannot go,
 becoming a part of the darkness that is always a part of drains and pipes.
 Winter is coming.
 The air is probably cooler already.
 I know this because of my sink. (Zepeda 1995, 68)

The yoking of so disparate entities as the seasons' procession and a kitchen sink, to make the latter a measurer of the former and the tomb of sunlight, is a conceit that might have pleased a seventeenth-century "metaphysical" poet and reveals a strain of Zepeda's imagination for which the definition "sensuous thought" might not be amiss.⁴

What makes Zepeda's texts poetry? The question is perhaps less silly than it sounds at first, when we pause to consider a passage such as this:

Our family kept the Jergens lotion people in business, we used to say.
 Early in December moisturizing lotions were fine, but in January
 and February we were ready for the hard stuff, petroleum jelly.
 Our parents went to bed each night with a slight sheen of grease on
 their hands and face.
 We did the same.
 A minor epidermal comfort.
 My sisters and I laugh about one aunt who doesn't even bother with
 moisturizing lotion
 or even petroleum jelly, she goes straight for *lard*. (Zepeda 1995, 70),

or the excerpt quoted on pp. 127-128 above which produce a similar impression of quasi-prosaicness.⁵ Passages such as these (by no means very

⁴ Of this talent for wit ampler evidence is offered in *Where Clouds Are Formed*. In "Trapped Air," "Mogollon Rim" and "The Way to Leave Your Illness," concrete, homely things such as ripped-out old ceilings, a folded-up tent, the university library stacks are again the secret receptacles where much less tangible things such as, respectively, dreams and nightmares, emotional hurt and physical pain have gone to hide. In "Traces" the flakes of dead skin are the "[p]art of me" that takes part in "the disturbance / when rocks move again. / Reshaping a canyon" (Zepeda 2008, 33) and ends its migration at the bottom of the ocean, while in "Aligning Our World" the racket produced by the moving of the hotel room furniture so as to wake up facing east becomes a sort of music of the spheres: "We push beds, dressers, nightstands, and lamps. / We push the moon, the stars, and the earth. / Like the tumblers in a combination lock, we / Hear them roll, we can feel the anticipation of the / Right set of numbers, click, click. / The earth's axis makes this sound as we continue / Moving furniture. / The stars screech and scratch the sky — / A sound one wouldn't expect from stars" (Zepeda 2008, 70).

⁵ Or, in the first two sentences of the second stanza of "Proclamation," "The true story of this place / recalls people walking / deserts all their lives and / continuing to-

frequent), could lead one to think that Zepeda's texts have no style, if "[b]y having a style, we usually mean that a text in some way deviates from the statistical norms [...] of the ordinary language" (Levin 1969, 16, n. 11). But, of course, the matter stands otherwise. Zepeda's texts do have a style, a clearly recognizable one, whose main distinctive traits are syntactical simplicity and an intensive use of iterations. The first trait is evident in the large predominance of end-stopped lines, which results in slowing down the pace of the poem and therefore increasing the impact of each line, even when the quite frequent reprise of a word or a phrase of the end-stopped line in the next one surrogates (to some extent) the function of an enjambment. Here is an example from a poem where anadiplosis occurs five more times:

flat, green fields appearing to end at the foot of distant *mountains*.
Mountains, a reminder of what the *fields* once looked like.
Fields saturated with water pulled from its secret storage place.
 (Zepeda 1995, 30)

Its most striking occurrence, however, is in the English version of "Cewagi," where anadiploses tightly bind one to another all of its six lines:

Summer clouds *sit* silently.
 They *sit*, quietly, *gathering strength*.
Gathering strength from the good winds.
 This *strength* that becomes *the thunder*.
The thunder so loud it vibrates the earth.
The thunder that surround us. (Zepeda 1995, 26)⁶

This, however, is not the only or the most important of the iterative procedures. At the phonic level, these lines of "Wind:"

The wind was whipping my clothes harshly around me,
 slapping me,
 hurting me with the roughness.
 The wind was strong that evening.
 It succeeded in blowing my clothes all around me. (Zepeda 1995, 16)

combining the dominant /ŋ/ sound with a consonance ("wind"/"around") and the end- and internal rhyming of "me," are just one sample of Zepeda's keen sensitiveness to the sounds that are to create the music of her poems.⁷ But, by far, the most conspicuous kinds of iteration are constituted

day, if only / in their dreams. / The true story is ringing / in their footsteps in a / place so quiet, they can hear / their blood moving / through their veins" (Zepeda 2008, 43).

⁶ The occurrences of this stylistic peculiarity are quite rare in the poems of *Where Clouds Are Formed*.

⁷ Noteworthy in this regard is a 16-line long poem in *Where Clouds Are Formed*, "Sounds of Ceremony," structured as a catalogue of traditional musical instruments

by anaphora (often coextensive with the whole line, often continued for several lines) and parallelisms. By our approximate reckoning, in *Ocean Power* there are forty-five anaphoric series, appearing in sixteen of the thirty-five poems in the book; and sixty-nine parallelisms (of phrases, sentences or periods), which occur in all poems but two.⁸ But what is more interesting than how often iterations occur, is, of course, to see *where*, and to what effect, they do.

An anaphor and a syntactical parallelism is what the shortest poem of the book, “Ju:kĩ Ñe’i,” consists of, in both its O’odham (if our surmising from the look of the signs is correct) and English versions:

Wa nt o m-ñe’i g ju:kĩ ñe’i.	I would sing for you rain songs.
Wa nt o ñ-keihi m-we:hejed.	I would dance for you rain dances.
	(Zepeda 1995, 14)

This is a poem in the vein of traditional O’odham prayers and songs, like most of those surrounding it in Part 1, and when we realize that it is in these poems as well as in others of similar inspiration and intent, such as “Kots” (presumably), “Ba:ban Ganhu Ge Ci:pia” and three in Part 4, that those two forms of iteration, together or separately, score the highest rate of recurrence, we are perhaps warranted to see in Zepeda’s predilection for iterative figures the legacy of the traditional — formal, religious — uses of her mother tongue.⁹

The parallelism in “Ju:kĩ Ñe’i” constitutes a perfect coupling, since “naturally [i.e. phonically, semantically or both — as here] equivalent forms occur in equivalent positions” (Levin 1969, 35). In this case it is something that, owing to the simplicity of the coupling, can be grasped at first sight, but certainly it could not be so with the more complex instances offered by

and their sounds through a succession of nominal sentences rich in phonosymbolic effects (Zepeda 2008, 36).

⁸ *Where Clouds Are Formed* presents a somewhat attenuated use of anaphora (no fewer than forty-five, though, occurring in twenty of the forty poems gathered in the volume), but unabated is the use of parallelisms (which are at least seventy-four, occurring in all of the poems but five).

⁹ The idea that has been just advanced on the basis of *Ocean Power* finds confirmation, in the main, in *Where Clouds Are Formed*, once the attention is drawn to poems with a religious or celebratory flair, like “Lost Prayers,” “How to End a Season,” “Ñeñe’i Ha-şa:gid” and (presumably) its English counterpart “In the Midst of Songs,” “Words on Your Tongue,” “Do’ag Weco,” “Redefining Home,” “Watto/Ramada,” or expressing intense personal emotion like “Birth Witness” and “Mogollon Rim.”

In the context of these observations it does not seem irrelevant to recall that in “Music Mountains” one of the recommendations about the right way to address the sacred mountains is “We must be prepared with *repetition*, / a singular, undisturbed beat.” (Zepeda 2008, 30. Italics ours). “O’odham people use repetition for emphasis” (Zepeda and Hill 2001, 150), remarks sociolinguist Jane Hill, who in the 1980s collaborated with Zepeda in field research on O’odham dialect variation.

Ocean Power, some poems of which are indeed one complex of couplings. This is not, of course, the place where to embark on the meticulous analyses they would require. One thing is sure, though: since coupling, as convincingly argued by Samuel R. Levin and other theoreticians, is a very important structure in poetry, its prominence and its effectiveness in Zepeda's texts do powerfully contribute to make them firmly rooted in the language of poetry.

The last aspect of Zepeda's poetry that will be touched upon here, is most likely the first to strike the attention of the reader of *Ocean Power*, namely, the presence of not a few poems alternating O'odham and English, and of one, "Kots," exclusively in O'odham, significantly placed at the exact center of the book.

"O'odham is my first language," declares Zepeda in the "Introduction" (1995, 4). But that the language she spoke was a language she could not read was what she had to discover as, in her late teens or early twenties, she got hold of one of the then few existing books in O'odham. "[The] education in linguistics and language teaching" that was to make of her a first-rank specialist in Native American languages, linguistics and their teaching methods, and give her a university chair, began then, by her being "a student of [her] own language, trying to become literate in [it]" (Zepeda 1992), and soon a promoter, along with other young O'odham speakers, of literacy in the O'odham community, through the creation of a literature in the language.

"A little bit of literature in O'odham [...] meant for the small but growing number of O'odham speakers who are becoming literate" is in fact how Zepeda defines in her "Introduction" the "O'odham pieces" (Zepeda 1995, 4) of *Ocean Power*. At the same time, though, those "O'odham pieces" must have been immensely important for their author, since "I feel confident in the language," she has affirmed a few lines above, "and so I am able to create pieces *solely* in my first language." (Italics ours)

But what about, then, the "English pieces," outnumbering by far the O'odham ones? How and when were they created? Are we to think that for each of those appearing without an O'odham counterpart or containing no O'odham lines, there might exist an unpublished urtext in O'odham? While in the "Introduction" Zepeda informs the reader that "[f]or the pieces that appear only in O'odham, the English versions never occurred" (4) but says nothing about the obverse possibility, she talks at length on the relation between O'odham and English in her creative process in an interview which took place in 1992. Before seeing what she said on that occasion, it may be convenient to point out that: 1) none of the bilingual poems of *Ocean Power* presents code-switching, if this term is taken to strictly mean the engrafting and interweaving of words and phrases of one language onto a text primarily written in another language; 2) in those poems, O'odham and English are either intercalated — as, for example, with ll. 1-6 of "Pulling Down the Clouds" and in ll. 36-43 of "O'odham Dances" — or juxtaposed — as, for example, with "Ju:k kī Ńe'i" and "Ka:cim Šu:daḡi."

In the interview Zepeda is very clear about the priority and the primacy of O’odham in the writing of her poems:

I like to think that I can create something in O’odham first. Something that’s only in O’odham, that can only be in O’odham. The whole experience starts out in O’odham. The words that I use or play with are in O’odham only and English never comes in. (Zepeda 1992)

Then she goes on to talk about the relation between O’odham and English:

[A]s the O’odham piece exists for me, it’s possible to have an English piece to be there as well. And in this case it’s not merely a translation, going line by line. I tried that because that would be a very convenient thing to do, but [...] there were pieces that didn’t come out right in English. [...] So what I [...] do is I simply do another piece which happens to start in English. The general information, the general thought, the general theme, of whatever of the O’odham piece, is still there in the English. But it is not a translation. That’s why I say I have an O’odham version and then I have an English version. (Zepeda 1992)

One reflection stirred by this passage concerns what in it sounds like reluctance on the part of Zepeda to see her “English versions” as translations of their respective “O’odham versions.” Not knowing O’odham, the present writer is in no position to affirm conclusively that the “English versions” *are* translations. And yet, this is what — whether bilingualism is in the intercalated or the juxtaposed form — the look and the succession of the O’odham words, correspondences in the length of lines and passages, the overall intention and meaning of the poem suggest. Needless to say, no translation can be a perfect rendition of its source text. But are not precisely “the general information, the general thought, the general theme” among the features of any source text that any translation (those of poetry included) can most safely preserve? And could not Zepeda’s reluctance derive, after all — one may also surmise — from an over-refined sensitiveness to the subtle complexities of her native language, as exemplified in her discussion, later in the interview, of the exact meaning of “a little verb” or in her memory of the hilarious response of her class for the consequences the omission of a syllable had on the sense of a sentence? (Zepeda-Hill 1998, 135)

At the same time, Zepeda’s presentation of her setting out on the “English pieces” as a sort of “making it new” signals something deeper-reaching than her bilingualism — a quality of her imagination, of her being in the world, that can be defined as bi-sensitiveness. Her poetry is bilingual because it is bi-sensitive in that, according to the definition by Chicano poet Tino Villanueva,

[it] emanates from two sensibilities before there can even exist the oral and/or written exercise of language. Therefore, it is possible for the same reality

to inspire in a bicultural and bilingual observer two different sets of reactions from the points of view of two cultures. (Villanueva 2000, 741, n.1)

At the other end of the communication process, by just looking at the O'odham words on the page or — a much more gratifying experience — listening to Zepeda's readings on the CD of *Jewed 'I-Hoi Earth Movements*, one who does not know O'odham at all like myself, brings home what T.S. Eliot recalled about his first approach to Dante: "genuine poetry can communicate before it is understood" (Eliot 1929, 16).

POSTSCRIPT 2011

The essay, in a rougher shape, had been written before Zepeda's second book of verse, Where Clouds Are Formed, came out, in 2008. In order to acknowledge it, if only summarily, I have resorted to the endnotes, which have swelled therefore to an abnormal size. To the observations therein contained, what seems appropriate to add here is that, vis-à-vis its predecessor, Where Clouds Are Formed marks a growth of the effectiveness of the poet's delicate and incisive voice, that within the continuity of subjects, themes and poet's stance, implied by the titles of both books (both referring to the rain cycle), an element of novelty is constituted by the discreet presence of poems in a more immediately personal vein, and, finally, that the reduced recourse to O'odham could be a proof in support of Richard Shelton's words printed on the back of the cover — that with Where Clouds Are Formed, "without sacrificing any of her proud Native American heritage, Ofelia Zepeda blasts herself into the realm of major American poetry."

I must own, however, that a strong reason for appending this postscript has been my wish to tell what "Birth Witness," one of the best poems in Where Clouds Are Formed, has done for me.

Back in 2002, and again two years later, while organizing sessions of the Forum for the Study of the Literary Cultures of the Southwest to be held in Florence, I had suggested our friends in Tucson to include Ofelia Zepeda in the delegation from the University of Arizona. Both times I was told that that was impossible because she could not be granted a passport, owing to the fact that the exact day of her birth was unknown. Her parents, both "Sonoran Papagos," I was explained, had migrated from across the border and settled not on the Reservation but in one of the cotton-growing areas of Central Arizona where Ofelia was born at a time when registers of birth were practically impervious to the poor, illiterate, hardly English-speaking, work-weary "people of the cotton fields." The story was hard to believe, and my suspicious Italian nature led me as far as to imagine that some internecine strife, of the kind not infrequent in academic milieus, was the real cause of the impediment.

"Birth Witness" has rid me of my suspicion and my disbelief. Starting with the memory of the mother's memories of the location of the birth ("[...]

an old wooden row house / in the cotton fields. / [...] it was windy. / [...] The tin roof rattled, a piece uplifted / from the wooden frame [...]” and the fuzzier ones of the birth’s time (“Around one in the afternoon, / [...] it was March”), the poem develops as a one-way conversation across an office glass window. On one side of it, a bureaucrat, who goes by her regulations and, unaware or uncaring of the unreasonableness, the absurdity, of their provisoes in the case at hand, advises: “If you were not baptized the same year you were born, / the baptismal certificate cannot be used to verify your birth. // You need affidavits, [...] Your older siblings, [...] old enough to have a memory / of your birth. / Can they vouch for you? // You need records [...] Are there doctor’s receipts from when you were a baby? / Didn’t your parents have a family Bible, you know, / where births were recorded? / Were there letters? / Announcements of your birth?” On the other side of the glass window, the applicant, never breaking her silence before the time comes to take the forms she is handed and go, aware as she is of the futility of giving voice to any of the thoughts that are crossing her mind: “Who was there to witness my birth? [...] Was it my big sister? / Would my mother have let a teenager watch her giving birth? [...] / Who knew then that I would need witnesses of my birth?” And to what avail say that the stars, the wind, the sun, the pollen were the witnesses of her birth, “[...] silent witnesses,” who “[...] do not know of affidavits. They simply know,” or explain that her “[...] parents are illiterate in the English language” and that the language they speak is “[...] much too civil for writing [...] minor things like my birth?”

While I am savoring once again so splendid a reminder of the different uses of language, of the different weight of words, in an oral and in a literate culture, I wish to express my hope that red-tape America will soon find a solution for Ofelia Zepeda’s predicament, such that would make her free to see “Other Worlds” beyond the perimeter of the USA.

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ABOUT THE GENRE(S) OF IRVIN MORRIS' *FROM THE
GLITTERING WORLD. A NAVAJO STORY*

Gaetano Prampolini

Before addressing this topic, an account of both the contents and the shape of *From the Glittering World. A Navajo Story* — the only published book to-date by the Navajo (*Diné*) author Irvin Morris — would not go amiss.

According to the creation story of the *Diné*, “the Glittering World” is the Fifth World, the present one, lit by the sun and the moon — the *Diné* universe delimited by four sacred mountains and contained within a holy rainbow circle. Since this book is coming from such a place, it will not seem strange that its paratext consists of a “Dedication” and a “Prayer” (the former in *Diné*, followed by its English translation; the latter in *Diné* only), that *Diné* precedes English also in the table of contents, and that *Diné* words and phrases as well as characters’ speeches in *Diné* frequently occur throughout. While never impairing comprehension, *Diné* works on the non-*Diné*-speaking reader as a constant reminder that what he/she is reading comes from a radically different culture, one which is determined to defend the right to its own difference. As it is affirmed later on, “we’re all created different and meant to be that way. To have different skin tones, languages, and religions. Did the eagle try or want to be a hawk?” (Morris 1997, 104).

Adopting a partition that has become a sort of trade-mark for works by Native American authors, the text is arranged into four sections.

Section One, titled “Into the Glittering World,” is thirty pages long and evenly divided into two segments: the first (3-15) is a telling of the *Diné* creation story, with the final emergence of the people into the present world, after their predecessors had lost each of the subjacent four through acts of sexual misbehavior but had, each time, been helped to enter the next upper one through the intervention of unfailingly benevolent deities. After instructing the people how to best live in this world, and after ridding it of all monsters (except Old Age, Poverty, Hunger and Cold so that the *Diné* “would not grow complacent as immortals” [Morris 1997, 14]), Changing Woman, the Twins and all the Holy People left, to return to their home, but they “promised that they would always keep watch over the people [...] and they are always within reach through the songs and prayers they gave us” (Morris 1997, 15. *Italics ours*). The appearance of this pronoun, first person plural, almost at the end of this segment changes the reader’s perception of what he/she has been reading: he/she realizes now that this is no ethnographical account of a tribal cosmo- and anthropogonic myth, but a profession of faith, which culminates

in the last four lines of the segment, where living in the sacredly appointed homeland is declared to be, at the same time, the prerequisite for and the effect of both the favor of the Holy People and the *Diné*'s piety and morality:

"[S]o long as *Diné* remain within this boundary, *we* will have the blessing and protection of the Holy People. So long as *we* remain within these boundaries *we* will be living in the manner that the Holy People prescribed for *us*." (Morris 1997, 15. Italics ours)

Apart from General Carleton's ruthless, genocidal instructions to Kit Carson, in 1863, for the taming of *Diné* resistance, and apart from headman Dághaa'í (Barboncito)'s plea, in 1868, for letting his deported people return to their homeland (because "Changing Woman," he says, "gave us this land. Our Holy People created it specifically for us" [Morris 1997, 27]), what the reader hears in the second segment of Section One (17-30) are the musings of a twelve-year old boy who has witnessed the horrors of the three-hundred miles march the *Diné* have been forced on by the *bilagáanaas* (the Americans) to reach the area devised for their new habitation; a boy who has survived the deprivations (hunger and cold) and abuses (among others, those inflicted on *Diné* women by "that red-haired soldier [who] has left a trail of blue-eyed babies") during the four years of his people's captivity at *Hwééldi* (alias Ft. Sumner or Bosque Redondo), that hostile land that "does not know us" (Morris 1997, 24 and 20).

By juxtaposing the *Diné* creation story and the narration of *Diné* captivity, blessed and blissful *Dinétah* and the holocaust of the Long Walk and at *Hwééldi*, Morris highlights the falling, so to say, of the *Diné* from mythic timelessness into history. Those of the Long Walk and at *Hwééldi* remain unforgettable and unforgiven experiences, engraved in *Diné* collective memory, and as such they keep resurfacing in various contexts throughout the book.

Furthermore, this abrupt juxtaposition at the beginning of the book establishes Morris' characteristic method of signification: keeping his narrators' extra-narrative comments to a minimum, so as to have as much of the meaning as possible conveyed through the stories they tell — and counting on a cooperative reader's capability to connect, compare and contrast sections, segments, stories, sentences.¹

¹ Juxtapositions may concern consecutive segments, as, for instance, when, after the enchanted, and enchanting, recollection, on pp. 64-65, of the night-long winter ceremony culminating with the dance of the *Yé'í'ii* and their and the spectators' teasing by *Tóneinilií*, the Water Sprinkler, meant "to invoke the healing power of laughter," the narrator switches directly, on p. 66, to the recollection of his "first Halloween," when an "old, old lady," thinking that the children at her door "[were] taunting her," "[...] scold[ed] us [and] sw[ung] her cane at our legs even as we tr[ie]d" to explain about Halloween." Thus is the reader silently invited to contrast native and imported festivities. Quite often, though, in this tightly and shrewdly textured narrative, the reader's interpretive cooperation is called for by segments which are non-consecutive, and even far apart one from another,

Sections Two (125 pages) and Three (25 pages), titled "Child of the Glittering World" and "Travels in the Glittering World" respectively, cover the bulk of the book (257 pages) and make up one single unit inasmuch as both emanate from one voice.² In other words, Sections Two and Three share the same narrator — an autodiegetic one, since the identity of narrator and main character of the story is postulated by the personal pronoun "I" by which the latter is referred to. But, of course, whether *From the Glittering World* is an autobiography cannot be decided until the identity of the main character and the author is also ascertained.

The first segment of Section Two is all-important for at least two reasons.

Firstly, while harking back to the covenant between Holy People and *Diné* which concluded the telling of the creation story in Section One, it introduces what the reader will not fail to recognize as a major — albeit never overemphasized — tension running throughout: the sense of contentment, healthiness and centeredness deriving from living in the homeland vs. the polluting, demoralizing, decentering effects produced on the self by living anywhere else. Whenever "I have lived outside the holy rainbow circle," says the narrator, "[...]outside the circle of the sacred mountains, I have known spiritual hunger and longing for the sound of desert thunder, for turquoise sky, dry air and radiant sun. And for many years, until I realized what I was doing, I was using hurtful words to describe my mother: *landscape, wilderness, nature*" (Morris 1997, 33-34).

Secondly, here the narrator also affirms: "The land is ripe with the stories of my people" (34). How true this is, and how important for his sense of who he is, becomes clear in the next segment, where he lets his eyes circle "sunwise" — east, south, west, north — and lovingly describes the land in terms of its geomorphology and ecology but — pre-eminently — as a storied entity: there are stories connecting its features and localities to events which have taken place there from creation time ("*Dzilná'oodílii*, Huerfano Mesa, where the Twins [...] were conceived [...], *Ch'oolí'ii*, Spruce Knob, the birthplace of Changing Woman [...]" [Morris 1997, 40]), to historical time ("*Shash bitoo'*, Bear Springs, now known as Ft. Wingate, the point of departure for thousands of *Diné* forced on the infamous Long Walk in 1863" [Morris 1997, 36]), to the present ("*Dzil yíjiin*, Black Mesa is now being strip-mined. [...] The coal is crushed into a powder, mixed with groundwater, and sluiced through huge pipes [...] to the Nevada-California border. [...] The operation siphons off millions of gallons

such as, for instance, the descriptions of two sweat lodge baths, respectively on pp. 133-134 and 159-160 — one conveying the sense of physical and spiritual well-being deriving from the cleansing rite properly performed, the other presenting a desecrating travesty of Indian religiousness set up for money on behalf of a mixed crowd of Californian whites.

² It is the same voice that in the first half of Section One has addressed the reader to narrate the creation of the *Diné* world. There, though, it sounded definitely different: the prose had the plain style, affirmative tone and solemn rhythm characteristic of texts on which religions are founded, sounding in fact much like that of the Biblical Genesis.

of precious water daily [...] and the toll on the land is immeasurable: the water table at Black Mesa has dropped tremendously. Sacred springs have dried up” [Morris 1997, 39]). The land is being defiled and impoverished by a colonial-like exploitation of its resources, but it is still sacred *Dinétaah* thanks to the stories. And knowing the stories that animate the places is knowing oneself. By the “wide sweep of [his] beloved land” that he can see from his house, “I am reminded of who I am,” says the narrator, “I am not alone, nor am I the first. The land has birthed and sustained all my grandfathers and grandmothers” (Morris 1997, 33).

In the third segment the scope of observation is reduced to the surroundings of his house: first, the different rock formations and soils and the diverse vegetable and animal populations down at the bottom and up the slopes of the valley; then the village with

a public elementary school and a teacherage, a Christian Reformed Church mission, a Catholic church and bingo hall, a trading post, a telephone switching station, water tower, tribal meeting hall, senior citizen’s center, tribal police substation, laundromat, greenhouse, low-rent apartments [...].

But “the school is dying, the HUD houses are deteriorating, and the scattered trees, shrubs, hedges and rose bushes have assumed curious postures in their fight to survive” (Morris 1997, 44-45); then a close-up on the area strewn with the homes of his extended family. Most of them are falling or have fallen into disrepair. He calls them “hovels,” but in the next sentence “true poverty,” he affirms, “is unknown to us,” and goes on listing riches which would hardly be rated very highly outside *Dinétaah*: “There is the land, and we have [...] the intricate and enduring clanship ties that provide us with relatives wherever we go on the reservation; and we have our language, our stories, our songs” (Morris 1997, 46).

And, since “the proper way” for a *Diné* to introduce and identify him/herself is in terms of his/her clanship, “*Tóbaahí nishlǫ́, doo Tótsohnii éí báshishchíín*, [...] I am of the Edgewater clan, and I am born for the Big Water clan” is to remain the only clue in the whole book to identify this narrator-protagonist with the author.

Not only does clan affiliation entail a pledge of mutual help for all members, but “knowing [one’s] clan weaves [one] inextricably into [the] web” of *Diné* society. “We are never alone” (Morris 1997, 47), says the narrator: something much more difficult to say about a member of any individualistic modern Western society. Grandfathers, uncles, aunts, mother, brothers and sisters, cousins are important presences in the narrator’s account of his life.³

From p. 53, where the segment titled “My earliest memories” begins, to the end of Section Three (191), when the narrator must be, roughly, thirty-

³ Less important seems to have been his father, only obliquely alluded to in the segment titled “Peripatetic Coyote” — a Coyote story condemning paternal selfishness and irresponsibility, and thus suggesting that the narrator’s silence about his own father might be due not just to the fact that “*Diné* are matrilinear and matriloal” (Morris 1997, 48), nor to the divorce of his parents.

five, the narration proceeds chronologically, alternating and opposing two different settings: “the Glittering World” and a “glittering world” whose glitter is as dazzling and enticing as it is dangerous and demeaning — two spaces standing for clashing sets of values, two clashing cultures.

The narrator begins to feel the encroaching of the Euroamerican world on the *Diné* early on, in sensitive areas of his childhood life such as education and religion: the school has no other object than a fast, uncompromising Americanization of *Diné* children; every week, on “religion day” Christian Reformed, Baptist, Catholic, Mormon, Presbyterian and Pentecostal missionaries “descen[d] on [the] classrooms,” contending for the conversion of the young “heathens” (which was, remembers the narrator with his characteristic quietly pungent humor, what “we were told [we] were” [Morris 1997, 78] and, without knowing what it meant, made him feel shameful). However, as the harsh corporal punishments meted out by *bilagáanaa* teachers are counterbalanced, in his memory at least, by the blander and wholly effective *Diné* methods of correction consisting just in “scolding[s] [...] stern look[s] or icy silence[s],” so is the ludicrous, Wednesday afternoons’ “competition for bodies” to be Christianized compensated by his attending *Diné* ceremonial activities and his being initiated “into many of the ways of [his] people” by the grandfather “who was a medicine man” (Morris 1997, 72, 78, 79 and 72).⁴

The restless shifting between *Diné* and America that marks his life to the end of his narration begins when, at fifteen and a dropout from high school, he is lured by the myth of California, “the land of everlasting summer” and easy opportunities. But for the youth who, leaving home in his “reservation uniform: blue jeans, silver buckle, western shirt and cowboy boots [...] didn’t realize how much [he] would stand out” (Morris 1997, 85 and 86) — and, if just for that, how much he would be looked down upon — California has in store only one dead-end job after another and a chain of shocking discoveries: drugs, alcohol, the commodification of sex, the mistreatment and abuse of animals. But on the bus that is taking him back, he keeps awake so as not to miss the outline of the sacred mountain announcing home — that cheering sighting that gladdened his ancestors coming home from *Hwééldi* and that he will be eagerly looking for on each of his subsequent homecomings.⁵

⁴“I learned some of the prayers and songs,” the narrator recalls, going on defining the kind of education worth having for a *Diné*. “I learned the names of the places and of the things that happened there. I learned the ceremonial names of plants, animals, and various types of earth. I learned where to find medicinal plants and how to collect them properly. I learned how to gather corn pollen. I learned many stories, and through them I learned of *things that have no existence in the limited world* [Italics ours] of the *bilagáanaa*. [...] I was told about the power of animals and about their place in creation. [...] I was also learning about myself. And I received my secret, sacred *Diné* name. The name that the deities know me by. The name used in prayers. The name that ties everything together and gives me an identity, a *presence*, in the universe” (Morris 1997, 79-80).

⁵Morris 1997, 165 and, also, 178, where the following passage occurs: “[...] I sit up. There they are, the mountains. I say the names in my mind. Pike’s Peak, Spanish

When he must already be in his early twenties, he is a student at the Navajo Community College, where he learns to read and write his mother tongue and discovers his literary vocation, and then at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque “because Leslie Silko and Simon Ortiz [were] teaching there.” But, when he “drop[s] out after a year of booze and bad grades[, t]he ensuing downward spiral le[ads him] to Gallup,” into that Indian hell on earth “where,” he recalls, “my days became a blur of alcohol and living day by day” (Morris 1997, 102 and 117).

After nearly two years of street life, which has showed him “human frailty and dignity — *human life* — laid bare” and left him with the feeling that Gallup “is always so near, and that being an Indian in America will make the difference” (Morris 1997, 117 and 129), he is back on the reservation once again. For several years he works for the Navajo Nation on a program aimed at helping the people recover their alimentary self-sufficiency through a variety of agro-techniques, one of which is “the development of community seed banks, [...] intended to perpetuate traditional crops.” “There is no feeling,” he remembers, “like seeing heirloom seeds sprout, and watching them grow and ripen, to give you hope” (Morris 1997, 141). Where, however, the rehabilitating effects homeland has on him are best seen is in the leisurely, enraptured account of a spring-day horse ride to the top of a mountain, which ends on this note: “I can disappear into the forest and emerge somewhere else, someplace where I can believe it is a hundred years ago or even further back. [...] There, in the absolute stillness, I can believe there is no Kit Carson. No Niña, Pinta, or Santa Maria” (Morris 1997, 135). Anywhere else but *there*, though, there is no way to reckon without history, and the irony of some of its twists is not lost on him as when, for instance, after grieving over his Mother, the Land, “[l]ying] bound and gagged” under the complete anthropization of the Great Plains, he reflects that “the Breadbasket of the World [...] feeds us too. Bleached commodity flour once a month. Commodity rice, commodity beans, commodity this and that.” (Morris 1997, 178), or when, after sympathetically shaking hands with a Tibetan demonstrating against the Chinese occupation of his country, he shocks a *bilagáanaa* reporter by observing that “these Tibetans are asking support from a people who are guilty of genocide and oppression too, as well as the illegal occupation of this hemisphere” (Morris 1997, 184).

At thirty he is in the outside world again, a student at the IAIA in Santa Fe, then at the University of California in Santa Cruz, finally at Cornell University, where he completes his training in creative writing. He also takes a journey cross-country, all the way to Montana to attend a memorial powwow and back to the East coast. That he has “a place to return to, *Diné bikéyah*,” is his one comforting thought, because, wherever he is go-

Peaks, and *Sisnaajini*, the home of *tséghá’ dínidíinii ashkii* and *tséghá’ dínidíinii at’ ééd*, Rock Crystal Boy and Rock Crystal Girl. I feel the power seeping back into my body.”

ing, there is always something, or someone, to disagreeably remind him of his “differentness” (Morris 1997, 155 and 148).

The last segment of Section Three is titled “Terra Incognita” — aptly so, whether it is to be taken as suggesting the open-endedness of this life story or, ironically, that there is no alternative to the life the narrator-protagonist has lived so far. He is in New York, riding the subway he has had “to screw up the courage” to board (Morris 1997, 187), being no less and, in fact, more “nervous” (that is, afraid) than he had been at fifteen, boarding the bus to California since, then, “he didn’t realize how much [he] would stand out,” while now he feels “so conspicuous” (Morris 1997, 188). Fear is the consequence of the shame — “for our poverty, ‘dark’ skin, ‘Indian-ness’ and ‘primitive’ ways” (Morris 1997, 98) — he has introjected by living in the Euroamerican world. “I am afraid,” he has owned, reflecting on his Gallup days, “to face my own life. I am Indian. I am minority. I am dark and I am powerless. The only way to cope is to numb the senses [...]” (Morris 1997, 124). Fear, in time, has mounted to an anguish that makes him say “I want to kill but I know I won’t. I can’t. [...] Instead, I will turn the gun on myself first” and “I wish I was not so Indian-looking” (Morris 1997, 184 and 182). He has painfully learned that, invisible as a person, he is only too visible as an abstraction, “the Indian” — despised and hated in the very stereotyping look bestowed on him. In the subway, to hide his fear, he leafs through the tribal paper: acts of *bilagáanaa* as well as *Diné* violence, drunken road-casualties, tribal council ineptitude, toxic and nuclear waste dumped on Indian land, fashionable and opportunistic exploitation of Indian cultures are disheartening reminders of what day-by-day reality is even in the Glittering World. Despair, however, is by no means the total sum of the narrator-protagonist’s life experience: he does “caren[s] between shame and pride,” the reasons for pride being “our resilience, our story, our very lives” (Morris 1997, 98). But he needs to be far away from the contaminating, depressive effects of Euroamerica, as when he takes part in the powwow on the Rock Boy reservation in Montana, to be able to say:

They say that the drum is the voice and heartbeat of this continent. Over the next four hours I floated in the incredible energy unleashed by the music and dancing. The experience made all the anguish of being Indian bearable and precious. I was happy. I knew I would never give up my heritage no matter what the penalty might be, regardless of the suffering that would be inflicted upon me by refusing to assimilate, for remembering, for being a living reminder of the things some people would sooner forget. (Morris 1997, 174)

Titled “From the Glittering World,” Section Four takes the reader by surprise, since it consists of seven short stories which, at first, appear to have in common with the life story that precedes them not much more than their

settings. While admiring the very fine craft of Morris as a short story writer, and notwithstanding that two of the stories are told by an autodiegetic narrator whose ideological stance would be very difficult to distinguish from that of the narrator and protagonist of the previous two Sections, the reader may indeed be inclined to see this bunch of stories as an extrinsic and disjointed addition to what has so deeply absorbed him/her till then, and which he/she is most likely to have mentally defined as autobiography.

But was that really an autobiography? An autobiography, that is, of the same genre as those we are familiar with in Western literatures?

According to Philippe Lejeune's well-known definition, an autobiography is "a retrospective prose account a *real* person gives of his/her own existence, stressing his/her *individual* life; in particular, the history of *his/her own self*" (Lejeune 1996, 14. Italics ours). Indispensable for autobiographies is that the names of author, narrator and character be identical: this is the substance of what Lejeune calls "the autobiographical pact" offered by the author to the reader.

Now, how do matters stand with Morris' life story? There can be no doubts (for the reason cogently explained by Emile Benveniste⁶) concerning the identity of narrator and character. But what about the identity of author and character, without which no identity of author and narrator can be deduced?

External evidence provided by the flap cover of the book informs us that Mr Morris "is a member of the Tóbaaní clan of the Navajo Nation" and that he "received his M.F.A. from Cornell" — exactly like the protagonist of his narrative — and a diligent reader could cull from the text a heap of internal evidence to further sustain the identity. But neither explicitly (by giving his proper name to his narrator and protagonist) nor implicitly (through the title chosen for his book or some clear allusion to an autobiographical intent) does Morris ever propose an autobiographical pact. No pact and no protagonist's name equals no autobiography — that is to say, no autobiography according to a definition such as Lejeune's, which insists on an idea of *personal* identity, of *individual* self. Perhaps, it is this definition which does not fit Morris' book. A different one, one predicated on the idea — the traditional Native American idea — of a *relational* identity and a *collective* self, would certainly work much better. Let us remind ourselves that the second part of the title of Morris' book is not "*The Story of My Life*" or "*A Navajo Autobiography*" but *A Navajo Story*. What this implies is that a representation of that relational identity and collective self, to be effective, can only be entrusted to one story embracing creation times, the collective trauma of the Long Walk and *Hwééldi* and the present — the present depicted through stories about nowadays rez life as well as the story of, not necessarily, Mr Irvin Morris, but, rather,

⁶ As referred to in Lejeune 1996, 19 ff.

a kind of “*Diné* Everyman” representative of a whole generation.⁷ If this reasoning is plausible, with *From the Glittering World* we are offered another instance of that hybridizing impulse, so vital and fecund, which characterizes Native American literature.

By way of conclusion, I would like to point out one more aspect of the peculiarity of this work. Autobiography, as we all know, one of the most important narrative genres of American literature since its beginnings, is a genre centered on *becoming*: the Puritan autobiographer tells us how from sinner he (hopefully) became a saint; Benjamin Franklin (and the host of his successors in the from-rags-to-riches line) tells us how from being poor and obscure he became wealthy and famous. Also Native American autobiographies (to begin with N. Scott Momaday’s *Way to Rainy Mountain*, which nearly fifty years ago founded a much thriving tradition) are centered on “becoming” — how their authors (who are nearly always persons of mixed descent) have come to recognize, accept and value the “Indian” side of their identity. Morris’ book appears, on the contrary, to be centered on *being*, so strong, proud and firm is the sense it conveys, from beginning to end, of what it means to *be a Diné* and not to renounce being a *Diné* in the face of the pressures exerted by an overwhelmingly powerful, alien culture.

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⁷How the stories in Section Four can reinforce and mirror the life story narrated in Sections Two and Three is evident, for instance, in the following quotation from “The Snake of Light,” working as a perfect *mise-en-à-bîme*: “He was an outsider in the *bilagáanaa* world, would always be, hard as he tried to fit in. As he listened to her [the protagonist’s grandmother who has spent all her life in a remote corner of the reservation], he realized too, that he could not stay” (Morris 1997, 207).

II

Mexican-American

EMOTIONAL DISCOMFORT AND STRATEGIES OF SURVIVAL IN ALEJANDRO MORALES'S *THE RAG DOLL PLAGUES*

Michele Bottalico

Deconstructing history to reconstruct it from the perspective of emarginated people — giving the narrated events a metaphorical quality and creating a trans-historical fiction — is one of the main features of Alejandro Morales's prose writing.¹ *The Rag Doll Plagues*, his fifth novel and his second written in English, is a case in point. The book has triple layers of narrative chronology and is divided into three sections presented by three different first person narrators, who are blood connected doctors battling separate but also related diseases.²

The first section of *The Rag Doll Plagues* is narrated by the Spaniard Gregorio Revueltas, a physician sent to Mexico City by his government in 1788 to diagnose and cure a plague called La Mona by local people. The second section presents the account given by a contemporary Chicano doctor living in California, whose fiancée contracts AIDS through a blood transfusion and is ravaged by her disease. Finally, the events narrated in the third section take place in the future, sometime in the twenty-first century. Here the narrator/protagonist is a scientist employed by a US / Mexican technocratic confederation called LAMEX, in reference to the area between Los Angeles

¹ Alejandro Dennis Morales, a professor of Chicano/Latino studies at the University of California, Irvine, has so far published the following works, two of which were originally written in Spanish and later translated into English: *Caras viejas y vino nuevo*, 1975 (first trans.: *Old Faces and New Wine*, 1981; second trans.: *Barrio on the Edge*, 1997); *La verdad sin voz*, 1979 (trans.: *Death of an Anglo*, 1988); *Reto en el paraíso*, 1982; *The Brick People*, 1988; *The Rag Doll Plagues*, 1992; *Waiting to Happen*, 2001; *Pequeña nación*, 2005; *The Captain of All These Men of Death*, 2008.

² Morales thus explained the genesis of this novel: "Working on a second volume to *The Brick People*, in which I planned to take the last born character in the story to 1988, I attended a symposium on colonial Mexico at UC Irvine. Professor John Jay Tepaske spoke about a book entitled *The Royal Protomedicato: The Regulation of the Medical Profession in the Spanish Empire*. What I heard enthralled me. [...] Tepaske [...] described the condition of Mexico City, the diseases that struck the populace and the hospitals that accommodated a certain class of patients. [...] The next morning, I returned to work on the second volume of *The Brick People*. However, the protagonist, Gregorio Revueltas, the last person born in *The Brick People*, refused to stay in twentieth-century Los Angeles; instead, he leaped back in time and space to the end of eighteenth century in Mexico City" (Morales 1996, 21).

and Mexico City, whose population has been struck by another plague. Gregory discovers that only transfusions from pure-blooded Mexico City residents can cure this disease, which highlights the irony of Mexicans' new role in American civilization. Thus the three narrators, each of whom seems to be the reincarnation of the preceding, are the red thread uniting the texture of *The Rag Doll Plagues*, and illness is the central thematic metaphor of the novel. The plagues recurring in Morales's novel are a metaphor for different forms of colonialism and exploitation of the earth, and they give evidence of the pathological dimension of existence. But other shades of meaning are also implied in this metaphor which is built as a set of Chinese boxes.

Quite tellingly, in the three sections of *The Rag Doll Plagues* illness stands for an emotional discomfort, for a crucial stage in the process of self-development of the Indio-Hispanic population that is portrayed in three different moments of its history. Illness, which is the canonic symptom of an alteration of existence, signals the loss of a socially determined status and, at the same time, forebodes a probably utopian order. In Morales's novel illness becomes a rite of passage which leads — through healing — to the possible recovery of what has been lost: identity. Or, it may lead to death, which is the cancellation of the existing reality, and the passage to a superior order. In either case, the representation of illness embodies a strategy of survival which foreshadows resurrection or re-birth and leads to total change. In so doing, this metaphor gives *The Rag Doll Plagues* a reassuring sense of an ending and a circular vision of historical time.

In Book One, which sets what Edgar Allan Poe would call the tone of the narration, Gregorio's first impact with the New World shows all the contradictions implied in colonization, because he feels both repulsion and attraction for Mexico City. The narrator remarks that he is now ready "to endure the filth and corruption of this demoralized capital," and that "the cherub's golden wing" carved on the baroque doorway of the royal palace "contrasted with the filthy central fountain where Indians, Mestizos, Negroes, Mulattoes and the other immoral racial mixtures of humanity drank and filled clay jugs with foul dark water." As every implicit persecutor, though, Don Gregorio is also fascinated by his victims and once comments: "Poverty and illness attracted me, as if I needed to get closer to that which I rejected." He disdainfully calls the Indios "savages who could not possibly have souls" but is sexually attracted by their women (Morales 1992, 11, 13).

Morales establishes an obvious equation between colonialism and human disease, in that they both give rise to chaos and destruction. As a consequence of the terrible sanitary conditions, and of the plague which has killed hundreds, the muddy streets of Mexico City are described as covered with garbage and decaying corpses, with "the bodies of hundreds of dead dogs in a pile covered with a blanket of flies that undulated like a black hair net on and above the decaying carcasses." The bordello section of the city, "the culmination of disgrace and filth," is swarming with "dying male and female prostitutes who suffered from epidemic and/or venereal diseases." Debauchery abounds, and sexual acts are performed in the streets. Father

Jude, Gregorio's Mestizo guide whose face is also deformed by lacerations, ministers to a flock of "diseased, infested population: the prostitutes, the lepers, the abandoned children, the demented homeless people, the disenfranchised who survived in the filthy streets." Praying over the body of a dead young girl, once he ironically exclaims: "Just another one of the millions who have benefited from our Majesty's policies. [...] I am the only person who treats them. I help them die" (Morales 1992, 25, 28, 29).

Interestingly enough, the plague which devastates His Majesty's subjects deteriorates people's bodies starting from their limbs, their arms and legs, thus metaphorically depriving them of the capacity to act, and to react. People are turned into pliable puppets, or better rag dolls, and even after their death La Mona "leaves a corpse that feels like a rag doll. The body never hardens, as in natural death, but remains soft like a wine-skin" (Morales 1992, 30). This illness called La Mona, an expression that in colloquial Spanish means "drunkenness," hints at an intoxication of the body as well as at a blunting of the mind of the individual as human and civil entity. Amputation of limbs or other parts of the patient's body, up to the annihilation of the body itself, is a remedy used just to delay death.

It is clear, thus, that Morales alludes to the gradual civil death of the Mexican population caused by colonization in a society that is at a breaking point. So much so that he comments that Father Jude's patients "looked to him not only for physical and spiritual remedies, but for an insurgent attitude that made life tolerable and nurtured a growing desire for change," since they were in a tragic situation which, says Father Jude, "neither the Church nor the Crown has done anything to help" (Morales 1992, 29, 33).

In this section of *The Rag Doll Plagues*, as well as in its second section, incurable plagues give also evidence of the impotence of science and of human understanding, so that Don Gregorio deeply feels the threat of man's aloneness in a sometimes unintelligible universe. After four years spent in New Spain, his rite of passage through the experience of man's powerlessness and of people's suffering, illnesses, debauchery and decadence comes to an end, and he decides to remain in the New World. His coming of age, his transformation, are helped by the course of history. In truth, the King of Spain had sent him to New Spain to cure *another* disease, alias "to quell the fires of revolutionary fervor by extinguishing the illnesses in the fevered populace" (Morales 1992, 16), because the echoes of the American and French Revolutions were provoking dangerous omens of separatism in Mexico as well. And later Gregorio does see that new ideas of freedom and equality are circulating among the folk. Furthermore, he realizes that the plague has nearly stopped concomitantly with the birth of Marisela, the offspring of an affair of the Spanish viceroy with a Mexican woman, who obviously represents the rise of a new generation and whom he decides to raise.

At the end of Book One, Gregorio Revueltas (whose name, incidentally, hints at the revolutions of which he ends up being the herald in New Spain and which he partly witnesses) kisses Marisela, and her innocent giggling sounds to him like a sign of liberation "which offered a new century in my

new country,” as Gregorio remarks. Meaningfully, while a ray of the declining afternoon sun is passing over his face, Don Gregorio becomes aware that a historical cycle has completed its course leaving on him the heavy burden of a shameful past. The narration closes with the following words: “perhaps that was the cause of the tear running down my cheek; perhaps it was an older, more ancient tear, traveling through those who had come before me” (Morales 1992, 66). It is not surprising, then, that the first title Morales had chosen for this novel was *The Ancient Tear* (Rosales 1999, 17).

The narrator of Book Two, whose anglicized name is Gregory Revueltas, focuses on the Delhi barrio of Santa Ana in the conservative Orange County, California. He is a medical doctor and a writer, and from his picture of barrio life in the 1970’s, which reflects a multiracial reality, one can only glimpse configurations of the Other as seen by the Anglos, always implying allusions to backwardness, delinquency, alienation, degeneracy and social inequality. The clash with the Anglo-American milieu is hardly mentioned, for Chicano issues are dealt with transversally by Morales. It is implicit, though, in Gregory’s representation of the barrio as a stage for collective exasperation, for a discomfort that causes the arrogance and the gang fights of a potentially self-destructing youth.

Also in this section of the novel, illness indirectly signals the ineluctable presence of human error and of an existential malaise which love and rationality are unable to overthrow. As in Poe’s “The Masque of the Red Death,” physical sickness also hints at the *memento mori* theme, at the possibility of nemesis, and it even seems to warn that human beings should not look for their disease outside themselves since it actually is “within” them.

Sandra Spears, Gregory’s lover, is a hemophiliac theatre actress who contracts AIDS and is shunned by her colleagues and by the doctors of the hospital, who consider her “a human scourge, a Pandora’s box filled with diseases capable of destroying humanity” (Morales 1992, 112). Saying that her disease “arouses thoroughly old-fashioned kinds of dread [as] any disease that is treated as a mystery” (Sontag 1979, 5-6) would be too obvious, since the reasons for that have been fully analyzed by Susan Sontag in her well-known pamphlet. It is useful to remember, instead, that Sandra is Jewish, as we learn from Gregory who recalls the first night when, he says, she “exposed my heart to her pain. [...] I passed my hand over Sandra’s figure and moved on a swift river racing by windows of memory. The victims of the holocaust saw through her bones.” Soon afterwards, Gregory mentions two other Jewish friends, particularly Dr Milton Flink “who had suffered the abuses against children in the Nazi concentration camps while he watched his parents wither away and die.” And later on in the book, the narrating voice remarks that when Sandra’s beautiful body was at its highest point of deterioration, Flink refused to see her because “what her body was today he saw once before as a child. [...] He was afraid to see her, afraid of the memories brought back by the sight of her” (Morales 1992, 77, 128).

In Morales’s novel, Sandra’s presence is the reminder of another tragic folly of history and of the struggle of Jewish people in defending their

own identity. That very identity that Gregory questions as a Chicano, and over which he once ponders and comments: "We were not who we were, in the past, in the present, in the future. [...] I was someone else when I was myself. Fearfully, I searched for myself in my patients, friends, those whom I loved." Sandra, who is regarded as "an unpredictable, contaminated animal" (Morales 1992, 111, 108), reminds us of the intolerant attitude of Anglo-Americans towards the Chicanos, and Otherness in general. An intolerance which surfaces even in Sandra's father, who is definitely against her love affair with Gregory, with a Chicano.

As happens in Book One of *The Rag Doll Plagues*, also in Book Two Morales gives clear evidence of his exacerbated conception of human history through horrific metaphorical images of deterioration and decay, eventually foreshadowing future changes. For instance, the vision of Sandra as she is regarded by the people who surround her — a woman "transmuted into a decomposing creature, bursting with foul-smelling miasma, spilling fluids and dropping maggots in its wake, and decorated with a crown of filthy flies" (Morales 1992, 109) — has all the connotations of a "terminal" vision, which has the same valence as that of the bodies ravaged by the eighteenth-century plague described in Book One. Analyzed in the context of the whole novel, Sandra's illness and the descriptions of her sick body reveal themselves to be a skillful rhetorical and fictional device which leads the reader to expect final positive results, albeit continually deferred to the future. Since in fiction, as one critic rightly maintains:

[...] illness not only substitutes the sick body for the troubled self, but becomes a way of accommodating desires which are not legitimated in the society at large. Alienation [...] can be redrawn as solidarity, and the antithetical forces of desire and repression can be brought into accord, the disintegrative potential inherent in each term made benign. (Bailin 1994, 21)

For this reason, the final comments of Book Two point up not so much Gregory's personal sorrow at Sandra's death as, rather, a collective sorrow that Sandra has evoked, that "ancient tear" which will hopefully be wiped off in a distant future, when differences amongst people will be accepted as intrinsic factors of humankind. "While I looked upon the faces that cared for Sandra," says the narrating voice, "she gently expired. She, Sandra, who entered, changed and loved my life exactly as I loved hers, who called from deep within my soul an ancient tear that would forever taste to me like our love, the tear both of us shared at that final moment of her passage" (Morales 1992, 129).

In Book Three the third narrator, another Gregory Revueltas who also is a medical doctor but one specializing in genetic engineering, describes a plague that is the consequence of pollution, of a crazy control of the environment, of a degenerated relationship between man and nature. This virulent plague is thus described:

Totally unpredictable, these spontaneous plagues could appear anywhere. Produced by humanity's harvest of waste, they traveled through the air, land and sea and penetrated populated areas, [...] killing thousands [...]. From our pollution we had created energy masses that destroyed or deformed everything in their path. (Morales 1992, 138-139)

In the LAMEX territory, which is the result of a triple alliance between Mexico, United States and Canada, utmost poverty, hunger and crime have disappeared, but Mexicans are still exploited. They account for the ninety per cent of the Triple Alliance armies, for example. There still persists an attitude of apprehension toward the Mexicans. Gregory is aware that technology has destroyed all emotions and that sorrow, for instance, "was an emotion that humanity had done away with long ago," but he resists because, says he, "voices from the past and present warned me not to allow them to deconstruct my humanity" (Morales 1992, 139, 143).

The solution that Gregory discovers to cure the plague is obviously ironic but also grounded on historical fact, as he remarks: "For thousands of years, on authorities' terms, whether by a high Aztec priest or a United States or Mexican president, Mexicans have offered their blood to the world and to the sun only to be exploited and manipulated." In spite of his dark vision of reality, though, at the end of Book Three the narrator once again glimpses hope through the birth of a baby who, says he, "represents the hope for the new millennium" and he concludes: "I am no longer me. I am transfigured into all those that have gone before me [...]. From the deepest part of my being there rushes to the surface of my almond shaped eyes an ancient tear" (Morales 1992, 181, 200).

From all the foregoing it follows that, as has already been noted, the etiology of illness is explicit enough in *The Rag Doll Plagues* (Márquez 1996, 83). Morales's attention is not so much focused on the causes of the malaise, which are self-evident, but rather on the recurrence of certain historical and human forms of behavior, on the Nietzschean repetition of history, on the perennial threat of moral and physical catastrophes impending on humankind. Morales enucleates factual problems such as external and internal colonialism, and the irrationality of history which is similar to that of illness and of death. He touches upon great tragedies of history which have shaped human destiny, and emphasizes their paradigmatic quality. From a more specific existential perspective, the writer's attention focuses upon the proximity of death, even social death, upon the danger of alienation of any kind which lies always in waiting and against which human beings are bound to fight an everlasting battle.

Giving so much prominence to the presence of illness and death, to the terminal visions that are interspersed in his novel, Morales displays a sort of apocalyptic imagination. Or, better, *The Rag Doll Plagues* ends up being an example of secular eschatology which uses old visions (such as the canonic plague, for instance) as metaphors for modern anxiety, and in a Spenglerian way it foresees the end of a civilization. As frequently happens in modern literature, eschatological visions are principally linked to "the

thought of life's finitude, extending beyond the individual to civilization, to mankind, even to time itself" (Wagar 1982, 6). And Frank Kermode, in his seminal work *The Sense of an Ending*, reminds us that modern demythologized eschatology has wiped out "any expectation of a literal end, but makes the end something present or potential in every moment of our lives" (Kermode 1967, 27), thus opening the way to the literature of the absurd.

The Rag Doll Plagues may indeed be considered an absurdist novel, similar in a way to Albert Camus's *The Plague*. Like the protagonist of Camus's novel, the three Doctor Revueltas find in their medical profession the justification for their existence, the sense of their lives. They struggle to snatch their patients from death and revolt against the absurdity of death, but nonetheless they accept life with all its irrationality and make extensive efforts in order to change it. The horror of death and of human folly does not distract them from life, which they enjoy, because in a world where "beauty" must die, what attaches them to life is just (paraphrasing Camus) the double awareness of their own desire to last and of the inevitable destiny of death.

Morales's terminal vision is not necessarily pessimistic in that, as Warren Wagar claims, anybody expressing disbelief that his civilization can endure "becomes a naysayer, and his nay-saying helps prepare the way for a better or at least a different world" (Wagar 1982, 7). In *The Rag Doll Plagues*, Nature (in this case natural disease) proceeds in its own way, indifferent to man and man's hope and powers. Death becomes a purposeless end self-generated by the world order. The very existence of humankind appears problematical when mother earth is beheld murdering her own children. Hope in the future, however, remains immutable in the novel, as the birth of more than one child metaphorically attests. David Ketterer is surely right, then, when in *New Worlds for Old* he writes that "the fulfillment of the apocalyptic imagination demands that the destructive chaos give way finally to a new order" (Ketterer 1974, 14). The Canadian scholar refers mostly to science fiction, in which he finds the purest form of secular apocalyptic writing. And Book Three of *The Rag Doll Plagues*, in which the narrating voice indicates a final, utopian solution to the Chicano issue, is exactly this: a piece of science fiction writing that completes the postmodern polyptych created by Morales.

Morales's hope is based on the future, which means on transformation rather than on the preservation of the past. Surveying specimens of past, present, and future history, he meets the Chicanos' need to contextualize the universal dynamic of their own history and implicitly tells his people that "becoming" is more important than "being." Transforming and becoming, though, require the destruction of the pre-existent. Hence the necessity for Morales's terminal visions which are conveyed by means of crudely realistic images of illness, death, deterioration and decay, among other things, whose expressive potential is enhanced by magic realistic devices.

Distinctly set in an eclectic postmodern perspective, Morales's narrative modes waver between surrealism and expressionism, which are the progenitors of magic realism which, in turn, "facilitates the fusion, or coexistence, of possible worlds, spaces, systems that would be irreconcilable in other modes

of fiction” (Zamora and Faris 1995, 5-6). Promoting the integration of rational and irrational domains, Morales’s style seems to prolong the survival of realism in literature by instilling it with a sense of vitality that is no longer dependent on reality and almost tends towards abstraction, thus overcoming conventional logic. So that, in both style and content, *The Rag Doll Plagues* is a postmodern *and* a magic realist novel, because the two things partly coincide. It is an ex-centric novel which performs a displacement of the narrative discourse. And as one critic claims: “It is precisely the notion of the ex-centric, in the sense of speaking from the margin, from a place ‘other’ than ‘the’ or ‘a’ center, that seems to me an essential feature of that strain of postmodernism we call magic realism” (D’haen 1995, 194).

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THE SOUND TRACKS OF BORDERLANDS MUJERISTA MOVEMENTS: REMEMBERING CHELO SILVA

Yolanda Broyles-González

Since time immemorial, the native peoples of what is now known as the US-Mexico borderlands have transmitted life wisdom and varied forms of knowledge — be they spiritual, practical, analytical, poetic, theoretical knowledge — by heart and without writing. Both before and after colonization, the interrelated memory arts of the native peoples' oral tradition have been intimately bound with identity formation, community building, and survival in the borderlands areas where powerful occupying forces have imposed their regimes and their attendant truths. For several generations now, colonial power holders have disseminated historical representations through the schools, universities, medical systems, media, and newly imposed forms of social organization. Yet people of color's self-representations, understandings, and self-knowledges have continued to flow throughout the millennia through orality: music, story-telling, spiritual practices, cuisine, oral historical discourse, dance, medicinal knowledge, and earth knowledge.

As I was growing up, women (*mujeres*) enacted and embodied woman-centered knowledges in a wide variety of places and ways. During my early life in these borderlands, the womanist pendulum moved between the sweatshops where my mother worked and the home, where my mother also worked. At home, *mujerista* (womanist) knowledges found a profound performance venue in the kitchen, as kitchen table talk or *comal* stovetop talk, two places central to *mujerista* powers and epistemologies. In the kitchen there was always a radio and musical flow was a constant presence. The same was true of the living room whenever we had company. Music and musical poetics was always a rich discursive vehicle, and Chelo Silva figured prominently, as a resistive front. She was an important element within life's *mujerista* soundtrack.¹ Just a few bars of her music could alter everything: your mood, your conversations; your activities could suddenly include song and dance, or the re-telling of stories and life memories triggered by Chelo's voice and by particular songs that

¹ For reasons too extensive to discuss here, I use the term "mujerista" and not feminist, following in the steps of writers such as Ada María Isasi-Díaz, Alice Walker, Clenora Hudson Weems, who coined the terms "womanism" and "mujerista" in place of feminism.



served as the soundtrack for the original experience. In fact it was and is common to always associate a particular song with a particular family member or friend.

Little did we know as we listened to Chelo Silva's voice in the 1950s that our beloved Chicana borderlands idol had taken up residence in Mexico City where she waged *mujerista* media battles for recognition and for fair compensation. Chelo Silva also used the boycott as a tool in demanding her labor rights. In 1955 she declared before the international press her boycott of all Mexico City nightclubs because she was not allowed to sing at Mexico's mega-radio station XEW. That station broadcast throughout Latin America, Mexico, and the United States. Her strike worked and within a month she became one of the few Chicanas to ever perform there.

On another occasion she backed her demands for proper wages by declaring a temporary boycott of all Mexican television and radio programs. On 24 August 1955 the Mexican newspaper *Excelsior* delivered her words, "Durante mi estancia en esta ciudad—agregó—no he querido aceptar ninguna de las proposiciones que me han hecho para actuar en radio y televisión, porque además de no pagarme lo que pido, los programas son muy cortos."² (During my stay in this city—she added—I have not wanted to accept any of the offers I've received to perform over the radio or television, since in addition to not paying me what I ask, the programs are too short).

This article marks an attempt to honor and preserve Chicana singer Chelo Silva's rich contributions to the oral tradition of American, Mexican, and Chicana music and women's history. This is an exploration of the social powers of song, in this case the Bolero as *mujerista* social movement where many women singers have held leadership roles. Chelo Silva is a towering figure in that movement because she dared to articulate hard truths while also entertaining us. It is not difficult to imagine how Chelo Silva earned one of her popular epithets: "Ángel de la Guarda de las Mujeres" (Guardian Angel of Women). Chelo Silva, in singing bluntly about women's love tragedies, about sexual relations, about abusive relationships — and only occasionally about love's ecstasies — was far ahead of her time. Sexuality discourse had not entered into song with the language of the streets prior to her. And it was virtually unheard of for any woman to sing a public denunciation of a sexual partner. Silva's widespread appeal speaks to the hunger for and receptivity of this *mujerista* discourse. We can also recall that Lydia Mendoza's first major hit in 1934 was precisely such a denunciatory song: *Mal hombre* (Wicked Man). Part of the great importance of Silva's voice has to do with the discursive space she opened for the public display and exploration of gender and sexual relations. Many of her Boleros feature a new performative freedom regarding changing social morals and sexual conventions.

Chelo Silva, the prominent borderlands Bolero singer whose fame extended from the United States to Mexico, Latin America, and the Carib-

² *Excelsior* (Sept. 18, 1955, p. 3D).

bean, was born Consuelo Silva on August 22, 1922 in the small border town of Brownsville, Texas, across from the neighboring Mexican town of Matamoros. In spite of Silva's illustrious singing career and her popularity across the Americas, the written record has not preserved her memory. Scholars have not yet recognized the contributions of what might well be the most widely heard Chicana voice of the twentieth century. Unfortunately, many of the basic facts about her life are unavailable. I endeavor to piece her story together from disparate sources, which include old press clippings, photos, oral histories with her fans and her social adversaries, from my own reception of her music, and from references to her by notables such as culture critic Carlos Monsiváis, or by renowned singers such as Juan Gabriel, Paquita la del Barrio, and Lydia Mendoza. My richest source of material concerning her career is of course Silva's extensive musical repertoire.

Silva came from a working-class Mexican-American family and she showed an early inclination toward song performance. While working as a waitress and then as a sales clerk in Brownsville, Texas in her early teens she began to earn local notoriety by virtue of her beautiful singing voice. By the 1950s she had earned immortality across the Americas as a beloved interpreter of the musical song type known as the "Bolero." In Texas she is still often referred to as one of "Las dos Grandes de Texas" — the other being Lydia Mendoza. Unlike Mendoza, Chelo Silva exclusively embraced the newly evolved urbanite Mexican Bolero music and performative aesthetic, which had reached the Tejano borderlands (and the entire hemisphere) in the 1930s through the recently established radio mass medium. She can be credited with being in the forefront of promulgating the Bolero, and of interpreting the new song repertoire within the ever-changing Tejana/o norteño soundsphere. Significantly, Silva established herself outside of her native Texas, performing, for example, in Mexico City's mega-radio station XEW, the continent's most powerful broadcaster. Throughout the Spanish-speaking world she came to be known as "La Reina del Bolero." Outside of Texas her millions of fans do not generally associate her with the Texas borderlands homeland.

Chelo Silva rose from poverty to stardom, from minimum wage work to the night work of the entertainer. Any woman who embarked upon that path became a businesswoman who had to maneuver within a male-controlled music industry. Like many other Texas women singers of her generation (such as Lydia Mendoza, Rita Vidaurri, Eva Garza), Silva's radius of influence grew along with the new radio and recording sound mass media, which had come of age in the 1930s. In fact Silva's first move from visual performance to that of disembodied sound began at a local radio program. In the late 1930s she sang at a radio program hosted by one of her future husbands, Américo Paredes. Silva and Paredes had a son together and divorced not too long thereafter. Silva then continued her performance career singing at the Continental Club in Corpus Christi, Texas. In the 1940s she recorded with small Texas labels such as the pio-

neering Texas-Mexican record company Discos Falcon. By the late fifties she recorded with the transnational label Columbia Records and became one of the best-selling women singers in all of Mexico and Latin America. What are her contributions? What were the particulars of this US-Mexican's rise to fame? What gendered meanings, class meanings, and sexual meanings did her voice and person express? What did it mean to be a woman nightclub performer in the 1940s and beyond? How did she perform gender and sexual politics in working-class communities, which were her prime constituents?

As a cultural citizen of the borderlands, Chelo Silva needs to be seen in the light of both Mexican and US American histories. The Golden Era of Mexican song from 1935 to the 1950s saw the transnational emergence of the Cuban-Mexican Bolero. The Bolero moved throughout many countries — such as Mexico and the United States, for example — as the radio waves of the 1930s blurred the supposed separation of nations and created new imagined communities.³ Chelo Silva grew up on the Texas/Matamoros borderlands with radio-transmitted Boleros, live Ranchera music, and Corridos. She came to find her voice in the Bolero genre, the new voice of urban working-class modernity. In time the Bolero also found a strong middle-class following, particularly in its more polished and less sexually aggressive forms performed by the suave male guitar trios such as Trio Los Panchos or Los Tres Ases.

The rise and spread of the new Bolero song genre in the '30s, '40s, and '50s is related to many factors. Powerful new media technologies could transmit musics across national borderlands geographies, creating a multinational following for formerly regional musics. We must also credit the inherent aesthetic appeal of this music rooted in an old romantic lyric tradition. The new music found favor also because it captured and resonated with changing social desires, needs, and historical experiences rooted in the Mexican Revolution, as well as World War II and their aftermaths. Song and dance traditions, as memory arts, articulate sociocultural engagements of both producers and consumers, music is an aesthetic social interaction differentiated by categories such as age, economic class, local culture, global cultural flows, sexualities, gender, nation and race identities. The memory arts of the oral tradition construct experiences we wish to remember, while also enabling us to selectively forget. The need to forget was great in postrevolutionary Mexico and postwar United States. Mexico was devastated by the death of over one million men and women combatants and non-combatants; the populace was furthermore devastated by the displacements of millions into the new cities and urban life on both sides

³ For a brief overview of the Bolero's development from Cuba to recent times see George Torres, "The Bolero Romántico. From Cuban Dance to International Popular Song", in *From Tejano to Tango. Latin American Popular Music*, ed. by Walter Aaron Clark, New York: Routledge, 2002, 151-171.

of the border. The impoverished masses of Mexicans were disillusioned by the broken promises of politicians and continued corporate greed and exploitation on both sides of the border. It was these impoverished masses who cultivated the Bolero's inwardly directed expressivity. The Bolero provided a release from the turmoil of displacement and poverty by providing a refuge within innermost emotional life.

It could also be said that the domain of the Bolero helped give shape to new modes of gender/sex/class consciousness in the spaces opened up by the Mexican Revolution, on the one hand, and by World War II on the other. At the same time the Bolero — through its performativity — provided a new tool with which to mark oneself as an urbanite eager to disassociate from the class-stigmatized rural *rancho* experience. The urbanite effort to set itself at arm's distance from rural roots, even involves the poor working classes' contradictory appropriation of city clothes imitative of the elite class and its supposed cosmopolitan sophistication.

1. *Mujerista Performativity: Bolero Poetics & Gender/Class/Sexual Relations*

The nightclub became the setting most closely associated with the new Bolero music and with working-class urban modernity in all of its mixed and contradictory modes. Nightclub culture evolved in the 1930s as a transnational urban movement. The common ground of transnationalism is fashion and the musical instrumentation of the nightclub such as the piano, the cornet and trumpet, some string instruments, and percussion. Yet the expressivity of the songs within nightclub culture tended to be more localized and culture-specific. Chelo Silva, Billie Holiday, and Édith Piaf's songs are very different, even as they share common ground: an urbanite nightclub culture, an internationalist urban attire, and some shared musical instruments. In the case of Mexico the nightclub becomes synonymous with the Bolero and with the voices and personas of Bolero singers.

The Bolero comes onto the Mexican musical scene as an import from Cuba in the 1920s. It subsequently becomes mexicanized by Mexican composers, by the guitar trios, but also by an earlier generation of women solo singers, among them Chicana singer Evelina Garcia who attained international recognition in the 1930s. Mark Pedelty identifies what he feels is an urban "sense of loss and longing" in the Bolero and situates its emergence in the context of postrevolutionary urbanity and modernism (Pedelty 1999).⁴ His focus is exclusively on Bolero composer/performer Agustín Lara, with no attention given to women Bolero composers and performers. Although I would agree that the Bolero thrived in the context of urban uprootedness, the moral challenges of city life can also be said to have initiated new dialogues about love, sex, romance, courtship,

⁴ Pedelty does not even mention Chelo Silva nor, for example, Agustín's sister, María Teresa Lara, who composed many of Agustín Lara's hit Boleros.

and morality in general. The urbanization process, quite beyond triggering a sense of loss, required collective and individual adjustments, and the working-class discursive shaping of a new reality. The Bolero in fact encodes noticeable shifts and explorations of sexual and gender politics. It is through the voice of performers such as Chelo Silva that intimacy becomes a sustained public movement and discourse. Publicly performed and recorded, explicit love songs in fact transform women's private intimate sphere into a publicly discussed one. Through publicly performed song, ones most intimate feelings and sexual experiences become publicly manifest discourse; the experience is made available to the collective for commentary, evaluation, analysis, and renewed action in the context of treacherous and unaccustomed urban environments. Postrevolutionary Mexican cities as well as postwar US cities attracted record numbers of in-migrants, creating new social contexts, challenges, and possibilities (both positive and negative) for newly urbanized women. The Bolero becomes the new music for a new society and an important expressive medium in constructing and circulating dimensions of a new womanhood.

Significantly, the new music abruptly shifts part of the focus of Mexican music away from the accustomed rural domain (where the longstanding *canción ranchera* finds inspiration) and away from themes of social historical cataclysm (portrayed in so many *Corridos*). It could be said that the Bolero wants to forget the social turmoil of the last thirty years as it turns its focus upon inward geographies and sexual turmoil. Outward references to social environments are avoided. The love scenarios played out in Boleros appear closely related to nightlife, urbanite alienation from the land, and recourse to the confines of the nightclub and its fleeting love relationships. The picture on the cover of one of Chelo Silva's famed long-play records tells a part of the story: a man lighting her cigarette, cognac snifters filled, candlelight, urban attire. It is a heterosexual romantic scene centering on sex, drugs, and the nightlife. It was the imagery of a supposed urban sophistication.

Emotive openness, explicitness, and excess are at the heart of Chelo Silva's Bolero song repertoire. Whatever the passion or situation at hand, it involves extreme forms of affect, oftentimes disastrous and tied to experiences of obsession, anguish, abandonment, casual sex, violence, betrayal, ecstasy, and of course also unhappy unrequited love. Love relationships are portrayed as inherently contradictory. Most of her songs bespeak painful aftermaths. Silva's songs tend to highlight and play out many extremes. Hers is a marked departure from the grip of dominant elite rosy love ideologies. Within upper middle-class establishment culture love was a many splendored thing involving permanency, stability, marriage, women's sexual passivity and purity, procreation, domesticity and clearly drawn lines of inheritance. Chelo Silva's Bolero repertoire, by contrast, rarely featured harmonious love, and more often than not it sang the multiple disharmonious possibilities of love. Significantly, her love situations are unattached to domesticity and child rearing. As such her representations of love and

sexuality contradicted mainstream elite ideological standards concerning the sanctity of women and of state-sanctioned love controlled by men. Silva's repertoire thus defies male dominance and provides a sounding board and model for the emergent community of working-class urban women. She models sexual independence, free experimentation with life, and self-assertiveness outside of domestic orthodoxy.

Silva's deep rich and highly nuanced voice is well-suited to the expressivity of gut-wrenching torrid love affairs and stories of impossible loves which end in heartbreak or, conversely, in eviction of an undesirable partner. Perdition is also a frequent theme: the woman who gives all and loses all due to betrayal and/or abandonment. Such songs can be construed positively as signposts and warnings to women listeners. They bespeak the consequences of blind faith in urban love relationships within a patriarchal urban environment. There is an occasional song which celebrates a happy love. More often than not, however, love is the source of anguish. Silva's very song titles mark, encapsulate, and symbolize such love experiences: *Mal Camino* (Down a Bad Road), *Amor Burlado* (A Betrayed Love), *Judas* (Judas), *Por equivocación* (By mistake) or the loneliness of *Estoy sin ti* (I am without you). The era's urban fascination with nightlife includes the theme of the *cabaretera* (bar and/or sex worker). Yet Silva draws those female figures with great compassion in her songs such as *Besos callejeros* (Street Kisses) and *Amor de la Calle* (Street Love). It is not only the night club but also the street that proclaim the presence of the public woman outside of domesticity, bourgeois morality, and even established sex laws. Yet the topos of the streetwalker is only one means of proclaiming the public presence of women.

One should not underestimate the power of *mujerista* sentimental expression emanating from these songs and from women performers who sang them in the 1940s and 1950s. These singers greatly expanded the range and nature of women's sexual agency — in ways that contradicted the attempted moral power grip of national elites over women's bodies. Audiences were and are able to find themselves in song narratives of desire, courtship, seduction, bliss, abandonment, and all other possibilities of the love relationship. In many ways these singers become representative voices of women's newfound urban freedom and social/sexual independence. Chelo Silva's performative discourse serves as witness and accomplice to the audience's longings or passions. Simon Frith tells us that love songs are important, for example, "because people need them to give shape and voice to emotions that otherwise cannot be expressed without embarrassment or incoherence" (Frith 2007, 141). Thus Silva's *mujerista* songs map out a relational system of heart/body experiences.

In much of her song repertoire Silva transgresses sexual boundaries and restrictive sexual expectations put forth by elite middle-class morality, national powerholders, and church institutions. As such she subverts the boundaries of bourgeois womanhood. This is manifest, for example, in her song line "Que murmuren, no me importa que murmuren" (Let

them whisper, I don't care if they whisper). She defies elite nationalist social conventions and advocates following one's heart. At the same time, she is ready to speak of a bad partner in boldly explicit vernacular terms such as "Te voy a arrancar los ojos, para dejarte en tinieblas." (I'm going to tear out your eyes and leave you in the shadows.) The innovative nature of her sexualized and in-your-face song repertoire of course meant controversy, not unlike what Agustín Lara experienced when he sang poetically about the innate goodness of sex workers. At her concerts in the 1950s and 1960s men would often boo and heckle Silva. Yet this did not bother nor deter her.

Silva pushed the Bolero to new denunciatory extremes which suave male boleristas — such as Trio Los Panchos — never dared to sing. The male trios and their sweet three part harmonies tended to over-idealize love. By contrast, Chelo Silva's songs, such as *Ponzoña* (Poison), for example, bespeak the experienced toxicity of love. In *Ponzoña* she likens the love experience to a deadly poison. She relates that although she managed to heal from a rattlesnake bite, her lover's betrayal was a far greater poison. "My heart has not found a way to free itself from the poison of your affection" (*De la ponzoña de tu cariño no se ha librado mi corazón.*) Silva was a leader in formulating a new blunt register of affect.

Silva and other women Bolero singers also draw heterosexual identities into question. By virtue of her performativity any singer could fashion a song as a heterosexual or homosexual one by virtue of her choice of pronouns and vocabulary. In one of her great hits *Pasatiempo* (Pastime) she is singing about love with a woman. Or in the song *Fracaso* (Failure) she sings "You are the woman I have adored the most. I dedicate my love to you" (*Tu has sido la mujer que yo mas he adorado. A ti mi amor he consagrado.*) I would disagree with Lupe San Miguel's view that songs written from a so-called "male point of view" and sung by women create what he calls "absurd situations" of women singing to women (San Miguel 2002). That view disregards the power of women's performative presence. Far from being absurd, such performances can easily disrupt the heterosexual regime. They also create a gender dissonance when a woman sings explicitly male-voiced and thus defies the sexist division of emotional roles.

At times Chelo Silva's songs feature a schizophrenic dualism, which includes both a denunciation and unflinching affection in the same song. Such is the case in one of her most famous hits *Hipócrita* (Hypocrite) which berates the disloyal lover calling him/her "perverse." The lover is "perverse" and deadly (again, poisonous), yet the song concludes with "Y como no me quieres, me voy a morir" (And since you don't love me, I'm going to die).

Another dimension of this love without boundaries is the fantasy of total submission ("entrega total") to the loved one. This act of total submission and self-abnegation — carried to a masochistic extreme — is best expressed in another of her hits *Como un Perro* (Like a Dog): "Por tener la miel amarga de tus besos, he tenido que arrastrar mi dignidad" (Just to enjoy the bitter honey of your kisses, I've had to trash my own dignity.)

This song ultimately expresses a desire to love “like a dog,” that is, silently and at the feet of the beloved.

Lyrics such as these may be difficult to grasp in the post-feminist era. They could, however, function as a coded representation of violence within love relationships. Or, depending on how much irony is in the performance, this song could also become a parody and mockery of obedient love. In addition to the song, which seems could also represent masochistic submission, she has other songs that rehearse the opposite: the subject voice kicking out the bad lover. Happy love is rather rare in her repertoire. In contradistinction to Hollywood romance, love is not romanticized without inclusion of its downsides, its ambiguities, and conflicts. Among the rare exceptions is her hit *Esperame en el cielo* which exhorts the lover to wait for her in heaven if the love partner dies first.

Silva’s strong following perhaps also has to do with her dramatic and provocative presence off stage and on stage. Off stage she frequently gave provocative press comments to Mexico City’s leading daily *Excelsior*. Newspaper commentaries and her combative comments reveal the struggles she faced in finding acceptance in Mexico’s capital city. My sense is that the music industry initially kept her at arm’s distance because of her powerful personality, her refusal to mince words, and because she was from the other side of the border, a Chicana.

Chelo Silva, however, cannot be explained only in terms of her song lyrics. It was the artistry of her voice and stage presence that carried the lyrics and made them resoundingly meaningful. Silva’s voice artistry had to do with how convincingly she performed the tonalities of pain, disappointment, betrayal, and generalized urban angst steeped in sexual expectations. No doubt she drew from the depths of her own experiences in styling her songs. And in so doing she deeply connected with and voiced the widespread sentiments of the people, particularly women.

2. *The Urban Gendered Body Politic: On Being a Public Woman & La Vida Nocturna*

Viewed in its entirety, Silva’s repertoire gives voice to the open expression of female desire and agency. No wonder that elite moralists regarded the Bolero as scandalous. Song lyrics and the nightclub culture in which women displayed their bodies were in fact targeted by the state and its agents of public morality. In this regard, Silva’s bodily presence as a nightclub performer begs further analysis. Women Bolero singers were necessarily public women and their domain was the nightclub. Women such as Chelo Silva played an important role in affirming a new imaginary of the public woman whose body — or parts of her body — was on public display. The nightclub is no doubt a contradictory space. What meanings does the nightclub hold for gender and sexual relations? The fact of erotic display or even non-erotic body presence holds many meanings. Why do nation-states target nakedness? We should not forget that nakedness has a much

longer history in the Americas than manufactured clothing. A woman's exposed body can be viewed as a continuation of Indigenous presence and social practice. Indigenous women of the Mexican countryside in the 1960s still walked village streets bare-breasted (and still do in some places) while their urban counterparts submitted much earlier to covering their bodies and internalizing a new morality centered on covering the body and body concepts such as *Honestia*. "Honestia" is an elite summons to young women's bodies. It denotes submission to a wide spectrum of body controls. Hiding women's bodies is one of the most salient features of European colonialism. Indigenous communities, by contrast, have a long history of affirming both the private and public presence of women and their bodies. Even in many contemporary Native American societies women's bodies are by no means confined to a narrowly circumscribed domesticity. By upper elitist middle-class and colonial standards, however, a public woman and an unclothed woman were anathema.

State control has always extended to women's bodies. As the postrevolutionary patriarchal Mexican nation (and the Catholic Church) moved to consolidate their power, women's bodies became prime targets of renewed neo-colonial subjugation. The state's body control mechanisms include, for example, marriage licensing, so-called decency laws, inheritance laws, sex work laws, and curfew laws which include today's 2 a.m. closure of nightclubs. In their early days nightclubs catered to customers all night and even 24/7 nightclub performativity was a resistive one in the context of tense power relations between men/women/elites/and the Indigenous-based masses. The nightclub was a space that featured women's bodies on display and a discourse of sexuality. Both Bolero-lyrics and Bolero women performers' bodies articulated and even flaunted a new display of individual emotional needs, body experiences, and desire. Public dancing in a nightclub — let alone unchaperoned — was considered scandalous and synonymous with indecency by upper middle-class national tastes and by many of the working-class who aspired to the middle-class. Nightclubs were viewed by elite morality as dens of iniquity. Alberto Dallal in his book *El "dancing" Mexicano* (1987) refers to nightclub dancing as one of the first acts of women liberating themselves from traditional (that is middle-class and elite) social roles. Publicly dancing women were thought — by some — to submit their bodies to the male gaze and to provoke aggressive male attentions. But what economic classes subscribed to and enforced such views? Whose traditions sought to confine women to the private and away from public domains? Clearly, the nightclub in many ways challenged (and in other ways also reproduced) sexual ideologies and practices, body repression, and heterosexist dominion.

Mexican intellectual Carlos Monsiváis provides some insight in his book named in fact after one of the best-known Bolero songs *Amor perdido*. He sketches the Mexican post-revolutionary era as one in which women's rights are constitutionally denied, in spite of women's co-equal participation in the armed struggle of the Mexican Revolution. Monsiváis traces a

corresponding patriarchal power grab by the classist national bourgeoisie. My own sense is that a good portion of the power and determination of the Mexican women soldiers (*soldaderas*) of the Mexican Revolution and of Rosita the Riveter — symbol of the women who had worked in industrial occupations in the north during World War II — reincarnated in the nightclub and nightlife, after the Revolution's armed combat ceased and after the Mexican government banished the *soldaderas* from national civic and governmental processes.

With regard to moral standards, Monsiváis describes an ascendant post-revolutionary middle class that tries to resurrect proper “appearances” of morality propagated under the Porfirian dictatorship. Elite circles regard themselves as “Buenas Familias” whose moral slogans include being “[...] recatada, tímida, prudente [...] respetuosa del hogar, hija de familia [...] sin que haya ofensa para el Señor Gobierno” (cautious, timid, prudent [...] respectful of domesticity, a legitimate daughter [...] and nothing that might offend Mr Government) (Monsiváis 1977, 69). The body politicking of nightclub culture and of the Bolero posed major challenges to “Las Buenas Familias” and “El Señor Gobierno” (Good Families and Mr Government). Monsiváis interprets nightlife as a place of sensationalist refuge; it allows for an escape from a range of historical factors ranging from the fatigue of harsh working conditions, to the boredom of domesticity, to urban uncertainty: “La Vida Nocturna le da a los obreros fatigados, a los padres de familia hartos de su monotonía, a los emergentes de la clase media, la oportunidad de ubicarse en esa sensación de lo contemporáneo que es vivir al borde de la incertidumbre, la fatiga, o el dolor de los sentidos” (Monsiváis 1977, 81).

3. *The Mujerista Legacy of Chelo Silva*

Chelo Silva died in Corpus Christi, Texas, of cancer and the hard life at the age of sixty-five in April 1988. Yet her legacy lives on. She is widely remembered among the working class for her distinctive style and the unique powers of her musical expression. It would be no exaggeration to say that she remains the most prominent of all torch singers. In her lifetime she enjoyed a far-flung transnational fame which exceeded that of any male Chicano musician. Her fame and popularity even exceeded that of the many other well-known Mexican-born Bolero performers such as Elvira Rios, Amparo Montes, or Toña La Negra. Silva left behind a vast number of recordings, including almost a hundred long-play albums. In her lifetime she recorded with both regional and international recording companies. Among her Tejano labels were Discos Ideal and Discos Falcon, and her major transnational recording company was Columbia Records.

It is not only the transnational working-class that remembers Chelo Silva. She greatly influenced the next generation of performers and intellectuals. As the twentieth century drew to an end, Mexico's leading culture critic, Carlos Monsiváis, for example, was asked to name the people he considered most memorable in that century. Chelo Silva figures among

the very few women and the only Chicana he names. Singers are among the most powerful erasers of the national and of national borders and their controls. It is my sense that many fans who love Chelo Silva — outside of Texas — simply assume she was from Mexico and not from Brownsville, Texas. Curiously, most scholars of Texas Mexican music, in their male-centered tendencies, have also largely exiled Chelo Silva from those Texas histories. More recently, Deborah Vargas has radically reconfigured Texas Mexican music history by reclaiming its discursive range. Vargas examines how Chelo Silva's performance "generated alternative knowledges and subjectivities, enacting women's sexual agency and reminding us that passion [...] is as much a historical modality as an emotional one" (Vargas 2008, 175).

Contemporary singing idol and composer Juan Gabriel refers to Chelo Silva as a major influence in his musical career. In fact he explains that he was influenced from both sides of the border. Given the borderlands blur and intersection of cultures and nations, Juan Gabriel mistakenly (yet understandably) names Chelo Silva as an influence "de acá" (from his Mexican side).

Chelo Silva's *mujerista* legacy continues today also closely reincarnated in the hugely successful singer "Paquita la del Barrio." In all of her interviews Paquita credits Chelo Silva with the inspiration for her singing career. Paquita's story speaks to Chelo Silva's *mujerista* impetus. Paquita recounts how she suffered betrayal at the hands of her husband and one night ended up in her car and in a state of despair. She turned on the radio and heard Chelo Silva's famous *Cheque en blanco* (Blank Check). In that classic song which denounces a bad lover's behavior Paquita found not only solace and companionship, but also the courage and determination to begin her own singing career at midlife. Far from conforming to the standardized sleek body image of the young stars launched by recording firms and studios, Paquita is heavy set and already a grandmother. Yet she has found a very strong following across national borders. Paquita la del Barrio sets forth the *mujerista* legacy and soundtrack of Chelo Silva, singing the songs that expose, condemn, celebrate, or even deride bad love partners. In the middle of her songs Paquita always calls out: *¿Me estas oyendo, inútil?* (Are you listening, you good-for-nothing?).

In the twenty-first century Chelo Silva also enjoys iconic status within various gay/lesbian/bi-sexual/trans-sexual communities, particularly in Mexico. She is a standard among drag performers. In this world of compulsory patriarchal heterosexuality Chelo Silva also figures as a lightning rod and vector of the spectrum between gay liberation and homophobia. There are many stories circulating about Chelo Silva. Many of those stories speak to Silva's strong will, her determination, and her disregard for social conventions. Virtually all conversations about Chelo Silva also sooner or later turn into debates as to whether or not she was lesbian or straight, or both. Epithets are hurled. Whispers turn to raised voices. The myth of Chelo Silva continues to grow long after her burial in Corpus Christi, Texas.

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NORTEÑO BORDERLANDS CUMBIA CIRCUITRY:
SELENA QUINTANILLA AND CELSO PIÑA

Yolanda Broyles-González

The Cumbia is a grassroots working-class collective musical expression that has been in circulation along the US-Mexico borderlands for over half a century. The wildly popular Cumbia dance music cuts across national borders, state boundaries, and tribal/ethnic groups. As such it is one of the most unifying musical forces across the land. It serves as a pan-tribal expressive vehicle among native borderlands peoples: Mexican, Chicano, Yaqui, Tohono O'odham, Akimel O'odham and more. In my experience across the US Southwest and northern Mexico, this is the beat that brings the most dancers to the floor at family gatherings or public dances. Cumbia *norteña*'s magnetism has to do with the foundational repetitive driving beat, a percussive rhythm that resonates with primordial Indigenous drumming and other percussive instruments.

The Cumbia originated in Colombia, was appropriated throughout the Americas, and in each place it was indigenized: received into pre-existing cultures. The Cumbia *norteña* I write about has been absorbed into what Bonfil Batalla calls the Mesoamerican matrix, the millenarian Indigenous civilizational complex that exists beneath the veneer of colonization in what is today called Mexico and the US-Mexico borderlands. Across *América Indígena* (the Native America continent), ceremonial dance moves are signaled first and foremost by an easily identifiable repetitive rhythmic structure (*compás* in Spanish). The drum (or other percussion) gives the rhythmic signal at the onset. Of all the borderlands *norteño* social dance forms, the Cumbia's rhythmic structure is the most prominent. Cumbia is most notably a preset rhythmic structure. Everything else (harmonies and melodies) revolve around the rhythmic structure. Its basic rhythm is what makes it Cumbia. The most readily identifiable element of this dance music is its characteristic 2/4 rhythmic figure, with an accent on the upbeat of the measure's first beat; this rhythmic figure supports all other elements of this music.



(fig. 1) Cumbia Rhythmic Structure

Cumbia, unlike many other established *norteño* borderlands dance forms, allows dancers great freedom: you don't need to partner with anyone and everyone dances independently (without touching). You can take the dance floor together with someone, alone, or with a group. What is more, the traditional Cumbia *norteña* does not require that anyone "lead" or "follow." As such, Cumbia *norteña* breaks up the prevalent spectacle of hetero-normative pairing inherent to much social dancing. It is not uncommon for whole groups of friends and/or family to approach the dance floor together. Groups of women are traditionally seen getting up and dancing together. More recently among borderlands working-class youth, Cumbia sometimes involves young men dancing in pairs (a huge innovation) in all-male circles. Cumbia dance moves can vary greatly, but most basic is a type of three-step pattern, with the hips undulating, as the feet alternate in a one-and-two-slight kick. As a dance, Cumbia involves pelvic motion, hip swaying, body undulations, and arm movements. It is important to note that *norteño* youth culture has introduced whole new Cumbia steps and protocols; these can include the hip-hop inflected Cumbia.

The circle is foremost. There is the immense power of dance created by all of those bodies circling counterclockwise *together* around a common axis and to a common Cumbia music. One of my most memorable dance experiences was arriving at a Fito Olivares dance in 2009 (San Antonio, Texas) and feeling the circling pulsing mass of over 600 dancers moving counterclockwise to *Juana La Cubana*. Upon joining the circle I felt an indescribable energy, a cosmic strength. A more recent youth innovation is what I call the "inner swirl" Cumbia, which combines the traditional counterclockwise circling group dancing, yet with the middle of the circle filled in with bodies that cumbia around their own axis (like the atom's movement where the electrons revolve around the nucleus). In other instances, the youth's counterclockwise movement includes break dancing. I have seen youth and elders combined on the dance floor, with elders doing the traditional swaying three-step pattern and young people engaged in Cumbia Hip-Hop acrobatics.

Within the US-Mexico *norteño* borderlands, Cumbia has thrived and multiplied into Cumbia-rap, tecnoCumbia, Cumbia rock, Cumbia Tejana, and the waila Cumbia of the Tohono O'odham tribe of Arizona-Sonora, the Yaqui tribal Cumbia, not to mention Cumbia's presence within various other tribal groups. Sydney Hutchinson explores how the Cumbia has even morphed into the wildly popular *quebradita* craze of the 1990s (Hutchinson 2007, 27-33), and those *quebradita* acrobatic moves are at times also used to dance the old slower Cumbia tunes. At the same time, the presence and cross-pollination of Cumbia, hip-hop, reggaeton, and funk also seems indisputable. There is even an anarCumbia afoot, allegedly in support of anarchy! In all of its changing forms, the Cumbia beat remains unmistakable and brings everyone to the dance floor. Some prefer to dance the Polka *ranchera*; some like to dance Bolero; some only

like oldies; and others like Salsa. But, in my experience it is the Cumbia that makes the most people dance, no matter how it is inflected.

With regard to origins, the Cumbia is widely regarded as having emerged in Colombia's *costeño* region, the Atlantic — or Caribbean — Coast, in the early 1800s (Wade 2000, 53-64). Cumbia came not from the elite ruling or middle class, but from the poor and marginalized Indigenous and black sectors. Cumbia's widespread dissemination has in part to do with the consolidation of new media in the 1940s and '50s. The establishment of recording and transmission industries in Colombia, Los Angeles, and Mexico City effectively allowed music to travel far and wide, even prior to human mass migrations. The Cumbia moved into the *norteño* borderlands more so by means of radio, recording, and television transmissions than through people. Cumbia has since taken on a life of its own in the *norteño* borderlands. The Cumbia arrived in the US-Mexican borderlands in the early 1960s, long after the *conjunto norteño* (accordion and *bajo sexto*) and *orquesta* (big band) and their repertoires were established. Although all music is capable of transcending social boundaries of time, space, geopolitical borders, aesthetic difference, class and ethnic divides, the second half of the twentieth century is the time when that truth becomes most evident and hugely accelerated, largely due to the disembodied music circulated by the new electronic sound mass media. The established global capitalist media circulates sound and visual images at speeds not even imagined until well into the twentieth century.

For most of rural borderlands *norteño* Mexico and the US in the 1930s, recorded music initially traveled by means of itinerant musicians, or by means of a hand-operated "sinfonola" or "victrola" (the high-tech music machines of their day) transported from rancho to rancho on a donkey's back. Today the speed of musical travel and transmutation is astonishing. Even as I grapple with the presence of something like Cumbia I recognize the inadequacy of academic print cultural discourse whose understandings and snapshots of music freeze dynamic living breathing phenomena whose truth is a state of constant transformation. The effort to grasp the shifting and dynamic nature of popular music movements is greatly complicated by their instant disembodied movement across thousands of miles, where they establish new musical fusions and meanings. What happens to our understandings of "regional" or "ethnic" or "national" when radio and/or recordings to a large extent eclipse such boundaries? How do newly arrived (deterritorialized) music genres interact in new regions with preexisting regional musical attachments? My own sense is that the attachments of the "newly arrived" with the "pre-existing" happen through cultural cognates. In this case, Cumbia's percussive rhythmic structure very likely served as a cultural cognate that made it readily assimilable. A second cultural cognate is the newly arrived Colombian Cumbia's use of the same button accordion used in the pre-existing US-Mexican borderlands *norteño* music.

1. *Cumbia's Arrival Within the Norteño Borderlands Circuitry*

Although the US-Mexico borderlands extend for more than 2000 miles, my main focus is the cultural heritage area or circuitry that spans the states of Texas (now US) and Nuevo León, Tamaulipas, and Coahuila (now Mexico). Among the pioneers of that *norteño* borderland's Cumbia — which on the US-Mexico borderlands has generally been considered a part of a larger genre called *tropical* — were Mike Laure with vocalist Consuelo (Chelo) Rubio (from Jalisco); Carmen Rivero y Su Conjunto (from Tampico, Tamaulipas); La Sonora Dinamita (with changing lead vocalists, including Mélida Yará, Vilma Díaz, and the inimitable Margarita Vargas). Beto Villa y Los Populares de Nueva Rosita (from Nueva Rosita, Coahuila) was also an influential Cumbia pioneer in the 1960s, using an accordion driven *conjunto*. Villa was influenced directly by the Colombian group Los Corraleros de Majagual who had traveled north and spent time stranded without visas on the US-Mexico border. Although Beto Villa's group carries the name of his Mexican place of origin, he was a revered fixture in San Antonio, Texas.

In the 1970s various other groups dedicated almost exclusively to Cumbia gained popularity. Among them, the greatly popular rock-influenced *cumbiero* Rigo Tovar, who was born on the border (in Matamoros, Tamaulipas), yet launched his career after migrating to Houston, Texas; Renacimiento 74 (from Nuevo León); and Los Bukis. In the 1980s and into the twenty-first century it was (and is) Fito Olivares (a Texas resident originally from Tamaulipas); Los Angeles Azules; Aniceto Molina (a longtime San Antonio, Texas, resident, originally from Colombia); and Tropicalísimo Apache (from Torreón, Nuevo León, yet performing mostly in Texas and other southwestern states). Fito Olivares' ability to fill large dance halls for the last three decades, playing only Cumbias, is certainly a measure of that genre's enduring presence and popularity in Texas. Among the most popular of Cumbia artists who launched careers in the 1980s are Selena Quintanilla (from Texas, with family roots in Coahuila) and Celso Piña (from Monterrey, Nuevo León). More recent successors are groups such as the Kumbia Kings and Los Chicos del Barrio, while veterans such as La Sonora Margarita and other older groups continue to circulate. The cross-border spheres of influence and ties manifested by the above-named Cumbia artists for the most part affirm what Selena Quintanilla expressed in her teaching film *Mexican American Music of Today — Mi Música with Selena Quintanilla*: “Tejano or Texas Mexican culture was very much tied to the commercial and cultural center of Monterrey and the Mexican state of Nuevo León. This strong relationship continued even up to the 1920s. Most population interchange was with the states of Nuevo León, Tamaulipas, and San Luis Potosí. Monterrey supplied many music teachers and musicians to South Texas.” That strong relationship continues into the present.

Pre-existing ensembles of the *norteño* borderlands (*conjunto norteño*, *banda*, *tejano*, *mariachi*) in the 1960s easily appropriated the Cumbia, in part due to the Cumbia's infectious rhythm. The San Antonio/Monterrey

axis took a strong liking to the Cumbia at about the same times that Colombians adopted the Mexican *mariachi*-performed *rancheras* and (later) even *narcocorridos*. (There are approximately 3500 mariachi groups today in Colombia!) In the last fifty years Cumbias have become an integral part of *conjunto norteño* music, although the *ranchera* Polka and Corridos remain a mainstay of that accordion and *bajo sexto* centered music. Significantly, one of *conjunto norteño*'s pioneers, Narciso Martínez, commented in 1988 that the Cumbia had almost displaced the traditional *tejano* Polka: "There's almost 60, 70 percent more on the side of the Cumbia than on the side of the polka" (Tejeda 2001, 336).

My purpose here is not to trace Cumbia genealogies, as important and interesting as they are. In my discussion of the Cumbia I want to reference sociohistorical and aesthetic musical frameworks that propel Indigenous musical circuitries. I examine how the Cumbia flows within these *norteño* borderlands, which I conceptualize as a long-standing unified cultural area (with sub-areas) that now traverses two nations. As the Cumbia becomes deterritorialized from Colombia to the *norteño* sphere in the twentieth century it undergoes changes in aesthetics and social meanings. The new reterritorialized Cumbia *norteña* takes root in the borderlands, interacting with pre-existing musical sensibilities, musicians, and social contexts of these Indigenous borderlands. On the one hand, I examine Cumbia as an example of how music both deterritorializes and reterritorializes, how music becomes a force in new sociocultural geographies (of race, class, gender, aesthetics, sexuality, and ecosystem). On the other hand, I highlight the contemporary music of Celso Piña and of Selena Quintanilla as important reference points or examples of Cumbia movements within the borderlands. Both Celso and Selena (each in their own way) are mainline *cumbieros/as*. That is, although they occasionally perform other musical genres, their chief musical genre is Cumbia. I consider it important that we examine the nature of the social power which these two most prominent contemporary Cumbia artists wield in these times.

The names and musical/geographical trajectories of the Cumbia artists I name above serve to illustrate a cultural heritage that traverses recently imposed borders. Most existing research on *norteño* borderlands music neatly (and artificially) stops at the borders of the nation, the state, or the ethnic group — perhaps to affirm pride of place or ethnicity. (*Tejano Proud* is even the title of a book.) There exists a prominent tendency to view and imagine and categorize musical genres according to geographies whose boundaries are seen to conform with "states" or "nations" or an "ethnicity" resistive of a hegemonic power. In the case of *tejano* music it is the privileged masculinity of the *corrido* and *conjunto* music. In positing a relatively cohesive body of *raza* music in the state of Texas (even if divided by binary categorizations such as working-class and ascendant middle-class) various scholars, for example, on the one hand, imagine that music such as *tejano conjunto* is distinct and separate from that across the border in Monterrey, Tamaulipas, or Coahuila. On the other hand, aca-

demic formulations of *tejano* musical identity have also tended to downplay (and hence marginalize) aesthetic forms that do not conform to a narrowly constructed territorial, masculinized, heroic, and heterosexual vision. Manuel Peña, for example, regards Cumbia as a mere commodified international musical form, which is not really part of the boundaries he maps for *música tejana* (Peña 1999, 198). I beg to differ. It was many of *música tejana's* own homegrown pioneer *conjunto* musicians — such as Valerio Longoria — who eagerly appropriated the Cumbia.

To illustrate the complexity of Cumbia's diffusion I offer this anecdote from the years I lived in San Antonio, Texas. When I moved to Texas in the late 1970s, Cumbia was already firmly established. Although some have posited that immigrants brought the Cumbia to Texas, Cumbia was established there before the mass migrations. A chief agent in the Cumbia's appropriation and dissemination process was legendary *tejano norteño* accordion legend, pioneer, and hall of famer Valerio Longoria. Like millions of others in the United States and throughout Latin America — Longoria loved Cumbias. Longoria made a practice of listening to music on his short wave radio late at night. One of his favorite pastimes was holding his accordion on his lap, listening to a Colombian radio station and picking up Cumbias being transmitted. He would call out "Oye, oye!" (Listen, listen!) and immediately improvise, doing a simultaneous translation into his *conjunto norteño* musical idiom. These *colombiano/tejano* airwave jam sessions were where he picked up new Cumbia recording material. In fact he named one of his last CDs after one such Cumbia *La Piragua* — a classic of the Colombian Cumbia repertoire. Longoria combined a deep love of tradition with a deep interest in new musical forms. As a traditionalist innovator, Longoria was a trendsetter in the US-Mexico borderlands. In the 1940s Longoria had introduced Bolero (which originated in Cuba and were then adapted throughout the Americas) into the repertoire of Tex-Mex accordion music. The *norteño* borderlands and Texas are a permeable changing entity, reminiscent of performance artist Maria Elena Gaitan's claim, "Aztlan is wherever I eat a taco." People push the borderlands in all directions as they migrate, but mass media does it much faster.

It might also be Cumbia's often very playful, humorous, and often *risqué* lyrics which endeared it to *norteño* borderlands peoples. In contrast to various other musical genres well established in the US-Mexico borderlands (notably the academically privileged Corrido and *conjunto* music) many Cumbias playfully extol the body and its processes, including sexual desire (e.g. *Cuando me tocas así* [When you touch me like that]). A Cumbia has been written about every single body part. As an extension of the body theme, Cumbias also thematize dangerous relationships between bodies (*El Sida, el Sida* [AIDS AIDS]) and issued early warnings about rising health hazards (*Se me sube el colesterol* [My Cholesterol rises]) and health remedies (*El Viagra*). Cumbia remains something of a musical outcast within Chicano academic music history. Although not all Cumbias are of the same stripe, the Cumbia genre has — since the outset — been

the preferred site for the very open and often frivolous discussion of a host of sexualities, of body parts, of bodily functions, all delivered with ribald humor. For example, the Cumbia *Grande de cadera* — Broad Hipped — (popularized by Mike Laure) playfully sings the body not in the heroic stance of resistance but in a register of hilarity:

Una vez en el camion
mi amorsito se subió
el chofer vio sus caderas
Dos pasajes le cobró.¹

Before I enter into the discussion of two famed contemporary Cumbia *interpretes* (or singers, as interpreters of songs) I want to more closely circumscribe the terrain which I refer to as borderlands *norteño*.

2. *The Borderlands Norteño Circuitry and Indigenous Heritage*

I put forward a *norteño* borderlands frame of reference that highlights shared cross-border musicultural geographies between Texas and northern Mexico. The *norteño* Cumbia illustrates the ways in which Texas is not a self-contained musicultural region, but in many ways it forms a broader cultural terrain with the contiguous (now) Mexican states of Nuevo León, Tamaulipas, and Coahuila. I use the umbrella term *norteño* borderlands to signify culturally related Indigenous terrains that nation states and their wars have sought to divide. With regards to Texas music we need to remember, for example, that legendary *tejana* singer Lydia Mendoza moved constantly back and forth between Texas and Monterrey, Nuevo León in her formative years. Similarly, San Antonio music publisher and prolific song composer Salomé Gutiérrez moved back-and-forth across national borders. Notable *Tejana* Mexican-American singers such as Rosita Fernández and also Eva Garza were born on the Mexican side of the border. Numerous other musicians span both sides of the border because their relatives are on both sides and because the mass media connect both sides. *Tejano* (or “borderlands”) accordion pioneer Narciso Martínez was born in Reynosa, Tamaulipas. The north-south axis musicultural common ground is a well-established circuitry.

The borderlands *norteño* cultural region enjoys a great deal of shared heritage which includes an ancient and contemporary Indigenous civilizational foundation; the historical commonality of colonialism and economic marginalization of the majority of peoples; a shared Indigenous-based Mexican Spanish language; shared musical traditions; predominantly working-class affiliations; deep family ties across national borders; and a common physical environment symbolized by the shared Rio Grande Val-

¹ [One day my love got on the bus / The chauffeur saw the size of her (or his) hips / and made her (him) pay for two seats].

ley.² A similar borderlands shared musical heritage exists between California, Arizona, Sonora, and Sinaloa. That is the north-south borderlands *norteño* axis along which, for example, Selena Quintanilla's and (more recently) Jenni Rivera's rise to international stardom have been launched.

Although the new electronic sound media allowed for the Cumbia's easy travel from Colombia to the *norteño* borderlands, these borderlands have always brought older cultural forms to bear upon various new musical genres in the last sixty years. Among the "newer" musical genres and/or instrumental ensembles of the last sixty years I would include Cumbia, Big Band, Country music, Rock and Roll, Banda, Salsa, Bolero, Reggaeton, Quebradita, Pasito Duranguense and Hip-Hop. All of these musical genres have been re-created by Indigenous borderlands peoples according to regional borderlands conditions and tastes. By Indigenous I mean all the native tribal peoples of what is now the US Southwest and northern Mexico, including *Chicanas/os*. Nationalist-minded research — whose lens follows the logic of borders imposed by nations and their states — occludes music's older non-national social identities and solidarities, specifically that of Indigenous peoples. For example, I would include in my *conjunto norteño* universe the music of the Tohono O'odham, Yaqui, Akimel O'odham, and other tribes who have been playing *conjunto* music (sometimes called *tejano* music) — including Cumbia — for generations and on both sides of the recent national border. When Deborah Pacini Hernandez writes about the spread of Cumbia across the Americas she comments on how scholars have put so much focus on the African heritage in Cumbia, and virtually none on the Indigenous. However, Gerardo Pombo Hernández's book-length study dedicated to Cumbia — entitled *Kumbia. Legado cultural de los Indígenas del Caribe Colombiano* — centers on Indigenous Colombian tribal peoples and their heritage, while making the case that Cumbia is primordially Indigenous, not primarily African (Pombo Hernández 1995). I share Pacini Hernandez's speculation that the persistent popularity of Cumbia in the Americas might have to do with "organizing principles and aesthetic sensibilities deriving from Latin/o American mestizo communities' *indigenous cultural heritage*" (emphasis mine; Pacini Hernandez 2010, 141).

Central within the Mexican Indigenous cultural heritage (in Texas and many other places) is the ancient Indigenous practice of communities dancing counterclockwise in a circle. That circling movement is common to innumerable Indigenous ritual ceremonial dances. Within Indigenous thought and action, the overarching goal is the harmonization with nature and nature's cosmic movements, which are cyclical (circular). When people dance counterclockwise they move in harmony with planet Earth which turns on its axis in a counterclockwise direction, just as it circles around the sun in

² José Juan Olvera also posits a deep connection between San Antonio, TX, Monterrey, Nuevo León, and Houston, TX, yet his line of argumentation is very different from mine.

counterclockwise direction, and just as the moon moves counterclockwise around its own axis and around the earth. Thus the beloved counterclockwise movement traces the sacred circle. On a human scale, the body reenacts and moves with the circular movement of life itself. The circle is among the most sacred of life symbols. It marks the union of all life and its cyclical quality; all human life is said to move in cycles and the human life cycle resonates and moves with the larger cycles: day/night, seasons, the equinoxes, the solstices. These circle round and Cumbia dancers circle with them. The human wheel is not, however, simply a matter of symbolism. Indigenous cultures throughout the Americas recognize that when your body circles you are channeling energies, and as you circle with other bodies (human and heavenly) you mesh energies with all other dancers, as you align your energies with the energetic movement of the universe.

Indigenous counterclockwise circling has carried strongly into social dance in Arizona and Texas. The more longstanding dance genres (Polka, for example) are also danced that counterclockwise way. This is also the way Cumbia is danced by *mexicanas/os* and *Chicanas/os* in San Antonio, Houston, Monterrey, Nuevo León and Tamaulipas — and also among the Yaqui tribe, and at Tohono O’odham chicken scratch (AKA Waila) dances in Arizona and Sonora. Thus the Cumbia becomes one of the most important inter-tribal dance expressions across the borderlands.

My notion of borderlands also stresses the *lands* of border native tribes whose ancestral lands encompass both sides of the border; hence in my usage “borderlands” references the landmass — native peoples’ ancestral lands — and marks the Indigenous pre-national presence (before geopolitical boundaries) rather than the postnational (“transnational”). The supposed cohesion of nations, states, and ethnicities is complicated not only by the much older Indigenous presence, what Bonfil Batalla calls *Mexico profundo* (the overarching Mesoamerican civilizational matrix), but also by the new mass media which traverses and blurs national and ethnic boundaries. Cumbia nourishes the pre-national alliances among many Indigenous peoples of the Southwest borderlands and their kin who have migrated across far-flung geographies currently divided by nation states: such as today’s Mexican Americans. Along the Texas-Nuevo León axis it is the Indigenous substratum that unites peoples. Yet the tendency to erase or marginalize Native American heritage and presence occurs with great ease, such as when Selena is subsumed under the new semantically Euro-centered “Latinidad” umbrella (Paredes 2002 and 2009), fully eclipsing “Indianidad” (Indigeneity). In all the literature Selena is referred to as “dark-skinned” or “brown,” nowhere as Indian. In this vein it is significant to remember Gloria Anzaldúa’s description of the *norteño* borderlands:

This land was Mexican once
Was Indian always
and is,
And will be again.

(Anzaldúa 1987, 3)

What is more, the Indigenous land has memory, and the people of the Indigenous land — whether they are called Chicana/o, Tejana/o, Mexican American, or Coahuiltecan — are Indigenous people. This is the *norteño* musical region I write of here.

The “foreign” Cumbia was eventually indigenized as part of the Indigenous song/music/dance circuitry that flows in the borderlands. Cumbia groups tend to mark that indigeneity through new songs, themes (e.g. Celso Piña’s *Cumbia indígena* [Indigenous Cumbia]), and an overall musical expression that makes them distinctive from their Colombian cousins. Cumbia’s circulation in the US-Mexican borderlands is the meeting of new and older pre-existing music genres and Indigenous cultural sensibilities. How do new populations appropriate Cumbia’s aesthetics? One answer to that is manifest in a Chicos del Barrio CD that includes one cut entitled *Cumbia del indio*, which plays with a host of existing Indian stereotypes and their absurdity, while in another cut entitled *Cumbia Hip Hop* they fuse two related rhythm-based sensibilities. Indeed, a hallmark of Indigeneity is its propensity to synthesize and fuse (appropriate) elements into its own long-standing cultural matrix. How do borderlands musicians graft Cumbia onto their own pre-existing music? In its rise to great popularity, how does Cumbia construct the people (and vice-versa)? How does this song genre produce and convey the peoples’ meanings? How does it create collectivities? How do Cumbia’s meanings become a factor in social-bodily praxis? To answer some of these questions I do a close reading of various Cumbias and also examine two forms of borderlands Cumbia that have emerged within that circular flow of the *norteño* borderlands: Celso Piña and Selena Quintanilla.

3. Celso Piña and New Cumbia Musical Languages

The now legendary Celso Piña AKA El Rebelde del Acordeón (The Accordion Rebel) from Monterrey, Nuevo León shares a close kinship with Selena from Texas: born into and raised within a poor working-class family; musically on the margins of the “national” (US and/or Mexican music corridor) and on the margins of more long-established regional music genres; lifelong *barrio* dwellers. Additionally, they share the Cumbia infused with multiple other musical influences: Rock, R&B, Hip-Hop. I should add that both of them have cultivated different strands of Cumbia expressivity. Neither Celso nor Selena engage the very popular *risqué* Cumbia discourses; nor do they put forward a Cumbia repertoire of overt sexual desires or body parts.

Celso Piña, born in 1953 and thus a generation older than Selena, greatly impacted the music world around him: first in Monterrey, Nuevo León, then in northern Mexico. Currently he tours throughout the United States, Mexico, and Latin America. As I will explain, his sense of rebellion is partly manifest in how he names his band, in the visioning of his musical repertoire, and also in his rebellious anti-authoritarian social stance prominent in interviews. For the disenfranchised youth of Monterrey he has become a guru, visionary, and organizer.

Celso Piña adopted the *costeño* music of Colombia after discovering *costeño* master accordionists Aníbal Velásquez and Alfredo Gutiérrez who dedicate themselves to Cumbia, *vallenato* (very similar to Cumbia), and *guaracha*. From the early 1980s to the present Celso Piña has performed and recorded Cumbia, naming his group Celso Piña y su Ronda Bogotá. One of the most striking features about Celso Piña, born and raised in the impoverished hillside barrios of Monterrey, Nuevo León, Mexico, is his decision to name his band after a far away place he had never been to. His band prominently features the name of Colombia's capital: Bogotá. As an accordionist, it is significant that Piña semantically detaches from *norteño conjunto* music's widespread Indigenous practice of self-referencing in relationship to a specific *norteño* geographic location ("mi tierra" the homeland) and/or to a natural phenomenon, often combined with an animal spirit: Los Lobos del Este de Los Angeles; Los Tigres del Norte; Los Tucanes de Tijuana; Los Huracanes del Norte; Los Rancheritos del Topo Chico, Los Cadetes de Linares etc. Does Piña circumvent this practice because (as I will discuss below) his physical environment ("homeland") is something of a shantytown for economic refugees? His decision to name his group also has to do with his anomalous musical choice: his decision to adopt predominantly Colombian *costeño* music — Cumbia and *vallenato* music. At some point over two decades ago Celso Piña chose to follow the music of Colombia and thus turned his back on the prevalent *conjunto norteño* music of "his homeland."

Celso Piña states that he does only Colombian music because that's what he took a liking to. We cannot underestimate music's infectious quality as a factor in its dissemination. Yet I also wonder whether Piña's adopted and adapted musical identity is perhaps also related to his social position as a *cerrero*. "Cerrero" is the term used to designate the poorest and most marginalized hill (*cerro*) squatters on the fringes of the industrial city of Monterrey. Often used pejoratively, "cerreros and cerreras" are terms used to designate the disenfranchised masses that inhabit the *cerros*, the seized lands of the outlying hills. These are Mexico's outcasts. Unlike in the United States where the wealthy occupy hillside homes, in most of Latin America the hilltops are occupied by the most bitterly poor. Those hills with cardboard and tin houses typically lack in any kind of infrastructure such as running water, stores, transportation, etc. The neighborhoods are patrolled more by gangs than by law enforcement.

It makes sense that those on the margins or social fringes are less likely to be vested in a music such as *norteño* which is both a huge industry and enjoys a long-standing centrality. A *cerrero* is marginal, owns nothing, and is perhaps more likely to seek out new sounds, new vistas. He is a dis-placed person who perhaps attaches musically in new ways that claim no regional or national labels. Is Celso Piña's self-identification with Bogotá an imaginary self-exile, a rebellious way to distance himself from his Norteño musical homeland and its oppressive socioeconomic hierarchies? Significantly, however, he does strongly claim an attachment to the highly stigmatized hillsides where his music first took root. His CD covers al-

ways feature photos from these tough neighborhoods. And those *cerreros* — particularly the youth — have followed him in his enthusiasm for “la Colombia” as this new music is now referred to. As a living tribute to Celso Piña’s influence there are now over 600 youth ensembles in the hills and other urban areas of Monterrey, of this music now known as *la Colombia*.

In fact, over time, the margins can overtake the center. For decades into Celso Piña’s career none of the local Monterrey radio or television stations would play his music. The mass media had no controlling interest in this new music known as *la Colombia* and since they tend to control most aspects of the music medium, they believed perhaps that people would buy only what the mass media gave them. Monterrey’s officialdom is in many ways determined to preserve a Euro-colonial legacy, such as by loudly playing European classical music from a PA system at the Palacio de Gobierno (Government Palace). As Celso Piña’s Cumbia music gained ever more popularity among the disenfranchised masses, the mass media tried to obliterate their existence by ignoring *la Colombia*. As Blanco Arboleda reminds us, “Los medios de comunicación masivos de Monterrey han visto despectivamente el movimiento regio-colombiano, ignorándolo sistemáticamente, y aun cuando el mismo mueve una gran audiencia han realizado una labor de invisibilización como si al ignorarlos y bloquearlos pudieran desaparecerlos” (Blanco Arboleda n.d., n.p.). In spite of the media’s boycott, Piña’s music in time took on the unstoppable force of a hurricane. Now there are three radio stations in Monterrey who play nothing but Colombia. Piña is now a cult figure and his success startles the music industry and the many who did not expect this success from someone they consider a social outcast. Even the Governor of Monterrey in time found it expedient to honor Celso Piña!

It was Celso Piña’s 2001 CD *Barrio Bravo* [“Tough Barrio”] marking his twentieth anniversary in music that made it impossible to ignore him. It stands as one of Celso’s most successful and musically rich Cumbia-driven recordings. *Barrio Bravo* features an all-star cast of musicians who gather to celebrate Celso Piña: rock bands Café Tacuba, Santa Sabina, and Control Machete, among others. When I was in Monterrey, Nuevo León in the summer of 2001 I stood in line with thousands of others to purchase that newly released CD. All music stores had stacks of the CD next to their cash registers. By then Celso Piña already enjoyed iconic status among his youth followers. Not surprising that he also caught the attention of culture critic Carlos Monsiváis who wrote about Piña in a Mexico City daily. That of course awaked even the capital city. In the CD liner notes Monsiváis refers to Piña as “un conductor de tribus” (“a leader of tribes”) and as “The Accordionist of Hamelin” in memory of the “flutist who seduced the youth.” The 2007 film *Cumbia Callera* (Street Cumbia) features a poetic cinematography which (with a minimalist plot) captures Celso Piña’s centrality among the dancing youth of Monterrey.

Celso Piña’s story exemplifies how musicians can provide some of the most powerful social visionings that trigger changes in self-identity and forms of social organization. Music’s harmonies, beats, melodies, poetics and instrumental soundings capture individuals and constitute them into

auditory collectives. Music is capable of establishing collective identifications, of dispelling sorrows, of creating social cohesion in a society that fragments and alienates. The disenfranchised seize Cumbia as a collective means of expression, as an instrument of identity affirmation, and as a catharsis to monotonous day laborer existence. Music moves like a virus but its outcomes are far healthier. The constitutive power of music finds particular expression in Cumbia as it comes into the lives of Monterrey's *barrio* youth, later moving along the northward axis to Houston, Dallas, San Antonio. In Celso Piña's voice and hands the Cumbia becomes an entirely new discursive tool: a tool of non-violent practice, an instrument of peace, especially among gang youth, but extending to others.

A good part of Celso Piña's Cumbia repertoire has a distinctive self-referentiality. Most *norteño* borderlands genres — such as the Polka, Vals, Bolero — do not speak about themselves. Celso Piña's Cumbia repertoire, by contrast, serves as both a sounding board for philosophical debate as well as a place where extraordinary powers are evoked and identities as well as social praxis are shaped. Given the limitations of space I can only briefly examine two of Celso Piña's Cumbias: one is entitled *Cumbia Poder* (Cumbia Power) and another is *Cumbia de la Paz* (Cumbia of Peace). Both of these explicitly acknowledge the social powers of music as a direct social force. Both of these Cumbias have taken on the role of youth anthems.

A close reading of *Cumbia Poder* and *Cumbia de la Paz*, for example, reveals a representation of Cumbia's magical social powers, its capacity to intervene in oppressed lives through its own inherent powers as music, not through established political movements, parties, or other forms of conventional social organizing. *Cumbia Poder* speaks to the life-changing energy of this dance form, which in Monterrey also became a form of social organization. It is said that dozens of youth gangs took up this music and incorporated musical performance into their collective activities:

Cumbia Poder me alimentas,
dando energía a mi ser.
Para que pueda crecer
el sentimiento que tu representas.

Cumbia is cast as a profound nourishment, a soul force and healing agent: "La Cumbia Poder se asomaba, llenando mi alma tan simple." From the Indigenous cultural-spiritual matrix, the natural environment is summoned as an active ally and empowering agent for humans. The Cumbia transmits an Indigenous vision re-establishing ancient energistic linkages between humans and heavenly bodies, particularly the moon, stars, sky. Linkages historically made invisible, and that Celso's *Cumbia Poder* makes once again explicit to Indigenous tribal cultures and roots where ritual dance (Cumbia) reaffirms the human connection to cosmic powers, such as the moon. The alignment of human and celestial power leads to harmony and balance. In this way, Cumbia serves as an agent in the re-emergence of the Indigenous

use of movement/dance to balance: to align the human energies within the cosmic movement. As in the Conchero and other Indigenous dance traditions, dance moves energies; here Cumbia connects directly to the Indigenous dance traditions that persists throughout the Norteño region.

Not all of Celso Piña's Cumbias engage as directly with the energetic powers of Cumbia. Some sing about rivers, landscapes, love relationships. And *Cumbia Poder*, for example as a creation in the oral tradition, has been variously recorded by *cumbieros* in the Norteño borderlands, is not unique to Celso Piña. What is, however, unique is how Celso transposes its meanings directly onto the realities of *barrio* youth and especially *barrio* youth gang warfare. In the powerful music video for this song the actors are those very Monterrey hills youth. The beginning scene shows us one group of youth pursuing the member of another gang. Just as the hot pursuit ends with two rival gangs facing off, Celso Piña intervenes with his accordion and the fight becomes ritualized through a Cumbia dance battle, a ritualized pressure release valve. *Cumbia Poder* illustrates the "sublime ritual" whereby youth transform themselves into agents or warriors of peace. Celso Piña's music videos, such as *Cumbia Poder* stages his music within the very mean streets of Monterrey and its gang warfare. The enactment illustrates the possibility of non-violent action and social healing. The recurring stanza which speaks to the enormous transformative powers of Cumbia also stresses that reality. It resembles a prayer for peace:

Luna, llena mi alma de Cumbia,
saca de mi la locura
y llévame a la luz y a la paz.

Moon, fill my soul with Cumbia,
remove this insanity from me
and bring me towards the light and peace.

In all of his music videos Celso Piña positions music as a social power in the *barrio* streets where he lives. The protagonists and actors are the disenfranchised youth of those *barrios*. No surprise that *barrio* youth have responded to his music on both sides of the border: Monterrey, Houston, Dallas, San Antonio, creating new Cumbia dance steps and group dance configurations, most notably of young men dancing together as warriors.

In *Cumbia de la Paz* (Cumbia of Peace), Cumbia is clearly indigenized as "sublime ritual" (ritual sublime), as a ritual of profound love and peace. *Cumbia de la Paz* also makes explicit reference to native peoples circling and to "brave warriors" who die in the interests of peace and not war. There is an evocative image of young men warriors battling it out "in the circle of Cumbia" dance; it is a non-violent dance battle, a harmonizing contest where the warriors are enveloped in Cumbia's peace: "[...] los bravos guerreros que allí morían, en la paz de la Cumbia" (brave warriors died there, within Cumbia's peace). Consistent with Indigenous sociocultural

practice, this Cumbia invokes the powers of dream as a visioning device. Within that dream Cumbia is the equivalent of love:

Soñar un sueño profundo
 Donde mire al mundo
 Con amor de Cumbia.

I'm dreaming a profound dream
 Where I look at the world
 With Cumbia love.

These two Cumbias manifest how Celso Piña has harnessed Cumbia music as a vehicle of cultural politics and political intervention leading to peace. In these songs, which have become youth anthems, Cumbia is an agent and the chosen vehicle of the youth movement toward peace and love. Through this musical visioning Cumbia becomes capable of transforming social structures, exerting a huge collectivizing and cohesive power. In addition to the discursive visioning, youth have collectively created a new arsenal of performed Cumbia music and dance styles (such as the “chúntaro style”) that have spread northward to Texas. These are some of the notable accomplishments of Celso Piña and his fellow *barrio* dwellers.

What I posit here is that musical forms have their own inherent powers summoned by alliances between musicians and audiences. Among those basic powers, for example, is the power to trigger pleasure, *alegría*, enjoyment, and more broadly speaking it has the power to physically, intellectually and emotionally move groups of people, to foster collectivity, to shape identities and social praxis. In addition to the words which are sung there is the beat, the melodies and harmonies which alter the human psyche. *Cumbia Poder* is a rehumanizing power; it re-creates the vibratory bonds among working-class peoples who barely eke out an existence. In dehumanizing contexts music can rehumanize and put forward historical truths in a vastly different register than books. The truth of youth warriors, for example, is palpable in the 2008 dance segment captured in Houston on YouTube “Cholos bailando *Cumbia Poder* de Celso Piña.”

By 2005 Celso Piña's music put forward an even more straightforward rebellious social vision focused on the revolutionary icon Che Guevara. That recording, *El Canto de un Rebelde para un Rebelde* (The Song of a Rebel for a Rebel) features Carlos Puebla's classic farewell song to Che Guevara (*Hasta Siempre Comandante*) as well as two other songs in honor of Latin America's arch-revolutionary symbol. On the CD cover Celso Piña poses as a Guevara look-alike, including the beret with red star. In 2009 Celso releases his new CD *Sin fecha de caducidad* (Without Expiration Date), which includes as musical collaborators Benny Ibarra, Aleks Syntek, Alex Lora, Laura León, Eugenia León, Natalia Lafourcade and Pato Machete. One of the most striking aspects of Celso Piña's music is its jam session quality where notable musicians come and leave their Cumbia imprints.

As a result of his many guests (and the instruments and styles they bring), all of his CDs since *Barrio Bravo* are a series of remarkable musical fusions, but all within the parameters of Cumbia.

4. *Cumbia Chicana Borderlands Circuitry: Selena and Monterrey, Nuevo León*

Selena Quintanilla's Cumbias have an entirely different register of emotion and range of meanings than Celso Piña's. Selena's inclination was playful and wholesome voiced Cumbias involving love relationships. There are funny love reversals (*El Chico del apartamento 512* [The Guy from Apartment 512]), or the worn and torn working-class symbols from *rasquache* sensibility (*La Carcacha* [The Jalopy]); love disappointments (*Como la flor*) or unrequited love (*Si una vez*); and just plain Cumbia dance pleasure (*Baila esta Cumbia*) or kissing pleasure (*Besitos*). Selena's *Techno Cumbia* summons everyone to the dance floor, while with her very popular Cumbia *Bidi Bidi Bom Bom* (the sound of her heart "speaking") she projects a happy love story. Her huge hit, the Cumbia *Amor prohibido* affirms the possibility of love between two people from different socioeconomic classes. Notably, *Amor Prohibido* replaced Gloria Estefan's *Mi Tierra* at #1 on *Billboard's* Latin Tracks charts and even made the top 200 on *Billboard's* Pop Charts.

In her songs — a majority of which were Cumbias — Selena's voice projected a sonorous warmth and joyfulness. Selena's wide-ranging musical repertoire notwithstanding, her stock-and-trade became Cumbia. Cumbia is her bedrock, while other sounds circle there as well: she includes an occasional *Ranchera* sung with mariachi, a Polka with accordion-sounding electric instruments, and some *tejano* synthesized pop-sounding music. She grew up hearing a variety of musical genres, ranging from Rhythm & Blues and Rock, to Conjunto and Tejano, but she ultimately became a *cumbiera* backed up by *onda tejana* instrumentation. Significantly, Selena's primary focus on the Cumbia musical idiom facilitated her entry into vast sectors of the Spanish-speaking working class in the United States and throughout Latin America. Cumbia is a powerful common ground among musical languages.

Selena's powerful voice resounds throughout the land, even years after her premature death in 1995 at the hands of an assassin. Her life, cut short at age twenty-three, was rooted in the *norteño* borderlands musical circuitry: on both sides of the recent border and extending back to borderless times. Selena was of Cherokee and Coahuilteco lineage; one set of grandparents was from Nueva Rosita, Coahuila (now Mexico), the other Texas Cherokee, predating national borders. Her Cumbia artistry was an easy fit in Monterrey, Nuevo León, and the other Mexican border areas where Cumbia was and is a favored musical currency among Indigenous Mexican, Guatemalan, Salvadoran, and other peoples. The Texas-Nuevo León axis was the terrain that served as Selena's first and deepest fan base, launching her to stardom. Although some may point to Mexico City or New York or Los Angeles as the national hubs where careers are made, Selena's musical and personal aesthetics, her working-class style, and her

pocha Spanish did not translate to the Mexico City terrain at all — at first — and only much later to the two United States coasts. It was her *tejano* base and easy movement south to Monterrey, Nuevo León — her acceptance by borderlands *norteño* audiences and most notably by the youth who were immersed in Cumbia movements — that launched her success in the greater Spanish-speaking world, long before most of the English-speaking world even heard of her. Monterrey, Nuevo León, became her springboard to other parts of Mexico and Latin America. Ironically, it was not until after her death that Selena, a US citizen whose first language was English, became known within the English-language US music market.

Although often compared by media pundits to Madonna — for lack of a borderlands musical frame of reference — Selena falls within a long-standing lineage of Chicana Tejana borderlands performers, in virtually all her performative aspects: the glitzy shiny bustiers and other tight attire; her Spanish-English bilingualism; her multicultural influenced repertoire ranging from R&B, Disco, Rock, Corrido, Ranchera, to Tejano Balada, to Hip-Hop and Cumbia. Also part of that aesthetic tradition was the Texan Mexican *Onda Tejana* (Tejano wave) band instrumentation of her back-up band Los Dinos with lead & rhythm guitar, keyboards, bass, drum/percussion, congas, and backing vocalists and dancers. Selena was part of a Chicana Onda Tejana School which is always overlooked and erased, while *non-Mexican American* influences are always named. I hereby name Selena's direct Chicana precursors; Onda Tejana singers Patsy Torres, Shelly Lares, Laura Canales, Elida Reyna, Elsa Garcia (*La Guerita de Houston*), and other less known singers of that Onda Tejana style who were Selena's contemporaries such as Lynda V and the Boys. Although Selena was the youngest of that group they were friends and mutually influenced each other. Selena always acknowledged them. For the untrained ear they are indistinguishable in timbre, intonation, singing style, performative techniques, musical phrasing, musical repertoire, and the attire of their publicly staged bodies and sexuality. As a group they form a distinctive and unmistakably identifiable musical-aesthetic group. In other words, Selena was not a huge breakthrough musical innovator. After Selena's premature death, that performative style lives on with many Chicanas Norteñas, such as Jennifer Peña. Selena stood not only on the shoulders of fellow *Tejana* singers, but also on those of Johnny Canales whose popular and unique *tejano* borderlands television show introduced and broadcast *tejano* musical forms across Mexico. For decades the televised Johnny Canales Show was the key working-class musical launching pad. He showcased Selena (among others) and brought her into the north-south musical axis even before EMI Latin showed up. Canales also made the arrangements for Selena's first concerts in *norteño* Mexico. Selena's 1993 appearances in the Mexican *telenovela* (soap opera) *Dos Mujeres, Un Camino* also brought her into the Spanish-speaking Mexican limelight.

After Selena was signed to EMI Latin in 1989 that corporation's huge distribution and publicity power helped propel numerous of her songs to

the top of the charts and to stardom in the “US Latin” category and in the Spanish-speaking *norteño* borderlands world. She was already a star in Monterrey, Nuevo León, Coahuila, and Tamaulipas — later throughout Latin America — and yet virtually unknown in the English-language recording industry. (Her first English-language album was released posthumously by EMI’s English-language SBK label in 1995.) The conditions for her *norteño* borderlands stardom had a great deal to do with the Cumbia surge emanating from disenfranchised *barrio* youth organizations in Monterrey, Nuevo León, and with their idol, Cumbia artist Celso Piña. It was her Cumbia repertoire and moves that opened the doors to her popularity southward: first in Monterrey, Nuevo León (and surrounding *norteño* states); then to other parts of Mexico and Latin America.

Only after her death did Selena receive attention from the academic world. Deborah Vargas examines how Selena “re-maps *Tejas*” as Selena does not fit within the musical genres/genders privileged by academicians as signifiers for mapping “*Tejas*.” Vargas cites the *tejano* masculinist, heroic, resistance narratives (*corrido* and the accordion-driven *conjunto*) of *tejano* music histories produced by Américo Paredes, Manuel Peña, and José Limón (Vargas 2002). In a later article Vargas examines the appropriation of Selena’s persona by the queer community (Vargas 2007). José Limón dispenses with Selena’s voice and reduces Selena’s appeal to her sexuality, identifying “Selena’s sexuality as the primary force driving her popularity” (Limón 1998, 192). My own sense is that it was her considerable musical artistry, her enormous charisma, combined with her closeness to her fan base that launched her to stardom in a musical environment where her style of music was already circulating. Selena would sign autographs, converse with and hug her fans both before and after her shows. She was the highly congenial girl next-door, funny, and capable of instant rapport. In all her interviews with Mexican TV stations, Selena would interrupt to speak directly with the fans and thank them, uttering the golden *norteño* mantra: “Sin ustedes no somos nada” (“Without you we are nothing.”) In various of her interviews in Mexico she stresses “Lo mas importante es tener un amor para el público.” (“The most important thing is to have love for your public.”)³

I sometimes think of Cumbia as a kind of heavily trafficked musical circuit, moving like electricity. If we want to use spatial imagery Cumbia could also be considered a crossroads, an open and free circuit embracing all instrumentations and styles, provided that the defining Cumbia rhythmic pattern is maintained. Celso Piña and Selena Quintanilla’s music illustrate that openness.

Selena Quintanilla herself was a confluence of many musical tributaries. Yet it is the Cumbia that provided her most consistent musical platform and

³ Her television interviews in Mexico are available at <<http://selena-mexico.com/2011/01/selena-en-radio-y-television/>>.

idiom. If we examine her moves and music — the visual spectacle that she evolved — Cumbia is not only her most powerful musical tool and her fondest means of musical expression; it is Cumbia that provides most strikingly for body exhibition, which includes Selena's powerful dance moves. It cannot have escaped the attention of a performer such as Selena that Cumbia dancing, with its undulations and focus on solo performance, provided her with the kind of body focus and heightened body spectacle that other song genres did not. When Selena occasionally performed straight *tejano* songs (which do not offer the Cumbia rhythm) her body spectacle seems to recede and even become static, suggestive clothes notwithstanding. In those straight *tejano* songs Selena figures only as one in a line-up of bodies with her back-up band. The preponderance of Selena's most impressive music video performances of her hits are Cumbias where her dance talents flourish.

Selena — with the Cumbia as her chief musical language — attained a national and international recognition unmatched by any other Mexican American in history. Her laurels are too numerous to name here. At the *tejano* Music Awards, Selena won Best Female Vocalist repeatedly. Her album *Selena Live!* won Best Mexican-American Album at the 36th Grammy Awards. She was named the top Latin artist of the '90s and best-selling Latin artist of the decade by *Billboard*, for her fourteen top-ten singles in the Top Latin Songs chart, including seven number-one hits. She also broke all attendance records at virtually all venues where she performed. She was larger than life.

Mexican-American women, particularly from the *barrios*, saw in Selena “one of us” finally in the limelight. That was something unheard of: a young woman born and raised in the poverty of the *barrios* rose to a level of celebrity and visibility never seen before. Her huge voice and highly visible persona was an unprecedented achievement, especially given the utter lack of nationally visible Mexican Americans and the general voicelessness of Chicana woman in the mass media. Selena was an important role model for marginalized Chicanas; she was someone who made it big time, someone to be hugely proud of; she reached the pinnacles of greatness using her Cumbia-centered countercultural arsenal from the oral tradition. She laid down footprints to follow. She also humbly visited the schools in order to inspire and uplift, even though she had entered the pantheon of icons who only need one name: Selena, Prince, Madonna, Cher, Elvis, etc.

The 1995 tragedy and sensationalism of twenty-three-year-old Selena's cold-blooded murder only catapulted her to new heights of fame. Her posthumous CD, *Thinking of You*, a combination of Spanish-language songs and new English-language tracks, debuted at number one on the *Billboard* 200, making her the first “Hispanic” singer to accomplish this feat. Selena did not live to see it.

The publicity around her fans' grief and the hundreds of commemorative projects too numerous to name here have only heightened our awareness of the terrible loss of this towering public figure and voice. In life and in death Selena attained heights of popularity never before (or since) par-

alleled by any other Chicana. As such, along with her Cumbias, she holds a singular place in history.

I close with Celso Piña's words published in the liner notes of his 2003 CD which he named *Una Vision*. He holds up Cumbia as a powerful peoples' forum:

La Cumbia es la raza, el canto de las calles, el calor de los barrios. La Cumbia es la nostalgia que llevamos en la sangre, es nuestras emociones, sentimientos, encuentros y desencantos. La Cumbia es perder por amor, es ganarle al dolor, es burlarse chido de las penas. La Cumbia hace crecer nuestra fe y nuestra esperanza.

Cumbia is the people, the songs of the streets, the warmth of the barrios, Cumbia is the nostalgia that we carry in our blood, it's our emotions, feelings, encounters and disappointments. Cumbia is to suffer for love, to triumph over pain, to make fun of sorrows. Cumbia makes our faith and our hope grow.

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ESCRITURA Y CUERPO FEMENINO:
SUGERENCIAS Y FUENTES DE EUROPA Y AMÉRICA

Martha L. Canfield

A medida que la escritura se vuelve un oficio verdadero y cada vez más difundido entre las mujeres, aumenta la necesidad de formular teóricamente la relación que la mujer escritora siente y realiza con la escritura. Contemporáneamente se afirma la necesidad de delimitar el área en la que la mujer se expresa a sí misma exactamente como mujer, sin olvidar que a un cierto nivel de la escritura el sujeto que escribe no tiene sexo. Excava, busca, extrae y se nutre de todo lo que es patrimonio de la humanidad; y luego asimila, modifica y restituye en forma de discurso dirigido a la humanidad, más allá del “género gramatical.”

Pero la mujer que se expresa difícilmente puede olvidar su propia condición femenina ni lo mucho que ésta puede condicionar la intencionalidad de su discurso. Así queda demostrado en la vasta literatura que va de Mme de Sévigné a Simone de Beauvoir, de Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz a Gabriela Mistral, de la riquísima poesía femenina hispano-árabe de los siglos X y XI a la poesía chicana del siglo XX. Entre estas autoras y estos movimientos las sugerencias e influencias son recíprocas, viajando de Europa a América y viceversa, creando modelos que, en la novedad de la ruptura, mantienen una tradición o, cuanto menos, un determinado modo de afirmar la propia femineidad y la relación con el propio cuerpo. Dice Cecilia Bustamante, poeta peruana residente desde hace varios decenios en los Estados Unidos:

My body was before the Word. The reality of being a woman made me belong to silence, unacquainted with myself, unable to describe-inscribe my being in a Universe where man is the measure of all things. He set the norms, the terms of our human relations and has designed the frontiers to the flight of my thought.¹ (Bustamante 1989, 123)

“My body was before the Word.” *Mi cuerpo era antes de la Palabra*, como decir que una indagación de sí misma, para la mujer, no puede em-

¹ “Mi cuerpo era antes de la Palabra. La realidad de ser mujer me hace pertenecer al silencio, desconocida para mí misma, incapaz de describir-inscribir mi ser en un Universo donde el hombre es la medida de todas las cosas. Él ha establecido las normas, los términos de nuestras relaciones humanas y ha marcado fronteras al vuelo de mi pensamiento.”

pezar sino a partir de su propio cuerpo. La secular represión masculina — que es social y es cultural — se ha ejercido ante todo sobre el cuerpo y como consecuencia sobre la expresión. Lo que no está permitido decir es lo que no está permitido sentir, en los distintos matices que van de lo inadecuado a lo escandaloso. Del mismo punto debería partir entonces la reivindicación: el lenguaje femenino, que delimita la realidad de la que la mujer ha sido alienada, halla como referente privilegiado el propio cuerpo y el espacio contiguo a él.

Pero, reflexiona Bustamante siguiendo las huellas de Wittgenstein,² el poder del lenguaje está delimitado a su vez por el silencio en medida desproporcionada. Lo que el lenguaje revela de la realidad es mínimo respecto a lo que permanece escondido en el silencio, en el reino ilimitado de lo anónimo.

Existe una poesía marginal femenina muy antigua, de cuya existencia hay ecos en toda la Edad Media, cuya temática principal es la expresión del deseo amoroso, con explícita referencia al propio cuerpo, y no tergiversada por el punto de vista masculino. Una realización de esta corriente se encuentra en la poesía medieval hispano-árabe (Rubiera Mata 1989). Ha sido demostrada además la existencia de profundos vínculos entre la poesía griega arcaica, las *cantigas de amigo*, las *jarchas* hispano-árabes y las *albas* provenzales. Todas estas formas poéticas se pueden conectar con el culto mesopotámico de Inanna-Ishtar-Astarte, nombres distintos de una misma divinidad femenina presente en varias culturas, como la sumérica, la babilónica y la fenicio-cananea, finalmente transfigurada en Afrodita (Gangutia 1972, 329-396). Esta poesía femenina permaneció marginada ya en la época griega clásica, de cultura masculina. Pero los fragmentos que se conservan muestran un sorprendente paralelismo con las *jarchas*, incluso por la disposición estrófica, y actualmente con cierta poesía amorosa femenina que elige la forma popular de la *copla*, no por afectación sino por una necesidad intrínseca. Éste es el caso de las *Coplas chicanas* de Gina Valdés, recogidas en su libro *Puentes y fronteras*, del 1982. En estas “coplas” la escritora se deja llevar fundamentalmente por la tradición popular y anónima, prestando así su voz a una expresión de auténtico candor, que sólo en parte le pertenece. En efecto, ella es en otros libros menos inmediata y transparente, mientras que resultan notables las coincidencias temáticas y de imaginación entre algunas de sus coplas y ciertas *jarchas*. Dice, por ejemplo, una *jarcha* anónima de tipo tradicional:

Si os vais, ¡oh señor!,
antes quiero besaros la boca roja,
bermeja como cúrcuma.

² “Wittgenstein compels us to wonder whether reality can be *spoken of*, when speech is merely a kind of infinite regression, words being spoken of other words ... Language can only deal meaningfully with a special, restricted segment of reality. The rest, and it is presumably the much larger part, is silence...” (Steiner 1970, 21; citado por Bustamante 1989, 129).

Y le hace eco la copla 56 de Valdés:

La piña madura es dulce,
la papaya es deliciosa;
de todas las cosas ricas
tu boca es la más sabrosa.

Los rasgos somáticos del amante árabe — piel y cabellos oscuros — a menudo aparecen puestos en evidencia en las jarchas como valores superiores a los del hombre blanco. La misma superioridad aparece subrayada por Valdés con respecto a su “moreno.” Dice la jarcha anónima:

Dulce morenito.
¡Qué suerte la de la amante
que duerma contigo!³ (Rubiera Mata 1989, 45)

Y de manera aún más explícita, dice Valdés:

El amor del hombre blanco
a veces llega a merienda;
el amor de los morenos
es siempre sabrosa cena.

Según la escritora argentina Tununa Mercado, “la escritura y el erotismo se alimentan de una misma energía libidinal” y “ese continuo entre cuerpo y escritura, entre goce del cuerpo y goce de la palabra escrita es una fusión/combustión, algo así como una fuente móvil que en su trayecto va soltando moléculas de sentido, partículas que por su acción intermitente — suspender el goce y proseguirlo a designio, entrar y salir del texto, pasarse del borde de la página por exceso o no llegar a él por abstinencia —, que por su acción intermitente (decía) configuran un modelo de sexualidad y una concepción del Eros.” La escritura, por lo tanto, sería para Mercado, “un modelo de sexualidad” (Mercado 1989, 11-12). Pero, se pregunta ella misma, ¿qué escritura y qué sexualidad?

En cuanto a la primera, Mercado entiende una escritura que, más allá del resultado y de la conclusión, se interese por las “zonas intermedias,” que no tenga miedo del vértigo o del balbuceo, que sepa conectar sentidos sin dejarse condicionar por los significados...

Una escritura sin tema principal ni preámbulos, que haga perder la cabeza... Por cierto ella piensa en una escritura muy evolucionada, que sabe jugar con la ambigüedad, que tiene en cuenta tanto el referente como el destinatario del discurso y del efecto que ejerce sobre él. Se trata de

³ Véanse también las cautivantes versiones “en calco rítmico” de García Gómez (1965).

una escritura muy consciente, que está lejos de las formas más ingenuas y primitivas de la poesía popular auténtica o imitada, como ocurre, por ejemplo, en las citadas coplas de Gina Valdés. Sin embargo, el efecto que ambas producen es muy semejante, a pesar del orden, la rima, la simplicidad de las coplas, porque el modelo de sensualidad al que están asociadas es el mismo.

La sexualidad a la que se refería Tununa Mercado está concebida sin una *finalidad*, *difundida* pero no *confundida*, y conectada con una escritura igualmente difundida pero no confundida. Una sexualidad definida de esta manera evoca inmediatamente la que Norman O. Brown, freudiano sui generis, había definido como “sexualidad polimórficamente perversa,” [la traducción es mía] asociándola a la infancia, al perpetuarse del puro juego y al goce no finalizado, por oposición a la sexualidad finalizada y determinada por la organización genital adulta (Brown 1978, 39-56). La escritora argentina, sin embargo, siguiendo la corriente feminista de rescate del propio cuerpo y de recuperación de una percepción-expresión distinta del propio cuerpo, distingue entre sexualidad “femenina” y “masculina.” Los adjetivos indican naturalmente dos grandes categorías del pensamiento y no quieren aludir simplemente al hombre y a la mujer. En este sentido se puede afirmar una sexualidad femenina distinta de la masculina, que se puede dar tanto en la mujer como en el hombre. Los amantes masculinos, asegura Mercado, tienden a terminar; en cambio, “cuando permanecen, cuando se detienen a medir y a palpar el espesor del deseo, son amantes femeninos y hacen escritura femenina, una escritura que las mujeres tenemos que darnos, que poco a poco ha de ser nuestra escritura, cuando nos hayamos desprendido de toda la carga reivindicatoria y le entremos al texto” (Mercado 1989, 12).

La escritura “masculina” se porta como la sexualidad masculina en el cuerpo de la mujer: quiere dominar sin discriminar ni reconocer las diferencias, escritura de representación y de reflejo, marcada por los temibles rasgos de crudo realismo que encadenan la palabra al referente y no dejan una mínima grieta a través de la cual se pueda insinuar otro sentido, la duda, la ambigüedad, el doble sentido... Esa literatura o escritura masculina puede ser hecha — conviene repetir el concepto — tanto por hombres como por mujeres. Es una literatura que no admite ni el misterio ni el silencio y que no se atreve a aludir a ese espacio ilimitado de lo no dicho. De este modo, dibuja una especie de línea de frontera (“línea comatosa,” dice Tununa Mercado), más allá de la cual la literatura deja de existir en cuanto se consume en el rechazo de lo que más intensamente la alimenta.

La habilidad más exquisitamente femenina — esa forma de sabiduría que es al mismo tiempo instinto e ímpetu — se reconoce entonces en la preferencia por un modelo de sexualidad no finalizada, “polimórficamente perversa,” en la cual no se distinguen más zonas erógenas, porque todo el cuerpo es zona erógena y territorio del placer, una sexualidad “difundida,” que “hace perder la cabeza;” y en consecuencia en la adopción de un modelo de escritura donde la palabra ya no es la isla en el silencio, sino entidad que se difunde y se conjuga con el silencio. El silencio, de esta manera, da significado a la palabra, antes y después de la emisión de la palabra.

No es casual que el legendario personaje de Sherezada se haya transformado en el símbolo de la mujer escritora. En ámbito femenino su nombre aparece continuamente propuesto: la escritora colombiana Helena Araújo la ha convocado en el título de su libro sobre la literatura femenina latinoamericana, *La Scherezada criolla* (Araújo 1989). La escritora italiana Franca Bacchiega dirige una colección de obras femeninas que ha querido intitular “Sherazade” (versión italiana del mismo nombre). La hispanista Elide Pittarello, de la Universidad de Venecia, define a Carmen Martín Gaité como “allieva di Sheerazade,” desde que ella “ripone in questa gratuita arte della parola la temporanea salvezza dalla morte” y como un personaje de un cuento suyo podría decir: “Mientras hablo, estoy todavía vivo” (Pittarello 1994, 75). No obstante, es bueno recordar que la salvación de la astuta contadora de fábulas depende, no solo del uso de la palabra, sino también de su habilidad para interrumpir cada cuento en el punto justo. Esta sagaz dosificación de palabra y silencio constituye en realidad el secreto del éxito.

Decir y callar, sugerir y velar, la habilidad de la escritura femenina está precisamente en saberse mover a lo largo de ese “borde comatoso” del que hablaba Tununa Mercado, sin miedo del vértigo, ni rechazo de la fecundación que lo no dicho implanta en lo dicho.

Ahora deberíamos preguntarnos qué ocurre en las situaciones de bilingüismo o de transculturación. En estos casos el cambio de código es obligatorio: no hacerlo implica el riesgo de perder la posibilidad de expresarse. La palabra resulta entonces yugo y libertad. Así ha sido el español para las poblaciones indígenas de América y el inglés para los mexicanos del New Mexico, y en general para los emigrantes latinos en Estados Unidos. El resultado de esta coerción, en la poesía femenina chicana, es un regreso a la poesía amorosa con referencia explícita al cuerpo, en especial al cuerpo femenino, es decir al sujeto poético.⁴ Canto y cuerpo son dones que la mujer ofrece de sí misma, ambos profundamente entrelazados e identificados. Ellos son los instrumentos con los que la mujer recupera la imagen de sí misma e interpela al otro.

“Lo que doy cantando — dice Barthes — es al mismo tiempo mi cuerpo (a través de mi voz) y el mutismo del que tú te vales para atacarlo” (Barthes 1979, 67). El amor es mudo, dice Novalis; sólo la poesía lo hace hablar. Sin embargo, incapaz de enunciarse, “el amor quiere asimismo exclamarse, declamarse, escribirse en todas partes” (Barthes 1979, 68) [La traducción es mía].

Hay un texto de Gina Valdés en el que la escritora logra condensar en una única metáfora los signos de la escritura, del cuerpo y de la casa; en otras palabras, su cuerpo y su casa se vuelven una misma cosa en el espacio del canto, que es dádiva de amor (tal como el cuerpo, o como la casa).

⁴ Véanse estos versos de Sandra Cisneros: “Tomorrow they might find a body here — // unraveled like a poem, // dissolved like wafer. // Say the body was a woman’s” (Cisneros 1987), y más en general la marcada atención al cuerpo presente en la obra de Alma Luz Villanueva. En Italia ambas escritoras, además de la citada Gina Valdés, se pueden leer en la antología de poetas chicanos de Bacchiega 1990.

El poema aparece escrito en dos versiones, en inglés y en español. Por el cuidado en el tejido fónico y fonosimbólico, mayor en inglés, es presumible que la primera versión haya sido en esta lengua; parece justo, de todos modos, transcribir ambas versiones. Valdés, por otra parte, pertenece a ese tipo de sujeto literario en el umbral entre dos culturas y dos lenguas, que se preocupa de autotraducirse sistemáticamente, sea cual sea la lengua inicial, inglés o español. Otros prefieren la mezcla de los dos códigos, como se sabe, generalizando el uso del code-switching, facilitando la inmediatez del mensaje pero reduciendo el entorno de los receptores.

En mi casa

En mi casa
 todos los muebles
 han sufrido desventuras
 no hay ni uno
 que no esté desportillado
 cicatrices de caricias rudas
 que toda visita masculina
 les ha dado
 una silla de paja
 tiene el vientre desgarrado
 un sillón cojea
 una mesa redonda de tres patas
 con tres patas heridas tambalea

no queriendo compartir
 la misma suerte
 que mis muebles
 atranqué todas las puertas
 de mi casa

pero a ti
 bailarín de pierna segura
 pianista de mano cautelosa
 pintor de rasgos finos
 te abrí mi casa
 mis cuartos
 mis armarios
 te dejé piruetear
 en mis pisos
 tocar en mis techos
 pintar en mis paredes

en la madrugada
 me despierta
 el suspiro de un sillón roto
 el gemido de una mesa temblorosa
 el sollozo de una silla destrozada
 y me pregunto
 si tengo el corazón intacto
 (Valdés 1982)

At my house

At my house
 all the furniture
 has met misfortune
 the one that isn't torn
 is broken
 scars of rough caresses
 left by male visitors

 a straw chair
 has its womb ripped out
 an armchair limps
 a round three-legged table
 on three wounded legs wobbles

not wanting to share
 the same fate
 as my furniture
 I bolted the doors
 of my house

but to you
 sure leg dancer
 soft hand pianist
 light stroke painter
 I opened my house
 my rooms
 my cabinets
 I let you pirouette
 on my floors
 make music on my ceilings
 paint on my walls

at dawn
 I'm awakened
 by the sigh of a broken armchair
 by the moan of a quivering table
 by the sob of a wrecked chair
 and I ask myself
 if my heart is intact

El texto ofrece la posibilidad de dos lecturas por lo menos: en la primera resulta evidente que la casa es el símbolo del propio cuerpo y que frente al desajuste causado por el amor ella “atranca todas las puertas,” en un intento de negarse a escuchar lo que ocurre en su interior. Sin embargo, no puede evitar ceder a la atracción del amado. Los gemidos de los muebles se confunden con los de su corazón y la casa se transforma en algo más que el cuerpo-físico, es el espacio interior del cuerpo-psíquico desgarrado por el amor.

Dado que el budismo está muy difundido en California y teniendo en cuenta que en la poesía de Gina Valdés se encuentran referencias precisas a oraciones y ritos budistas, es útil recordar que mientras en otros contextos la casa resulta metáfora del universo, en el budismo lo es por lo general del cuerpo. Ella es además sobre todo un símbolo femenino y a menudo remite al mundo interior (Bachelard 1975, 70-106).

En una segunda lectura del mismo texto poético, la casa se nos revela como una materialización de las raíces familiares y culturales: es el pasado desarraigado por el presente, como le ha sucedido a las comunidades de mexicanos emigrados o instalados en el Norte, que han dado origen, precisamente, al pueblo chicano. El cuerpo, entonces, es el presente, trastornado por el amor. Y a través del amor — un amor de signo femenino en el que el desgarramiento y el goce resultan indivisibles⁵ — la mujer recupera la percepción del propio cuerpo y se vuelve a conectar con sus propias raíces.

No es necesario insistir sobre el hecho de que el amor en clave femenina remite a ese tipo de escritura que arrastra hacia el desorden, hacia el exceso o el abuso gozables, una escritura “que hace perder la cabeza,” también ella de signo femenino.

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⁵ El concepto de *goce*, como conjunto complejo y paradójico de sentimientos que se opone al concepto de *placer*, se encuentra en Barthes 1975.

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DE MÉXICO A AZTLÁN A TRAVÉS DE LAS IMÁGENES PARENTALES

Martha L. Canfield

Toda la América Latina ha sentido intensamente la ambigüedad de su propio origen, considerándose en primer lugar fruto del choque entre el Conquistador español y las civilizaciones indígenas sometidas. El debate sobre la identidad continental o sobre las identidades nacionales empieza en seguida y no termina nunca, y entre todas las naciones hispanoamericanas es tal vez México la que más dramáticamente la testimonia, desencadenando una segunda revolución, la de 1910, y poniendo en primer plano el problema de los orígenes en los postulados culturales que acompañan la lucha. Tomaremos en consideración México y la sucesiva evolución hacia otra concepción del mundo y de la historia en ámbito *chicano* como fenómeno ejemplar de una problemática, la de la identidad nacional, y de ciertas imágenes emblemáticas, las figuras del padre y de la madre, que involucran a toda Hispanoamérica.

1. *Primer acto: en ámbito mexicano*

El mexicano se considera tradicionalmente como el *fruto de una violación*. Dice Octavio Paz en su célebre *Laberinto de la soledad*: “La historia de México es la del hombre que busca su filiación, su origen” (Paz [1959] 1987, 18). A través de la palabra tabú *chingar* y sus derivados *chingón* y *chingada*, y en especial mediante el análisis de la expresión que acomuna a los mexicanos — o sea ¡*Viva México, hijos de la Chingada!* (Paz [1959] 1987, 68) — Octavio Paz descifraba el malestar profundo de la mexicanidad: la impresión de ser todos, y no solamente los enemigos o los malos mexicanos, “hijos de la Chingada,” y por tanto de estar deshonrados desde el nacimiento e incluso de ser culpables de haber nacido. La palabra, probablemente derivada de la lengua nahuatl (*xinachtli*, semilla de hortaliza, o *xinaxtli*, hidromiel fermentada), existe en todo el ámbito hispánico con diversos matices de significado pero siempre con valor negativo: *chingar* significa equivocarse, romper, dañar; en México, donde significa muchas cosas, adquiere el sentido de grave ultraje y si se refiere a una mujer resulta sinónimo de violación. *Chingón* es quien realiza la infamia y

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chingada es la mujer que la sufre. Con estas reflexiones — de las cuales ya una primera versión había sido publicada en 1950 — Octavio Paz tocaba un drama fundamental, no solamente mexicano sino en general del ser humano. Recuérdese el célebre personaje Segismundo de *La vida es sueño* de Calderón de la Barca, el cual termina afirmando que su delito consiste simplemente en haber nacido:

aunque si nació, ya entiendo
 qué delito he cometido;
 bastante causa ha tenido
 vuestra justicia y rigor,
 pues el delito mayor
 del hombre es haber nacido.

(Calderón de la Barca, *La vida es sueño*, Acto I, Esc. 2, vv. 107-112)

Y es sin duda un drama específico del mundo hispanoamericano, surgiendo del choque entre dos civilizaciones y desarrollado a través de las luchas entre razas y culturas distintas. Emblemática y trágica en este sentido es la reflexión del célebre gaucho argentino Martín Fierro, que así definía su propia condición: “porque el ser gaucho ... ¡barajo! / el ser gaucho es un delito” (Hernández, VIII, 1967, vv. 1323-1324, 38).

Sin embargo, si esta “continentalidad,” e incluso “universalidad” del malestar secreto del mexicano le da a su drama existencial una dimensión que sobrepasa las fronteras nacionales, la referencia a una situación histórica muy precisa define el mismo drama como algo específicamente “mexicano.” Si la *chingada* es la mujer violada, herida, humillada, o bien usada y luego abandonada por el Gran Chingón, ser “hijo de la Chingada” — nos sigue diciendo Paz — resulta la condición más humillante y la ofensa más grave. Mientras que para el español el deshonor reside en ser hijo de una mujer que se concede demasiado fácilmente o, peor aún, por dinero, o sea, en ser “hijo de puta,” para el mexicano el deshonor está en ser el producto de una violación. Y si — siempre según Paz — la Chingada es una representación de la Madre violada, en contraposición a la Virgen de Guadalupe, la Virgen Madre, ella se asocia espontáneamente a la Conquista, realizada mediante la violación, en sentido histórico y literal, de las indígenas. Símbolo de esta violencia es Doña Marina, la amante de Hernán Cortés, llamada la Malinche (versión distorsionada de su nombre nahuatl Malintzin), primero explotada como esclava, intérprete e intermediaria a expensas de su propio pueblo, y al final abandonada sin escrúpulos y concedida en matrimonio a un lugarteniente del Conquistador.

De este modo, más que figuras históricas, Cortés y la Malinche son la encarnación del mito mexicano de los orígenes: el hombre mexicano, desde el principio lacerado y marcado por esta ascendencia espuria, deriva de ellos. Muy significativa en este sentido es la reconstrucción didascálica y la representación mítica de la nación mexicana hecha por el movimiento muralista, ideológicamente afín a la Revolución de 1910. Uno de los más

famosos murales, el que pintara José Clemente Orozco en la Escuela Nacional Preparatoria de Ciudad de México, representa a la Malinche como Eva mexicana. Madre humillada por el padre y repudiada por los hijos, ella nos explica la angustia implícita en la mexicanidad y en los sentimientos contradictorios que despierta. Los mexicanos no pueden perdonar a la Malinche que haya adoptado la causa de Cortés. *Malinchismo* es el término despreciativo con el cual en México se indica la fascinación por lo extranjero. Por otra parte, sobre la Malinche vista como víctima se proyectan los sentimientos de autocompasión del mexicano, “inocente hijo de la Chingada,” y en especial de la mujer mexicana, objeto de vejámenes por parte de la cultura machista. Veremos sin embargo cómo estos estereotipos cambian en la cultura chicana.

La interpretación de Octavio Paz ha sido rebatida, en primer lugar por la escritora Elena Garro, primera esposa del escritor, en su famoso relato “La culpa es de los tlaxcaltecas” (Garro [1964] 1987), donde, en efecto, al dar la culpa a los tlaxcaltecas de la caída del imperio azteca — y por consiguiente del mundo indio — se liberaba implícitamente de toda responsabilidad a la Malinche. Por su parte Margo Glantz ha analizado los orígenes de la mexicanidad desde otro punto de vista en “Las hijas de la Malinche” (Glantz 1994, 178-197). A pesar de todo ello, y más allá de los matices con los cuales se quiera modificar la interpretación de Octavio Paz, la verdad es que la literatura mexicana, al menos hasta la segunda mitad del siglo XX, le da la razón. Recordemos que en “La suave Patria” (1921) de Ramón López Velarde, considerado el poema nacional de México, se asigna un papel preponderante a Cuauhtémoc, muy amado por los mexicanos y los chicanos, héroe y mártir de la resistencia azteca, antagonista de Cortés, llamado emblemáticamente por el poeta “joven abuelo.” Igual que Cortés y la Malinche, Cuauhtémoc es un mito y, según López Velarde, el “único héroe a la altura del arte” (López Velarde, “La suave Patria,” 1971, v. 66, 210); y así lo consideran en verdad la mayor parte de los mexicanos: no el *padre azteca*, sino el *abuelo*, es decir, el padre de la madre-tierra-india.

En el citado poema velardeano es notable la configuración femenina de la Patria (sería mejor decir *Matria*) y la referencia al antagonismo entre Cuauhtémoc y Cortés, además de la traición de la Malinche, esta última apenas sugerida, como cuando se habla en voz baja de un hecho vergonzoso de la familia, que basta mencionar porque todos conocen.

En los años en los que Octavio Paz concibe su teorema del *Laberinto de la soledad* y en la década inmediatamente sucesiva, se publican en México dos obras maestras, que resultan igualmente emblemáticas de la *mexicanidad* ya delineada y que demuestran cómo esos rasgos descritos por Paz han sido determinantes en la configuración de la historia y del imaginario literario. Recordemos que la primera edición del *Laberinto* es de 1950 y la segunda, que incluye modificaciones e integraciones es de 1959. En 1955 sale la primera y única novela de Juan Rulfo, *Pedro Páramo*, y en 1962 *La muerte de Artemio Cruz* de Carlos Fuentes. La novela de Rulfo, magnífica

parábola del estar perdidos en el mundo, de la imposibilidad de ser héroes y de la gran dificultad de cada uno de nosotros para conocerse a sí mismo y a los demás, de quienes no vemos jamás el verdadero rostro sino las máscaras (uno de los capítulos del *Laberinto* se llama precisamente “Máscaras”), resulta — por notable coincidencia de cosmovisión — una perfecta configuración, en términos mítico-narrativos, de las teorías de Octavio Paz. Juan Preciado va en busca de un padre que no ha conocido y que no podrá encontrar porque *ya no está en este mundo*, aunque sus huellas aparezcan por todas partes, así como el mal que ha sembrado. Su padre, nos confirma Juan Preciado, ha sido un Gran Chingón, y su madre, por tanto, a pesar de ser la esposa legítima, es una *chingada*, primero utilizada (económicamente) y luego abandonada. La ausencia del padre determina la imposibilidad de una confrontación, o de una lucha en la que se pueda matar al padre y volver a tomar posesión de sí mismo, o bien, en el mejor de los casos, de una reconciliación. Nada de esto es posible. La parábola del héroe (o antihéroe, como es en realidad Juan Preciado) queda incompleta, trunca, fallida. Él no logra encontrar la salida de este *laberinto de soledad* que es Comala, perdida en el fondo de un valle, en medio de caminos inciertos y complejos, sofocante, alucinante, poblada de fantasmas. Con la muerte de Juan Preciado y el triunfo final de los murmullos de los sepultados, el lector siente que la historia de Comala, metáfora de la nación mexicana, no es más que un vórtice en que se da vueltas sin salida, en coincidencia con lo que el autor mismo había dicho como explicación de su propia obra: “En México estamos estabilizados en un punto muerto” (“Juan Rulfo o la pena sin nombre.” Entrevista en Harss [1966] 1973, 311).

En la novela de Carlos Fuentes, el protagonista Artemio Cruz es el mexicano típico, que progresa socialmente con medios no muy limpios, que admira la sociedad norteamericana y su “civilización” y eficiencia, pero que desprecia en ella el maniqueísmo y la ausencia de matices. Él fue un protagonista de la Revolución, a cuyos ideales había adherido sincera y apasionadamente, pero que ha terminado por sentirse defraudado, convencido de la inutilidad de la empresa. Y por cierto no es el único que piensa de este modo. Ya en los tiempos de los primeros testimonios literarios de la lucha revolucionaria se habían producido juicios semejantes por parte de los mismos protagonistas. La primera novela del ciclo de la Revolución Mexicana, o sea *Los de abajo* de Mariano Azuela, de 1915, se cerraba con un amargo comentario del revolucionario Demetrio Macías. Su esposa le pregunta:

– ¿Por qué pelean ya, Demetrio?

Demetrio, las cejas muy juntas, toma distraído una piedrecita y la arroja al fondo del cañón. Se mantiene pensativo viendo el desfiladero, y dice:

– Mira esa piedra cómo ya no se para ...

(Azuela [1915] 1972, 137)

En la personalidad de Artemio Cruz hay muchos elementos comunes con Pedro Páramo, aunque ambos sean muy distintos. Cruz es un aven-

turero, que deja su casa, se enrola en las filas revolucionarias y viaja por todo México buscando su destino. Páramo no sale nunca de Comala, se conforma con ser el propietario de todas las tierras que lo rodean hasta donde alcanza la vista. Cruz se vuelve un señor burgués, Páramo no deja de ser un cacique de provincia y mentalmente un campesino, profundamente vinculado a la tierra. No obstante, ambos entran en la categoría del Gran Chingón, ambos se casan por interés pero tienen otras mujeres, son o pueden llegar a ser despiadados y violentos, y ambos custodian en el secreto de sus corazones, de inesperada y refinada sensibilidad, un amor imposible, alimentado por recuerdos y sueños llenos de poesía y de melancólica ternura. Páramo y Cruz encarnan el estereotipo del hombre de poder en México, el primero en el campo y el segundo en la ciudad. Pero sobre todo Cruz es sin lugar a dudas un “hijo de la Chingada,” en cuanto ha nacido como consecuencia de una violación. Es algo que el lector descubre sólo al final y ese *dato escondido* a lo largo de toda la novela ilumina definitivamente el modelo que ha generado el personaje:

Cruz, Cruz sin nombre ni apellido verdaderos, bautizado por los mulatos, con las sílabas de Isabel Cruz o Cruz Isabel, la madre que fue corrida a palos por Atanasio: la primera mujer del lugar que le dio un hijo. (Fuentes [1962] 2001, 396)

Por fin, en una obra en la que se procura retratar a México, su historia y su conformación social y mental, Fuentes no podía dejar de afrontar la “palabra sagrada” del mexicano, o sea *chingar/chingada*. Le dedica un capítulo entero del cual citamos un fragmento como ejemplo:

Tu la pronunciarás: es tu palabra: y tu palabra es la mía; palabra de honor: palabra de hombre: palabra de rueda: palabra de molino: impre-
cación, propósito, saludo, proyecto de vida, filiación, recuerdo, voz de
los desesperados, liberación de los pobres, orden de los poderosos, in-
vitación a la riña y al trabajo, epígrafe del amor, signo del nacimiento,
amenaza y burla, verbo testigo, compañero de la fiesta y de la borra-
chera, espada del valor, trono de la fuerza, colmillo de la marrullería,
blasón de la raza, salvavida de los límites, resumen de la historia: santo
y seña de México: tu palabra:

- Chingue a su madre
- Hijo de la chingada
- Aquí estamos los meros chingones
- Déjate de chingaderas
- Ahoritita me lo chingo
- Ándale, chingaquedito
- No te dejes chingar
- Me chingué a esa vieja
- Chinga tú
- Chingue usted
- Chinga bien, sin ver a quién

- A chingar se ha dicho
- Le chingué mil pesos
- Chinguense aunque truenen
- Chingaderitas las mías

[...]

Viva Méjico, jijos de su rechingada:

(Fuentes [1962] 2001, 243-244)

Entre la publicación de *Pedro Páramo* y la de la novela de Fuentes, sale otra obra maestra de la narrativa mexicana, obra singular, cruce de géneros entre la novela autobiográfica, narrativa de la guerra cristera y neo-indigenismo: se trata de *Balún Canán* (1957) de Rosario Castellanos (1925-1974). Balún Canán es el nombre indígena de la pequeña ciudad de Comitán, en el estado de Chiapas, donde la autora transcurrió su infancia; y la historia se desarrolla en los años Treinta, cuando se desata la violencia cristera. La voz narrativa es la de una niña de siete años — proyección de la autora — que descubre muy pronto que la sociedad en que ha nacido es racista y machista y que allí tanto el indio como la mujer son discriminados. Aprende también que su madre biológica es víctima de los prejuicios de la educación dominante y que éstos la llevan a preferir a su hijo varón y a someterse a la autoridad del padre, a despreciar a los indios e indias que la sirven, a querer menos a su hija. La figura de la madre biológica entra en el canon de la madre traidora. La figura de la niñera se le opone, encarnando todos esos valores de los que el mundo mexicano está impregnado y que, sin embargo, aparecen paradójicamente descuidados, o reprimidos e ignorados, o peor aún, tergiversados por la cultura oficial. La figura del padre corresponde a la del Chingón: autoritario, insensible, oportunista, violento, sin respeto por las leyes.

Los ejemplos podrían multiplicarse, pero por lo que se refiere a México nos vamos a detener aquí, y pasaremos a ver cómo los esquemas se modifican y se invierten en el mundo de los mexicanos emigrados al Norte, transterrados y por tanto transformados en algo distinto, algo que a lo largo de la historia ya secular de esta colectividad especial ha recibido varios nombres: *pocho*, *pachuco*, *mexican-american*, *chicano*. Nosotros preferimos este último nombre, reivindicado en la literatura y enarbolado en la lucha por el reconocimiento de la propia identidad cultural, lucha que en los años Sesenta desemboca en lo que ellos mismos han denominado *Chicano Renaissance*.

2. Segundo acto: en la tierra de Aztlán, ámbito chicano

A mitad de camino entre México y América del Norte, los chicanos — es decir los hijos de mexicanos emigrados en Estados Unidos y nacidos o criados allí — se nos presentan, al comienzo de su historia, todavía más inciertos y atormentados que los mexicanos con respecto a su propio origen. Por una parte herederos de la cultura hispánica y de los valores de una

sociedad feudal ligada a la tierra, ellos están asimismo involucrados y atraídos por la cultura anglosajona y por los valores de la sociedad industrial, con los cuales sin embargo no logran identificarse del todo y que, en gran parte y por buenas razones, rechazan. Los hijos de los mexicanos trasplantados en suelo norteamericano se vuelven a plantear la vieja ecuación: la madre-tierra de los orígenes es explotada mediante la mano de obra a bajo precio que ellos mismos proporcionan, y despreciada, con la ferocidad del odio racial que conocen otras minorías étnicas en los Estados Unidos. Es, en definitiva, lastimada o dañada o, más claramente dicho, *chingada* por esa imagen terrible del arquetipo paterno que encarna el Poder en el imaginario mexicano. El Poder, el Estado, el Gobierno, como el Tirano o el Conquistador, están modelados sobre la agresividad, la impasibilidad¹ y el uso de la violencia, característicos del Macho, del Gran Chingón.

Los chicanos están marcados por una doble violencia de la Historia: ante ellos está la Madre-México (pintada como una dulce mestiza en esa composición clave para la mexicanidad que es “La suave Patria”), humillada por el Poder (Padre) Norteamericano; atrás está la Madre-Indígena, humillada por el Conquistador (Padre) Español. No es casual que los chicanos se declaren procedentes de Aztlán, tierra mítica de donde el pueblo azteca o mexica creía provenir, privilegiando así la ascendencia *materna* (la tierra indígena) sobre la *paterna* (la estirpe española). Al mismo tiempo, conscientemente o no, ellos asumen la condición del exilio como destino y como condena. Los mexicas en efecto, una vez llegados al altiplano de México hacia el año 1100, conservaron en su mitología el recuerdo de la tierra abandonada y un sentido de fatalidad ligado a ese abandono (Durán [1867] 1967, vol. II, 217-220). Igualmente la expresión “flor y canto,” que da título a un libro del poeta Alurista, eminente protagonista del movimiento chicano, y a un grupo particular del mismo movimiento, remite a la lengua nahuatl y a la tradición poética azteca, en la cual “flor y canto” — en nahuatl *in zochitl in cuicatl* — son dos términos inseparables, vinculados en un mismo glifo, que significa precisamente “poesía,” o más genéricamente “creación artística” (León Portilla 1978, 18 y sigtes).

Los chicanos, como los mexicanos, han reservado en la memoria tradicional un lugar prioritario a Cuauhtémoc. En el poema muy difundido de Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales, *I am Joaquín/Yo soy Joaquín*, especie de manifiesto del movimiento chicano, el antagonista de Cortés es Cuauhtémoc, y la voz poética, voz del pueblo chicano, se identifica tanto con uno como con otro, dos estirpes confundidas en una misma sangre, aunque hayan permanecido en contraste en el interior de cada uno.

¹ Ser “de piedra,” “insondable,” “impasible” es una característica fundamental de Pedro Páramo, implícita en el nombre y explícita en la descripción de su muerte (véase la última página de la novela), así como en general del tirano latinoamericano y en particular de ese otro arquetipo del dictador que es el Patriarca de Gabriel García Márquez (cf. García Márquez 1975; y Canfield 1984).

El joven emperador azteca, “joven abuelo,” es también la imagen del hijo sacrificado; y el pueblo mexicano que se reconoce en él, es el mismo que ha repudiado a la Malinche. Los *malinchistas*, en cambio, aprueban la existencia de un México abierto hacia el exterior; son ellos — dice Paz — los verdaderos hijos de la Malinche (Paz [1959] 1987, 78). No nos debe sorprender entonces que la figura de Doña Marina sea recurrente en la poesía chicana, en particular en la poesía escrita por mujeres. Para el chicano *cerrarse* dentro de las tradiciones mexicanas es cuestión de vida o muerte, es el único modo para delinear una identidad que lo distinga en el conjunto de las minorías marginadas de los Estados Unidos. Pero también *abrirse* (v. dialéctica de lo abierto y lo cerrado, Paz [1959] 1987, 27 y sigtes), en determinado momento, se vuelve regla de supervivencia: para que el pasado no se vuelva sofocante debe ser dialectizado, no mumificado sino expuesto, confrontado, revalorado; en una palabra, tiene que ser *chingado*. Un México completamente cerrado en sí mismo, por otra parte, corre el riesgo de transformarse, al menos para los chicanos, en una patria irremediadamente perdida, ya no más en condiciones de reconocer a estos hijos algo distintos. Más que como traidora, entonces, Doña Marina es vista como madre e incluso como “santa madre.” En la poesía de Lucha Corpi, por ejemplo, María y Marina se sobreponen: Marina-Madre purificada se transforma en Marina-Virgen y así las dos figuras maternas antagonistas se unifican (así se ve en su poema “Marina mother,” Corpi 1980). Esta operación está además ampliamente autorizada por el tradicional sincretismo religioso. Si la Virgen de Guadalupe es la diosa madre Tonantzin, la madre india vilipendiada puede ser redimida por el hijo que con su propio sufrimiento — el sufrimiento de los chicanos en tierra extranjera — la vuelve pura y santa.

La reapropiación de la Malinche como figura materna positiva aparece diseminada en la poesía chicana a través de la orgullosa reivindicación de la condición mestiza (por ejemplo en la obra de Angela de Hoyos, de Gina Valdés y de muchas más) y mediante la proyección cósmica y por tanto sagrada del cuerpo de la madre en el cuerpo del amado (véase, por ejemplo, la poesía amorosa de Alma Villanueva).

Pero el cambio fundamental que se observa en el pasaje del imaginario mexicano al imaginario chicano tiene que ver, precisamente, con la distinta configuración del arquetipo del padre. Y en esto el chicano se diferencia, no sólo del ancestro mexicano más directo, sino también del más general hispanoamericano, en el que la figura del padre es prevalentemente negativa o ausente, como se deduce por la frecuencia con que aparece la temática del incesto, en especial en la literatura indianista e indigenista, de *Cumandá* (1879), de Juan León Mera, a *Aves sin nido* (1889), de Clorinda Matto de Turner, en adelante (Kristal 1991). En la poesía de Tino Villanueva aflora a menudo el deseo de reunir las distintas raíces en contraste, en una armonía nueva, que mire hacia adelante, no borrando el pasado, sino acogiéndolo en un espacio nuevo de reconciliación, como en su poema “Cuento del cronista:”

Me pongo a pensar y digo: Ayer es viejo
 como un nombre que no deja de decir su historia.
 Tlacuilo, Núñez Cabeza de Vaca,
 conmigo estáis reconciliados oyendo
 esta impaciencia, este diario acto de vivir.
 (Villanueva 1994, 42)

Tal vez lo que determina este cambio de perspectiva nace de la conciencia de tener un enemigo nuevo, bien presente y con el cual se debe convivir a diario. El enemigo es la cultura dominante de la sociedad en la que el chicano vive discriminado y humillado. Muy emblemático en ese sentido resulta el poema que Tino Villanueva le dedica al maestro de su infancia — seguramente una figura que representa muchas más — de quien *no había que aprender*, sino al contrario, *desaprender*. Y ahora el poeta, de grande, lo entiende con toda claridad: había que defender la patria profanada, apropiarse de la palabra como instrumento de conocimiento y redención. Por eso hace un repetido llamado a recordar y a contar; memoria y poesía tienen que transformarse en las armas incruentas de la rebelión salvadora, como se ve en su poema “Tú, por si no otro:”

No calles,
 no eches al olvido
 [...]
 Di cómo pudiste llegar
 hasta aquí, desatracar
 las puertas de la Historia
 para ver tus años iniciales,
 tu pueblo, los otros.
 Di para qué te ha servido
 el sereno duende de la rebeldía,
 y cómo fuiste
 desaprendiendo las lecciones
 de aquel maestro, profanador omnipotente
 de tu patria.
 Haz memoria
 de cómo te fuiste salvando
 desde el primer vacío,
 y pregúntate para qué,

 después de todo,

 pueden servir estas palabras
 en esta rotunda hora del presente
 donde tu voz suena con tiempo.
 (Villanueva 1994, 36-38)

Mientras la memoria de Comala, es decir, las voces de los muertos que reconstruyen la historia de Pedro Páramo, aplasta y mata al hijo, la me-

moria de Aztlán sirve para vigorizar y preparar a los hijos, de manera que ellos puedan marchar adelante en el presente. En este contexto, la imagen del padre aparece completamente modificada: ya no encontramos al Gran Chingón, que habitaba el pasado ancestral del mexicano, sino al padre presente, al emigrante que afronta dolores y sacrificios por el bien de la familia. El padre en el mundo chicano despierta conmiseración, amor y gratitud. Véase este dramático testimonio de Gina Valdés:

Necesitábamos una casa nueva
en Los Angeles, en 1945.

Florecientes jacarandas
adornaban las calles de casas blancas
donde caminabas solo, padre, con tu
traje café oscuro que usabas a misa
los domingos que ibas, con tu bigotito,
tu cabello negro peinado en una sola
onda, parándote una pulgada más alto
que tus cinco pies ocho pulgadas,
tocando el timbre otra vez, pasaron
cinco minutos, cinco años, una vez más
tocaste el timbre, ignorando el letrero,
NO DOGS OR MEXICANS.
Se abrió una puerta, lanzaron palabras
a tu cara sonriente,
“Can't you read?”

Algunos días veía tu cara sin sonrisa
y no encontraba a mi padre sino a una
multitud de hombres, nómadas buscando
un lugar donde alojarse. Pero siempre
regresaban tus sonrisas a iluminar los
sótanos donde nos escondían.

Florecientes jacarandas
adornan las calles de casas blancas
donde caminamos tu nieta y yo,
parándonos en una casa con letrero
rojo, tocando el timbre, esperando
oír la respuesta de siempre,
“It's already rented”.
Seguimos caminando.
 (“Buscando una nueva casa,” Valdés 1986, 12-13)

En la narrativa de Tomás Rivera (1935-1984) resultan muy vigorosos tanto el sentimiento de pertenencia a una colectividad, como el respeto y el amor por la familia, empezando por los padres, llamados afectuosamente el *jefito* y la *jefita*, como ocurre en general en el ámbito chicano. En la conocida novela

... y no se lo tragó la tierra (novela por cierto muy *sui generis*, construida en base a relatos brevísimos y con muchos y distintos narradores), Rivera cuenta las penurias de una serie de familias en las que todos tienen que trabajar para poder sobrevivir, incluso los niños, y en condiciones a menudo inhumanas. Pero algo les transmite una fuerza especial, precisamente a través de las imágenes de los padres, en los que ellos reconocen un llamado sufrimiento y la voluntad de dar lo más posible sin hacerlo pesar jamás. El padre es la figura ejemplar y protectora, quien transmite a los hijos ética y dignidad, el que incita al estudio, o sea a la rebelión pacífica (la rebelión de las palabras de que hablaba Villanueva), aun en contraposición con el pesimismo de los demás:

- Para qué van tanto a la escuela?
- El Jefito dice que para prepararnos. Si algún día hay una oportunidad, dice que a lo mejor nos la dan a nosotros.
- N'ombre. Yo que ustedes ni me preocupara por esto. Que al cabo de jodido no pasa uno. (Rivera [1970] 1992, 144)

El padre es también el que sabe cómo resolver los problemas en un mundo lleno de injusticias y de absurdas discriminaciones:

Faltaba una hora para que empezara la película de la tarde. Necesitaba cortarse el pelo así que se metió a la peluquería de enfrente del cine. De primero no comprendió muy bien y se sentó. Pero luego le dijo de nuevo que no podía cortarle el pelo. Él creyó que porque no tenía tiempo y se quedó sentado a esperar al otro peluquero. Cuando éste acabó con el cliente él se levantó y se fue al sillón. Pero este peluquero le dijo lo mismo. Que no podía cortarle el pelo. Además le dijo que mejor sería que se fuera. Cruzó la calle y se quedó parado esperando que abrieran el cine, pero luego salió el peluquero y le dijo que se fuera de allí. Entonces comprendió todo y se fue para la casa a traer a su papá. (Rivera [1970] 1992, 151)

Ése es el motivo por el cual, cuando el padre no consigue lo que se propone, porque el muro de la discriminación es demasiado duro para que él pueda abatirlo, no despierta rabia en los hijos sino piedad, como ocurre en el citado texto de Gina Valdés, o en tantos otros momentos de la obra de Tomás Rivera, o de Miguel Méndez. Este último, por ejemplo, en muchos de sus cuentos, pone en evidencia la relación de afecto y complicidad que a través de las vicisitudes cotidianas se crea entre el padre y el hijo adolescente (v. “El moro,” Méndez 1991, 79-85); y a veces recrea situaciones en las que se siente cómo la pareja chicana aspira a tener hijos para darles lo que ellos no han podido tener en sus vidas de constante sacrificio.²

² “Manuel [...] le propuso matrimonio. Ella dijo que sí, formarían un hogar humilde pero respetado, tendrían hijos y les darían lo que ellos nunca tuvieron,” dice el narrador de “Muerte y nacimiento de Manuel Amarillas” (Méndez 1991, 68).

El padre en el mundo chicano, no importa cuánto haya sido dura su experiencia vital, deja de todos modos un recuerdo luminoso y después de la muerte se transforma en una cálida figura tutelar. Es así en el poema "Father," de la texana Rebecca Gonzales (1946):

By the time we buried you
you had changed your strength.

It's the pull of the North now;
storms stray and it finds its way to me,
as you did, coming home from work each day.

I walk from you, strong in my bearings,
never at the mercy of the wind.³

O bien en la conmovedora evocación de Lucha Corpi (nacida en Veracruz, México, en 1945, pero emigrada a los Estados Unidos a los diecinueve años):

A mi padre

A tu música, padre
no he puesto nombre
pues por ser tan mía
seguirá siendo tuya.

Es tu rumor subterráneo
que corre por la piedra,
tu verde gris de antaño
que se desliza por
los canales cerrados
de la tarde.

Aprendí de ti el idioma
del río nocturno,
y la palabra zafiro
del mar nuestro,
y recogí
tu último suspiro
en la bocanada

³ "Desde que te enterramos / tú transformaste tu fuerza. // Ahora es el Norte que empuja; / se desplazan las tormentas y él viene hacia mí, / como lo hacías tú, al regresar del trabajo cada día. // A partir de ti emprendo mi camino, segura de la dirección que tomo, / sin estar jamás a merced del viento." Rebecca Gonzales, "Father." En *Slow Work to the Rhythm of Cicadas*, 1985; el poema aparece asimismo antologado en Bacchiega 1990, 184.

de luz musical
 de mi verso.
 Ya mi música, padre,
 lleva tu nombre,
 ya carga mi palabra,
 ya es nueva y vieja.
 (Corpi 1975, en Villanueva 1985, 263)

El camino recorrido por el movimiento chicano desde los comienzos de su lucha es muy largo, y los resultados obtenidos desde su histórico “renacimiento,” que ya ha cumplido medio siglo, son notables. El español es la segunda lengua más usada en los Estados Unidos y la comunidad de hablantes de español es más grande que la del enorme conjunto formado por hablantes de chino, francés, alemán, italiano, hawaiano y lenguas indígenas. Eso mismo — el crecimiento y el reforzamiento de la comunidad hispana — ha fortalecido el orgullo de las propias raíces y el amor por los ancestros y en especial por el padre. Si está presente, encarna una figura loable y ejemplar; si ya no lo está, su memoria guía e ilumina.

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POCHO, ASSIMILATION AND THE MELTING POT:
A RECONSIDERATION

Daniel Cooper Alarcón

As the article-less title indicates (“pocho” refers, somewhat pejoratively, to an Americanized Mexican), Richard represents the often clumsy attempts of second-generation Mexican Americans at assimilation. His near obsession to win acceptance by the dominant culture is ultimately expressed in his decision to join the Navy at the beginning of World War II: what better proof, after all, of one’s loyalty to a country than the demonstration of one’s willingness to die for it. Richard’s tragedy is that *Pocho* very conspicuously presents no evidence that his gesture will be regarded generously by the Anglo community. (Paredes 1993, 41)

José Antonio Villarreal’s novel *Pocho* ([1959] 1989) has long suffered an uneasy relationship with Chicano literary critics. Published as it was at the dawn of the Civil Rights Movement and a few years prior to the Chicano Movement, the lack of any overt nationalist message in the novel, and its apparent celebration of individualism over communal activism, did not endear it to the generation of Chicanos who would go on to form the first Chicano studies programs at universities. The novel has been tagged “assimilationist” by Raymund Paredes (1993, 41) and other critics, even though it clearly is not, perhaps because the historical scope of the narrative (1921-1941) coincides with a period of history during which Mexican-American issues were voiced within the existing political system and a policy of accommodation with the dominant culture was not uncommon (Muñoz 1989). As Ramón Saldívar notes,

Pocho has always been somewhat of an embarrassment to Chicanos. Even the preface to the Anchor paperback edition attempts to apologize for the novel. Richard’s rejection of his father’s values [...], his statements that ‘codes of honor are stupid,’ his rejection of the Catholic faith [...], and, finally, his departure at the novel’s end to join the United States armed forces in the months after Pearl Harbor are seen as assimilationist tendencies, indicating an uncritical acceptance of ‘melting pot’ theories of American immigration. (Saldívar 1990, 65)

Saldívar goes on to argue, as I do here, that the novel is more complicated in its stance toward immigration than such a simplistic interpretation allows. I will argue that, in fact, Villarreal offers an insistent and perceptive



critique of Melting Pot ideology, and I will speak to what I perceive to be a troubling tendency to label the novel assimilationist solely on the basis that it examines the issue of assimilation.

However embarrassing *Pocho* may be for some Chicanos, it is hard to deny its significant position in the literary tradition; *Pocho* has long occupied a prominent space within the Chicano literary canon (prior to recent archival work by literary historians it was often referred to as the first Mexican-American novel). Whatever its flaws, the sweeping scope of the book, its vivid portrayal of the difficulties encountered by first generation immigrants from Mexico, and the subsequent generational rift between them and their children born in the United States (the *Pochos* of the title) have cemented its place in the Chicano canon. In regard to the kind of Mexicanness produced by the novel, the book also seems to me an important touchstone. For not only is Richard Rubio, the novel's protagonist, born in a very different country from that of his parents, they seem to descend from very different literary lineages as well. Paredes has argued that,

Pocho is an assimilationist book not only in theme but in style and technique. Its language, so important a cultural indicator in Mexican-American writing, is, with scattered exceptions, standard English. Furthermore, [...] nothing about *Pocho's* structure or sensibility as a novel suggests a significant link to any literary tradition other than Anglo American. (Paredes 1993, 41)

Although this is the prevailing view of the novel's genealogy, such a position overlooks important textual evidence that links *Pocho* to earlier Mexican-American literary forms. For example, Villarreal incorporates distinctive Mexican-American oral narrative traditions into the novel: Mexican patriarch and *émigré* Juan Rubio often tells his son Richard stories about his life and, in addition to recounting his own history, he teaches Richard about the history of Mexico (Villarreal [1959] 1989, 96-102). There are also narrative eddies, such as the story of Mario, the Mexican-American sharecropper dispossessed of his earnings by a corrupt Anglo landowner and sheriff (19-21), that clearly draw on and invert the tradition of heroic border corridos, such as those documented by Américo Paredes ([1958] 1990) and José Limón (1992). Specifically, Mario's story draws on the tradition of the border *corrido* in its documentation of racial injustice with conventional *corrido* figures: the Mexican-American male sharecropper, the greedy Anglo landowner, the corrupt Anglo sheriff. It inverts the *corrido* formula by omitting all heroic action on the protagonist's part. Moreover, as Saldívar astutely observes, Juan Rubio's character and values are firmly rooted within the ideological discourse of the heroic *corrido* (Saldívar 1990, 61). In addition to incorporating older forms of Mexican-American narrative in his novel, Villarreal also foreshadows the themes and icons of much subsequent Chicano prose. Juan Rubio's denigration of the Spaniard and celebration of indigenous Mesoamerican cultures (8) foreshadows the

cultural nationalism of the Chicano Movement; the fruit pickers strike in *Pocho* — one of the most impressively crafted episodes in the novel (45-60) — would be tackled full blown by Raymond Barrio in *The Plum Plum Pickers* ([1969] 1984), and the *pachucos* of Luis Valdez's *Zoot Suit* ([1978] 1992) seem to owe more to *Pocho* than to the earlier, mocking portrayal in Mario Suárez's short story "Kid Zopilote" ([1947] 2004). I suppose the reluctance to acknowledge the role that *Pocho* plays in linking contemporary Chicano literature to older Mexican-American narrative forms may have something to do with the critical insistence that *Pocho* mirrors Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* ([1917] 1964), as Luther Luedtke suggests (1986). Given the textual evidence just cited, however, we might consider whether the novel is formally assimilationist as Paredes suggests, or whether it is a more interesting hybrid sort of narrative, one that contains a multiplicity of narrative acts within its existential modernist trajectory. Whatever the case may be, it seems to me important to recognize the influence of the Mexican-American literary tradition in *Pocho*, as well as that of the Anglo and Anglo-American.

Pocho is also an important work as far as the production of Mexicanness is concerned, particularly in the relationship between Juan Rubio, whose problems seem to stem from his unwillingness to adapt his Mexicanness to his new circumstances, and his son, whose problems seem to stem in part from his readiness to disavow his Mexicanness. As a way of examining this relationship, I want to first consider both Villarreal and Juan Rubio as producers of revisionist histories. As many critics have noted, *Pocho* is bracketed by two wars: the Mexican Revolution of 1910 and World War II. The symbolic import of the wars increases when we consider that the novel begins with Juan Rubio's reluctant farewell to arms and ends with Richard Rubio's reluctant enlistment in the navy as the United States prepares to enter World War II. Between these two poles, Villarreal historically grounds his novel to a degree that I find remarkable, given the book's central theme of Richard's struggle for individuality. A few examples: Richard's family hosts uprooted Okies during the Depression; he and his father participate in the formation of an embryonic labor union and witness a fruit pickers' strike; and Richard becomes involved with the pachuco counter-culture movement of the 1940s. As mentioned earlier, Villarreal also uses narrative eddies for the purpose of further grounding the novel historically. In relating the death of Mario, the man shot for cheating at cards in Chapter One, Villarreal digresses to tell us the story of his exploitation by a corrupt Anglo rancher and Anglo sheriff. Such narrative digressions function to, first, complement the Rubio family's struggle with the struggle of other Mexican Americans, suggesting that the obstacles they face are not anomalies but rather part of a larger social environment, and, second, they allow the reader to become aware of the multiple forms of economic and racial discrimination faced by the immigrants. In other words, through the course of the novel, Villarreal displays a panorama of discriminatory methods directed at non-whites,

so that while the omniscient narrator may claim that Mario's story does not matter because "there were thousands like him at this time" (19), Villarreal's narration of his story demonstrates that this man's experience does matter, precisely because it was one common to thousands and one commonly left out of dominant histories.

Much of the history in the book is given through the oral lectures of Juan Rubio, as well as through the reminiscences of Juan and Consuelo (Richard's mother). Although their reminiscence is nostalgic at times (97-101), each is keenly aware of the hard times they faced in Mexico and as they speak we get a glimpse of their awareness of Mexican history and Juan Rubio's cynical view of the oppression practiced by the refugees themselves. He argues that oppressed *émigrés* to the United States quickly forget their own oppression and in forgetting this history of abuse, enable racial oppression to continue: "All the people who are pushed around in the rest of the world come here, because here they can maybe push someone else around. There is something in people, put there only to make them forget what was done to them in other times, so that they can turn around and do the same thing to other people. [...] It is not in retribution because they remember they were once mistreated my son; it is because they forget" (99-100).

Significantly, Juan Rubio argues that it is an attempt to erase, forget or ignore history that enables cycles of oppression to continue. The cynical spin that he gives to the idea of the US as Melting Pot seems especially important, given the tremendous anxiety that Chicano literary historians and critics demonstrate in regard to the novel's stance toward assimilation. This anxiety seems to stem from the fact that Richard not only appears to break away from Mexican cultural values but also from nascent Chicano values, as represented by the *pachucos*. Both of these observations are easily documented within the text. From an early age, Richard comes to perceive traditional Mexican values as obstacles to his education. The quest for knowledge is the driving force in Richard's life and his belief that traditional Mexican cultural expectations threaten that quest intensifies as the novel progresses. Also, throughout the course of the novel, Richard repeatedly self-identifies as an American, particularly when referred to as Mexican by Anglo-Americans. As for the *pachucos*, in a passage that borrows heavily from Octavio Paz ([1950] 1985), Villarreal's narrator tells us that the *pachucos* have a contempt for both Anglos and Mexican immigrants, borne out of an inferiority complex: "The result was that they attempted to segregate themselves from both their cultures, and became truly a lost race" (149). "In spite of their behavior, which was sensational at times and violent at others, they were simply a portion of a confused humanity, employing their self-segregation as a means of expression" (150). Richard (and, one suspects, Villarreal as well) writes off the *pachuco* culture as a fad, a vicissitude of society (150). Also revealing is Richard's attitude toward the *pachucos*. He is fascinated by them, but fascinated as one would be by an exotic curiosity; his association with them has noth-

ing whatsoever to do with rebelling against traditional Mexican values or those of the dominant culture. Rather, he infiltrates a group of *pachucos* in much the same manner as an anthropologist of old, hoping to gain access to the group in order to study its members as specimens. His partial acceptance by them as well as his reserve are used by Villarreal to reveal Richard's characteristic naiveté about life. He exults, "I can be a part of everything [...] because I am the only one capable of controlling my destiny [...]. Never — no, never — will I allow myself to become a part of a group to become classified, to lose my individuality [...] I will not become a follower, nor will I allow myself to become a leader because I must be myself and accept for myself only that which I value, and not what is being valued by everyone else these days" (152-153), all of which the narrator dismisses with "He thought this and other things because the young are like that and for them nothing is impossible; no nothing is impossible, and this truism gives impetus to the impulse to laugh at abstract bonds" (153).

Such idealistic belief in individuality and a refusal to recognize any social constraints upon the individual are at the core of Richard's young personality and it is this belief which the events in the novel challenge and ultimately shatter. Richard's assimilation into the dominant culture is never in question, nor is the naiveté of his belief that he can live his life unlimited by social constraints. But what *Pocho* demonstrates with deliberate and stark clarity is that in the racist United States of 1921-1941, individuals are not judged solely on their own merits and there are no rewards for assimilation. Raymund Paredes is correct when he says that "Richard's tragedy is that *Pocho* very conspicuously presents no evidence that his gesture [of enlisting in the Navy] will be regarded generously by the Anglo community," but he is wrong to conclude that the novel's examination of the issue of assimilation is "ideologically naïve" (Paredes 1993, 41). On the contrary, Villarreal's systematic and conspicuous portrayal of the lack of any benefits from assimilation is the book's greatest virtue and major point. The novel is hardly "achingly innocent about the coercive powers of American institutions" as Paredes contends (Paredes 1993, 42). To make such a statement one must not only overlook the events and motivation that drive Richard to enlist, but also the fate of the other characters in the book. Once we begin to look carefully at these people and events and destinies, we must conclude that *Pocho* is not only a novel aware of the coercive powers of American institutions, but also one that forces that awareness upon the reader.

I find it curious that few critics have commented upon the decidedly multicultural group of friends with whom Villarreal equips Richard. Such diversity is not coincidental. Richard's neighborhood "gang" is in effect a microcosm of the Melting Pot and the fates of the individual members contribute to Villarreal's critique of assimilation. Of the group, Ronnie and Mary Madison — Anglo protestants — are shown to have the most social mobility. Their father is able to get another job during the Depression and they move away to Chicago. During their time in Santa Clara, however, their religious difference puts

them at odds with the Catholic children. Villarreal also portrays Ronnie and his mother as racist snobs. In a parting confrontation with Richard, Ronnie exclaims, “My mother’s right about this lousy town. No decent people at all — just a bunch of Mexicans and Japs and I don’t know what kind of crud!” (139). While his sister Mary dreams of someday marrying Richard, it is clear that her mother and brother would never allow such a union. Ricky Malatesta, an Italian American and perhaps Richard’s closest friend, is the group member who most strongly desires to assimilate. He tells Richard he plans to Anglicize his name when he is legally of age because he believes it will be good for business, a move which strikes Richard as ridiculous. A few years later, after a police beating, Ricky distances himself from Richard, presumably because of Richard’s Mexicanness: “Something had happened to their relationship, particularly to his relationship with Ricky. More than ever he knew they could never be friends again, because somehow he represented an obstacle to the attainment of certain goals Ricky had imposed upon his life” (164). Still later, Ricky’s distrust of *pachucos* and homosexuals will be contrasted with Richard’s open acceptance of them. Such intolerance reflects that of the larger society as a whole and Ricky’s internalization of that society’s values. By the end of the novel, Ricky plans to apply to officer candidate school in order to avoid combat and his plan appears as though it will succeed. But Ricky’s apparent acceptance by the dominant culture is offset by the fate of another of Richard’s friends, Thomas Nakano. In the days following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Thomas loses his girlfriend, who no longer wants to be seen with a Japanese American, and suffers a beating at the hands of a rival gang — even his own friends are reluctant to be seen with him. Ultimately Thomas and his family are ordered to report to an internment camp and the bank forecloses on their ranch. But perhaps the saddest fate of all awaits Zelda, the Anglo-American tomboy who once ruled the neighborhood gang. As the boys enter puberty, they force Zelda to become their sexual plaything and eventually Richard comes to dominate her completely, with no regard for her feelings. In sum, Villarreal skillfully dramatizes the failure of the Melting Pot through its representation in Richard’s circle of childhood friends. For the Madison children and their white, protestant parents, social mobility is never in question. Nor does it appear out of reach for those like Ricky whose racial difference is not visible enough to preclude assimilation, provided he take certain steps like change his name. But for those with dark skin like Richard, or Asian features like Thomas, or young independent women like Zelda, US society strictly regulates their place and what they can achieve, regardless of the degree of their attempts at assimilation.

As already noted, Richard insists upon an American identity when members of Anglo society refer to him as Mexican. Two of these instances are so similar that they invite closer examination. In the first instance, Richard is encouraged by a boxing promoter to take up fighting. He tells Richard, “I’m giving ya the chance of your life. It’s the only way people of your nationality can get ahead.” When Richard replies that he is an American the promoter responds, “All right, you know what I mean.

Mexicans don't get too much chance to amount to much. You wanna pick prunes the rest of your life?" (106-107). In this case, twelve-year-old Richard shrugs off the promoter's remarks, not only with righteous indignation but also secure in the belief that the man is wrong and that his ambitions will never be limited by his ethnicity. But this exchange is echoed by a later one that will produce a very different response in Richard. When Richard is sixteen, he and his friends are beaten and arrested by police, who try to force the boys to confess to various unsolved crimes, including the rape of a white girl. The detective interrogating Richard tells him the girl was raped by three Mexicans and Richard asks how he knows the suspects were Mexicans: "Did she see their birth certificates? Maybe they were Americans?" To which the detective responds, "You know what I mean when I say Mexican, so don't get so Goddamn smart. She said they were Mexican, that's how we know. Maybe it was your gang" (160-161). Richard's reaction is very revealing:

He was amazed at his naiveté. Hearing about Mexican kids being picked up by the police for having done something had never affected him in any way before. [...] One evening had changed all that for him, and now he knew that he would never forget what had happened tonight, and the impression would make him distrust and, in fact, almost hate policemen all his life. Now for the first time in his life, he felt discriminated against. The horrible thing that he had experienced suddenly was clear, and he cried silently in his bed. (163)

This is a very important moment in Richard's coming of age and in the novel's attack on the Melting Pot. For the first time, Richard's previously unshakable belief that he can achieve whatever he wants, regardless of his ethnicity, is severely challenged and he begins to doubt himself. It dawns on him that institutionalized prejudice and racism may prove to be more of an obstacle to his dreams and goals than he had thought. Significantly, this epiphany marks a turning point in the novel as Richard's sense of being trapped by racism on the one hand and tradition on the other increases. But more importantly, both episodes clearly illustrate that, despite Richard's desire to be treated as an American citizen, American citizenship does not confer the same privileges upon all its members. The statements made by the boxing promoter and the police detective complicate a reading of *Pocho*: Richard's assimilation is clearly located within a racist environment that will continue to view him as Mexican and thus inferior. Thus the ironic pathos of Juan Rubio's plea that Richard never forget that he is a Mexican: from the perspective of the dominant culture it doesn't matter whether or not Richard remembers that he is a Mexican, for from the point of view of white society there is no such thing as an American of Mexican descent, only Mexicans. Assimilation will bring Richard no rewards and that is the critique of US society that this novel repeatedly drives home.

As for Richard's decision to go to war, despite those who would like to see his enlistment as the ultimate expression of his desire to win acceptance by the dominant culture, Villarreal repeatedly emphasizes that Richard sees enlistment as the only way to escape the deadening restrictions of familial responsibility: "There was nothing to be done now except run away from the insidious tragedy of such an existence. And it came to him that it was all very wrong, somehow, that he should think of himself at this time. All very wrong that he should use the war, a thing he could not believe in, to serve his personal problem" (186). As Rosaura Sánchez perceptively comments,

Richard Rubio rejects his family's patriarchal prescriptions for male sons and joins the navy, not for any patriotic reason, but simply to get away from his family, to escape and thus avoid a restrictive situation that suffocates him with expectations of domestic and filial obligations and forces his transformation into what to him is a nonentity, that is, into a steel mill worker, a family man. Much like his father, who in his youth had set his political and personal allegiance to the Pancho Villa above the needs of the family to the point of neglect, the protagonist Richard too felt that his personal goals should take priority. (Sánchez 1991, 115)

This self-centeredness and Richard's complete disinterest in any sort of politics are another reason that the novel has not been more warmly received by Chicano critics.

In sum, *Pocho's* position vis-à-vis the American myth of the individual and Horatio Alger success stories (which Richard reads as a young boy) is precisely the opposite of what Raymund Paredes has claimed for it. Villarreal systematically demonstrates that in America individuals are judged by and treated on the basis of their color, their ethnicity, their gender, the language they speak and so on. In no way is *Pocho* an assimilationist novel; rather it is a powerful condemnation of the Melting Pot mythology. But *Pocho* is also a critique of the restrictions imposed by traditional Mexican values and expectations. Thus, Richard's decision to join the Navy is hardly the action of a young Mexican American who wants to serve his country, rather it is the desperate act of a man trying to escape the constraints of familial and cultural expectations. From the very beginning, Richard has opposed and rejected all institutions which he felt stood in the way of his quest for knowledge and individuality, whether it be the police, the Church, schools, or family. The book's final irony is that the price he chooses to pay to continue on his quest is to give up — at least temporarily — his individuality.

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LA EXPERIENCIA DEL SUJETO FEMENINO CHICANO
Y LA CONSTRUCCIÓN DE SU IDENTIDAD
EN LA OBRA NARRATIVA DE SANDRA CISNEROS

Erminio Corti

Desde el punto de vista de la expresión artística así como de la producción cultural chicana (estudios históricos, sociológicos, étnicos, literarios, teóricos etc.), el período conocido hoy como *post-Movimiento*, en el que se inserta la narrativa de Sandra Cisneros, se caracteriza por una significativa renovación de temas, modalidades expresivas e intereses con respecto a la cultura de la década anterior. Sobre todo, por la aparición en la escena pública de sujetos y puntos de vista hasta aquel momento ignorados, marginados o ausentes. En efecto, a mediados de los años Setenta, se asiste a un crecimiento exponencial de la presencia de voces femeninas entre artistas e intelectuales chicanos, hasta aquel momento representados casi exclusivamente por autores varones.

Son muchos los factores que favorecen el florecimiento de la literatura escrita por mujeres chicanas en este período. En general, la afirmación del movimiento feminista, principalmente de matriz blanca, en todos los Estados Unidos, y también la atenuación del conflicto con el *establishment* angloamericano cuando, después de casi un década de luchas encabezadas por el *Movimiento*, los mexicoamericanos consiguen una relativa mejoría de las condiciones materiales y sociales de vida. Mejoría que, entre otras cosas, permite a los jóvenes acceder más fácilmente a la instrucción superior y a la universidad, donde ya han sido fundados los primeros centros de estudios chicanos. Todo esto genera un clima favorable para la introspección y permite realizar un análisis más articulado de los factores históricos y culturales que condicionan la existencia de los individuos y los grupos, y fomenta, además, el desarrollo de un proceso de revisión crítica de las dinámicas sociales y de las relaciones de poder dentro de la misma sociedad mexicoamericana.

Por lo tanto, la producción narrativa y poética a partir de la segunda mitad de los años Setenta se caracteriza por una pluralidad de temas y problemáticas vinculadas en particular al punto de vista de sujetos que en la comunidad chicana, dominada por una estructura machista y patriarcal, vivieron hasta entonces en una condición de subordinación. Los sujetos que adquieren visibilidad y palabra son en primer lugar las mujeres. Su

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producción cultural, literaria y teórica, se revela rica no solamente en términos cuantitativos sino también cualitativos. Así lo testimonia el hecho de que autoras como Gloria Anzaldúa o Cherríe Moraga, y por supuesto la misma Sandra Cisneros, gocen, también fuera de los Estados Unidos, de un gran prestigio, y que sus obras hayan sido traducidas, leídas y estudiadas en muchos países.

Otro factor que caracteriza la literatura de las mujeres chicanas es la fértil relación de osmosis entre la escritura creativa y el ámbito de la reflexión teórica. Las mujeres chicanas inician a practicar sus propias estrategias de lucha y a elaborar sus propias reflexiones sobre la identidad femenina inspirándose en los movimientos de las mujeres angloamericanas, con los cuales encuentran obvios puntos de convergencia. No obstante, a través del contacto con el movimiento feminista estadounidense, las chicanas se dan cuenta de que, como parte integrante de una minoría étnica discriminada, tienen también reivindicaciones respecto a las cuales las mujeres angloamericanas no son igualmente sensibles. Por ejemplo la lucha contra el racismo o el derecho a tener una educación bilingüe y bicultural. En cuanto mujeres y chicanas advierten que la construcción de su identidad tiene que pasar por un proceso más articulado. Y, en efecto, los trabajos más importantes del feminismo chicano que aparecen en los años '80 son muy innovadores y originales porque llaman en causa referencias teóricas heterogéneas como los estudios post-coloniales, el post-estructuralismo, el marxismo y el psicoanálisis, que se entrelazan con una reelaboración de la tradición cultural pre-colombina, de la experiencia de la conquista hispánica y anglosajona y de la inmigración en los Estados Unidos. Textos ejemplares en este sentido son la colección de ensayos *This Bridge Called My Back* (1981), editado por Cherríe Moraga y Gloria Anzaldúa y *Borderlands/La frontera*, (1987). El impacto de estos textos 'excéntricos' que reelaboran una teoría del sujeto femenino ha sido reconocido también fuera del ámbito de las Radical Women of Color, como Moraga y Anzaldúa se han auto-definido.

Sandra Cisneros no es una autora que ha contribuido de modo directo a este debate teórico y crítico. Se ha dedicado en cambio a la escritura creativa con tres poemarios, un libro para niños, el volumen de cuentos *Woman Hollering Creek* (1991) y las dos novelas *The House on Mango Street* (1984) y *Caramelo* (2002). Sin embargo, en su obra, las vivencias narradas, los entornos, las referencias culturales, los personajes que pueblan la escena, constituyen la transposición artística de aquella realidad que primero las feministas chicanas y luego (más en general) los estudiosos de la literatura y la cultura han explorado y analizado a fondo. Esta visión crítica cala su mirada en la sociedad y en la experiencia histórica de los mexicoamericanos desmitificando y demoliendo una imagen en cierta medida idealizada y tendencialmente androcéntrica difundida por intelectuales y artistas del *Movimiento*. De este modo Cisneros pone al descubierto la intrincada red de conflictos, contradicciones, dinámicas de poder y subordinación que recorren la comunidad chicana en su interior, una

comunidad culturalmente mucho más heterogénea y compleja de lo que la construcción de una identidad étnica fuerte propuesta por el nacionalismo del *Movimiento* hizo creer.

El tema principal que caracteriza la narrativa de Sandra Cisneros, y sobre el que la crítica se ha concentrado principalmente en el estudio de sus primeras dos obras, es sin duda el de la experiencia del sujeto femenino chicano. Sujeto representado a través de la mirada de las narradoras adolescentes como Esperanza Cordero en *The House on Mango Street* y Celaya Reyes en la última novela, o por el punto de vista de jóvenes mujeres como Cleófila en el cuento "Woman Hollering Creek."

En *The House on Mango Street* se manifiesta una visión marcadamente negativa de la condición en que las mujeres de origen mexicano viven, clausuradas en una esfera doméstica dónde, en lugar de la armonía, el orden y la protección que este espacio íntimo debería garantizar, rige la subordinación al modelo cultural patriarcal y machista encarnado por padres, maridos o hermanos. El cuento "Boys and Girls" expresa en términos elementales, es decir infantiles y por lo tanto extremadamente 'transparentes,' el arraigamiento de esta concepción jerárquica entre los sexos, que en la construcción de la identidad masculina y femenina en la cultura chicana se manifiesta precozmente. A propósito de la relación con sus hermanitos, Esperanza de hecho remarca como, fuera de la esfera privada de la familia, Carlos y Kiki ostenten un código de comportamiento misógino que refleja las convenciones sociales que rigen el mundo de los adultos. Mientras que a esa edad en la dimensión doméstica todavía predominan los vínculos y las complicidades afectivas que prescinden del *gender*, en el ambiente externo de Mango Street, que como cualquier calle representa el cronótopo bachtiniano del encuentro y por lo tanto de la estructuración de las relaciones sociales, se impone la conformidad a los roles de género con sus estereotipos: "The boys and the girls live in separate worlds. The boys in their universe and we in ours. My brothers for example. They've got plenty to say to me and Nenny inside the house. But outside they can't be seen talking to girls" (Cisneros 1991, 8).

La protagonista del capítulo titulado "Alicia Who Sees Mice," una joven huérfana de madre, obligada por las circunstancias a madruguar para preparar a su padre el desayuno y la lonchera, tiene que afrontar cada día la pesadilla de la presencia de ratones que vagan por el piso en el que habita. Estos animales representan por supuesto la sordidez material de un entorno del que la chica anhela poder huir un día; pero las ratas emblematizan sobre todo sus miedos, entre los cuales se destaca la figura del padre, encarnación de la opresiva cultura machista: "Is a good girl my friend, studies all night and sees mice, the ones her father says does not exist. Is afraid of nothing except four-legged fur. And fathers" (32).

Las pobreza y la subordinación, en que muy a menudo la mujer chicana vive, son las condiciones que caracterizan la existencia de la protagonista del capítulo titulado "There Was an Old Woman She Had So Many Children She Didn't Know What to Do," una madre agobiada por una multitud

de hijos que quedan a su cargo después de que el marido ha abandonado la familia “without even leaving a dollar for bologna or a note explaining how come” (29). Análoga situación se presenta en los capítulos titulados “Minerva Write Poems” y “Edna’s Ruthie.” En el primero, la protagonista es una chica un poco mayor que Esperanza que tiene dos hijos muy pequeños y está casada con un hombre irresponsable, que sistemáticamente abandona el techo conyugal: “she has many troubles, but the big one is her husband who left and keeps leaving” (85). Minerva encuentra en la escritura de poesías, que custodia celosamente, la única forma para salir de la dramática realidad en la que vive. Cada vez que el marido regresa a la casa para intentar reanudar su relación con la familia, Minerva es sistemáticamente sometida a la índole brutal del hombre, que no tiene la fuerza de dejar de una vez por todas: “Next week she comes over black and blue and asks what she can do? Minerva. I don’t know which way she’ll go. There is nothing I can do” (85). En “Edna’s Ruthie,” Esperanza presenta un retrato sintético de Ruthie, una joven mujer que para casarse ha renunciado a la perspectiva de construirse una existencia independiente. Sin embargo, algo en la pareja no ha funcionado así que Ruthie se ha separado del marido volviendo a vivir con su madre en Mango Street. Esta experiencia traumática parece haber vulnerado la personalidad de Ruthie, que se ha convertido en una mujer incomunicada, sin voluntad ni perspectivas futuras, incapaz de tomar ninguna decisión — ni siquiera por el asunto más fútil — sin los consejos y la aprobación de su madre, figura que, de modo vicario, reemplaza la autoridad de un *pater familias* ausente. El condicionamiento de la cultura patriarcal en la que Ruthie ha crecido y que es dominante en el mundo de Mango Street, se manifiesta también en las relaciones sociales con el mundo exterior, así que el personaje disimula por vergüenza su condición de mujer abandonada que ha regresado a la casa de su madre, afirmando que “she’s just visiting and next fin de semana her husband’s going to take her home. But the weekends come and go and Ruthie stays” (69).

Cuando el *pater familias* no falta a sus responsabilidades abandonando hijos y esposa, su presencia es casi siempre asociada a una actitud violenta o a formas de represión física y psicológica hacia las mujeres que se hallan sometidas a su autoridad. En *The House on Mango Street* Esperanza, con su mirada desencantada, es a menudo testigo de estas situaciones. En “Rafaela Who Drinks Coconut & Papaya Juice on Tuesday” la protagonista es una mujer casada que permanece clausurada en la casa cuando el marido, todos los martes por la noche, sale para ir a jugar al dominó con sus amigos y no regresa sino hasta la madrugada. Rafaela, que quiere salir para ir a bailar, puede solamente observar el mundo desde la ventana. Para poder tomar una bebida se ve obligada a pedir a los niños que juegan en la calle de ir al bar de la esquina, de dónde llega el sonido de la música. Como refiere la narradora, la mujer es todavía muy joven, “but getting old from leaning out the window so much, locked indoor because her husband is afraid Rafaela will run away since she is too beautiful to look at” (79).

Víctima por excelencia de este control asfixiante y a menudo violento con que los hombres condicionan la vida de las mujeres mexicanoamericanas, es Sally, una amiga de Esperanza que aparece como personaje principal en algunos capítulos de *The House on Mango Street*. Su caso muestra cuán difícil es para una joven chicana escapar del dominio machista ejercitado primero por los padres y después por los maridos. Sally es una chica bonita y, consciente de su hermosura, cuida mucho, como cualquier adolescente, su aspecto. Por esta razón el padre, hombre posesivo obsesionado por el recuerdo de una hermana suya que ha ‘manchado’ el honor de la familia, subyuga y controla a Sally, por temor que también ella siga el ‘mal ejemplo’ de la tía. “Her father says to be this beautiful is trouble. They are very strict in his religion. They are not supposed to dance. He remembers his sisters and is sad. Then she can’t go out. Sally I means” (81). Sally es obligada a respetar las prohibiciones del padre — “Why do you always have to go straight home after school? You become a different Sally. You pull your skirt straight, you rub the blue paint off your eyelids. You don’t laugh, Sally” — pero, a pesar de esto, cada vez que su comportamiento le hace sospechar al hombre que la hija pueda escapar a su control, éste le pega brutalmente: “like if I was an animal. [...] Just because I’m a daughter [...] He just forgot he was her father between the buckle and the belt” (93). Para huir de los maltratos del padre decide casarse; pero ni siquiera con la boda su situación cambia, porque también el marido se muestra igualmente receloso y prepotente. Esperanza describe la condición de Sally con la misma ironía casi ingenua que a menudo caracteriza los narradores de Cisneros: “She’s happy, except sometimes her husband gets angry and once he broke the door where his foot went through, though most days he is okay. Except he won’t let her talk on the telephone. And he doesn’t let her look out the window. And he doesn’t like her friends, so nobody gets to visit her unless he is working. She sits at home because she is afraid to go outside without his permission” (101-102). Todo lo que puede hacer Sally, para pasar el tiempo, es fantasear y mirar la decoración de su casa, la jaula dorada en la que transcurre su existencia de mujer clausurada.

Con respecto a las dos obras posteriores, en esta primera novela las referencias directas a los artefactos de la cultura de masas, que tienden a difundir modelos femeninos sumisos y funcionales a la conservación de la androcracia, son poco evidentes; aunque el lector puede intuir que el condicionamiento de personajes como Alicia, Rafaela o Sally, que emblemizan la segregación, la represión y hasta la violencia física a las cuales las mujeres se ven sometidas, depende no solo de una tradición machista arcaica (de procedencia europea antes que americana), sino también de la influencia de superestructuras ideológicas vehiculadas por la cultura de masas.

La misma Esperanza Cordero experimenta directamente las consecuencias negativas de esta cultura misógina; consecuencias que en su caso derivan no tanto de la esfera familiar cuanto de la realidad externa de Mango Street, donde la mujer tiene que conformarse a desempeñar su papel tradicional de persona sometida a la autoridad masculina: “Mexi-

cans don't like their women strong" (10) observa con extrema agudeza la joven protagonista-narradora. A este mundo patriarcal y represivo Esperanza reacciona en dos modos: cultivando el sueño de abandonar un día el barrio donde ha crecido y de trasladarse en una casa confortable y toda suya, un espacio privado donde realizarse como individuo y materializar sus deseos — la misma ambición que Lala expresa en *Caramelo* —, pero sobre todo poniendo en práctica una estrategia de auténtica rebelión.

Su rechazo a someterse a los códigos de comportamiento impuestos a las mujeres chicanas por la cultura hegemónica, se manifiesta cabalmente en el capítulo "Beautiful & Cruel," donde emerge de modo claro la cognición de la joven narradora de cómo funcionan los mecanismos represivos masculinos. Esta precoz intuición la empuja a buscar la identificación con un cliché femenino popularizado sobre todo por el cine, el de la *femme fatal*, del cual invierte el signo negativo, transformándolo en un modelo simbólico de resistencia e independencia: "I have decided not to grow up tame like the others [otras mujeres] who lay their necks on the threshold waiting for the ball and chain. In the movies there is always one with red lips who is beautiful and cruel. She is the one who drives the men crazy and laughs them all away. Her power is her own. She will not give it away. I have begun my own quiet war. Simple. Sure. I am one who leaves the table like a man, without putting back the chair or picking up the plate" (89-90). Sin embargo, Esperanza es el único personaje en *The House on Mango Street* que muestra esta voluntad rebelde y el deseo de vivir una existencia emancipada inspirándose en un modelo femenino al cual la opinión común atribuye un valor negativo puesto que desafía y socava el papel dominante del hombre. En cambio, los demás personajes femeninos parecen adecuarse estrictamente a los modelos — procedentes de la tradición o difundidos por los modernos medios de comunicación — que corresponden a los de un sujeto sumiso con respecto a la autoridad masculina.

En la obra siguiente, *Woman Hollering Creek*, en que la relación asimétrica entre sujeto masculino y femenino sigue siendo una de los temas claves abordados por Cisneros, la visión esencialmente negativa y pesimista de la primera novela se corrige en parte. Mientras en el mundo de Mango Street el único personaje que actúa una forma de oposición y abre por sí mismo una perspectiva futura es la narradora, en la colección de cuentos aparecen otras figuras que encarnan esta actitud de resistencia.

En el texto que da título al libro, la protagonista es Cleófilas, una joven mujer mexicana que abandona el ámbito patriarcal y rural donde ha nacido y vivido hasta entonces para trasladarse, después de su boda, a los Estados Unidos, donde ya vive el marido, también él emigrado de México. Cleófilas, que proviene de un contexto social pobre y culturalmente retrasado, ha construido su visión de la realidad fuera de la esfera doméstica y todas sus expectativas a propósito de la futura vida matrimonial se basan en el imaginario ficcional de las narraciones sentimentales y engañosas de fotonovelas, novelas rosa y sobre todo de las telenovelas. Ella, por lo tanto, está convencida de que su boda y sobre todo el traslado a los Estados

Unidos le permitirán conseguir la felicidad, el bienestar económico y un nuevo status social — como ocurre a los personajes protagónicos de estos productos de la industria del entretenimiento de masas, de los cuales es una asidua consumidora. La perspectiva de un futuro mejor, según ella, ya está escrita en el nombre mismo de la ciudad en la que irá a habitar: “*Seguín*. She had liked the sound of it. Far away and lovely. Not like *Monclova*. *Coahuila*. Ugly. *Seguín*, *Tejas*. A nice sterling ring to it. The tinkle of money. She would get to wear outfits like the women on the tele, like Lucía Méndez. And have a lovely house” (Cisneros 2004, 45). Pero la realidad que encontrará al otro lado de la frontera será muy distinta. El marido, que la mujer conoce poco, tiene un trabajo precario que a duras penas le permite a la familia sobrevivir; ni siquiera pueden permitirse comprar un televisor, que para Cleófilas representa la única vía de evasión, aunque sea ilusoria, de la cotidianidad escuálida. La casa en que se alojan es una morada pobre y la pequeña ciudad se revela ser un lugar claustrofóbico y hostil, que hunde a la protagonista en una penosa condición de aislamiento y soledad. Como es fácil imaginar, las frustraciones del marido se descargan sobre la infeliz Cleófilas que se convierte en víctima de su violencia. Cuando nace el primer hijo de la pareja, las cosas empeoran. El hombre se hace cada vez más agresivo y huraño, y Cleófilas tiene que suplicarle para obtener el dinero necesario para pagar los exámenes médicos que ella necesita a causa de su nuevo embarazo. En suma, todo está muy lejos de las fantasías en las que la mujer proyectó sus expectativas: “Cleófilas thought her life would have to be like that, like a telenovela, only now the episodes got sadder and sadder. And there were no commercials in between for comic relief. And no happy ending in sight” (52-53). Pero lo grave de la desventura de Cleófilas es que ella tiene como únicos modelos de identidad femenina aquellos encarnados por las heroínas de las telenovelas — es decir sujetos dóciles, hiper sentimentales o resignados. Y precisamente, por esta razón, no logra concebir frente al marido que la maltrata una actitud diferente de la del aguante, de la silenciosa subordinación física y psicológica a “this man, this father, the rival, this keeper, this lord, this master, this husband til kingdom come” (49). El punto de viraje de su existencia se da cuando en la clínica obstétrica la enfermera de origen mexicano comprende que Cleófilas es una de las tantas mujeres inmigradas que sufre los maltratos del marido. La enfermera decide entonces contactar a Felice, una amiga feminista suya que, como ella, es voluntaria en un grupo chicano de asistencia a las mujeres víctimas de abusos, y logra convencer a la protagonista a escapar del marido. Acompañada por Felice, Cleófilas va a la estación de autobuses de donde partirá para regresar a México. Durante el trayecto las dos mujeres conversan y Cleófilas descubre estupefacta que Felice es una mujer que tiene una mentalidad y una actitud para ella hasta entonces inconcebibles (“What kind of talk was that coming from a woman?” [55], se pregunta la protagonista): vive sola, es independiente, desinhibida, optimista y enérgica, maneja un *pickup*, y sobre todo no advierte la necesidad de tener un marido a su lado. Mientras que atraviesan

el puente sobre el arroyo de La Llorona (el Woman Hollering Creek que da título al cuento) Felice de repente lanza un grito desaforado, como el grito de un mariachi, que hace sobresaltar a Cleófilas. La mujer explica que cada vez que pasa este arroyo celebra así La Llorona, figura muy popular del imaginario mexicano de la que el riachuelo toma su nombre.

Con su grito que evoca el de La Llorona, Felice por un lado rinde homenaje a este personaje legendario que la cultura misógina ha transformado en chivo expiatorio; por el otro, rompe simbólicamente el silencio a que las mujeres a menudo están obligadas, y en este sentido representa un ejemplo para Cleófilas.¹ El modo con que el cuento termina no abre una perspectiva utópica para la protagonista, que regresa a su aldea mexicana a cuidar un padre anciano y seis hermanos inútiles. Sin embargo, el contacto que tuvo con Felice y su ejemplo representan una experiencia trascendental para ella, una experiencia que le brinda la oportunidad de transformarse de objeto pasivo del dominio masculino a sujeto activo capaz de controlar su existencia y su historia. Quizás su vida no cambiará pero, como deja entender la narradora, cuanto menos tendrá modo de contar a sus amigas que hay otros modelos femeninos por seguir, diferentes al de las heroínas de las telenovelas. Mujeres emancipadas como Felice, que se rebelan a la autoridad masculina, que ayudan a otras mujeres practicando el ‘feminismo popular,’ una forma de activismo chicano que tiene su origen en la cultura obrera y conjuga los discursos teóricos con la práctica de la solidaridad, como recuerda Sonia Saldívar-Hull en su ensayo titulado “Women Hollering, Transfronteriza Feminisms.” En el caso de Cleófilas, por lo tanto, una perspectiva futura se abre cuando, con la ayuda de Felice, ella descubre un modelo femenino presente en la tradición popular — aunque connotado negativamente, como es el de La Llorona —, lo reactiva y lo contrapone a los modelos tranquilizadores pero intrínsecamente represivos difundidos por las formas narrativas de masas destinadas a las mujeres.

¹ La figura leyendaria de La Llorona, que se difunde después de la Conquista pero cuya origen remonta a la tradición cultural azteca, se sobrepone a veces a la de Malintzin/la Malinche. Ambas lloran por sus hijos perdidos y ambas representan a las civilizaciones precolombinas de Mesoamérica violadas y traicionadas por el invasor europeo. En la literatura chicana contemporánea – valga como ejemplo “The Marina Poems” de Lucha Corpi – estas dos víctimas de un mestizaje forzoso que tenían en la tradición una connotación negativa, han sido volcadas en símbolos positivos de resistencia cultural, de autodefinition y autoafirmación de la mujer. Gloria Anzaldúa en su *Borderlands/La Frontera* señala que ya en la cultura azteca la imagen de la mujer que llora tenía un valor simbólico y que el ritual público de la lamentación representaba también una forma de protesta: “*La Llorona* wailing in the night for her lost children has an echoing note in the wailing or mourning rites performed by women as they bade their sons, brothers and husbands good-bye before they left to go to the ‘flowery wars.’ [...] These collective wailing rites may have been a sign of resistance in a society which glorified the warrior and war and for whom the women of the conquered tribes were booty” (Anzaldúa 1999, 55).

Esta desmitificación de la producción cultural de masas, en cuanto sistema concebido para construir una identidad femenina frágil e hiper-sentimental subordinada a la autoridad masculina, se repite también en las páginas conclusivas del cuento “Bien Pretty,” cuando la protagonista, Guadalupe Arredondo — artista y mujer culta a diferencia de Cleófilas — frente a una desilusión sentimental que presenta aspectos casi grotescos, actúa una forma de catarsis feminista. Primero, quema todas las fotografías, cartas y poesías de Flavio Munguía, el hombre que la engañó y que ella mismo ha idealizado, asimilándolo al príncipe Popocatépetl de la leyenda precolombina y asumiendo implícitamente el papel de su querida Ixtaccíhuatl. Idealización a través de la cual querría corregir la versión estereotipada de los dos personajes popularizada por “the kitsch calendar art” donde el héroe aparece como un John Weismuller indianizado y la princesa es una procaz Jayne Mansfield (144).² Hace falta observar que, a través de la recuperación de esta imagen que pertenece a la tradición cultural mexicana, Cisneros actúa una reelaboración feminista del mito de los dos volcanes. Mientras que en la leyenda y en la iconografía tradicional — popularizada, por ejemplo, por el pintor e ilustrador mexicano Jesús Helguera (1910-1971) —³ es el príncipe Popocatépetl el que desarrolla una función activa, velando el cuerpo sin vida de su querida Ixtaccíhuatl (cuyo nombre significa ‘mujer dormida’) (fig. 1), en “Bien Pretty” los papeles se invierten y es Guadalupe la que asume un papel activo en su relación sentimental con Flavio Munguía. La misma inversión de papeles que, en la novela *Caramelo*, Lala intentará poner en práctica organizando su mismo ‘rpto’, cuya representación iconográfica tradicional repite el mismo molde: una mujer pasiva que, lánguida, casi desmayada, se entrega totalmente al hombre.

Acto seguido, después del holocausto simbólico de todo lo que pudiera recordarle a Flavio, Lupe se encierra por días enteros en su casa para visio-nar incesantemente, “in the name of research” (161), telenovelas que tienen títulos muy elocuentes: *Rosa Salvaje*, *Balada por un amor*, *Dulce Desafío*. La conclusión de este *tour de force* es un proceso de auto-sicoterapia que desbarrata los clichés femeninos representados por las mansas heroínas de la cultura de masas para celebrar en cambio a las mujeres reales, que toman un papel activo y que desde siempre se oponen, a veces de manera inconsciente, a la homologación: “I started dreaming of these Rosas and Briandas and

² Esta tendencia del arte figurativo popular mexicano a reproducir los cánones estéticos de Hollywood es bastante común; resulta evidente, por ejemplo, en la ilustración titulada “Legado azteca” del pintor Ángel Martín que aparece en un calendario promocional distribuido por una tienda de productos latinoamericanos de Kansas City.

³ Véanse, por ejemplo, obras como “La Leyenda de los Volcanes I,” “La Leyenda de los Volcanes II o Grandeza Azteca,” “Amor indio,” “La mujer dormida” y “El Flechador del Cielo,” realizadas por Helguera entre los años Cuarenta y Cincuenta del siglo XX.

Luceros. And in my dreams I'm slapping the heroine to her senses, because I want them to be women who make things happen, not women who things happen to. [...] Not men powerful and passionate versus women either volatile and evil, or sweet and resigned. But women. Real women. The ones I've loved all my life. [...] The ones I've known everywhere except on TV, in books and magazines. *Las girlfriends. Las comadres. Our mamas and tías*" (161).

En *Caramelo*, Cisneros parece querer retomar y problematizar este discurso, representando algunos personajes femeninos cuya fuerte personalidad en determinadas circunstancias revela de todas maneras ciertas ambigüedades que ponen en tela de juicio el sentido potencialmente positivo de este modelo.

La figura ejemplar en este sentido es Awful Grandmother, mujer que manifiesta una índole autoritaria, tenaz e imprevisible. Su carácter es sin duda el de una 'mujer fuerte.' Pero no del tipo que Cisneros desea. Su fuerza se basa, en efecto, sobre una identificación casi total con la cultura dominante, machista y clasista, de que ella misma es la primera víctima. Esta actitud contradictoria, que además constituye su drama oculto, emerge de la relación con Aunty Light-Skin, la única hija que se ha quedado a vivir con la familia en Ciudad de México. A través de las palabras de Lala se comprende que su abuela nunca tuvo hacia Aunty Light-Skin la misma actitud solícita reservada a las dos figuras masculinas por excelencia de la familia: su marido y el primogénito Inocencio. Y cuando Aunty Light-Skin, después de la muerte del padre, decide trasladarse a otra ciudad, la madre la embiste echándole en cara su supuesto egoísmo. Sus ásperas palabras revelan todo el resentimiento ante una mujer que quiere abandonar su papel de 'ángel del hogar' y que antepone sus propias exigencias individuales al deber de acudir a la familia.

Zoila, la madre de Lala, encarna en muchos sentidos la antítesis de Awful Grandmother, aunque ella también es un ejemplo de 'mujer fuerte.' Nacida en los Estados Unidos de una familia de inmigrantes mexicanos, ha crecido en Chicago. Sin duda conoce su cultura ancestral pero con respecto a Inocencio, su marido, ha asimilado mucho de la sociedad y de la mentalidad angloamericana. Tendencialmente, no antepone la deferencia por la tradición a las necesidades de los individuos. Al contrario de Awful Grandmother, no se dedica de modo obsesivo a la cocina; cuida con cariño a su esposo pero cuando tiene que criticarlo lo hace sin escrúpulos, levanta la voz, intima e insulta. Pero sobre todo parece haber asimilado una conciencia social y cierto radicalismo político que revelan una influencia de los discursos del *Movimiento*. Cuando se da cuenta de que su hijo Toto puede ser reclutado por el ejército y enviado a Vietnam, ataca la retórica patriótica: "Great country, my ass! [...] You don't know it, Ino[cencio], because you never pick up a newspaper, but believe me, all the brown and black faces are up on the front line" (Cisneros 2003, 245). Al contrario de su suegra y del marido, consumidores de fotonovelas y telenovelas, Zoila lee a Paulo Freire, Erich Fromm, Paz, Neruda, Sor Juana, Malcolm X y Chief Joseph; pega poesías políticas en la nevera, el retrato

del vicepresidente Spiro Agnew sobre el blanco de los rehiltes, y escucha en la estación WFMT el programa radiofónico de Studs Terkel.⁴

Sin embargo, a pesar de su mentalidad abierta y progresista, también ella en algunas circunstancias deja aflorar prejuicios y actitudes atribuibles a la influencia de la cultura machista. Por ejemplo cuando descubre que Lala usa tampones absorbentes la regaña de modo áspero, manifestando un prejuicio moral misógino: “Don’t you know tampons are for floozies? Mother had said when she found them in the bathroom [...]. Don’t you know nice girls don’t wear tampons till they are married? And maybe not even then” (333).

A propósito del papel que la cultura de masas desarrolla en la construcción de la identidad de los personajes y en el condicionamiento de sus comportamientos, es necesario observar que, también en *Caramelo*, se encuentran muchas referencias a productos de la industria cultural como cine, música, telenovelas, fotonovelas e historietas. Pero con respecto a las dos obras anteriores, en la saga de la familia Reyes la visión tendencialmente de rechazo de la cultura de masas en cuanto instrumento de condicionamiento y homologación — análoga a la concepción negativa de la industria cultural concebida como forma de control de la opinión pública por parte del poder, formulada por la Escuela de Frankfurt — al menos en parte se corrige. O, cuanto menos, la representación de tales productos y la influencia que ellos ejercen en la esfera social aparece menos previsible y más compleja. Sin duda hay todavía algunos episodios que aluden al poder engañoso y subterráneo de los modelos identitarios que la cultura machista impone. Por ejemplo, para intentar afirmar su voluntad de independencia Lala recurre a la idea del rapto,⁵ una experiencia desastrosa que desembocará en su ‘desgracia’, exactamente porque ella se deja seducir por la iconografía popular hiper romántica del charro elegante que huye a caballo con su amada. Pero, en general, las referencias a la música y al cine que aparecen con cierta frecuencia en la novela demuestran no tanto el carácter engañoso de la industria del espectáculo, cuanto la riqueza, el poder atractivo y la vitalidad de la cultura mexicana. Y este discurso parece ser válido también para los productos menos ‘nobles’ como fotonovelas y telenovelas, que resultan inofensivas formas de entretenimiento, o para una serie muy popular de historietas como *La Familia Burrón*, perspicaz y divertida representación de la familia media mexicana, asimilable a la *Familia Simpson* estadounidense. La impresión es que, bajo este aspecto, la Sandra Cisneros de *Caramelo* se haya acercado a una idea de la cultura de masas más afín a la de los *Cultural Populist*, representados entre los

⁴ Estudioso de historia oral y cultura popular de los Estados Unidos, censurado durante el macartismo y autor en 1970 del libro *Hard Times: An Oral History of the Great Depression*.

⁵ El tema del rapto aparece también en el capítulo titulado “My Name” de la novela *The House on Mango Street* (11); en *Caramelo*, la fuga de Lala tiene un precedente en el episodio del casamiento de Aunty Light-Skin, contado en el capítulo 53.

intelectuales chicanos por estudiosos como José Limón y Américo Paredes.⁶ Según esta concepción, la industria de la cultura no sería capaz de imponer modelos sociales a través de sus productos, porque éstos, de largo consumo, en último análisis, traen origen de la estética popular y reflejan los gustos de un público vasto que, en cierto sentido, debe ser considerado autor y, a la vez, destinatario de lo que consume. Desde esta perspectiva, por lo tanto, una visión pesimista y de rechazo de los productos del entretenimiento de masas no tiene fundamento, puesto que tales productos siempre son, en medida más o menos relevante, *cultura popular*, o sea constituyen el reflejo de la creatividad y del imaginario colectivo más que de su manipulación.

En *Caramelo* las frecuentes referencias a las obras maestras del cine mexicano de la edad de oro absuelven, en la construcción de la novela, una dúplice función. Primero, sirven para connotar, cuanto menos al público que tiene familiaridad con estas películas, el entorno y las atmósferas que caracterizan algunos episodios de la historia de la familia Reyes y, más en general, de la cultura mexicana del siglo Veinte. Pero, al mismo tiempo, en algunas circunstancias desarrollan también la función de modelo narrativo y de juego intertextual de corte típicamente posmoderno. Un ejemplo de esto se encuentra al principio de la segunda parte de la novela, donde Lala, dialogando con el espíritu de la abuela, empieza a reconstruir a su modo la historia de la familia Reyes antes de su nacimiento. “If this were a movie from Mexico’s Golden Age of cine, it would be black-and-white and no doubt a musical,” dice Lala. “Like *Nosotros, los pobres*,” contesta la abuela proporcionando una precisa referencia cinematográfica (98). Y, en efecto, el melodrama urbano dirigido en 1947 por Ismael ‘El indio’ Rodríguez con protagonista el actor y cantante Pedro Infante evoca desde el punto de vista iconográfico el entorno popular de la capital descrito en el capítulo 23, cuando Narciso por primera vez encuentra a Soledad. Lala refiere que la figura misma de su padre puede ser asimilada a la de Pedro Infante, o en alternativa, para el lector angloamericano, a Clark Gable. Además, el episodio del despertar de Inocencio el día de su cumpleaños, cuando toda la familia le canta “Las mañanitas” (cap. 12) parece una reelaboración sugestiva de una escena de la misma película, donde Pepe “El toro” reúne a un coro muy extravagante para entonarle a Chachita esta canción popular.

Análogamente, la rememoración de la bailarina Tongolele, de sus danzas seductivas y de la efervescente vida nocturna de la Ciudad de México

⁶ Véase: Charles M. Tatum. 2001. *Chicano Popular Culture. Que hable el pueblo*. Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona Press, cap. I; Ramón Saldivar. 1990. *Chicano Narrative. The Dialectics of Difference*. Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, cap. II y José E. Limón. 1991. “Dancing with the Devil: Society, Gender, and the Political Unconscious in Mexican-American South Texas,” en Héctor Calderón y José David Saldivar, eds. *Criticism in the Borderlands. Studies in Chicano Literature, Culture, and Ideology*. Durham-London: Duke University Press.

de los años Cincuenta hecha por Aunty Light-Skin cuando en el capítulo 55 le cuenta a Lala del primer encuentro con su gran amor, tiene su correspondiente cinematográfico en una de las primeras escenas de la película *Chucho el Remendado*, dirigida por Gilberto Martínez Solares e interpretada por el cómico Tin Tan,⁷ que no acaso se cita de modo explícito en la novela (264).

Los que hemos mencionados son sólo dos ejemplos dentro de las numerosas referencias a la cultura popular mexicana que se encuentran en *Caramelo*. Se trata de elementos que contribuyen a crear la riqueza textual de la obra de Sandra Cisneros y, al mismo tiempo, permiten al lector percibir la complejidad de la cultura chicana.

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⁷ Tin Tan, pseudónimo de Germán Genaro Cipriano Gómez Valdés Castillo (1915-1973), además de gran caricato fue excelente cantante y bailarín y es considerado, junto a Cantinflas, el mejor cómico que ha dado el cine mexicano. En su larga carrera actuó en una enorme cantidad de películas bajo la dirección de cineastas como Humberto Gómez Landero y el ya mencionado Gilberto Martínez Solares. Aquí vale la pena señalar que en su primera aparición cinematográfica (*Hotel de verano* de 1943) Tin Tan llevó al escenario el personaje del *pachuco*, figura entonces estereotipada del *mexican-american* que él interpretó en clave humorística.

YO, MYSELF AND I: PRONOMBRES PERSONALES E IDENTIDAD BILINGÜE EN UN “POEMA LARGO” CHICANO

Francesco Fava

1. Cervantes, inventor de la novela, pone en boca de su Don Quijote en el cap. V la afirmación: “Yo sé quién soy” (Cervantes 1998, 73), y la frase ya ha entrado en el canon de la literatura mundial, en el cual ocupa también un lugar de relieve el provenzal Guillermo IX, el primer poeta lírico de las lenguas romances, que advierte una necesidad similar de plasmar en sus versos la conciencia de su identidad poética. En *Ben Vuelh que sapchon li pluzor*, el conde trovador se define a sí mismo ante el lector, presentándose con estos versos: “Eu conosc sen et folor / e conosc anta e honor, / et ai ardimen e paor” (Guglielmo IX 1973, 165).

Observando estos dos ejemplos, habría que suponer que para fundar un género literario nuevo (en los casos citados, la novela y la lírica románica), es necesario no sólo estar conscientes de la propia identidad, sino también, y sobre todo, dejar bien clara dicha autoconciencia en las páginas de la obra. Sería justo agregarle a estos dos ejemplos el nombre de Rodolfo Gonzales y de su *Yo soy Joaquín*, puesto que este autor, parafraseando a Yurkievich, podría ser definido como uno de los “fundadores de la poesía chicana.”

El carácter de fundación del texto en cuestión deriva ante todo de su fecha de publicación, el año 1967, que lo convierte en el primer documento poético importante producido en el ámbito chicano. Este dato, y el impacto del texto en el momento de su publicación, obligan a ver *Yo soy Joaquín* como un ejemplar emblemático de la poesía chicana.

La génesis del poema está ligada a la del “Chicano Movement,” y a la “Crusade for Justice” de la cual Gonzales era animador principal en la ciudad de Denver. Por ende, junto a su función poética, prevalece en el texto la función política. *Yo soy Joaquín* es un “poema largo,” compuesto de más de 500 versos, del cual el autor ha ofrecido tanto la versión inglesa como la española: un texto en dos lenguas, y por ello también con dos títulos: *Yo soy - I am*. El nombre Joaquín que completa el título se inspira en la figura de Joaquín Murrieta, un bandido legendario en la época de la *gold rush*, con características de Robin Hood, brutalmente torturado y asesinado por el ejército de los Estados Unidos. En el poema, no obstante, más que al bandido/rebelde del siglo XIX, el nombre Joaquín nos remite

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a la idea de un “Chicano Cualquiera,” en cuya figura cada lector chicano está llamado a reconocerse.

I am Joaquín está definido por la crítica como *epic poem* — y teniendo en cuenta esto lo acercaré en estas páginas a dos poemas extensos, y épicos, fundamentales de la modernidad: *Song of Myself* de Walt Whitman (1855) y *Alturas de Macchu Picchu* de Pablo Neruda (1950). No consideraré estas dos obras como fuentes directas de *Yo soy Joaquín*, sino como poemas que compartan con nuestro texto algunas características esenciales: la lectura comparativa, por lo tanto, podrá tal vez ayudar a dar luz a nuevos aspectos del poema de Gonzales.

2. Tanto en el poema de Whitman como en el de Neruda, el yo se define a sí mismo y la propia función comunicativa a través de la relación directa con un interlocutor en segunda persona. El íncipit del *Song of Myself* es elocuente, además de celeberrimo:

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,
 And what I assume you shall assume,
 For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you
 (Whitman 1982, 27)

En el *Canto General* de Neruda, obra monumental que contiene dentro de ella (es la segunda de las doce partes que la componen) el poema largo *Alturas de Macchu Picchu*, el yo poético se presenta con las palabras: “Yo estoy aquí para contar la historia,” para luego llegar a declarar el sentido de la propia operación poética e ideológica en los versos finales de *Alturas*, donde se lee: “Yo vengo a hablar por vuestra boca muerta” (Neruda 1999, 447).

En ambos textos, la identificación con el interlocutor en segunda persona (tú o vosotros) le permite al yo definir su propia identidad: “el hombre se vuelve Yo en el Tú,” dice Martin Buber, y en los dos ejemplos citados el alocutivo dentro del texto le da sentido no sólo al Yo sino también a todo el enunciado poético.

En el caso de *Yo soy Joaquín* la relación se establece en primer lugar con el pasado histórico de la propia comunidad, sin embargo en la introducción del poema también Rodolfo Gonzales se dirige directamente, en segunda persona, al propio lector, exhortándolo: “and after you’ve read it, promise to yourself to learn how to think” (Gonzales 1972, “Preface”). Siempre en las líneas de introducción al texto, escritas en inglés, el yo y el tú se identifican ambos en un *ourselves* que le sirve al autor para aclarar de forma programática la intención del texto: el poema es una “affirmation of ourselves, a chicano people.” O sea, los dos extremos del proceso comunicativo, emisor y receptor, están unidos en una identidad colectiva.

En los tres casos, por lo tanto, el texto se funda en una intención y modalidad comunicativa que liga el yo del emisor al tú del receptor: si ésta se eliminara, todo el poema perdería su razón de ser, concepto que Walt Whitman expresa de forma elocuente en la decimoséptima sección del *Song of Myself*. A propósito de los propios pensamientos que ha fijado en

forma de poema, Whitman dice: “If they are not yours as much as mine they are nothing, or next to nothing” (43).

3. Esta intención comunicativa determina también la opción estilística de los tres autores, que se confirman en un dictado poético de tono oratorio, fuertemente plasmado de oralidad pero al mismo tiempo retóricamente elevado. En concreto, esto lleva a que prevalezcan en los tres poemas fenómenos retóricos fundados en la repetición y la acumulación: series de construcciones anafóricas, polarizaciones marcadamente paralelas, neto predominio de la parataxis. En el caso de nuestro poema, la más evidente entre las formas de repetición es la fórmula “Yo soy Joaquín” que, además de dar el título al poema, se repite marcando cada una de las secciones temporales y temáticas que constituyen la obra, pero al mismo tiempo sufre una serie de variaciones que de vez en vez proponen la identificación del yo, además que con el nombre Joaquín, como también veremos, con las figuras de los diferentes personajes históricos mexicanos evocados en el poema. Repitiendo la fórmula “Yo soy él” es que Joaquín proclamará su identificación en personajes como Benito Juárez o en los “campesinos” que se le unieron a Pancho Villa.

4. En la estructura de *Yo soy Joaquín* son notables las analogías con la construcción de *Alturas*. Ambos poemas se abren con la constatación de un presente doloroso, hecho de loca confusión. El íncipit de Gonzales afirma en efecto: “Yo soy Joaquín, / perdido en un mundo de confusión, / enganchado en el remolino de una sociedad gringa” — sociedad que en unos pocos versos siguientes se define como “neurosis social americana, esterilización del alma” (3). Esterilización evidentemente experimentada también por Pablo Neruda, si había iniciado su *Alturas* con la imagen de una realidad urbana en la cual “como una barajada cantidad, queda el alma.” “En el lodo del suburbio,” o “en las calles de invierno de una ciudad,” la unidad del individuo se disgrega: “El ser como el maíz se desgranaba en el inacabable / granero de los hechos perdidos” (436).

Del fracaso de un presente lacerado, el yo lírico de ambos poemas se remite al pasado, buscando en éste una clave para determinar su identidad en el presente. El yo lírico de Neruda se mueve hacia las ruinas de Macchu Picchu, el de Gonzales dirige la mirada al pasado de la historia mexicana. La relectura de casi cinco siglos de historia ocupa parte considerable de *I am Joaquín*, y va desde la civilización azteca y desde la época de la conquista, a la Independencia, a la Revolución, hasta llegar al presente, donde, sin embargo, la atención se desplaza de México al Suroeste de los Estados Unidos.

Nótese como para ambos autores es fundamental la relación con la cultura indígena. Si el mundo inca es el corazón del poema de Neruda, también en Gonzales la relación con la cultura azteca no es un elemento de segundo plano. En efecto, el primero de los muchos personajes históricos con el cual el yo lírico se identificará en el curso del poema es Cuauhtémoc:

Yo soy Cuauhtémoc
 Majestuoso y Noble
 Guía de hombres
 Rey de un Imperio (3)

dice de sí mismo Joaquín en el pasaje del poema que recuerda la civilización azteca, cuya destrucción por parte de Cortés abre la larga serie de violencias que marcarán los posteriores siglos de la historia mexicana.

La relación con la cultura indígena de México obliga a reflexionar sobre el hecho de que en ámbito chicano no se observa sólo una dialéctica entre cultura anglo-americana e hispano-americana, sino que la presencia significativa dentro de esta última del elemento indígena obliga a hablar de una triple identidad. Esta ha llevado a Tino Villanueva establecer un sugestivo paralelo con la España medieval de las tres culturas. Como en las jarchas se encuentran rastros lingüísticos de proveniencia árabe, hebrea y romance, así en la cultura chicana conviven tres sensibilidades culturales diferentes: es por esto que Villanueva habla del mundo chicano definiéndolo “trisible” (Villanueva 1980, 51-65). En relación con el pasado, sea éste indígena o no, las visiones de Neruda y de Gonzales muestran otra afinidad, pero también una diferencia importante.

La afinidad consiste en la connotación del pasado en términos de violencia, muerte, sangre. “Yo soy Joaquín / que se sangra en muchos modos” (13), se lee en el poema largo chicano, donde la sangre regresa a anegar casi todos los momentos históricos evocados. Como observa Bruce-Novoa, “Mexican history is portrayed as a bloody life-and-death struggle, with death emphasized” (Bruce-Novoa 1982, 52). En Neruda es la muerte el hilo que liga el pasado con el presente, pasando de la “pequeña muerte” consumada en las miserias cotidianas a la “poderosa muerte” que reina en el desolado “recinto de piedra” de Macchu Picchu. Ambos textos, además, se detienen en varias imágenes para describir la cruenta brutalidad del pasado.

Diferencia capital entre las dos obras, sin embargo, es que en Neruda la evocación del pasado se concentra en la revitalización sólo de una parte de éste. El poeta opta, en efecto, por revivir “el viejo corazón del olvidado,” identificándose con “el miserable,” “el esclavo,” etc. En la última parte de *Alturas*, el yo lírico enumera una serie de figuras humildes y explotadas, para luego concluir, dirigiéndose directamente a ellos: “traed a la copa de esta nueva vida / vuestros viejos dolores enterrados” (447).

Aunque también en Gonzales la opción del compromiso político es preponderante en el texto, su actitud con respecto al pasado es diferente. También él, como Neruda, identifica en la historia una polarización entre “bueno o malo,” sin embargo en la figura de Joaquín tanto el primero como el segundo se ven reunificados: “Yo era ambos, tirano y esclavo,” escribe Gonzales. Pocos versos antes había propuesto una doble identificación: “Yo soy la espada y la llama de Cortés el déspota / y yo soy el águila y la serpiente de la civilización Azteca” (5). En este sentido

su comportamiento se acerca, más que a Neruda, a la expansión omni-compreensiva del Yo del poema whitmaniano, que por ejemplo afirmaba: “I am not the poet of goodness only, / I do not decline to be the poet of wickedness also” (Whitman 1982, 48). La tendencia a reunificar ambos polos del pasado en la figura emblemática de Joaquín se repropone en todos los pasajes históricos evocados en el poema. Joaquín es tan vencedor como vencido en la Revolución Mexicana, y puede, por lo tanto, afirmar, corroborando la naturaleza violenta de la propia historia: “Yo he matado / y he sido matado. / Yo soy los déspotas Díaz y Huerta / y el apóstol de la democracia / Francisco Madero” (Gonzales 1972, 11). Este aspecto ha sido perfectamente sintetizado por Charles Tatum, que ha hablado de Joaquín como de un “antepasado dual,” que “era a la vez tirano y esclavo, el explotador y el explotado, el revolucionario y el anti-revolucionario, el vencedor y el vencido” (Tatum 1982, 203). El yo de Joaquín es un contenedor amplio, doble y contradictorio, exactamente como el Yo de Whitman, que escribe:

Do I contradict myself?
 Very well then I contradict myself
 I'm large, I contain multitudes (87)

El yo de Joaquín funda su propia unidad en la identificación en ambos polos contradictorios, modalidad que se conserva incluso cuando el poema, en su parte final, se desplaza geográficamente hacia el norte y cronológicamente hacia nuestros días. Después de haber descrito las difíciles condiciones de vida de las mujeres chicanas, en el presente, Gonzales escribe: “Y yo soy ella / y ella es yo” (19). Es la primera y única vez en el poema en la cual la identificación yo-él (más bien ella, en este caso) es recíproca, bidireccional. Un doble reflejo al cual el largo recorrido emprendido en el pasado ha preparado el terreno, y que al final del poema se proyecta en el futuro, a través del verso conclusivo: “Yo perduraré” (21). Lo que hace significativo este verso no es tanto la afirmación de una resistencia cultural y política contenida en el verbo “perduraré,” como la mutada condición del sujeto que dice “yo:” no ya un solo individuo, sino una identidad colectiva y compartida.

5. También en *Alturas de Macchu Picchu*, como en nuestro poema, la relectura del pasado se condensa en el reconocimiento colectivo en un nombre emblemático, nombre que en el caso del poeta chileno es Juan. La octava sección del *Canto General* se titula “La tierra se llama Juan,” pero es ya en los versos de *Alturas* que se fragua la identificación de “ourselves, a people” con el nombre Juan. En los versos conclusivos de la undécima sección de *Alturas*, en efecto, el yo lírico se dirige a “Juan Cortapiedras, hijo de Wiracocha, / Juan comefrío, hijo de estrella verde, / Juan piesdescalzos, nieto de la turquesa,” haciéndole al triple Juan una exhortación imperativa: “Sube a nacer conmigo, hermano” (446).

Que el nombre sea Joaquín o Juan, cambia poco: en ambos poemas se trata de un sujeto emblemático en el cual el yo del texto se reconoce — e incluso el lector está llamado a hacerlo. Tanto en Neruda como en Gonzales este reconocimiento es el punto de llegada de un trayecto cuyos pasajes, como se ha visto, son, en esencia, análogos en los dos poemas, así como es común el componente de militancia política que subyace en ambos textos. Sin embargo, no obstante las fuertes analogías entre *Alturas y Joaquín*, tal vez sea una frase escrita por Octavio Paz, a propósito del *Song of Myself*, el mejor modo para describir la evolución determinada en el curso del poema de Gonzales: “El poeta — dice Paz — canta a un yo que es un tú y un él y un nosotros. Al exaltar el yo exalta el nosotros. El *Canto a mí mismo* se resuelve en el canto de la fundación de una comunidad” (Paz 1990, 30). Ya se ha comentado la naturaleza paradigmática del sujeto que dice “Yo” en el poema de Gonzales; recordar que ésta es también el punto de partida del poema de Whitman, y el punto de llegada del de Neruda, lleva a atribuirle a los tres textos la ambición, señalada por Paz, de erigirse en canto de fundación de una comunidad.

6. Pese a sus limitaciones — sus excesos de retórica y demagogia y el recurso a algunos estereotipos — *Yo soy Joaquín* se inserta con toda razón en una línea importante de la poesía moderna, que de la búsqueda de identidad individual ha hecho una cuestión de naturaleza épica, más bien un verdadero *epic poem*. La identidad individual, en efecto, puede pronunciarse en los tres poemas examinados sólo en el momento en que el yo sabe que es un nosotros potencial, superando de esta manera la laceración del yo del cual toma su referencia tanto el poema de Gonzales como el de Neruda.

En el caso de nuestro texto, no me parece casual que haya hallado significativas asonancias con dos modelos poéticos provenientes uno de la América anglófona, el otro de la hispanófona. Se trata, vale recordarlo, de las dos áreas geográfico-culturales de las cuales provienen la mayor parte de los poemas extensos, o *long poems*, producidos en época contemporánea. Al fundar la poesía chicana, Gonzales escribió (no sé con qué grado de conciencia) un poema de ecos biculturales, que remite tanto a un patriarca de la literatura norteamericana como a uno de los “fundadores de la nueva poesía latinoamericana.”

Rescapitulando lo que se ha dicho hasta ahora, se ha definido el Joaquín de Gonzales, en el orden: “bilingüe,” por la presencia de inglés y español en el texto poético y en su experiencia biográfica; “trisenible,” por la necesidad de agregar a estos dos ámbitos lingüístico-culturales el elemento indígena; “dual” por el carácter contradictorio y doble de sus antepasados. Doble, se puede concluir llegado a este punto, es también su relación con los modelos literarios, el angloamericano (Whitman) y el hispanoamericano (Neruda). Ante tantas bi (o tri)particiones, parece evidente la complejidad del proceso de *self-construction* del yo chicano observado en este texto: es larga y abigarrada la serie de escisiones pasadas, presentes y futuras, que Joaquín está obligado a remendar, recomponer, antes de poder afirmar como Don Quijote “Yo sé quién soy.”

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THE ROLE AND MEANING OF BORDER CORRIDOS: THE CASE OF NARCOCORRIDOS

Celestino Fernández and Jessie K. Finch

Introduction

The US-Mexico border, as we know it today, was established in 1848 with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo at the end of the Mexican-American War when Mexico was forced to cede nearly half of its land to the United States. The 2,000-mile border was finalized a few years later, in 1853 with the Gadsden Purchase (Kent 2011).

Since then, this border has become a focal point for the movement of people and goods, both legal and illegal. Today, the US-Mexico border is the most frequently crossed international border in the world (Andreas 2003). Each year, an estimated 300 million people cross it, including thousands who cross daily in both directions for work-related purposes such as maids from Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, to El Paso, Texas; or farm workers from San Luis Rio Colorado, Sonora, to the Yuma Valley in Arizona; or American businessmen from San Diego, California, to Tijuana, Baja California Norte. Additionally, many people cross the border without proper documents, particularly those known as “undocumented” workers. In 2010, for example, the US Border Patrol apprehended 463,382 undocumented individuals; a large number certainly, but a significant drop from the 1,676,438 that were apprehended in 2000 (Homeland Security Digital Library 2010).

During the winter months, 53% of the imported fruits (e.g., melons) and vegetables (e.g., cucumbers and tomatoes) consumed in the United States come from Mexico and much of this fresh produce crosses at the Mariposa port of entry in Nogales, Arizona, where as many as 900 commercial trucks cross daily (Lucier, *et al.* 1997). This port of entry is being expanded to handle 3,000 vehicles daily, more than twice the current capacity; construction is underway and expected to be completed in spring 2014. The two ports of entry at Mexicali, Baja California Norte-Calexico, California, handled nineteen million north-bound crossings during 2007 (City of Calexico 2011). In addition to produce, many other types of goods and services cross the US-Mexico border on a daily basis, including grains, textiles, construction materials, furniture, automobiles, etc. Of course, various products move *illegally*, as well, across the border daily, such as drugs from Mexico to the United States and weapons from the US to Mexico.



The US-Mexico border is a very complex border and as such, it calls for various approaches to documenting, analyzing, interpreting, and understanding it. Indeed, this border has been studied from various perspectives, including political (Cornelius 2005 and 2004), sociological (Massey 2009 and 2005), economic (Gans 2008 and 2007), environmental (Laura Lopez-Hoffman, *et al.* 2009 and Scott, *et al.* 2007) and literary (King 2004 and García 2006), among others. This article examines the US-Mexico border from the perspective of *corridos*, a musico-poetic form that is popular among Mexicans and Mexican Americans.

1. *The Corrido*

The *corrido* is a popular component of Mexico's oral tradition; it is a descriptive narrative, a running account (the word *corrido* comes from the verb *correr*, to run) that is written in verse, like poetry, and put to music. In other words, *corridos* are stories sung in poetic form and to simple music, much like ballads. Although the *corrido* can be traced to an archaic Spanish form known as the *romance* that was brought to the Americas by the Spanish settlers, this Spanish form was transformed in central Mexico into a unique musical genre that spread quickly and became very popular with "*el pueblo*" (the people; the working class) (Mendoza 1954). The *corrido* art form was already well-known from at least the mid-1800s onward but it became even more popularized and deeply engrained in Mexican culture during the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920). Although this genre originated in Mexico and has become a source of popular expression throughout Mexico and the United States, today it is known and performed wherever Mexicans and Mexican Americans reside, particularly along the US-Mexico border region (Paredes 1958; Fernández and Officer 1989).

Much like the editorial page of the local newspaper, the *corrido* takes a topic of importance and accurately and precisely documents the essential points, interprets them, and then provides commentary; it may also provide advice or recommendations (Griffith and Fernández 1988). However, the *corrido* always takes the point of view of the working class ("*el pueblo*," the people), and thus it is from this unique perspective that the particular issue is documented, analyzed, and interpreted. In a world in which working-class people have little economic or political power/influence, cultural expression, such as *corridos*, plays an important role in giving voice to this segment of the population. The values espoused are most often ones of bravery, loyalty to friends, machismo, independence, disrespect for the law (but respect for a Higher Law) and love of justice for the common man. Women are rarely mentioned, but are the subject of strong emotions when present, such as love, anger, scorn, etc. There are a few notable *corridos*, however, that favorably refer to the love and good advice of mothers.

The *corrido* has been used to document and provide commentary on any and all events, occurrences, and personalities of local, national, or international importance (Fernández and Officer 1989). Indeed, *corridos* have been composed about every imaginable topic. As one Mexican scholar noted:

Corridos emerge through popular tradition from those events that people intuitively select as representative of a particular time period. Thus, anything that appeals to the masses, influences their daily lives, and supply them with lasting stimulation, becomes subject matter for the *corrido*. (Pérez Martínez 1935, 6-7)

Although any topic may be fit for a *corrido*, some themes have been covered extensively by this folk tradition, such as:

- Wars and armed conflicts: Most notably the Mexican Revolution but also, World War II, the Korean War, Vietnam, Persian Gulf War, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Some of the best-known and classic *corridos* are about the Mexican Revolution, such as *Corrido Villista*, *La Persecución de Villa*, and *Carabina 30-30*.

- Immigration: These *corridos*, which number well over a hundred, discuss many aspects of the Mexican immigration experience, including leaving the family in Mexico, the details of the trip, crossing the border, encounters with the Border Patrol, and migrant deaths in various forms (e.g., in the desert, automobile accidents, inside locked train boxcars, and in overcrowded trailers of semi-trucks). Some well-known immigration *corridos* include: *El Lavaplatos*, *Vendiste Los Bueyes*, *La Jaula de Oro* and *Los Mandados* (see Fernández forthcoming for an extensive list of immigration *corridos*).

- Folk heroes: Many folk heroes have been memorialized through *corridos*, including Gregorio Cortez (border folk hero depicted in an entire book [Paredes 1958] and in a feature-length commercial film, *The Ballad of Gregorio Cortez*) and Fernando Valenzuela (a pitcher for the Los Angeles Dodgers during the 1980s who was recruited from Sonora, Mexico, and in his first year won both the Cy Young Award and Rookie of the Year Award).

- Personalities: Shortly after Michael Jackson died on 25 June 2009, several *corridos* appeared documenting his life.

- Tragedies: Train accidents, the terrorist acts in New York City and Washington, DC, of 11 September 2001, and earthquakes are but a few of the tragedies that have been documented through *corridos*.

- Horses and horse races: Although horses are a major *corrido* theme, there are also *corridos* that involve other animals such as cock fights and bull fights. Some of the most notable horse *corridos* include: *El Caballo Blanco*, *Caballo Prieto Azabache*, and *El Moro de Cumpas*, which inspired a commercial film with the same title.

- Miraculous events: Two individuals depicted in *corridos* as being associated with miracles come immediately to mind: Jesús Malverde and St. Toribio Romo. Malverde has a public shrine (though he is not recognized by the Catholic Church) in Culiacán, Sinaloa (Mexico) and is credited with being a “Robin Hood-type” character while alive (robbing the rich to give to the poor). He is now viewed as a protector of drug traffickers; he apparently helps keep them safe while moving drugs north and delivering them to the US. Romo (a Catholic priest who was killed in 1928 during the Cristero movement in Mexico) is said to appear to distressed migrants

making their way across the US-Mexico border and cures them as well as giving them food, water, money, and even directions. Today, St. Romo's image can be seen everywhere, including on religious cards carried by immigrants. His shrine in Santa Ana, Jalisco (Mexico) is visited by 5,000 every weekend.

- Assassinations: There are several *corridos*, for example, about John F. Kennedy (President of the United States; assassinated on 22 November 1963 in Dallas, TX) and Donaldo Colosio (candidate for President of Mexico; assassinated on 23 March 1994 in Tijuana, Mexico).

- Towns and regions: These *corridos* usually document, with much pride, a town's or state's special characteristics and features, e.g. *Corrido de Mazatlán* and *Corrido de Chihuahua*.

- Drug smuggling: These *corridos* are commonly known as “*narco-corridos*” because they depict the comings and goings of drug traffickers (more on these *corridos* below).

- Other topics: Many other topics have served to inspire *corridos*, including civic engagement, love affairs gone awry, and particular family members. There is even a *corrido* about *corridos*, appropriately titled *El Corrido*.

While there may be exceptions to every pattern and every rule, and such is the case with *corridos*, the fact remains that one can identify very clear patterns in the form and structure of *corridos*. Some of the more salient characteristics of the traditional *corrido* form are listed follow:

- Perspective: As noted above, *corridos* take the perspective of the common folk. Thus, they are composed in the vernacular language of the people, generally by eye-witnesses or well-informed observers situated in (or intimately knowledgeable of) the culture of the working class, who are also the primary audience of *corridos*.

- Meter and rhyme: Meter refers to the number of syllables in each line and traditional *corridos* can be composed in seven to ten syllables, but mostly are composed with either six or eight syllables per line. Also, verses can be either four or six lines. If the verse is four lines, the rhyme scheme is ABCB; in other words, the end of the last word of the second and fourth lines should rhyme. If six lines, the rhyme pattern is ABCBDB; the last words of lines two, four, and six should rhyme.

- Length: Old-style *corridos* are long (twenty or thirty verses), providing much rich detail as they narrate an event. In fact, when *corridos* were first recorded, many of them did not fit on one side of a 45-rpm record and it was common to record “Part One” on one side and to continue the *corrido* as “Part Two” on the flip side. Now, *corridos* tend to be much shorter (only eight or ten verses), easily falling within the standard time for songs aired on commercial radio, approximately two to three minutes.

- Opening, middle and closing: In order to call the audience to attention so that listeners will hear the story being related in the *corrido*, many *corridos* begin by noting in the first or second verse that, indeed, this is a *corrido*. Some familiar lines include: “*Este es el corrido*” (This is the *corrido*) or “*Señores pongan cuidado*” (Ladies and gentlemen, lend me your ears). The middle part of the *corrido*, the longest section, relates the details of the story. Finally, the listener

is frequently alerted to the fact that the *corrido* (the story) has come to an end; the final or penultimate verse, for example, will say, “*Así termina el corrido*” (That’s how the *corrido* ends) or “*Aquí termina el corrido*” (The *corrido* ends here). If the *corrido* has described death, either the penultimate or final verse begins with “*Vuela, vuela palomita*” (Fly, fly little dove), a spiritual reference.

- Performance space: Traditionally, *corridos* were performed wherever people gathered such as *plazas* (town squares), *mercados* (marketplaces), or *ferias* (fairs). Even today, it is common to hear *corridos* wherever people gather, including in the *plazas* of large cities such as Guadalajara (Mexico’s second-largest city).

- Singers: *Trobadores* (wandering singers) would carry the news of the day in their *corridos* as they travelled from town-to-town. They played mostly for tips, although some of them also sold broadsheets, often with artistic borders and designs, with the words of *corridos* printed on them.

- Singing style and accompaniment: Because the emphasis is on the words, on the story being told, traditional *corridos* were performed without any embellishment, simply by one individual accompanied by a guitar. Today, however, *corridos* are performed in almost all musical genres, from *mariachi* to *norteño*. Still, the emphasis should remain on communicating the words clearly, so that the listener can understand and follow the story being conveyed by the singer.

2. Border *Corridos*

Corridos on specifically border themes — often of political and cultural clashes — have been sung since the nineteenth century, and still continue to be composed. *El Condenado a Muerte* (The One Condemned to Death) was discovered in New Mexico and laments the author’s coming execution for an unnamed crime, and actually gives an exact date, Wednesday, 20 July 1832 (Roberts 1999). Possibly the earliest Texas *corrido* is *Corrido de Leandro Rivera*, which dates from 1841. Paredes (1958) labeled the period from 1836 to the late 1930s the “*corrido* century” on the US-Mexico border (although given the popularity of *corridos* in this region during the past forty years, a rival “*corrido* century” may be in the making). An early Texas *corrido* hero was Juan Nepomuceno Cortina, who in 1859 shot a Brownsville, Texas, city marshal who had been mistreating his mother’s servant, and with his followers, he briefly occupied the town before fleeing across the border into Mexico. The most famous *corrido* from that period was about Gregorio Cortez, whose exploits and problems resulting from the shooting of a Texas Ranger have also been documented in a popular film, “The Ballad of Gregorio Cortez,” starring James Edward Olmos.

Numerous *corridos* are available about the late César Chávez, the founder and long-time leader of the farm workers’ movement. One of the first ballads on César Chávez was by Felipe Cantú (Burciaga 1993), one of the original actors in *El Teatro Campesino* (The Campestral Theatre), a highly popular theatre that performed plays with social and political themes of interest to farmworkers and other laborers. There is even a 1995 *corrido* mourning the

death of Selena, the popular “Tejana” star who had recently been murdered by the president of her fan club.

Corridos are often intensely serious, and they have always mirrored social and political concerns. They are repositories of both myth and history for a people not often served by mainstream newspapers and other media. A few such examples are: *Los Rinches de Texas* (The Texas Rangers) which tells the story of how Texas Rangers brutally beat poor farmworkers. This song is featured in the film *Chulas Fronteras* (Beautiful Borders) and describes an incident during a strike of melon pickers in Star County, Texas, in June 1967; the *Corrido de Juan Reyna* (The *Corrido* of Juan Reyna) recounts his conviction for manslaughter (for killing a police officer while allegedly being beaten up in a squad car) and sentence to prison; a sequel tells of Reyna’s apparent suicide in jail five months before his release; and *La Tragedia de Oklahoma* (The Tragedy in Oklahoma) deals with a famous case in which two students from Mexico, one of whom was related to the president, were shot by deputies near Ardmore, Oklahoma. One overt protest song is *El Deportado* (The Deportee) which bluntly describes Anglos as very evil people who treat Mexicans without pity. A relatively recent song, *El Corrido de César Chávez* (The *Corrido* of César Chávez) by Los Pinguinos del Norte (The Penguins of the North), reflects the rise of Chicano political and ethnic consciousness in the 1960s and 1970s. The death of eighteen undocumented workers who died of heat asphyxiation while locked in a boxcar was widely reported in the mainstream press, but was also recorded in a *corrido*, *El Vagon de la Muerte* (The Boxcar of Death). Hence, border *corridos* have acted as not only a reflection of political and social consciousness but also as a stimulus to it. (As noted above, see Fernández forthcoming for an extensive list of immigration *corridos*).

3. *Narcocorridos*

There are literally thousands of *corridos*, and this article only touches on one small aspect of popular and representative tunes that deal with drugs and specifically with drug trafficking, *corridos* which the media has labeled “*narcocorridos*” (Wald 2001). This section analyzes and comments on the extent to which these songs provide an expression of how a sizeable segment of the working-class population has viewed drugs and drug smugglers during the past forty or so years — similar to the role of rap music in the US. In that respect, it may provide a view of public/popular opinion not otherwise found in the media or other sources. The popularity of these *corridos* is one indication that many people, particularly young people, have not accepted the official antidrug message of both the Mexican and United States governments.

In 1972, the musical group Los Tigres del Norte (The Tigers of the North) released *Contrabando y Traición* (Contraband and Betrayal), at a time when drug use had increased dramatically in the United States in less than a decade, and Mexican immigrants were seeing drug trafficking

daily as they crossed the border. The song, about a Bonnie and Clyde-type couple of drug runners, was a huge hit in both Mexico and the United States, and was a critical factor in Los Tigres becoming major stars in Spanish-language pop music. Specifically, this *corrido* features a woman smuggler who shoots and kills her partner, a man, after they have successfully smuggled the drugs from Mexico into the US and takes off with the money to never be heard from again. Los Tigres are revered within the Mexican immigrant and Chicano communities in the United States and among Mexicans throughout Mexico. Indeed, their music continues to be highly popular at Mexican and Chicano *fiestas* and dances and they often play at popular venues such as country fairs.

Since 1972, Los Tigres, who started playing and recording in their teens and whose members are originally from Mexico but have made the San José, California, area their home since the late 1960s, have made thirty-five (LP) records, fourteen movies, have won five Latin Grammys, and sold over thirty-two million records. With their popularity, Los Tigres have broadened the appeal of the accordion-based music of Northern Mexico (*música norteña* or simply, *norteña*). This band has changed the landscape of Mexican/Chicano pop music at least twice — first with songs about drug smuggling and later with songs about immigration (Quinones 1997). This group has also modernized the *corrido*, infusing their music with *cumbias*, rock rhythms, and sound effects of machine guns and sirens. Over time, they have added a full drum set and an electric bass, and thus modernized *norteño* music. Besides their “drug” songs, common themes in their music include machismo desires and the values and beliefs that are the essence of the Mexican and Chicano working class such as dignity, respect, family, and Christianity.

Contrabando y Traición became a *norteño* classic and has been recorded by many other individuals and bands, plus it served as the title of a popular commercial film. In the US, popular books, both fiction and nonfiction, frequently serve to inspire feature films, while *corridos* have often done the same in Mexico. The two main characters of *Contrabando y Traición*, Emilio Varela and Camelia “La Tejana” (The Texan), are now part of Chicano folklore. Although songs about smuggling had been performed since the 1920s when alcohol was smuggled from Mexico into the United States during Prohibition, *Contrabando y Traición* was the first hit song about drug smuggling, and thus the first *narcocorrido*. The song *El Corrido de Camelia ‘La Texana’* (The *Corrido* of Camelia “The Texan”) spawned a number of movies, including one titled *Mataron a Camelia La Texana* (They Killed Camelia, “The Texan,” 1976) and *Ya Encontraron a Camelia* (They Found Camelia, 1979) (Herrera-Sobek 1998).

Los Tigres followed *Contrabando y Traición* with *La Banda del Carro Rojo* (The Red Car Gang) also a *corrido* about drug smuggling. These tunes essentially sparked a trend that since the 1970s (and particularly during the 1990s and through the present) has undergone immense popularity in Mexican music. In a sense, the *narcocorrido* is an update, both in terms of music and theme of the traditional *corrido*, although many recent *narcocorridos*

lack the tight rhythmic structure and quality of singing of the traditional *corrido* style and these particular songs emphasize drug smugglers, shoot-outs between drug gangs and the police, corruption, and betrayal. Most *norteño* bands today play a selection of *narcocorridos*, and many bands play almost nothing else. Like gangster rap in the US, *corridos* recount violence and crime and have achieved immense popularity, even without the benefit of radio airplay in some areas. Even in areas where *narcocorridos* are played regularly, disc jockeys often will warn listeners about language and content when such *corridos* are particularly graphic.

Criticism of *narcocorridos* has come from leaders within the Catholic Church, many business, and from at least one political party, the conservative Partido Acción Nacional (PAN) (National Action Party) in Mexico, the party of Mexico's previous (Vicente Fox) and current President (Felipe Calderón). These *corridos* have been labeled as being part of a "culture of death" for emphasizing drugs and murder. *Newsweek* (23 April 2001) notes that, "Critics on both sides of the border are attacking Mexican pop songs that glorify drugs. Los Tucanes de Tijuana and Los Tigres del Norte, in particular, are targets for their *narcocorridos* [...] Tijuana's city council and a national business coalition are urging stations to stop playing these songs." Jorge Hernández of Los Tigres, like many rap artists, responds that, "The only thing that we do is sing about what happens every day. We're interpreters, then the public decides what songs they like" (Quinones 1997).

Since the early 1970s, the Chicano community and Mexican working class have decided they like *narcocorridos*. Los Tigres regularly includes two or three of these songs on each album. In 1989, they released *Corridos Prohibidos* (Prohibited or Banned *Corridos*), an entire album of drug smuggling *corridos*. Numerous other less well-known singers and bands have followed suit with their own *narcocorrido* CDs and cassettes. These albums can be purchased in almost any store that sells music, from small specialized music shops that cater to Mexicans and Chicanos to large chain department stores such as Target and K-Mart, as well as at other popular venues such as swap meets and street fairs. The album, *Corridos Prohibidos*, was very controversial in both the US and Mexico, and was reported to be very popular among drug smugglers themselves. Los Tigres, however, is not really a "narcoband;" it is a *norteño* band that plays all varieties of *norteño* music, including *corridos* dealing with various themes, and one of these themes is drug trafficking. Los Tigres, for example, won a Grammy for the song *America*, a rock tune that preaches the universal brotherhood of Latinos. Also, unlike younger bands today, Los Tigres rarely mention the names of real drug smugglers, are not photographed with handguns or assault rifles, and usually refer to marijuana and cocaine as *hierba mala* (bad weed) and *coca*. In addition, Los Tigres have achieved a more respectable cultural claim with their songs about the immigration experience; for example, *Vivan Los Mojados* (Long Live the Wetbacks), *La Jaula de Oro* (The Golden Cage), and *El Otro Mexico* (The Other Mexico) which deals with the undying desire of Mexican immigrants to return home.

The title song of *Jefe de Jefes* (Boss of Bosses or Chief of Chiefs), which has a number of pictures in the CD booklet of the members of Los Tigres at Alcatraz Island/Prison in the San Francisco Bay of California, was released in the summer of 1997 and is about a fictional drug kingpin. The album features several *narcocorridos*, including one about drug lord Hector “El Güero” (light skinned) Palma, who was arrested in 1996 after a plane crash.

Perhaps one explanation for why *narco* and immigration *corridos* are so popular is because they capture the essential reasons as to why so many Mexicans immigrate to the US. Namely, the lack of employment and economic opportunity in Mexico and the availability of work in the US. These songs document and help people cope with the discrimination and lack of equality experienced in the US, for example, as expressed in *Ni Aquí Ni Allá* (Neither Here Nor There — neither in the US or in Mexico). Undoubtedly, these are some of the critical factors (employment and income), as well, that make the drug trade lucrative for many young working-class Mexican men. As Cortese notes, “The Mexican-US border is the only place where one can leap from the First World to the Third World in five minutes” (Cortese 1990).

The 1990s experienced a resurgence of the *corrido*’s popularity. At the request of listening audiences, Spanish-language radio stations throughout the Southwest and Mexico offered daily hour-long *corrido* programs (in some cases the “*corrido* hour” was offered twice daily, usually during early morning and late afternoon/early evening). Without a doubt, during the 1990s the single favorite theme of *corridos* composers and listeners became drug trafficking; and this has continued in the 2000s. When Mario Quintero, the lead singer of the popular group Los Tucanes de Tijuana, takes the stage, he often sings about drug lords, cocaine shipments, and shoot-outs. This has been one of the hottest bands in Northern Mexico since the 1990s and it is equally popular with Chicanos and working-class Mexican immigrants in the United States. One of their recent two-CD release, *Tucanes de Plata*, has sold a million copies in the US and over two million copies worldwide. Los Tucanes have been criticized for glorifying the drug trade and drug lords, and the question has been raised whether the message of this group (and dozens of other bands and *corrido* singers) may be changing the values of a generation of young Mexicanos and Chicanos (Collier 1997). One of Los Tucanes’ most popular songs is called *La Piñata* (The Piñata) and tells the story of a drug lord’s party that included a *piñata* full of bags of cocaine. Two other songs from this CD are *El Primo* (The Cousin) which adopts the voice of a narcotics boss and *The Little Colombian Rock* which refers to cocaine. While it is an open question whether these tunes and others like them actually change beliefs and behavior, they regularly describe the potential riches and pitfalls of the drug trade. Often these *corridos*, particularly the early *narcocorridos*, speak of betrayals, murders, and assassinations among those involved in drug trafficking, and the listener could easily conclude that this is a highly dangerous enterprise, one not worth entering. Yet, this was not the common message during the 1990s or into the 2000s. Drug trafficking, while highly dangerous, is a most lucrative business. A report issued by

the United Nations (1997) documents that “drug trafficking has grown to a \$400 billion-a-year enterprise.” The same report notes that worldwide, “illegal drugs are reported as a bigger business than all exports of automobiles and about equal to the international textile trade.” Drug traffickers “are successful 85-90% of the time” (Cortese 1990).

Besides Los Tucanes de Tijuana and Los Tigres del Norte, other known (and many relatively obscure) groups like Los Huracanes, Los Dinamicos del Norte, Los Alegres Del Barranco, and Los Morros Del Norte have also had success with *narcocorridos*. Popular titles include, for example: *Contrabando de Juárez* (Contraband of/through Juárez), *Terrible AK-47* (Terrible AK-47), *El Chapo Guzman* (The Chapo Guzman), *A Mis Enemigos* (To All My Enemies), *El Señor De Los Cielos* (The Lord Of The Skies), *Mis Tres Animales* (My Three Animals) and *Carga Sagrada* (Sacred Cargo).

Like rap music in the US, *narcocorridos* have been widely criticized in Mexico as having a negative influence on young people and a negative impact on society in general. Rene Villanueva, a prominent music historian and a member of Los Folkloristas (a band that has played *corridos* and other traditional regional Mexican music since the 1960s) calls *narcocorridos* a “horrible perversion of Mexican culture,” and “a sign of how the power of money amid poverty has diverted people’s interest to the most vulgar aspects of our society” (Collier 1997). In two northwest Mexican states, Chihuahua and Sinaloa, government officials have banned *narcocorridos* from the radio and television, and many other individual stations have done the same. Of course, banning them has not made them disappear or any less popular, on the contrary it encourages many rebellious youth to acquire them. A common complaint is that they glorify criminal behavior and should be banned everywhere. Interestingly, it is widely known that these two states, Sinaloa and Chihuahua, are home to numerous individuals involved in the drug trade. For example, there is a shrine in Culiacán, the capital of the state of Sinaloa, dedicated to a Jesús Malverde, where traffickers go (literally at all hours of the day and night) to pray for protection during drug trafficking trips and to thank Malverde when such trips have been successful. Malverde has come to be known as the “narco-Saint,” the saint of the drug traffickers. There are numerous *corridos*, incidentally, about Malverde and several of these very specifically refer to drug trafficking.

Some *narcocorrido* composers/singers have been identified or affiliated with drug cartels to the extent of receiving death threats, being shot after performances, and even killed by, presumably, individuals from competing cartels. For example, twenty-two year old *narcocorrido* singer Gerardo Ortíz’s automobile was attacked on 20 March 2011 in the state of Colima, Mexico. Ortíz was on the way to his hotel after a performance at a fair in Villa de Alvarez when his automobile was riddled with bullets; the driver and his representative were killed. Ortíz survived and he is pictured on his new record with a blood-stained shirt and blood splattered on his face.

Between 2006 and 2008, over twelve Mexican musicians, most of them connected to the *narcocorrido* genre, were murdered. It is widely believed

that in these cases, a musician performs a song praising or criticizing a drug trafficker and then hit men from a competing cartel go after this singer. Perhaps the most well known *narcocorrido* composer and singer to have been killed after a concert was Rosalino “Chalino” Sánchez. Chalino composed numerous *corridos* about drug traffickers. It is said that many such individuals even paid him to compose *corridos* about them which, of course, always placed them in a positive light. Sánchez had an interesting, although very short career. He was born in and raised in the state of Sinaloa, Mexico, and in 1977, after killing the man who raped his sister, immigrated to the United States where he initially worked in agriculture. Sánchez started writing and singing *corridos*, mostly *narcocorridos*, on the side and by 1989 he was a much requested performer throughout California. At a performance in Coachella, California, a patron drew a gun and shot Chalino in the side; Chalino reacted and immediately pulled his own gun and fired back. The gunman was killed as was one other person and at least five others were wounded. In 1992, after a concert in Culiacán, Sinaloa, Sánchez’s automobile was forced to the side of the road and he was murdered with two shots to the back of the head. Chalino was only thirty-one years old but he became a legend and his death sparked a boom in *narcocorridos* and the rise of dozens of imitators.

There have not been public calls for banning the playing of *corridos* on radio in California, Arizona, or Texas, although *narcocorridos* remain very popular on Spanish-language stations in these states. Vicente Romero, program director of KRAY-FM in Salinas, California, plays *rancheras* and other popular forms of Mexican music, but he also plays *narcocorridos*, commenting that, “Maybe Los Tucanes and the other *narcocorridos* are a bad influence, but we have to play them because everybody asks for them, and no one complains” (Collier 1997). *Narcocorridos* are played daily on both of Tucson, Arizona’s Spanish-language radio stations and here, too, no one complains. It may be that *narcocorridos* arouse less concern than rap music because they have a much softer touch musically, and lack the aggressiveness and harder edge of many rap tunes. Plus, *narcocorridos* are part of the long and extensive *corrido* musical and cultural tradition and are almost always sung in Spanish, and thus rarely heard outside the Chicano and Mexican immigrant communities. Additionally, *narcocorridos* are performed by individuals and groups who look “normal,” that is, they dress in clothes normal to the *norteño* music tradition, unlike rappers who project a distinct “look” (e.g., tattoos, baggy clothes, and lots of “bling,” large jewelry).

Narcocorridos, at times, almost seem to make drugs and drug trafficking a positive, lucrative, and charming experience. While they share drug and crime themes with gangster rap, they are still very popular with a large segment of the Spanish-speaking population. Quintero, the lead singer and guitarist for Los Tucanes, responds to critics in much the same way as many rap artists, that they are simply reporting on a popular aspect of contemporary life, and that by prohibiting drugs the government has actually contributed to their popularity and to the development of a multi-billion dollar under-

ground business. One of the most controversial aspects of Los Tucanes' songs is that some of their lyrics read as if they might have been written for the drug lords and gangs themselves. For example, the group's song about "El Güero" (Whitey) Palma, a Sinaloa drug lord now serving time in Mexico's high-security Almoloya prison, calls him "a respectable gentleman" and concludes in a warning to the police: "Don't go over the line, because the king isn't dead [...] Don't sleep soundly. The orders are the same, and will be carried out to the letter. Even your pillow could explode on you." Quintero argues that their songs are about what they have seen or what people tell them. *La Piñata* is about a real drug lord's cocaine party that someone told him about, he claims.

Whether *corridos* are always completely accurate or not is somewhat irrelevant. What is accurate, however, is that illegal drugs have been part of American popular culture since the 1960s and drug smuggling, drug wars, and other activities endemic to the drug trade and drug use have touched the lives of most Americans, including Chicanos and Mexicanos. Given the role of the *corrido* in Chicano and Mexican cultures, its part in capturing and commenting on the daily experience, particularly that which shocks, it is no accident, nor should it be surprising, that we find so many *corridos* about drug trafficking and that these *corridos* have become so popular.

Conclusions

The US-Mexico border region is likely to continue to be a focal point for both the United States and Mexico for the foreseeable future for various reasons, including its population growth. On the US side, the border continues to attract both businesses and people, including thousands of retirees. On the Mexican side, border communities are growing as a result of business and industry and because border communities often serve as launching pads for migrants wishing to cross to the United States.

Furthermore, the economies of the United States and Mexico are inextricably linked, as are the families, cultures and geographies of the US-Mexico border region. In sum, all demographic and economic trends unequivocally project increased activity along the border. Both legal and illegal goods, services and people will continue to cross this border on a daily basis and in large volumes. And, we predict, *corridistas* (*corrido* composers) will continue to give "el pueblo" (the common folk) a voice as they document, interpret, and memorialize border events, personalities, and occurrences through *corridos*.

Narcocorridos seem to indicate a change in heroes or, if you will, antiheroes to some extent. While drug smugglers and dealers do fight the government, they rarely do it to benefit the community or the oppressed. Their popularity with young working-class Mexicanos and Chicanos should not be surprising, given the poverty and inequality that continues to be a common phenomenon in both countries. As Cortese notes, "Profit and poverty explain why Mexico has become the source of large quantities of illicit drugs[...] They [poor Mexicans] literally have nothing to lose and much to gain by cultivating or trafficking in illicit drugs" (Cortese 1990).

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DEL CINE AL POEMA LARGO: SCENE FROM THE MOVIE GIANT-
ESCENA DE LA PELÍCULA GIGANTE DE TINO VILLANUEVA

María Cecilia Graña

1. Autorrepresentarse

Contagiada por la “pasión crítica” de Octavio Paz que siempre demostró una particular predilección por borrar las fronteras geográficas y lingüísticas en ámbito literario y que, a pesar de las diferencias de lenguas y culturas, consideraba la poesía moderna de occidente una sola (Paz 1972, 15-16), he elegido un texto en inglés de un autor estadounidense de madre lengua española que ha sido definido por Charles Tatum “fino poeta y perceptivo investigador” (Tatum 1986, 215).

*Scene from the Movie GIANT*¹ de Tino Villanueva, un volumen ganador del American Book Award for Poetry en 1994, cuenta y canta el esfuerzo por autorrepresentarse de un individuo a partir de la representación que de él ha hecho el Otro.² Una autorrepresentación que se logra en la medida en que se deconstruye el estereotipo del chicano creado por el angloamericano — dos polos de una dicotomía que, desde la batalla de El Álamo, aparecen como opuestos. Investigar el funcionamiento de esa serie de oposiciones en su argüir, y en las relaciones que establecen con los diversos niveles textuales³ es, aquí, un proceso en el que la escritura se vuelve el remedio que restituye un espacio a quien había sido expulsado como chivo expiatorio de su lugar originario: el méxicoame-

¹ An earlier version of this essay appeared in *Séptimo foro internacional de estudios sobre las culturas literarias del sudoeste norteamericano*, M.C. Graña and F. Fava (eds.), Verona: QuiEdit 2007.

² La primera edición fue publicada en 1993 en Willimantic, CT, por la Curbstone Press. Aquí usaré la edición bilingüe, traducida por R. Cabañas Alamán (Villanueva 2005).

³ Fiamma Montezemolo reflexionando sobre la representación y la autorepresentación chicana recuerda que para los constructivistas el mundo, para poder ser percibido y vivido, tiene que adquirir un sentido; y para que el sentido no sea arbitrario tiene que nacer de la relación que establecen entre sí una serie de signos en el interior de un código socialmente fijado (Montezemolo 2004, 97).

⁴ En una oposición filosófica tradicional no encontramos una coexistencia pacífica de términos sino una violenta jerarquía en la que uno de los términos domina al otro axiológica o lógicamente. Por lo tanto deconstruir la oposición es, ante todo y en un momento dado, invertir la jerarquía (Culler 1982, 79-82).

ricano que, de residir en el propio territorio, se convirtió en el ‘Otro’ en el sudoeste norteamericano.

Scene from the Movie GIANT, sobre el que su autor estuvo meditando durante casi diez años,⁴ aparece constituido por 21 poesías articuladas en cinco partes. Como encabezando el poema aparece indicada la dicción: “Estos poemas relatan un incidente del pasado y están concebidos para leerse en secuencia,” podemos vincular el texto con el concepto de *modern sequence*, término utilizado por la crítica anglosajona para definir un poema en el que las acciones se manifiestan diegéticamente pero se alternan o confluyen en pasajes fundamentalmente líricos que tienden a interactuar con el todo en forma orgánica. En pocas palabras, un poema que, gracias a su extensión, va expresando la compleja música de sentimientos que envuelve un número de centros radiantes por medio de secuencias que progresivamente se van liberando de su marco narrativo o temático (Rosenthal y Gall, 1983).

Pero el concepto de *modern sequence* no es suficiente, como ha señalado Klaus Martens, para clasificar las formas poemáticas relacionadas con las principales experiencias poéticas de ámbito anglófono e hispanoparlante que se manifestaron a ambos lados del Atlántico en las primeras décadas del siglo pasado y caracterizadas, como en este caso, por una larga elaboración escrituraria y por una longitud mayor que la de una poesía (Martens 1986, 350-65). Más abarcador resulta el de “poema extenso,” en el que la extensión puede llegar a ser relativa, pero en el que la tensión compositiva debe incluir la “máxima variedad en la unidad” (Paz 1990, 12). Este tipo de tensión en la estructura de un poema es lo que aquí me interesa observar porque se enfrenta con una idea canónica de unidad al multiplicar los contextos emotivos, las voces, las perspectivas (Altieri 1978, 653) y, en este caso, las lenguas y los códigos semióticos.

2. Primera causa

En la primera lírica de *Scene*, una suerte de “poema pórtico,” el enunciante queda atrapado por la pantalla del televisor de su casa al ver que transmiten una película, *Giant*, que lo retrotrae a un pasado en el que había asistido como espectador — entonces adolescente —, a la misma proyección en un cine: “A scene from / the past has caught me in the act of living;” “Una escena del / pasado me ha sorprendido en el acto de vivir” (Villanueva 2005, 20-21).

De la saga cinematográfica de 1956, dirigida por George Stevens, basada en la novela homónima de Edna Ferber, e interpretada por Rock Hudson, Elizabeth Taylor y James Dean, Tino Villanueva extrapola la penúltima

⁴“It was in Madrid, in 1978, when I was interviewing Spanish poets for my research, that it finally clicked in my mind that I had a poem here,” he says. “What I didn’t know was that I had a book.” He wrote the first six poems on the basis of his memory of the scene in 1983 and finally bought a VCR and the film and completed the cycle of 21 poems.” (Susman 1994).

escena y gira obsesivamente alrededor de ella, convirtiéndola en el núcleo germinal de su poema y la parte de un todo que es algo más que la película.

What I have from 1956 is one instant at the Holiday
Theater, where a small dimension of a film, as in
a dream, became the feature of the whole.

Lo que llevo conmigo de 1956 es un instante en el Cine
Holiday, donde una breve escena, como en
un sueño, se convirtió en un distintivo de la película. (18-19)

Porque con *Scene*, como dice Ann Marie Stock, se cierra “el trecho que se para el espectador pasivo del enunciante activo” (Stock 1998, 243).⁵

En *Scene* cada lírica describe y se refiere, alternadamente, a acciones y personajes de la película (“The Serving of Water,” “The Benedicts [Up Close]”), al sujeto que la mira (“On the Subject of Staying Whole”), a la toma de la cámara filmadora (“Stop Action: Impression”) o al acto de escribir (“The Telling”).

Ahora, ya no en un cine del sudoeste de los Estados Unidos en 1956, sino en Boston en 1973, el yo lírico se ve viendo — en el presente y en el pasado — la escena en la que el propietario de un restaurante de carretera advierte entre la clientela la nuera y el nieto chicanos de los rancheros Benedict. Cuando éstos piden un helado para el nieto, Sarge, el propietario, responde que lo imaginaba prefiriendo *tamales*; y con su agresión niega el mestizaje anglo del niño para remitirlo al lugar de origen de sus ancestros maternos. Y cuando, sucesivamente, Sarge prohíbe la entrada a su local a una familia México-americana, esta última discriminación — dentro de la ficción cinematográfica — indigna a Bick Benedict al punto que sale a pelear contra Sarge, pero resulta perdedor.

Si al volver a ver *Giant*, el sujeto lírico adquiere conciencia del dolor que le produjo a los catorce años aquella escena que le parecía muy semejante a la vida misma y, concretamente, a la vida de un chicano,⁶ las últimas dos partes del poema se detienen en el proceso por el cual la sensación de derrota del jovencito al salir del cine se transforma en la afirmación escrituraria de un sujeto lírico que en la Palabra va a hallar el fundamento de su identidad.⁷

⁵ “The gap between the viewing ‘eye’ and the enunciating ‘I’, as the passive spectator develops into the active enunciator.”

⁶ Sin embargo, véanse los matices que establecen J.M. Lotman y Y. Tsivian (2001, 14-21), para referirse al arte cinematográfico como duplicación de la vida.

⁷ En su libro *Identidad y violencia* Amartya Sen considera que existe una gran cantidad de categorías a las que pertenecemos simultáneamente: “Puedo ser, al mismo tiempo, asiático, ciudadano indio, bengalí con antepasados bangladesíes, residente estadounidense o británico, economista, filósofo diletante, escritor, especialista en sánscrito, fuerte creyente en el laicismo y la democracia, hombre, feminista, heterosexual,

Villanueva explicita que está fundiendo el texto artístico con un texto de vida (la suya). De esta forma, la escena que se recorta de la saga elimina su carácter fragmentario en cuanto se inserta como un elemento fundamental en la personalidad del autor, delata una tendencia romántica y entra a formar parte de lo que podríamos llamar su “diario poético”.⁸ La escena, al dar lugar a una particular tensión entre la represión del recuerdo y la repetición y revisión del mismo, genera una identidad melancólica que, como dice Harold Bloom, “se rompe con cada nuevo poema fuerte y [...] a la vez es reconstituida por este mismo poema” (Bloom 2000, 49).

3. De la abyección a la escritura

El poema cuenta (Partes I, II y III) un “suceso”⁹ abyecto que se transforma en la causa desplazada y simbólica de una historia posterior (Partes IV y V). Lo abyecto — entendiendo por el mismo una mezcla de fobias y obsesiones racistas — es ese episodio de discriminación anglo dentro de lo que fue visto como una épica americana, épica basada en el dinero (*self-made man* hace una fortuna petrolífera) y en el *melting pot* (rudo texano y heredera del este tienen un hijo que estudia en Harvard y se casa con una chicana).

Pero lo abyecto funciona también en el sentido que le da Julia Kristeva. La crítica búlgara afirma que, a diferencia de la histeria en la que el yo expulsa completamente de sí el “objeto maligno,” el sujeto de la abyección “produce eminentemente cultura” porque “su síntoma es el rechazo y la reconstrucción de lenguajes” (Kristeva 1982, 51. La traducción es mía).

El yo lírico del poema al querer “volver a ver” una y otra vez con la memoria la causa de su trauma, descubre cómo, a partir del “suceso,” fue trasgrediendo ciertos límites: en el momento de la primera visión de la película mezcló el juicio con los afectos pero, al acercarse de nuevo a esa frontera de la que creía haberse separado sumiéndose en la pesadumbre (Parte II “Fallingrief of Unpleasure”), logra representar “otra cosa” (Parte V), en la que las dicotomías semánticas e ideológicas (que, en la Parte III, se representan en la luz y la sombra

defensor de los derechos de los gays y las lesbianas, con un estilo de vida no religioso, de origen hindú, no ser brahmán y no creer en la vida después del la muerte.” Aclara que en este tema hay dos aspectos para tener en cuenta: el primero consiste en reconocer que las identidades son en gran medida plurales, el segundo consiste en el hecho de que una persona tiene que elegir “explícita o implícitamente — la importancia relativa que dará, en un contexto particular, a las lealtades divergentes que compiten por ser prioritarias” (Sen 2007, 44).

⁸ Al respecto véase Lotman 1980, 230.

⁹ Hablo de “suceso” en el sentido utilizado por Roland Barthes en “Estructura del suceso,” es decir: “El ‘suceso’ o ‘fait divers’ [...] procede de una clasificación de lo inclasificable, es el desecho inorganizado de las noticias informes; su esencia es negativa, sólo empieza a existir allí donde el mundo deja de ser nombrado, sometido a un catálogo conocido [...]; en una palabra es una información monstruosa, análoga a todos los hechos excepcionales o insignificantes, es decir, anómicos, que suelen clasificarse púdicamente bajo el epígrafe de los Varia” (Barthes 1967, 225).

con las que se encuadra la pelea entre Sarge y Bick), se disuelven. Y a medida que se disuelve también el recuerdo de la escena cinematográfica, se pone en juego “una metamorfosis del sujeto con la que se extraen de los significantes elegidos un vigor inventivo y un heroísmo completamente nuevo” (Saint Girons 2006, 214)¹⁰ — como vemos en la Parte V del poema.

En “Fade-Out-Fade-In” el espectador adolescente a la salida del cine, va transformando el ritmo de su caminata y su respiración en la acentuación alternada del verso yámbico. Y de ser alguien que no era nada más que su nombre y que, en la derrota no poseía siquiera el escudo de su fe, con un juego de palabras, enlaza el nombre del verso (*Iambic*) con el tema de la propia identidad (*I am*). Inmolando el Silencio, el sujeto lírico regresa a un nudo de la memoria para recuperarlo, y cada paso de la historia, o poema, es un anhelo o “inspiración” para el siguiente, de modo tal que, gradualmente, se va creando la extensión del *long poem*.

[...] And
 what I took in that afternoon took root and a
 quiet vehemence arose. It arose in language —
 the legitimate deduction of the years thought out.
 Now I am because I write: I know it in my heart
 and know it in the sound iambics of my fist that
 mark across the paper with the sun's exacting rays.

[...] Y
 lo que capté aquella tarde dejó huella y surgió en mí
 una silenciosa vehemencia. Surgió en el lenguaje —
 la legítima deducción de los años meditados.
 Ahora soy porque escribo: lo sé en mi corazón
 y lo sé por los firmes yámbicos de mi puño que
 marcan el paso por encima del papel con los precisos rayos del sol. (84-85)

En *Scene from the Movie GIANT* el recuerdo de una escena representada que había quedado al margen de la vida del poeta — pero que ahora se transforma en “primera causa” de su escritura¹¹ — se va tejiendo con el recuerdo auditivo de su caminar por las calles del pueblo en un atardecer de 1956.

¹⁰ “[...] una metamorfosi del soggetto pronta ad estrarre dai significanti d'elezione un vigore inventivo e un eroismo del tutto inediti.” La traducción al español es mía.

¹¹ En la parte I de *Scene*, “Claiming the air” “Apropiándose del aire,” el poeta inicia a contar, ya no la entrada de los Benedict en el restaurante, sino la de la familia México-Americana que podría haber sido la suya propia, y aparecen estos versos: “The camera's eye blinks, adjusts its / Focus to the segment that follows, the one grown around / Me like a lingering first cause.” “La lente de la cámara parpadea, ajusta el / enfoque al fragmento que sigue, el que ha ido creciendo como / una persistente primera causa en mi mente” (34-35). Meditar sobre una ‘primera causa’ biográfica que se transforma en incentivo de la escritura, es algo recurrente en Villanueva. De hecho da el título a un volumen en español de 1999. En ese libro, la “primera causa,” aunque no aparezca “narrada,” existe para motivar y sustentar las palabras y la identidad de quien las emite: “Entretanto, me dejo llevar / por la condición de la memoria / — primera causa que me nombra — / que me persuade a escribir sobre lo escrito. / Ser y seguir siendo: / soy el que sólo existe más / si está escribiendo” (Villanueva 1999a, 14).

Luego de una sensación de levedad, de vacío (“*Observer and observed*”¹²) y de a-significación, el yo “ligero de equipaje” — como diría Machado —, al desprender “your daily / self from the lost fragments of the past” (86-87), con el “pesar del tiempo” ancla su salvación y va reconstituyendo, del contexto al texto y de la realidad a la profundidad de su alma, su integridad. Una integridad cuya amalgama es paradójica, pues está constituida por dos tiempos, dos lenguas y dos culturas, separadas por una frontera porosa, en la que una no quiere ser asimilada por la otra, dominante. Será a través de ese “Otro” escriturario del que hablaba Rimbaud, que Villanueva logra recuperar la unidad tendida entre momentos temporales diversos y fragmentos culturales dispares.

4. *Una composición híbrida*

El poema se transforma en un cuerpo textual en el que el acto de habla del sujeto lírico, no sólo evidencia, sino que “produce” ante nuestros ojos/oídos, el mestizaje que lo caracteriza y lo fundamenta, en una exploración del umbral que lo separa del Otro: esa frontera que separa al chicano del anglo y que divide el yo presente de la enunciación del yo que se sitúa en el enunciado.

Una exploración que se trasluce en la concepción misma del poema de Villanueva. De hecho, en la estructura de *Scene* se articulan dos códigos diversos — pues el lenguaje de uno (la literatura) retoma y reproduce el lenguaje del otro (el cine) que, ya de por sí, es un fenómeno que resume, desde un punto de vista semiótico, varias lenguas.¹³

[...] Now I think: *the poem's the thing wherein I'll etch the semblance of the film.* [...]

[...] Pienso ahora: *el poema es donde la esencia de la película mejor podrá grabar.* [...] (82-83)

Así pues, el texto es, voluntariamente, la trasposición de una forma artística (el cine) en otra: el cine, por ejemplo, aparece en el léxico de algunos títulos e incide en el *design* de cada poema porque, como William Carlos Williams, Tino Villanueva piensa que el sentido de una lírica puede obtenerse prestando atención al diseño, al aspecto visual de la misma.¹⁴ En *Scene* las estrofas se transforman en unidades visuales, consistentes, repetitivas de tres en tres, de cuatro en cuatro, etc., que van pasando frente a

¹² “Something weightless / gathers around me, while my body, unpoised, / holds its forward momentum / in silence and slow time.” “Algo ingrávido / se forma a mi alrededor, mientras mi cuerpo, sin plomo / sostiene el impulso hacia adelante / en silencio y a tiempo lento” (74-75).

¹³ Cine: fotografía en movimiento + discurso verbal, por ejemplo. Cf. Lotman 1980, 53.

los ojos del lector como “encuadres” unidos unos con otros por el *enjambement* para diferenciarse de la fotografía y asemejarse a una secuencia cinematográfica. O, como en “The Existence of Sarge,” vemos una estrofa de versos largos transformarse en un solo bloque textual comparable a la prosa,¹⁵ con el que se quiere representar, irónicamente, no sólo el peso emotivo de la imagen cinematográfica del propietario del infimo local en la psique del adolescente chicano, sino también su potencia física y social. Y sin embargo, el llenar con la escritura la página en blanco, no quiere ser sólo un *analogon* de la fuerza física de quien se describe, sino también demostrar el poder de la Palabra. Algo que el espectador adolescente descubre cuando Sarge concluye la pelea con Bic tirándole encima un cartel al que se acerca el zoom de la cámara:

WE RESERVE
THE RIGHT
TO REFUSE SERVICE
TO ANYONE

Al concepto de composición híbrida se agrega, asimismo, el que el poema sea plurilingüe,¹⁶ algo que lo centra en la modernidad del siglo XX.¹⁷ De hecho en *Scene* advertimos un *code switching* del inglés al español en “Text for a *Vaquero*: Flashback,” o en “The Telling.” En esta poesía que combina tercetos con dísticos, la palabra quiere transformarse en un *analogon* de la existencia, que no es *stasis* sino un ansioso caminar por los recuerdos para adelantarse a ellos y verlos bajo otra luz: vivir es escribir y al escribir se recupera la ceniza ardiente del pasado y se anticipa la vida por venir. De esta forma las frases en español (“*vida que no olvida*”

¹⁴ Esta atención, que en la modernidad había iniciado con Mallarmé y continúa con Apollinaire, se refuerza con Williams, para quien componer objetos verbales claramente delineados en el espacio llegó a constituir la razón misma de un texto poético. Es sabido además, que Williams fue un apasionado por trasponer otras formas de arte en la poesía (por ejemplo, al ver los movimientos de Isadora Duncan quiso transmitir la experiencia estética que sintió y, en ese momento, se dio cuenta de que debía inventar una forma nueva). Cf. Dijkstra 1978, 3 y 11.

¹⁵ William Carlos Williams se ha referido a la “ligereza” de la poesía frente al peso de la prosa (“I can go no further to say that poetry feeds the imagination and prose the emotions; poetry liberates the words from their emotional implications, prose confirms them in it.” (Williams 1970, 145).

¹⁶ Un plurilingüismo que no es exclusivo de la literatura chicana, como señala el mismo Villanueva refiriéndose al aspecto lingüístico en su ensayo *Rupturas y alianzas en la poesía bilingüe chicana*, recordando las jarchas o ciertas poesías de Chaucer escritas en inglés, francés y latín o las poesías escritas en vasco y español (Villanueva 1999b, 185-87, y también en el “Prólogo” a Villanueva 1994).

¹⁷ Recordemos que Steiner, observando el multilingüismo característico de la obra de los escritores más prominentes de nuestra época, considera que la literatura del siglo XX bien puede ser considerada multilingüe (Steiner 1973, 18).

“*la vida revivida*,” “*vida sacada de cada clamor*”) adquieren el significado de un renacimiento y una liberación.

Pero el plurilingüismo reverbera asimismo en los poemas escritos exclusivamente en inglés: por ejemplo, si traducimos este título “The Slow Weight of Time” al español, como lo hizo Cabañas Alamán (“El lento pesar del tiempo”), podemos pensar que el título inglés pudo haber sido concebido en español, porque el desvío de la *langue* hacia la *parole* se produce en este idioma. Veamos: el inglés usa una sola palabra (*Weight*) para indicar el sustantivo “peso” y el infinitivo sustantivado “pesar,” mientras que en la lengua española existen dos (“peso” y “pesar”). Y es en español que, por medio de la paranomasia, se produce un desvío de la *langue*, pues se ignora el cliché “*pasar del tiempo*,” para introducir la novedad del “*pesar del tiempo*.” En español, además, se introduce un matiz semántico que se relaciona con la experiencia dolorosa del adolescente ya que “pesar” une al significado del “peso” del tiempo, la “tristeza” que conlleva el mismo.

5. *El poema extenso como depósito de valores*

El autor, al elegir un fragmento de una historia que de la literatura pasa al cine, para transformarlo nuevamente en literatura, nos está demostrando que los signos están vacíos de significado y lo adquieren en un mundo de relaciones. Porque la saga, que en un sistema de relaciones sociales y en un código semiótico determinado (el cine) había sido vista como perteneciente al género épico (y el título de la novela y de la película son indicativos), al ser contada por otro enunciante que recorta de ella un “suceso” para insertarlo en otro código, se vacía de su sentido originario. En el poema de Tino Villanueva, la saga cambia sentido cuando el poeta encuadra una sola escena ínfima de la misma (seis minutos frente a tres horas y media de la película). Y el nuevo sentido se enriquece aún más cuando en el poema se recupera, por medio de un *flash back* ausente en la película, un héroe olvidado, el *vaquero*. Este personaje, de acentuada concreción histórica, forma parte de la estructura interna de una colectividad, la chicana, y literariamente diverge, en cuanto motivo, del *cowboy* que por aparecer tradicionalmente vinculado a los motivos del duelo y del combate, pertenece a otra serie: la de la naturaleza de los conflictos (Lotman 1980, 152-53).

En “Text for a *Vaquero*: Flashback” vemos de joven al anciano que Sarge ha intentado echar de mala manera de su local. El poema, que recuerda un vaquero en completo control de la propia situación en un rodeo, compensa la intensa negatividad que proponía el anterior “Claiming the air.” Esta lírica focalizaba — con la neutralidad de la cámara cinematográfica — los fotogramas de la expulsión de la familia chicana del restaurante, aunque su título aludiese a esa falta de aire que sintió el joven espectador ante la arrogancia de Sarge, y que ahora el sujeto poemático reclama, para transformarlo en pneuma creativo.

El hecho de que el *flashback* cumpla la función de recordar al lector la existencia de un sujeto social que la cultura anglo ha olvidado, pues el vaquero es el antecedente del *cowboy* y el detentor de su paternidad cultural,

justifica además el que el poema en inglés mantenga la palabra *vaquero* y el resto del vocabulario (*sombrero, chaparreras*) que lo caracteriza en español: para el sujeto lírico no hay otra lengua para definir o nombrar quien “Owned the language of a roundup” “Poseía el lenguaje del rodeo” (36-37). El vaquero, una figura mítica para la cultura México-americana a pesar de que “time denies him what he’s been” “el tiempo le niega lo que ha sido.” (38-39) es representado con una imagen *sub specie aeternitatis* similar a la del viejo gaucho en *El sur* de Borges: “[...] a separate fact / a silhouetted stoic in his saddle / like some vigilant bronzed-god / pondering his fate.” “[...] una realidad aparte / una estoica figura en la montura como algún dios bronceado vigilante / reflexionando sobre su destino” (36 a 39); y, en la exaltación de esa figura, el texto se relaciona con el *corrido* — canción tradicional mejicana y sobre todo tejana — que cantaba la gesta de los héroes de la frontera.

Conclusión

Así pues, *Scene from the Movie GIANT* se propone deconstruir la épica de la cultura angloamericana para poner en primer plano las emociones que suscita lo abyecto de la misma; y al seguir de otra manera los pasos de esa historia, al poner el fragmento del “cuento” en un “canto,” el poeta dirá que el mestizaje constituye un rescate si en él entran en juego con paridad los diversos sujetos sociales y raciales que lo componen. En este sentido el poema extenso apunta a una “experiencia moral”¹⁸ y en un mundo globalizado pero fragmentario, constituye un depósito de valores.¹⁹

Pero en *Scene from the Movie GIANT* la tensión que caracteriza al poema largo no se encarna en una voz “poseída” o grandiosa, como la de *Alturas de Machu Picchu* o, por momentos, la de *Anabase*. Es, en cambio, una voz “recuperada” del Silencio aunque corroída por la ironía,²⁰ cuyo propósito es desmenuzar la tendencia totalizante y abarcadora de la épica. Como ha señalado Alfred Arteaga citando a Bajtín, los géneros poseen una historia; ellos contaminan y aparecen contaminados por el espíritu del tiempo; representan la tradición a través de la cual el presente renegocia la subjetividad (Arteaga 1997, 127). Además, luego de las reflexiones de Lukács sobre el problema de la historia de las formas y los géneros literarios, ha quedado bastante claro que en la modernidad se vuelve imposible reconstituir el sentido homogéneo y unitario de la antigua épica en la que aparecían conjugadas experiencia y trascendencia (Lukács 1994, 46).

¹⁸ Estas palabras las utiliza Pere Gimferrer para referirse a la intencionalidad que mueve la escritura de Octavio Paz en sus poemas mayores (Gimferrer 1998, 19).

¹⁹ Peter Baker considera que los *long poems* de la modernidad cumplen esta función. Son un continente textual en el que se colocan una serie de valores del contexto (Baker 1972).

²⁰ De hecho ya la crítica ha notado que “hay una ironía que subyace constantemente” en la obra de Tino Villanueva (Bruce-Novoa 1999, 255).

Quizás por esta razón, Villanueva recoge una forma, la del poema extenso, para reescribir, sobre una manifestación emblemática de la cultura anglo, una historia mínima, un fragmento de historia en el que se reconoce una comunidad; y lo hace, sobre todo, para explicar el proceso por el cual llega a 'individuarse' un sujeto subalterno en la modernidad. Si desde Mallarmé la palabra poética termina en el Silencio, y el lenguaje se ha vuelto una prisión en la que el hombre está solo, Tino Villanueva expresa, por lo contrario, que el grito mudo ha quedado en un momento de la infancia, mientras que el lenguaje es la propia casa desde cuya puerta se advierte el perfil del yo.

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EL POETA CHICANO Y LA CIUDAD

María Cecilia Graña

1. El motivo de la gran metrópolis en la literatura chicana es reciente y se refiere, en particular, a ciudades de la llamada MexAmérica, como Los Angeles (donde la cultura chicana se definió mejor y más tempranamente), San Francisco, Austin, Albuquerque (Valenzuela Arce 2003, 168-70) aunque incorpora también las ciudades adonde muchos habitantes del sudoeste de los Estados Unidos emigraron, como Nueva York o Chicago. Así pues, en las últimas décadas del siglo XX, los símbolos comunitarios chicanos, de estar representados por la madre tierra y Aztlán, pasan a ser representados gradualmente, por lo urbano: “Whereas earlier the natural environment provided inspiration for the symbolic expression of collective identity, now the built environment has assumed that role” (Kaup 1997, 363). Sin embargo, los textos poéticos registran con un cierto malestar el abandono del espacio natural, porque se lo siente vinculado con un tipo de vida más auténtico. Así lo hace Juan Felipe Herrera en “La 24 y el otoño,” en el que la ciudad esconde el profundo dolor y la culpa de haberse arrancado de sí la parte ‘natural’ del mundo:

los miles de troncos amputados
debajo de la sala
de la ciudad
siguen sangrando hiel. (en Binder 1986, 93-94)

Y como las primeras representaciones chicanas de una urbe no logran conciliar “the machine with the garden,” los sujetos poéticos perfilan un “tú” “contra la ciudad,” como en otra poesía de Felipe Herrera, “Black Tenor on Powell Street:”

Whispering
Dreaming
Pointing

Against the city through the fog
Your X silhouette. (en Binder 1986, 87)

En la obra de Richard Vargas, la carga de negatividad que condensa la urbe se refiere, en cambio, a los desechos y a los materiales destruidos



de la misma que, por momentos, se transforman en una engañosa ilusión para sus habitantes (“the broken glasses in the gutters give the illusion of roads / decorated with jeweled glitter and precious shine / a conquistador wet dream”). Por esta razón, a esa “City of the Lost” la Llorona en lugar de llegar llorando (*weeping*) como usualmente hace, entra “barriendo” (*sweeping*) para, finalmente, encontrar allí a sus propios hijos:

when la llorona comes sweeping
down on the city from the sandia mountains to the east
she races up and down its streets and alleys
creating a fierce ugly wind blowing litter
and garbage across the desert into arizona
legend has it she is looking
for her long lost children

and here
she has found them.

(Vargas 2011)

2. Desde las grandes novelas dickensianas o balzacianas, la urbe se representa con una alternancia; por un lado, es el espacio de la ilusión, al cual se sueña con llegar mientras se vive arraigado a la tierra o a la vida de los pueblitos de provincia; por otro, la urbe es el lugar en el que se han perdido las esperanzas. Así pues, la gran ciudad en la poesía chicana aparece en una dialéctica que hoy ya constituye un topos literario.

Por ejemplo, en “Casi bíblica ciudad: Chicago” de Tino Villanueva, de la gran urbe se tienen noticias gracias a la radio o al cine; no obstante esto, el sujeto poético, en una suerte de desdoblamiento, sueña con estar viviendo allí.

[...]: yo era el niño
desdoblado por la paradoja
de dormir en casa y de vivir
igual que un amante anónimo
en la casi bíblica ciudad
que con fuerza real hablaba
en muchas lenguas. (Villanueva 2002, 100)

También Sylvia González en “Chicana evolution,” un poema extenso en tres partes, habla de Nueva York como de un lugar deseado más que como una ciudad real y vivida. La ve como el ámbito ideal para su labor literaria, desde la misma perspectiva con que Tino Villanueva representaba a Chicago:

Last night I had visions
of New York and Greenwich Village
where artists gather.
[...]

My friends tell me I waste energies
 on bohemian fantasies because I've read books
 About Paris and Pernod,
 sidewalk cafes and cappuccino. (en Fisher 1980, 418-426)

En cambio, en “La gran ciudad” de Angela de Hoyos,

And every day the price of hope goes up.
 Every day in the bleak pit
 the sun casts a thinner shadow
 (algún día nos olvidará por completo.)
 [...]

 So where is the paradise? (de Hoyos 1976, 23)

Con su interrogación, el sujeto poético nos confirma que la ciudad-paraíso en la que hasta ese momento había creído, no existe. Y al advertir que uno de los términos de la dialéctica agustiniana (Ciudad del hombre / Ciudad de dios) ha desaparecido, seculariza definitivamente el ámbito de la metrópolis moderna.

3. Pero cuando las líneas verticales empiezan a predominar sobre un paisaje horizontal, en el momento que la “pastoral americana” desaparece, reemplazada por imágenes de hierro y cemento, en los textos poéticos mexicanoamericanos la ciudad puede mostrarse, paradójicamente, como el lugar de una conciliación. Y en el interior de una metrópolis deshumanizada y frenética, se recorta un lugar apoyado en valores y costumbres que se remontan al pasado rural o pueblerino de sus habitantes. En efecto, el concepto de familia, los juegos infantiles, la vida amigable de la calle, un cierto ritmo humano de vida, una cierta religiosidad de raigrambre cristiana, las fiestas, son todos elementos constitutivos de un *setting* que, sin cortar sus vínculos con “lo mexicano” de los pequeños pueblos de frontera (Cf. de León y Cuéllar 1996, 363-78), ha logrado establecerse en el barrio de una gran ciudad.

En este sentido se puede afirmar que la poesía chicana urbana es una poesía *situada* y, como la restante nueva poesía latinoamericana, tiene que ser examinada con una lente que pasa, por ejemplo, por las categorías de género, migrancia y raza. Como se ha observado, “En una cultura de la imagen veloz y ‘des-anclada’ territorialmente, las formas poéticas invitan a operar con texturas donde cobran significación los mínimos detalles” (Cárcamo-Huachante y Mazzotti 2003, 15).

En la poesía chicana el barrio es un motivo que, indirectamente, se revela como el espacio de una discriminación residencial producida por los habitantes anglos de la gran urbe — aunque hoy, como señala Charles Tatum, no todas las comunidades chicanas ni todos sus barrios son, en la gran ciudad, pobres o masificados (Tatum 2006, 97). Asimismo, el barrio se vuelve espacio de una salvación identitaria, porque establece una

continuidad entre un presente urbano vinculado con el mundo anglófono y un antes no metropolitano, representativo de una filiación mexicana e hispanófono. Y en ese pequeño espacio encastrado dentro de una gran metrópolis se siguen cumpliendo los rituales del pueblo natal, ritualidad que se afirma (Cf. Bruce-Novoa 1990, 95-96) en las raíces de la cultura y de la comunidad originaria encarnada en la primera plural de este poema de Alurista:

Nuestro barrio
 [...]

 En las tardes
 Barriendo
 Dust about
 Swept away in the wind of our breath
 El suspiro de dios por nuestras calles. (Alurista 1979, 7)

En “Roosevelt Rd./1200 South/Chicago” de Sandra Cisneros, el yo poético hace revivir la vida comunitaria de un barrio mestizo de Chicago al incluir en su voz las que pueblan la calle: así escuchamos un diálogo entre niños; la vecina que protesta porque le han robado la *sour cream*; la madre que advierte de los peligros de la vida urbana; los adolescentes que saben cómo evitarlos. Si la pobreza acerca a los vecinos y les hace vivir intensamente los pequeños detalles de la vida cotidiana, asimismo les recuerda el pasado del lugar, como lo hace el mural con ese enorme pollo con un ojo casi humano — “the big chicken with an eye like a human’s / that the kids downstairs had drowned” (Binder 1986, 45) — que las diversas capas de pintura no han logrado cancelar.

Leyendo el corpus de la poesía chicana de los años sesenta y setenta, el barrio constituye, pues, lo que Bruce Novoa define como *axis mundi*, un espacio que ordena la cosmogonía de la propia cultura (Bruce-Novoa 1990, 152), a tal punto que, aunque haya desaparecido arrasado por el progreso y la tecnología, como en “Free Way 280” de Lorna Dee Cervantes, sus restos perviven en el recuerdo y en las actitudes cotidianas de algunos habitantes de la metrópolis:

But under the fake windsounds of the open lanes,
 in the abandoned lots below, new grasses sprout,
 wild mustard remembers, old gardens
 come back stronger than they were,
 trees have been left standing in their yards.
 Albaricoqueros, cerezos, nogales...
 Viejitas come here with paper bags to gather greens.
 Espinaca, verdolagas, yerbabuena ...

En el poema prevalece un sentimiento de pérdida: “without sun,” “without the smell of tomatoes burning / on swing shift in the greasy summer air”

(Tatum 1990, 557); sin embargo el espacio del barrio, ahora transformado “en los campos extraños de esta ciudad,” todavía mantiene su capacidad de recomponer lo que la vida moderna ha escindido: “where I’ll find it, that part of me / mown under / like a corpse / or a loose seed” (558).

La nostalgia define el barrio en el que se ha transcurrido la infancia o la adolescencia; el lugar en el que los jóvenes chicanos empezaban — en la visión de “A Trip through the Mind Jail” de Raul Salinas — a ejercitar su sentido artístico dentro de una sociedad extraña, que los reprimía:

Neighborhood of could be artists
 Who plied their talents on the pool’s
 Bath house walls
 intricately adorned
 With esoteric symbols of their cult:
 [...] (en Binder 1986, 142)

El barrio se puede configurar también a través de una dialéctica de rechazo y atracción, como vemos en “North Avenue/1600 North” de Sandra Cisneros. Aquí el yo funciona como testigo (“I know you,” “I have seen...”) porque en esta calle ha vivido, pero de ella ha querido huir. La actitud emocional de la poetisa que acarrea consigo recuerdos autobiográficos, se resuelve con un giro de tuerca retórico, pues la calle aparece personificada como una mujer y el sujeto poético, invirtiendo los términos, hace que la misma sienta lo que él todavía siente por el lugar. Las emociones contradictorias del hablante, en el presente de la enunciación, demuestran que no logra olvidarla, aunque, al mismo tiempo, se avergüence de provenir de allí (“Aged Avenue, I am ashamed to be seen with you”). Esta es la razón por la que la calle se imagina como una mujer “de atracción fatal,” apasionada, obsesionante y que abraza al yo hasta casi ahogarlo:

North Avenue, why do you wrap your arms
 So thick around my neck
 And refuse to let me go. (Cisneros 1978)¹

Sin embargo, con el pasar de los años y al acentuarse las contradicciones étnicas, de clase y económicas, que generan la violencia,² el centro simbólico de la vida chicana entró en crisis. Es lo que muestra “Canción de la Bahía” de Raul Salinas, donde se habla de la frustración juvenil en un barrio chicano de San Francisco. Porque si antes los “could be artists” ejercitaban su talento de *writers* y muralistas, ahora

¹ Hay un comentario del poema en Cota-Cárdenas 1981, 16.

² Como ha sido señalado: “from the Zoot Suit riots to the Chicano Moratorium, to the Los Angeles Riots after Rodney King, [...] the majority of people arrested were hispanos” (Arteaga 1997, 119).

[...] we all cry
 Because we feel the devastation
 Of the streets on
 Lost latino younglings
 Future músicos / pintores / poetas
 (Soldiers all)
 Who will never be. (en Binder 1986, 149)

Una situación a la que se sumó la represión de las instituciones metropolitanas. Recordemos que éstas, ayudadas por la prensa y la opinión pública WASP, transformaron a los jóvenes chicanos, de diestros bailarines e hijos afectuosos en — como los define Tino Villanueva — “A moving target for *la jura* brutality, / Brown anathema of high school principals” (Binder 1986, 211) sometidos a una ley injusta: “La ley de Los Angeles (y el orden)” — como resume el título de un poema de Danny Romero (Rosa 1996, 59-63).

Y el pachuco y la pachuca seducen a varios poetas (Tino Villanueva, José Montoya, Raul Salinas, Alivia Nada, Danny Romero, Inés Hernández Tovar, entre otros) porque, aunque emergen del centro simbólico del chicanismo, el barrio, paradójicamente acaban siendo el emblema de una cultura híbrida, cuya especificidad espacial se encuentra en una zona intermedia entre naciones o culturas, la MexAmérica, que saca fuerza de presiones contrarias y contradictorias, sentidas durante mucho tiempo al sur de la frontera. (Valenzuela Arce 2003, 168)

4. Cuando el barrio pierde su condición axial, la gran ciudad empieza a ser representada siempre con mayor frecuencia como lugar alienado y alienante donde se producen surreales acercamientos de personas, objetos y situaciones que vuelven la ciudad análoga a un cadáver exquisito, como sucede, por ejemplo, en “Deep in the bowels of the cast-iron city” de Ronnie Burk (Rosa 1986, 43-44).

En muchos casos el caos y el frenesí urbano se transmiten formalmente por medio de la enumeración caótica que va devorando lugares y personajes en los que lo híbrido no significa “fronterizo” sino, en cambio, “babélico.” Así sucede en “Urban life” de Xelina, poema en el que lo urbano se elenca en versos muy breves hasta llegar a estar constituidos por una sola palabra, la conjunción “and,” cuya función es la de unir los fragmentos dispersos de la ciudad:

city blues pay tribute to:
 massage parlors
 sauna rooms
 peep shows
 and
 cheap thrills
 lesbians

homosexuals
 hustlers
 playgirls
 and
 playboys
 pseudo-marxists
 nazis
 hare krishnas
 drug centers
 A.A. centers
 H.E.L.P: centers:
 all avant garde
 Pimping fringe benefits
 (en Fisher 1980, 384)

Curiosamente, estas formas poéticas “situadas” en el barrio, en una calle, en una casa, al instalarse en el web, reubican en un espacio globalizado una determinada experiencia de ese ámbito comunitario. Es el caso de *Chicanoando*, poema extenso de Alberto Roblest, mexicano emigrado en los Estados Unidos. Al ‘colgar’ su poema en internet, Roblest hace participar a la cultura de la red de su experiencia de migración por urbes norteamericanas donde el habla del yo hispanoamericano comienza a perderse (“Mi español es rebajado a segundo nivel / Cuarto o sexto piso por el ascensor”) para ser sustituida por otra lengua, avasallada a su vez por los decibeles exasperados de la gran metrópolis resumidos en el ritmo sincopado del catálogo:

cláxones / alaridos / sirenas / fuego en constante
 repetición / ventas *–money* / silbatos / cuerdas
 cascos de caballo / de helicóptero / rock and roll
 jazz / y pintura en aerosol / *graffitti* / ruidos
 Y mi idioma es ya un muerto dentro de un ataúd
 Ruidos / ruidos más que ideas
 más que gentes / más que *musseums* / más
 Que el mismísimo Nueva York. (Roblest n.d.)

5. Para las poetisas feministas México-americanas, la urbe se vuelve un espacio de libertad y de creación. Por eso mismo, las imágenes con las que representan a la metrópolis, se entrelazan con gran fuerza y autoconciencia en un desafío que modifica los mitos identitarios que configuran a la mujer. En algunas poesías de Gloria Anzaldúa, por ejemplo, es evidente que la gran ciudad es un lugar autobiográfico, símbolo de libertad y de expresión creativa y sexual. En la gran ciudad el sujeto poético femenino logra separarse de los arquetipos de su cultura (la Virgen de Guadalupe y la Malinche) y de los estereotipos que le han adosado los anglos, para crearse a sí misma. Y esa nueva persona, al descubrir ese nuevo espacio de libertad, queda admirada asimismo del poder de la tecnología, como nos lo cuenta el sujeto poético de “Interface:”

The first time she rode the subway
 I had to drag her out.
 I suppose it was the noise,
 The colors flashing by, the odd people
 That held her open-mouthed gaze. (Anzaldúa 1999, 174)

Sin embargo, la ‘nueva mujer’ chicana no olvida su Tierra Madre y por eso, con una suerte de “realismo mágico” incide en el contexto urbano reintroduciendo en el interior de un apartamento la naturaleza arrancada de cuajo para fundar la ciudad: “She had snow in the livingroom / and a tree in the bathtub” (174).

6. Una perspectiva diferente de las ciudades del Sudoeste de los Estados Unidos la han ofrecido, en los últimos años, los poetas performeros. La ciudad, para estos cultivadores del arte de lo efímero y percedero, se transforma en teatro y espacio primordial. Los nuevos poetas, convencidos de que un “archivo” (documentos, monumentos) no logra transmitir el espíritu dinámico de una urbe, pretenden encontrarlo en la dialéctica entre lo fijo y lo variable, y entre lo duradero y lo percedero, dialéctica con la que se revive un “repertorio” — “la memoria corporal que circula a través de las performances” (Taylor 1996, 272), en este caso poéticas. Con los poetas performeros se recuperan discursivamente las formas de vida urbana de un instante y con ellos, los “taco shops” donde se concreta un flujo que va del pueblo al artista y del artista al pueblo, se vuelven sitios en los que se concentran los valores de la simbología chicana que antes se apoyaban en el barrio (Alvarez 2006). Porque “the paradigms that explain barrio landscapes have to take into account new sets of global forces that both expand and restrict the political opportunities for reasserting control over space and its inscribed inequalities [...]” (Herzog apud Alvarez 2006, 226).

Uno de estos poetas, Rubén Martínez en “Poema de Ciudad n° 5,” representa la urbe como un lugar ambivalente: es el espacio de la impostura pero también aquél en el que los opuestos se concilian; como lo manifiesta la mezcla de voces que emergen de distintas etnias, culturas y clases sociales en el momento de un encuentro sexual-amoroso:

mi color marrón, mi polla, mi camarero, mi revolucionario latino, mi amante latino, mi odio al gringo, mi amante gringa, mi intelecto de clase media, mi indioasesinado, mi español místico y altivo, mi rudeza gitana;

tu barrio residencial, tus recuerdos judíos, tu instituto americano, tu aspecto a lo revista Cosmopolitan, tu mujer solitaria, tu mujer violada, tu dolor de mujer y autodesprecio, tu sexo convertido en una cárcel, tus pies, tus pies, tu pies ... (en Rosa 1996, 99-100)³

³ Nótese que en la versión anglófona del poema “tus pies” se ha transformado en “tu piel,” como para subrayar, quizás, el concepto de lo variable y cambiante del género ‘performance’: “my brown, my cock, my busboy, my Latin Revolutionary, /

7. He querido efectuar este recorrido poético-urbano porque el tema de la ciudad en la literatura chicana ha sido tratado poco por la crítica, si exceptuamos algunos artículos de Monika Kaup (1997), De Cuéllar y León (1996) y Margarita Cota-Cárdenas (1981). Como hemos visto, aunque la imagen de la urbe aparezca, en la mayoría de los casos, cargada de negatividad, adquiere un perfil positivo como lugar deseado para quien quiere ampliar los propios horizontes. En las grandes ciudades del sudoeste de los Estados Unidos se rescata, además, una suerte de *locus amoenus*, el barrio, ya que allí se logra representar la vida urbana en modo análogo a la del pequeño pueblo o de la comunidad rural México-americana. Y el barrio, centro de la experiencia chicana, aunque ubicado en la periferia de una gran urbe y con un poder aglutinador de positividad que, a veces, dura poco, adquiere — por ser una suerte de espacio sacro donde se repiten una serie de rituales — una potencia estabilizadora de los valores que sostienen la Raza. Su posterior vaciamiento y reducción en ruinas lo vuelve un lugar connotado por la nostalgia y la melancolía. La ciudad contemporánea irrumpe entonces, poderosamente en los textos poéticos chicanos que sólo atinan a catalogar el frenesí y a subrayar la absurda experiencia del vivir urbano.

Sin embargo, si en esta última representación la identidad chicana se ve avasallada por el caos y el rumor de la gran metrópolis, en las imágenes creadas por las escritoras feministas y *queer*, la urbe adquiere una positividad alternativa, pues se vuelve el espacio que da lugar a una nueva identidad femenina. Sin embargo, la nueva mujer chicana no desea separarse completamente de sus raíces originarias e intenta, con la imaginación, hacer ingresar nuevamente en un horizonte de cemento y hierro, la naturaleza.

Con los poetas performers que se insertan en un contexto más que urbano, globalizante y de errancia, la metrópolis fracturada se recompone por medio de las performances celebradas en los “taco shops;” allí la materialidad de la comida — marca identitaria y de clase — se conjuga con la espiritualidad de la poesía, aunque esos poetas inviertan, en un juego de palabras, los términos. “Read Tacos / Eat Poetry.” Y la poesía canta, a la vez que la propia condición también la conciliación de fuerzas opuestas (étnicas, culturales) en las jóvenes generaciones estadounidenses.

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my Latin / Lover, my gringo hater, my gringo lover, my middle class / intellect, my assassinated Indian, my mystical and haughty / Spaniard, my gitano coarseness; / ... / your suburb, your Jewish memory, your American high / school, your / Cosmopolitan looks, your woman alone, your woman violated, your / woman's pain and self-hatred, your pussy turned prison and / your / skin, your skin, your skin...” (Rosa 1996, 102).

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LATE RENAISSANCE ROOTS OF RELIGIOUS ARCHITECTURE IN SOUTHWEST ARIZONA

Francesco Gurrieri

Religious architecture rooted in the Late Renaissance is to be found throughout America, particularly in Mexico, in large parts of California, New Mexico and Arizona as well as in most of Latin America.

Renaissance and baroque architecture in Europe has always intrigued me from its earliest manifestations in Florence to its spread and diversification in countries beyond the Alps, in Bohemia, throughout the Iberian peninsula — and eventually in the Americas.

The religious architecture of the Americas is firmly rooted in the renaissance and baroque culture of Europe. The Renaissance began and was centred on Florence: in the architecture of Filippo Brunelleschi, in the painting of Masaccio and in the sculpture of Donatello. The Spanish interpretation of the Baroque, later exported to the New World, elaborated on the language developed by the artists of the Renaissance. From the Mannerism, begun by the great Michelangelo, the Baroque developed a distinctive idiom in Rome (Bernini, Borromini), with regional variations in Bohemia, and across the Iberian peninsula (Spain and Portugal).

The focus in this essay is on the Pimeria Alta (Southern Arizona) and the State of Sonora (Northern Mexico), an area evangelised first by the Jesuits, and later by Franciscan missionaries.

The Society of Jesus was founded by St. Ignatius Loyola and approved by the Holy See in 1540. Members of the Order are known as Jesuits: their apostolic mission is to evangelise and teach throughout the world. The leader of the Jesuits, known as the Superior General, holds office for life. The history of the Order, closely associated with the spread of religious architecture in Arizona, is divided into two periods: from 1540 to 1773 (when the Society of Jesus was suppressed by Pope Clement XIV) and from 1814 to the present day. Under two generals, Diego Lainez (1558-1565) and Francisco de Borja (1565-1572), missionary activity intensified particularly in Mexico and Peru, and more generally in Latin America.

The spread of the Jesuits and the building of new churches and monasteries followed in the wake of Spain's colonial expansion and increased political control. In 1573 Philip II established precise bureaucratic guidelines for the colonies, also regulating the construction of new cities, which remained in force throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. San Antonio de Bejar in Texas (1718), the missions at San Diego and San



Luis Rey (1769), Monterey (1770) and San Francisco in 1776 were all built in accordance with the royal decree. Philip created a real example of urban planning, clearly exemplified in the Native American city-states, called “reductions” (Spanish *reducciones*) founded by the Jesuits in Paraguay and elsewhere.

When we speak of Franciscans, members of the mendicant Order founded by St. Francis of Assisi, it is important to remember that they are in reality a family of three orders: Friars minor (O.F.M.), Conventuals, and Capuchins. In 1517 the Conventual Friars broke away from the Friars Minor, as did the Capuchins in 1528. It was above all the Observant Friars Minor who operated in Mexico, California, Arizona, in the Antilles, and throughout Central America. Juan de Zumárraga was the first archbishop of Mexico and Francisco Solano was named the apostle of the New World.

The religious architecture of the Southwest reflects the influences both of the Jesuits and of the Franciscans. And they are easily distinguished. Jesuit architecture developed in response to the demands of the Counter-Reformation and the Council of Trent. The teaching and power of the Church were given visible form: the architecture was richer, the buildings were made of stone with high ceilings, domes, magnificent altars, bell-towers, lavish marble, stucco and gold decoration.

Franciscan architecture by contrast was historically un-monumental, characterised by simple facades, wooden roofs, minimum decorative detail and altars made of wood. This of course is a simplification but one which nevertheless helps identify and understand the religious and cultural background of these buildings in the Southwest. The reality is more complicated with every project built in response to a particular situation. Local materials allowed for variations as did the degree of mediation of the Jesuits and Franciscans or their architects, when they existed, with the local builders. It would probably be more accurate to talk of the echo of Jesuit or Franciscan architecture.

Keeping this in mind, I shall now identify the European roots and more specifically Late Renaissance roots of this architecture.

Roger Kennedy, director emeritus of the National Museum of American History, has made a special study of the architecture of the missions, but the essays published in the *Journal of the Southwest* have probably done most to focus scholarly attention on this heritage. I draw particular attention to issues 45 (2003), devoted to Architecture, and 48 (2006), which dealt with *Pre-Euclidian Geometry in the Design of Mission Churches of the Spanish Borderlands*. Mar-dith Schuetz-Miller, first in her study of geometrical proportion in the mission of San Xavier del Bac and in La Purísima Concepción de Nuestra Señora de Caborca, and then in a whole issue devoted to the mission churches in the Spanish Borderlands greatly advanced our knowledge of this architecture. Having personally measured the ground plans and recreated the elevations with, I imagine, the use of photographic corrections, she has demonstrated that these buildings provide an “harmonious” reading, according to the “architectural principles of Humanism,” as described by Rudolf Wittkower (1962).

The role of proportion and harmony remained central in architectural theory from Leon Battista Alberti to Andrea Palladio. References to the importance of proportion also appear in the works of Leonardo, Francesco di Giorgio, Cesare Cesariano, Fra Giocondo, Sebastiano Serlio, Raphael and in virtually all theorists. The “harmonious” relationship in the frieze on classical temples between the tryglyphs and metopes were explored by J.B. Villalpando (*In Ezechielem Explanationes*, Roma 1596-1604); Serlio gave various examples of finely proportioned buildings (*Primo libro dell'architettura*, Parigi 1545); proportion and the vanishing point were treated by Palladio. Architectural harmony was also considered in relation to musical theory in the sixteenth century.

Daniele Barbaro, the humanist who commissioned the Villa Maser, was intrigued by the concept of *proportio* (the proportional relationship between two volumes) and *proportionalitas* (the proportional relationship not between the volumes themselves but between one proportion and another). Furthermore it was Barbaro (*I dieci libri dell'Architettura di M. Vitruvio*, Venezia 1556) who recalled the harmonious interplay between human voices and musical instruments: “Questa bella maniera si nella Musica, come nell'Architettura è detta *Euritmia*, madre della grazia e del diletto...” [This beautiful mode in both Music and Architecture is called Eurythmia, the mother of grace and delight...].

Schuetz-Miller in her study gives a precise bibliography in support of her ideas, an essential reference for those seeking further information (Schuetz-Miller 2006). I am neither a specialist nor an uncritical enthusiast of “proportion” in architecture (often extrapolated from an *a posteriori* reading of the building rather than being part of the architect’s original plan). My intention is rather to offer a list of buildings that can be considered the “European roots” of the churches in the Southwest.

Before embarking on the list I should also refer the reader to the useful bibliography by Hermann Graf (1958), cited by Wittkower (1962).

In accordance with chronological developments in Europe I shall begin with a few examples of Franciscan churches:

– *Florence, Santa Croce*. Gothic version of a basilican church with a wide nave divided from two aisles by polygonal piers and covered by an open timber roof. The facade was completed in the nineteenth century, decorated in contrasting colored marble. There are a number of chapels in the transept.

– *Assisi, San Francesco*. Although it has been considerably altered over the years, it is the earliest Franciscan church ever built. It is really two superimposed churches covered by ribbed vaults.

– *Arezzo, San Francesco*. It has an open wooden roof and crypt but is undoubtedly best known for the frescoes by Piero della Francesca in the apse. These frescoes served as pictorial lessons in the Old and New Testament for the congregation.

A long list might be made of the influential Jesuit churches. I quote a pertinent passage from Leonardo Benevolo’s *Storia dell'architettura del*

Rinascimento giving a brief account of the repertory of plans adopted. The development of these plans coincided with the increasing activity of the Society of Jesus:

In Catholic countries the ultimate model for a sacred building was defined by Vignola in the church of the Gesù in Rome (1568), a model spread throughout the world by the Society of Jesus from the end of the sixteenth to the first half of the seventeenth century. Most instrumental in the spread of this model in France was Father Etienne Martellange (1568-1604), who lived in Rome from 1590 to 1604. He later planned the Jesuit churches in Avignon (1620), Blois (1625), and Paris (1625), and became something of an inspector general of Jesuit buildings throughout France. In Spain Francisco Bautista designed the church in Toledo in 1628 and in 1629 supervised the building of the church of the Imperial College in Madrid. The generation of architects who appeared in the second third of the seventeenth century developed a wide range of plans in contrast to this model, including a number based on the centrally-planned churches of the High Renaissance. These included the octagonal plan with four arms of Sant Agnese by Borromini (1652), the Greek cross of Pietro da Cortona's San Luca (1634), Bernini's San Tommaso at Castelgandolfo (1658), the rotunda of the church of the Visitation in Paris by François Mansart (1632) and the Assunta at Ariccia by Bernini (1662). This central model was transformed into an elongated octagon with four apses in the church of San Carlino by Borromini (1634), or with four arms in the church of the college of the Four Nations in Paris by Le Vau (1668), in the oval Sant Andrea al Quirinale by Bernini (1658) or in the Desemparados in Valencia by Martínez (1652). Further variants were the geometrical innovations by Borromini's Sant'Ivo (1542), Guarini's San Lorenzo (1666) and San Filippo Neri (1679) or, in total contrast, the conscious repetition of medieval models in parish churches in Paris in the mid-seventeenth century: Saint-Roch by Lemercier (1635), Saint-Sulpice by Gittard (1655), Saint Nicolas-du-Chardonnet attributed to Le Brun (1656), and Saint-Louis-en-l'Île by Le Vau (1664). (Benevolo 1968, 803, 805, 818, 825, 1132 and 1303; compounded and translated by the author).

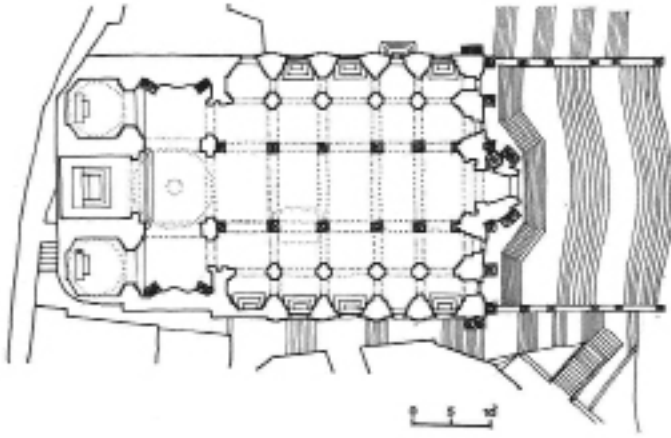
There are also, I believe, certain affinities between the churches of the Southwest and Sicilian prototypes. Of interest here is the creative interpretation given to the Italian Renaissance by Juan de Herrera between 1620 and 1630 which provided fresh nourishment for the gothic and Islamic roots of Spanish seventeenth-century architecture. Sicily was as architecturally diverse as its history of foreign domination might suggest and the Spanish influence in the period under discussion was strong, an influence also exported to America. Another interesting coincidence is that in Sicily, as in the Southwest, it would appear that no single great architect was at work but rather *magistri fabrorum murariorum* (master builders) and *lapidum incisores* (stonemasons).

To conclude, and here I am in sympathy with the views expressed in the *Historic Background* by Schuetz-Miller (1966), the religious architecture in Arizona and in the Southwest is firmly rooted in the Italian Late Renaissance and in the architectural treatises of that period. This architectural language was modified and enriched by a certain Spanish exuberance and eventually adapted to the needs of the new environment with its diverse political, religious, social and cultural demands. It demonstrates, yet again, how the spread and permanence of architecture remain one of the most reliable indications of anthropological continuity of our planet.

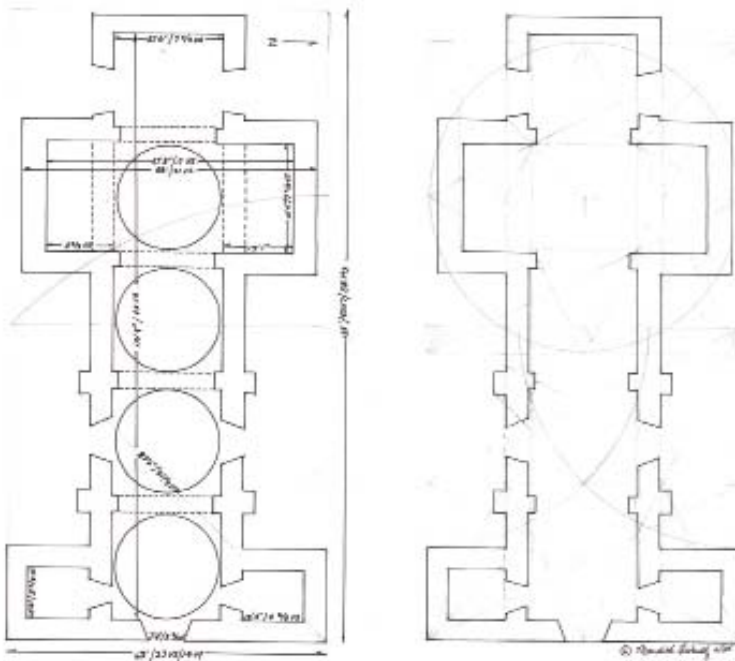
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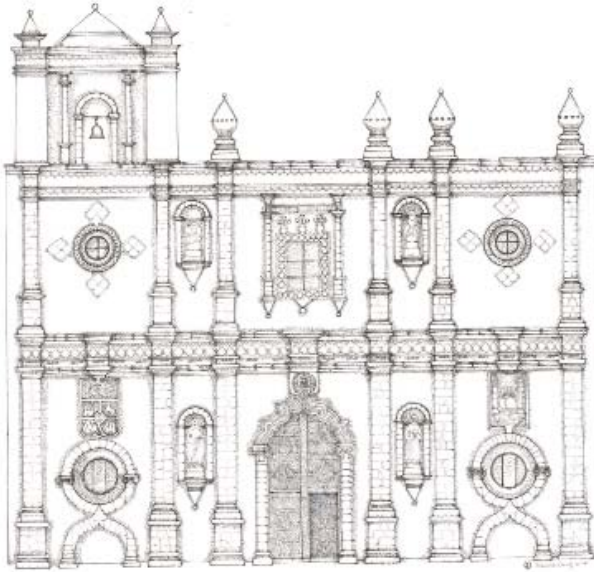
Important contributions were also made by G. Dawson, Samuel Edgerton, J. Lara, Ruben Mendoza, A. Morene; an exhaustive bibliography is the one supplied by Mardith K. Schuetz-Miller in *Journal of the Southwest* 48, 4 (2006): 605-619.



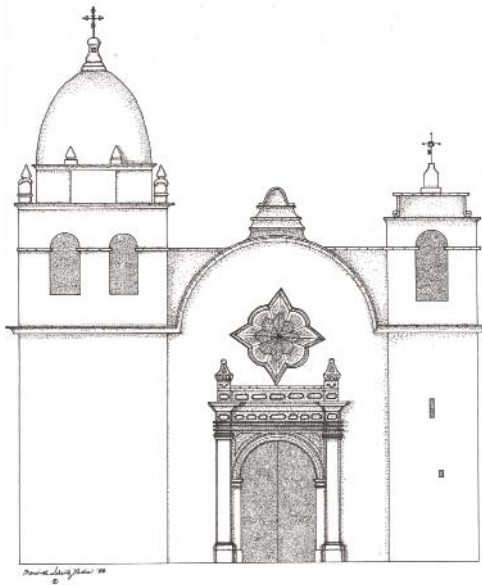
(fig. 1) Modica (Sicily), the church of San Giorgio. Courtesy of the Boscarino family



(fig. 2) San Ignacio de Kadacaamàn. Courtesy of the *Journal of the Southwest*



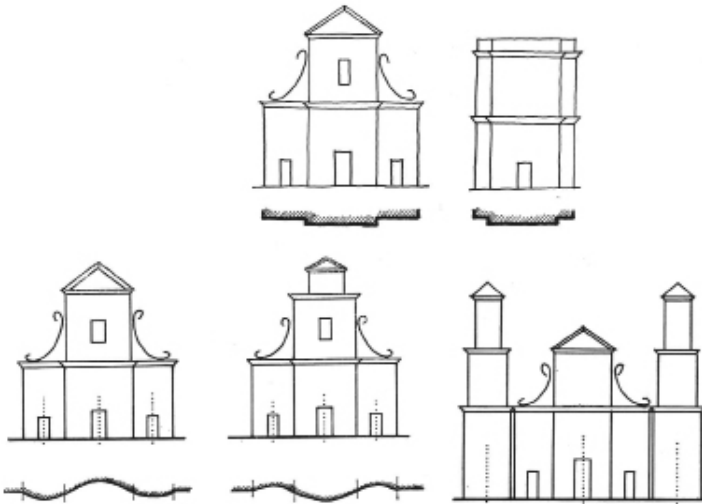
(fig. 3) San Ignacio de Kadacaamàn, elevation. Courtesy of the *Journal of the Southwest*



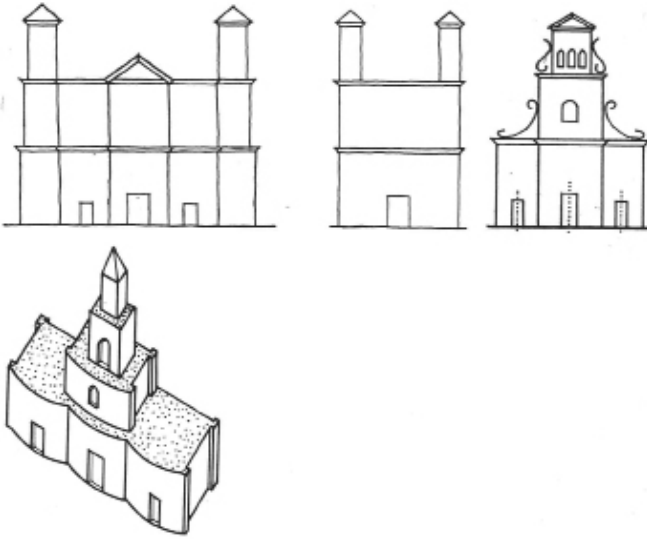
(fig. 4) San Carlos Borromeo. Courtesy of the *Journal of the Southwest*



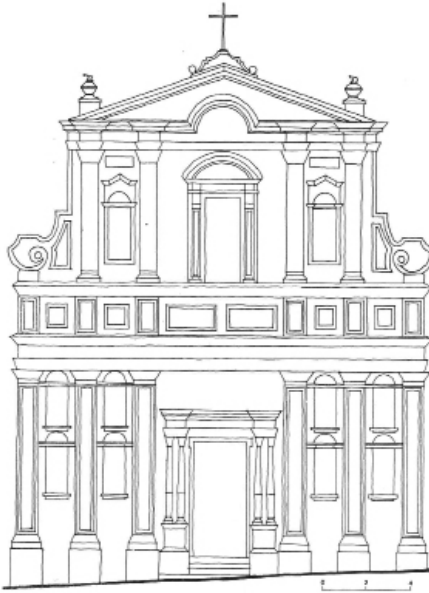
(fig. 5) Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción de Acuña, facade.
 Courtesy of the *Journal of the Southwest*



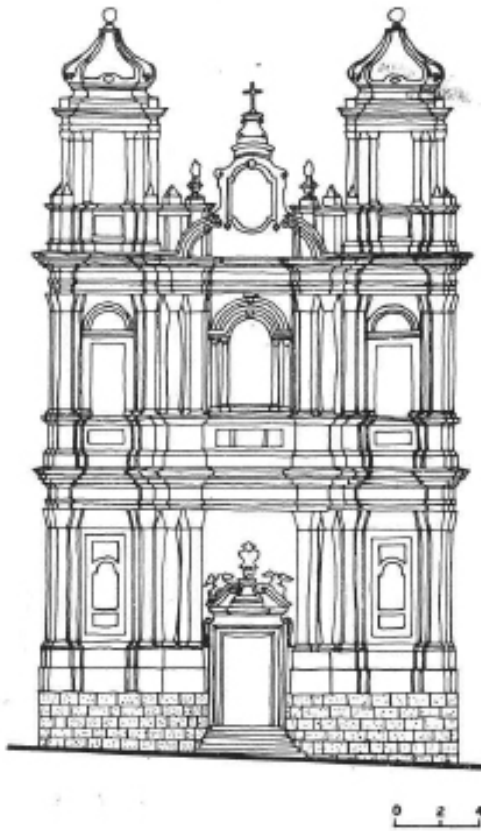
(fig. 6) Elevations of Sicilian baroque churches. Courtesy of the Boscarino family



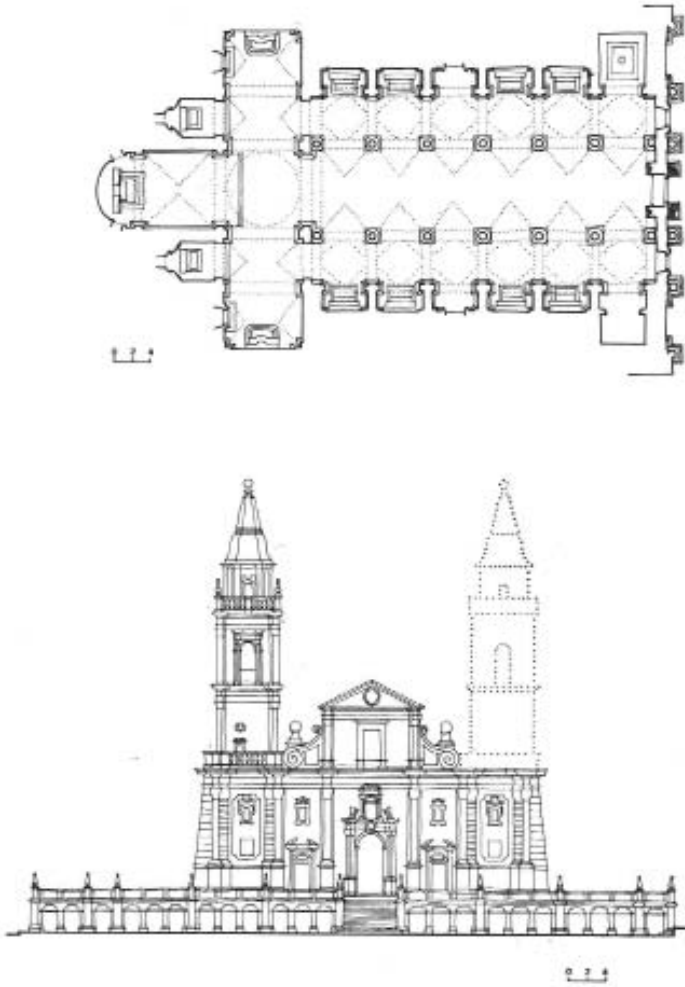
(fig. 7) Elevations of Sicilian baroque churches. Courtesy of the Boscarino family



(fig. 8) Caltagirone, facade of the Jesuit church. Courtesy of the Boscarino family



(fig. 9) Catania, facade of SS. Trinità. Courtesy of the Boscarino family



(fig. 10) Ragusa, Duomo, plan and elevation. Courtesy of the Boscarino family



(fig. 11) Naro, San Francesco, portal. Courtesy of the Boscarino family



(fig. 12) Catania, San Francesco. Courtesy of the Boscarino family

DOUBLES: STRATEGIES OF SENSE PRODUCTION IN
RUDOLFO ANAYA'S "THE MAN WHO FOUND A PISTOL"

Mario Materassi

The theoretical premise of this study is grounded on one of the axioms in the hermeneutic perspective of structuralism and semiotics alike, namely, that the literary text functions as a self-sufficient mechanism of communication; hence, the primary attention accorded to this mechanism in the search for the text's meaning. The *modus operandi*, therefore, is initially inductive. The analysis of the double as the overriding structural paradigm leads to an interpretative hypothesis which a second stage, intertextual in character and concentrating on relevant contextual elements, further supports and expands — the hypothesis being that "The Man Who Found a Pistol" constitutes a profound meta-narrative statement of aesthetics on the part of an author who straddles two languages, two cultures, and two literary traditions.

"The Man Who Found a Pistol" was first published in 1992 in *Mirrors Beneath the Earth: Short Fiction by Chicano Writers*. It was later included in *The Anaya Reader* (1995) and then in *The Man Who Could Fly and Other Stories* (2006). For the purpose of the present analysis, a brief summary of the fabula may be helpful.

While walking along the irrigation ditch near his big house in Corrales, as he is wont to do, a nameless, solitary man, a teacher at the University of New Mexico at Albuquerque about whom there are rumors of an old, tragic hunting accident involving his brother, discovers a pistol in the grass. He picks it up, and takes to carrying it in his pocket. Eventually, he buys bullets for it. When his wife deserts him, he asks a local boy to come stay with him because now he is afraid to live alone in the house. One winter night the boy wakes to a loud knocking. When the man opens the door, the boy sees the man's double standing at the entrance. The man shoots at his image and falls dead, the pistol at his side. The boy picks up the gun, throws it among the weeds, and runs away.

The story is told by an also nameless first-person narrator who learns it "piece by piece" from Procopio, the local cantina bartender, and, to a lesser degree, from the local well digger — an appropriate source of information for anybody interested in unearthing remote happenings (Anaya 2006, 141). The present discussion will begin by focusing on the initial segment of the text, specifically, on the first sentence of the first paragraph.

* This essay is here republished by courtesy of the author and Firenze University Press in view of the essential contribution it brings to the overall subject of this volume.



“‘This was the man who found the pistol,’ Procopio said as he pushed the newspaper across the bar for me to read” (140). This initial sentence includes all of the primary structural elements of the story. It also anticipates the dynamics to which the story entrusts its deeper significance.

Interestingly, the very first phrase (“This was the man who found the pistol”) throws the reader back to a previous statement: i.e., the title itself. Instead of being propelled forward, the reader is thrown back toward a textual absence. The empty space between the title and the beginning of the text invites one to try to fill it with the reason, or reasons, for the progression from *a* pistol to *the* pistol. Implicit in this progression are a number of elements denied the reader, the most relevant of which is that both the speaker (Procopio) and the listener (the anonymous first-person narrator, as is revealed further down the paragraph) are already cognizant of the fact about which they will presently converse. In other words, the initial segment of the story institutes an implicit connection between the present and the past. This connection will prove to be a pivotal factor in the overall strategy of sense production.

The first sentence introduces the three main characters: the man who found the pistol, Procopio the bartender, and the narrator. Only the bartender has a name — significantly, that of the sixth-century Greek historian Procopius of Caesarea. It should also be noted that the triangle formed by the principal characters replicates Karl Bühler’s communication model, with Procopio as the sender of the message, the man who found the pistol as the object of the message, and the narrator as the addressee.¹ The presence of the newspaper, one of Procopio’s props in his strategy of message delivering, reinforces the paradigm of communication already apparent in the first sentence. However, the newspaper is of little help to the reader because the news itself is withheld, and only toward the end of the story will the reader learn that the man who found the pistol is now dead.

Most interestingly, the conclusion of the first sentence (“for me to read”) alters the communication model. As both listener and reader, the addressee of the message reveals himself to be the narrator of the story and, therefore, the first-degree source of the overall message. Consequently, his function in the model is double. As the intratextual listener, he looks backward. As the narrator, he looks forward toward the extratextual addressee.

The implicit system of communication identified in the interaction between the title and the initial syntagm of the first phrase is homologous to the system identified in the first sentence as a whole. In fact, the message constitutes a continuum that expands simultaneously toward the past as well as toward the future. In the process, the sense of the message is modified. The nature of this change is inherent in the presence of the two narrators and, specifically, in their different narrative models. Procopio “has worked in the village cantina many years; he knows the stories of the village. . . . He doesn’t

¹ For Jacobson’s elaboration of Bühler’s model, see “Linguistics and Poetics.” For a further discussion, see Pagnini, *Pragmatica della letteratura*.

embellish the story; he just tells it. If you listen, fine; if you don't, there's always another customer at the bar" (140). The larger setting (the village), the specific setting (the cantina, with its social function as the community's gathering place — its watering-place, one might say), the anonymity of the listeners ("another customer"), the fact that Procopio does not enrich his tales, are all elements that point to the tradition of oral storytelling. Anaya makes this clear from the very beginning: "He does not *embellish* a story, he just tells it" (emphasis added). Procopio, the local historian, does not embroider his story with information or observations relating to himself. He is the objective, detached recorder of facts known to him. To use the terminology suggested by Gérard Genette, he is the perfect intra-heterodiegetic narrator (Genette 1972).

On the other hand, the unnamed first-person narrator immediately establishes his role as (again in Genette's terms) an extra-homodiegetic narrator. He is totally extraneous to the story of the man who found the pistol. Unlike Procopio, he has never met the man. The closest he comes to him is when he drives "by [the man's] home, with the old, weathered barns:" a place that "looked deserted and haunted in the sharp January wind" (142), and which even the blackbirds have abandoned — perhaps an intertextual intimation that he is denied not only thirteen ways of looking at what he came to see but also all possibilities of contact. Unlike Procopio, however, the first-person narrator "embellishes" the man's story with constant references to his own reactions to the tale. The story he tells is the story of himself in relation to the original one of the man who found the pistol.

This is made explicit from the beginning of the second paragraph: "The story of the man who found the pistol reminded me of something that happened to me years ago" (140). Paragraphs two to five are entirely devoted to the secondary story of the narrator who found an axe in a brook and, sensing "a presence" (140), put it back in the cold water.² This prolonged narrative tangent establishes a parallel between the man and the narrator. As the text progresses, the relevance of this parallel is reinforced. "I began to understand that the man was much like me" (141); "The story of the man who found the pistol became an obsession" (142); "Something in the man's story seemed to be my story" (144); "My own work began to suffer; I became even more obsessed with the story" (144); "He was like me, or like any other man who wonders how the past has shaped his destiny" (145); "I felt I knew what the man had thought" (145); "We listen to the tale and secretly whisper, 'There but for the grace of God go I.' ... I felt I knew the man as if he were my brother" (147).

Moreover, the tangent regarding the double-bladed axe establishes a parallel between the first-person narrator and Procopio, in that both tell a story. The difference, however, is that the latter never leaves his place behind the counter, whereas the former constantly roams the countryside in search of some meaning to give the story of the man who found the pistol. Procopio has

² The idea of the "presence," particularly in the proximity of a river, is a recurring topos in Anaya's work. It first appears in *Bless Me, Ultima*.

specific, intratextual listeners (the narrator himself, as well as any other customer), whereas the first-person narrator has no identifiable audience. Most important, Procopio does not present himself as an individual with his own particular feelings and personality; on the contrary, the feelings, personality, and family situation of the first-person narrator dominate his telling. Clearly, the two models are, on the one hand, traditional oral storytelling and, on the other, the self-centered, highly personal perspective of modern narrative technique. While the first excludes the presence of the narrator as an element intrinsic to the story, the second places the narrator and his performance in the foreground. Beside playing a significant role in the strategy of sense production, as we will see, this double narrative perspective is structurally consistent with the overriding paradigmatic presence of doubles in a story based on the presumable guilt over his brother's death that obsesses the man who found a pistol, and which culminates in the apparition of the man's *Doppelgänger*.³

The paradigm of the double is introduced in the third paragraph when the narrator recalls the "handsome double-bladed axe" he found in the Jemez River (140). Not all occurrences of this paradigm are so explicit. An example is the hare-lip (that is to say, the "double" upper lip) of the boy who witnesses the final tragedy. Whether explicit or implied, doubles persistently recur at various levels throughout the text. To begin with, two analogous incidents take place, concerning the discovery of two weapons. There are two wives: the man's, and the narrator's.⁴ There are two rivers: the Rio Grande and the Jemez River. Two communities are referred to: Corrales, a village in a "pastoral valley" (141) that is the main location of the story, and the nearby city of Albuquerque. The paradigm of the double is also present in the biethnic and bicultural population of Corrales, with Procopio, Primo, Primo's hare-lipped nephew and the well digger as representatives of the original Latino inhabitants, while the university professor from Texas represents the more recent influx of professionals, often of Anglo origin. (The singular position and function of the narrator in the community will be discussed later.) Furthermore, as was remarked, the obsession of the man who found a pistol is duplicated by the narrator's obsession with the former's story. Both roam the right bank of the Rio Grande in a fruitless search for meaning. Both repeatedly pose unanswerable questions to Procopio. In the penultimate paragraph,

³The apparition of the *Doppelgänger* is prepared by the rich isotopy of the preternatural, with six occurrences of *haunt*, *haunted*, and *haunting*, five of *ghosts*, three of *strange*, two each of *presence*, *curse*, and *obsession*, and one of *mystery*. For the concept of isotopy, see Greimas, *Du sens*, 10.

⁴The function of the two wives is one of opposition but also, on a subtler level, of similarity. Whereas the wife of the man who found the pistol leaves her husband ("Maybe she became afraid [of him]," [145]) the wife of the narrator shows concern ("Why are you so nervous?," [144]). At the same time, she distances herself from her husband's obsession, not by abandoning him, as the other woman did, but by forgetting the key episode that in his mind links the narrator to the man who found the pistol ("But she had forgotten," [145]).

the narrator summarizes his emotional involvement in the story of the man who had found the pistol: "Procopio had told me only sketches of the man, but I felt I knew the man as if he were my brother" (147). These last words bind the concept of the double to that of universal brotherhood in suffering.

Most important from a structural point of view, there are two narrators. As a result, there are two stories: the story of the man who found a pistol, and the story of the man who became obsessed with the story of the man who found the pistol. Accordingly, there are two addressees or, more precisely, two types of addressees: the intra-diegetic *destinataire*, and the reader.

This, however, does not necessarily mean that there are two, much less thirteen ways of looking at the story of the man who found the pistol. To both Procopio and the first-person narrator, the man's story is equally bewildering, an unsolvable mystery impervious to reconstruction and understanding. Both narrators share the conviction that the past "haunts us," that "[g]hosts of the past come to haunt our lives" (145), and that its reconstruction is subject to the uncertainties of relativity. In their common frustration at the impossibility of making some sense of the story, the two narrators reach analogous conclusions. Procopio, the historian, is unable to escape today's prevailing sense of the relativity of reality and, consequently, of the relativity of any message. In the story of the man who found a pistol, Procopio sees only the baffling composite of conflicting possibilities: "Who knows, . . . A ghost from the past. Maybe just the boy's imagination" (147). Faced with the same unanswerable query, the modern narrator, who focuses on the present and on its interaction with the future, also admits defeat in his concluding words: "What is the future, I thought, but a time that comes to swallow what we make of life" (147). Even by joining forces, therefore, the traditional storyteller and the modern narrator are unable to solve the mystery posed by the past.⁵

Let us reexamine the opening sentence: " 'This was the man who found the pistol,' Procopio said as he pushed the newspaper across the bar for me to read." At first, his gesture can be perceived as a sign of authority. In retrospect, however, it reveals itself to be an act of resignation. Procopio, the traditional storyteller and, as such, the repository of "truth," gives way to the riddles of relativity, and leaves the task of making sense of reality to his successor, the modern(ist) storyteller. In turn, conditioned by his acknowledged lack of authority, his successor can tell the *meaningless* story of a man who found a pistol and died because of it, only by turning it into the tale of his own doomed search for the eluding message.

Anaya's modernist narrator, however, is definitely *sui generis*. To appreciate the special nature of his storytelling, as well as its relevance within the overall mechanism of sense production, one will have to look at him in the light of his position and role in the community.

⁵ The narrator's question, "How could a man who'd had so much beauty around him do what he did?" (142), is purposely ambiguous. While seemingly implying suicide, it could also refer to some other violent act.

One of the sets of doubles observed in the short story is the dual character of the inhabitants of Corrales: the Latinos on the one hand, and the outsider, perhaps of Anglo origin, on the other. The first-person narrator is not readily placeable in either ethnic and cultural category. Integral to the structural strategy of the text, in fact, is the difficulty in conclusively associating the narrator with either group. His leisure, as well as the mention that his "own work began to suffer," would seem to place him, both professionally and economically, outside the old, rural Latino community. Presumably he is an intellectual, maybe even a colleague of the man who found a pistol. At the same time, his sensitivity to the "presence" and his realization that "one must return to the circle of the family to stay in balance" (141) suggest that he is part of the Latino culture. The question then arises: Who is this central character, listener and teller alike, protagonist of the story only as witness *manqué*?

It is more than tempting — in fact, it is inevitable — to view the narrator as a personification of the author himself. The text itself invites the reader to reach this conclusion by means of a direct allusion to *Tortuga* (1979) ("The mountain reminds me of a giant turtle. When I was a boy, I had killed a turtle, and when I look at the mountain, I am sometimes reminded of that incident," [142]), as well by other passages such as the one when the narrator and his wife "driv[e] up in the Jemez Mountains" (140) through a wooded area along the bank of the stream — just as the Anayas were wont to do on their way to and from their cottage in Jemez Springs. This is a constant in the writer's poetics. From *Bless Me, Ultima* to his latest works, it is to be found in most of his fiction, poetry, and plays. The function of this discreet, at times barely perceptible strategy of self-referentiality is to bring attention to the narrating voice, more than as a cultural mediator or a spokesperson for the Chicanos, as a storyteller addressing his own people; a storyteller ostensibly different from the Procopios of yore (Modernism has swept over Corrales too, reaching into the cozy adobe kitchen where the familiar ceremony of storytelling used to take place) yet still imbued with the sense of his time-honored social function within the community; a storyteller who, though aware of the changing literary expectations of his audience, is still mindful of his responsibility toward his people's collective memory, be it simply that of the scent of burning *piñon* in the fireplace, and knows which chords to strike in order to capture his audience's attention and how to orchestrate the echoes that his homey words evoke in the reader's mind.

One such resonance is powerfully activated by the title of the story. To a Mexican American reader, these words, "The Man Who Found a Pistol," can hardly fail to reverberate as an echo of "con su pistola en la mano," the recurring line in "El Corrido de Gregorio Cortez" (Paredes 1958). Once the resonance is struck, a stream of associations follows. Like Gregorio Cortez, the man who found a pistol grew up on a ranch in Texas. He, too, had a brother who presumably died of a gunshot, in circumstances suggesting some responsibility on the part of the surviving sibling. His wife, like Cortez's wife Leonor, eventually left him. He, too, traveled back and forth across the Rio Grande, preferring — as did Cortez — the South side ("That's why he had moved to Corrales, to be away from the city where he worked," 141). The man's story

is transmitted by word of mouth, as was Cortez's. After his death, his story was reported in the newspaper, and while it never achieved the notoriety of Cortez's flight, apprehension, and trials, and certainly did not develop into a legend, it too became a matter of widespread interest in the community.

To be sure, there are as many inverted parallels to Cortez's story in "The Man Who Found a Pistol" as there are parallels. To begin with, the man's pistol does not belong to him, whereas Cortez had his own pistol (not "a" pistol) in his hand.⁶ Unlike Cortez, who was a superb shot, he handles the gun as a totally unfamiliar object ("His hands were trembling;" "He weighed it in his hand and then looked around;" "... he sighed when he slipped the pistol into his pocket," [143]; "His hand was always in his pocket, as if he were making sure the pistol was still there," [144]; as Procopio says, "I think he was afraid to fire it," [144]; "He tried to get rid of the pistol, ... He begged Primo to take it, saying he was afraid something bad was going to happen," [145]). The lonely man is haunted with fear, whereas Cortez strikes fear into others: "Venian los americanos / màs blancos que una paloma, / de miedo que le tenian / a Cortez y a su pistola" (Paredes 1958, 155). Cortez was endowed with such a winning personality that even his jailers readily took to him, while the man "spent most of his time alone" (141), was "melancholy" (142), always "brooding over what he could tell no one" (145); he "had grown more moody and introverted" (144), and "the people let him pass in silence" (146).⁷ In the final "shoot-out" scene we have the only explicit reference to the *corrido*: "this time he held the pistol in his hand" (146); contrary to the Border hero, however, the man uses the gun against himself. Finally, unlike the ballad's hero who repeatedly taunts his pursuers by proudly announcing, "Yo soy Gregorio Cortez," he remains nameless to the end.

As we can see, direct as well as indirect intertextual suggestions prompted by the *corrido* resonate throughout the text. This does not necessarily indicate any intentional use of the *corrido* on the part of the author — the writer himself has not volunteered any comment on the subject. Certainly, one does not detect in "The Man Who Found a Pistol" any of the stringencies that attend many mechanical implementations of T.S. Eliot's peremptory bidding to pursue James Joyce's "mythical method" (Eliot [1923] 1959, 153). There is

⁶ During his legendary flight, Cortez carried two guns: his own, with which he had killed W.T. (Brack) Morris, the sheriff who had tried to apprehend him, and Morris's own gun. This he later exchanged for that of Ciferino Flores, a friend who helped him (Paredes 1958, 72). Typically, the *corrido* only mentions his pistol. Aside from the *corrido*'s tendency to essentialize the narrative, the implication is that whatever pistol Cortez used, it became *his* pistol.

⁷ The legend (not the *corrido*) has it that while bringing his wounded brother to their mother's house in his buggy, Cortez met a posse. When he calmly told them who he was, "[t]hey all looked at him and were afraid of him, because they were only twenty or twenty-five, and they knew that they were not enough. So they stepped aside and let him pass" (Paredes 1958, 41-42). In Anaya's story, a similar effect is caused by the uneasiness felt by the community at the man's uncanny behavior.

no doubt, however, that “El Corrido de Gregorio Cortez” functions here as a relevant structural model, as does the *Odyssey* in Joyce’s *Ulysses*, or the New Testament in Hemingway’s *The Old Man and the Sea*, or the Song of Solomon in Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury*.

To be sure, on many levels the story of the man who found a pistol is worlds apart from that of Gregorio Cortez, as it presents none of its heroics, none of the straightforward simplicity of motivations that are typical of the traditional *corrido*. But in the subtle balance of similarities and dissimilarities between today’s nameless anti-hero and the dauntless Border figure, the reader comes face to face with one of the tenets of Modernism: the present-day protagonist’s inadequacy to measure up to the mythical model.

Gregorio Cortez cannot boast of the universality of the Greek or the Biblical prototypes that are at the center of some of the masterpieces of twentieth-century literature. His story is confined, both in time and in place; his fame is limited to a relatively marginal stage. Nonetheless, the operativeness of the mythical model is not affected by dimensions. For Cortez’s regional story provides the tale of the man who found a pistol with the richness, cogency, and exemplarity of a universally shared experience, no matter how culturally circumscribed and humble in its breath. When the narrator confesses, “[s]omething in the man’s story seemed to be my story” (144), he might as well have been talking about “everybody’s story.”

Which is what Rudolfo Anaya, our contemporary storyteller, intended us to sense.

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THE DESERT AND THE SEED: THREE STORIES BY RUDOLFO ANAYA

Mario Materassi

Rudolfo Anaya's accomplishment as a master craftsman had been somewhat overshadowed by his steadfast example as an author deeply imbued with his native Chicano culture, and by an *oeuvre* rich in absorbing mythopoetic value. While by no means intending to underplay these essential aspects of Anaya's work, in the present paper I will further the argument put forth in my discussion of "The Man Who Found a Pistol" and focus on the writer's welding of various cultural heritages into one composite — one that makes use of different aesthetic languages, as in his recent *Seraphina's Stories*, which superimposes the *One Thousand and One Nights* paradigm onto colonial Santa Fe and grafts local onto universal themes creating a new, complex world of the imagination. To this purpose, I will discuss three short stories ("Absalom," "In Search of Epifano," and "Children of the Desert"), concentrating on Anaya's manipulation of literary conventions and on his subtle transformation of some of their established semantic functions.

These three stories (all collected in *The Man Who Could Fly*) share a number of common traits. They all take place in the desert. In all three, the function of nature is consistently atypical *vis-à-vis* certain literary and ideologic conventions. Two have a woman as the main actant, while in the third, the protagonist of which is a man, the woman is the positive pole in the gender opposition. Thematically, all three develop from or around an unfortunate love story. Moreover, the ending of "Absalom" and that of "Children of the Desert" are almost mirror-like: after a quarrel, the man in the first story drives recklessly away, has an accident, and dies, while the man in the second story drives recklessly back toward his woman, has an accident, and dies. The old woman who is the protagonist of the third story also drives away in the desert in search of love and dies, although not as a consequence of an accident. All these correspondences, plus several others, suggest that the stories may have been conceived as a triptych — a hypothesis that the rather close dates of publication (1985, 1987, and 1990) conceivably corroborate.

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Whether or not this hypothesis is correct, the three stories, independently of each other and with no loss to the individual sense each of them produces, display a singular consistency of means, all pointing to a remarkable consistency in the organization of meaning. In each component of this admittedly limited medioscopic sample of texts, meaning is not dependent on their aggregation. Once identified, however, this overall consistency allows us to delve deeper into the working of each text, thus revealing further levels of sense in their only apparently linear development.

“Absalom” concerns an unfulfilled American woman who after her divorce moves from New York to the desert south of Be’er Sheva. While visiting the Tomb of Absalom she meets a North African, whom she names Absalom. The two become intimate. The woman, whom the narrator names Tamar, is initially fulfilled by the new lover. Soon, however, after a quarrel caused by basic differences over their respective gender roles, the man leaves in anger, has an accident, and dies in his car. Every day, on her way to work, the woman “sees the mangled car” left to rust in the desert (Anaya 2006, 163).¹

Several structural elements are compounded in this story, namely, a series of references to the Second Book of Samuel, the paradigmatic opposition culture vs. nature, and the historical opposition Arabs vs. Jews.

The title obviously refers to the Bible but only midway through the narration do we find the first passage relating to Samuel. This is a reference to the Tomb of Absalom in the Valley of Qidron, where the two lovers meet; the naming of the man as “Absalom” is consequential to the circumstances of their encounter. Then comes the naming of the woman: “we might say her name is Tamar, a seductive, intriguing biblical name” (161). The African’s “long hair” further connects him to Absalom. There is the Pillar of Absalom, where for the first time the woman hears the African’s voice. In her passion, the woman cries, “Absalom! Absalom!” (162), an echo of King David’s cry over the death of his favorite son (2 Sam. 19:4). Then there are the Bedouin’s words: “The hand of God seemed to reach down and grab the North African by the hair. His car, faster than any horse, went out from under him” (162) — a passage very close to Samuel’s: “[Absalom’s] head caught hold of the oak, and he was taken up between the heaven and the earth; and the mule that was under him went away” (2 Sam. 18:10). Finally, the death of the African: (“he died ... pierced by the shaft of the steering wheel,” [163]) graphically recalls that of Absalom: “[Joab] took three darts in his hand, and thrust them through the heart of Absalom” (18:14).

Clearly, the story is intended to be read bearing the Second Book of Samuel in mind; however, there is no analogy between the two episodes. The biblical Tamar was not Absalom’s lover but his sister. The family drama involving David and his offspring — Absalom, Tamar, and their half brother Amnon,

¹ Cf. *Descansos*: “The cuentos of the people became filled with tales of car wrecks” (Anaya 1995, 31).

her violator — is absent, and there are only two brief mentions of King David.² Surely, it is not on the diegetic level that the function of these scattered references to the biblical story can be appreciated.

The deferment in pursuing the initial biblical allusion intensifies the reader's curiosity as to the reason for the title, while at the same time bringing attention to the present-day concerns. Here, the three oppositions — men vs. women, Arabs vs. Jews, and culture vs. nature — alternate in presenting a seemingly inescapable set of dualities. All are introduced at the very beginning of the story:

After her divorce she moved to the Negev, south of Be'er Sheva. There in the Israeli desert, she found the solitude she sought. She would awaken early in the morning to greet the sun, to smell the fresh air, which held the scent of fruit blossoms. Later, the breeze would smell of sand, rocks, desert heat, and the faint body sweat she thought must be of the shepherders. (159)

Every linguistic element present in the opening paragraph is referable to one of the three binary oppositions — and the same holds true for practically the entire text. Some elements are active within more than one opposition. For instance, the Bedouins, though pertaining to the pole of culture, are closer to that of nature than are their counterpart the Hassidin; similarly, there is a marked difference between the water used by the settlers to grow their fruit trees and the “dark water of the desert” (162) “surging deep beneath the earth, gurgling in darkness (163). Allowing for the ambivalence of certain elements relative to their immediate context, Anaya prevents his system of binary oppositions from being reduced to a rigid mechanism.

This is most evident in the treatment of the woman. “[S]he began to believe that men were essentially passionless” (160). Her husband “had pursued ambition, the making of money, the goal of profit” (159) — “but of his soul he gave nothing” (160).³ All her former lovers held back from her, including the priest who with his touch had released her “deep, rich woman smell” (161).⁴ Having “lost her soul, or the passion that is the fire

²On her way to the Tomb of Absalom the woman “walked beside the Arab houses, which clung to the hillside, daring the dark presence of eyes that knew she was a daughter of David” (161)—a passage intended to strengthen her association with the biblical Tamar. See also “the gardens of the City of David,” (163). A further possible reference to King David is the fact that unlike Absalom, whose name combines the concepts of “father” and “peace”(quite a misnomer, one could say), the North African is “a man sometime at war”(162)—therefore, at least linguistically, closer to David (a “man of war,” 2 Sal. 17:8) than was his favorite son.

³“Who has taken charge of our lives?... We know we have been manipulated, and in the resulting change we feel we have lost something important.” In “Mythical Dimensions/Political Reality” (Anaya 1994, 28).

⁴“Did he save himself for God,” the woman asks, “as the others saved themselves for fame or power or greed or wife at home?” (161).

of the soul" (159), she leaves "the sterility of the city," where she has known only the "common frustration of passion denied," and moves to Israel — not the Israel of the "commitment to the land and the nation," of the "burden of her people's history" (160), which does not move her, but the Israel of the desert, where she can attain the solitude she seeks because, in the words of the narrator of "The Man Who Found a Pistol," "One has to be alone to know oneself" (Anaya 2006, 141).

As it soon becomes evident, the gender opposition, seemingly postulated as primary in the first sentence of the story, develops into a variation of the culture vs. nature opposition. The imagery associated with the first opposition totally pertains to the second: all the men she has met were unable "to drink from that stream of passion that ran beneath the flesh, deep in the soul," none of them was ready to share her "true desire" (160). In men, culture has stunted nature.

Not so with the Bedouins, the "dark shadows on the rim of her life" (160). She was keenly aware of them, for hers was not the solitude of the celibate — the solitude that the initial sentence seemed to indicate as her drastic solution to the loneliness created by the gender duality. Her nights are made restless by "the acrid odor," "the faint body sweat" (159) she associates with those "dark men of passion she did not know, a dream that could not be shared" (160). Speaking to them is not "allowed. They kept to their world, she to hers" (159). These words, which conclude the second paragraph, reintroduce the cultural barrier — a warning that the woman does not heed because for a moment the forbidden dream of shared passion seems to turn into reality. The call of that faint body smell anticipates the African's "strong ... man smell" into which her "woman's fragrance [is] released" (162).⁵ "They made love, a dark, physical love that broke the bonds of separation, ... a love fulfilling intense need." A new phase has begun. "He draws ecstasy from my soul; his love is like fresh water in the desert. But he was a demanding man, a jealous man."

Culture again raises its barriers. "Manhood was [the African's] creed, his vision of life. Her own rich and complex creed flooded over her, and suddenly the world was old, and as bone dry as the desert" (162). The desert, which with its "dark water" running beneath the earth had seemed to offer the ultimate hope for passion, is again "filled with ghosts, as are most places on earth" (162). These words point to the futility of the woman's flight. They also indicate the delusion intrinsic to any conceptualization of life along lines that do not allow for the coexistence of opposites.

Toward the end of the story, a question is asked:

What is the stream of life beneath the flesh of woman? Is it like the waters of the Qidron Valley, surging deep beneath the earth, gurgling in darkness until it rises at the Pool of Shiloah to refresh the gardens of the City of David? Or is it a stream of deception, drawing the man to drowning? (162)

⁵ See, in *Jemez Spring*, "the fragrance of a woman" and "[a]n erotic fragrance," (Anaya 2005, 21, 23).

The implicit answer is that the stream of life both refreshes and deceives, because life will always be one with death. Polarization, the exclusion of one or the other of the two poles, can only lead to sterility.

But why the Qidron Valley, why Absalom — why Tamar?

In fleeing to the biblical desert, the present-day Tamar chooses a mythical world over the real one. She elects to isolate herself from the real Israel as well — the Israel of history, besieged by its present-day problems “as are most places on earth.” She intellectualizes the desert, seeking in its extremity the solution to the complexity of the city, its opposite, and investing it with the function of providing the solitude in which she hopes to recapture her lost soul. In so doing, she invents the desert to suit her emotional needs. Her name is quite apt, as Tamar means palm tree — a plant that lives in the desert. The biblical associations underscore the woman’s estrangement from reality. By equating her lover with King David’s son, by investing him with Absalom’s beauty, she invents him as a paradigm of perfection vouched for by Samuel’s words.⁶ Like the biblical Tamar, who after being violated disappears into her brother’s home and is heard of no more, the present-day Tamar obliterates herself, if only for a while, in the shadow of her invented Absalom: “She asked no questions” (162).

Myth, however, can provide her with only the illusion of distance. The woman’s attempt to decontextualize herself, both spatially and temporally, from reality by taking refuge in the world of myth is all in vain.

In the second story, “In Search of Epifano,” an elderly woman travels in her old Jeep through the Sonora desert toward the land of the Tarahumara to find what may be left of the ranch built by her great-grandfather Epifano. Her search is prompted by what she takes to be his call to reconnect to her place of origin. At dusk, she finds the place. “There, below the spring where she stood, . . . was the hacienda. Now could be seen only the outlines of the foundation and the shape of the old corrals” (Anaya 2006, 181). She beholds an Indian, “a tall, splendid man,” perhaps the very one who appeared to her at her wedding and then was gone before she tied herself to the passionless man whom she later divorced. Now, her thirst quenched at the spring, the woman (who is dressed in white, “the color of desire non consummated” (181), knows that she “ha[s] come home, home to the arms of Epifano.”⁷ Then, “in the dying light of the sun, a blinding flash filled her body. Like desire, or like an arrow from the bow of the Indian, the light filled her and she quivered. The moan of love is like the moan of life.”⁸

⁶ “But in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him,” 14:25.

⁷ White is also the color of the robe of the “desert wanderers” (Anaya 1996a, 4).

⁸ An interesting convergence: “She sat and gazed at the desert, the peaceful, quiet mauve of the setting sun” (181); and, “There, in that desert, sitting alone in a knife

The story is structured according to a three-tier time frame. The present (level A) concerns the woman's last day in her final travel through both the desert and her life; it also includes the flashback of the delay in Mexicali while her jeep is being repaired. A second time frame (level B) concerns her life prior to the final voyage — the wedding, the birth of her two children, her loveless marriage, the separation (“Years later she left her husband, ... left the dream of southern California, where there was no love in the arms of the man, no sweet juices in the nights of love pretended”), her art (“She sketched, she painted”), her travels to the south (“each year in springtime, she drove further south” toward the goal marked on her map — “the place where Epifano's hacienda once stood,” 180). The third time frame (level C) touches upon her family history, namely, the scanty information about Epifano (“His picture was preserved in the family album, his wife, a dark-haired woman, at his side. Around them, their sons,” 178). Significantly, this album is all that the woman takes along in her last voyage in preparation of the final ritual, because “one must return to the circle of the family to stay in balance” (“The Man Who Found a Pistol,” 141).

The temporal structure of the story is best described as three concentric circles, the time frame of the present constituting the outer rim.⁹ The two inner circles do not follow the reversed chronological order, from level A to B to C. The more remote circle is introduced before the one concerning the woman's individual past: that is to say, we move from level A to C then to B. With perfect symmetry, at the end of the story level C again keeps the woman's past from reaching the time frame of the present.

This temporal structure, which intimates that the woman does not care for her own past and is interested only in her great-grandfather's, suggests the figure of a funnel, with the central hollow representing the woman's empty life. The symmetry of the overall construction underscores her quest for meaning away from her barren life. It further highlights her final success: “She had come home, home to the arms of Epifano.”

The figure of the circle emerges also on the lexical level. First the woman sees “vultures circ[ling] in the sky” (179); then we learn that she had “left the circle of pretend” (180); finally, she sees the shadows of Indian women — “a circle of women” — moving silently around her. The lexical level validates the figure of the concentric circles: first an image of suspended

edge of shade, I felt more sentient than I have anywhere, any time—at home, at ease, fascinated, entranced ...” Thus does Ann H. Zwinger give words to an analogous emotional experience—the sense of “homecoming” that the desert gives to those who care enough to listen (Zwinger 1994, 66).

⁹The figure of the circle in connection with the number three also appears in reference to one aspect of the landscape. This occurs in the second paragraph (“She was following the north rim of el Cañon de Cobre,” 177), then again in the middle of the story (“following the north rim of el Cañon de Cobre,” 179), and finally at the end (“las montañas of el Cañon de Cobre,” 181).

wait that will end with her death; then an image of her constricting past; ultimately, an image of the liberating acceptance she achieves.

Both directly and metaphorically, all time levels are dominated by the most comprehensive icon present in the story — the desert. *Desert* occurs twenty-four times, and is accompanied by a wealth of attendant lexical occurrences relating to dryness, dust, heat, dirt, solitude, silence, emptiness, immensity, etcetera. *Death*, with which the desert is archetypically associated (as it is locally: see the warning toponym, La Jornada del Muerto, mentioned in *Rio Grande Fall*, [Anaya 1996b, 160-161]) occurs seven times, and is metonymically underscored by the presence of vultures. Three times we have *bones* — Ross Calvin's "frail, blanched relics of death" (Calvin [1934] 1965, 48).¹⁰ *Old* occurs ten times, in reference to the woman, her Jeep and her map, Epifano and his corrals, the "old days" and the "old ceremony." The woman knows she will soon become "a spirit of the desert" (178).¹¹ She is a "moving shadow" (179), she notices "the shadows of the palo verde and the desert willows," and at the end has a vision of "other shadows" (181) — yet another instance of miniaturization of the number three pattern. Irregardless of this array of life-negating elements, the archetypical function of the desert as death-dealing is repudiated. In fact, "In Search of Epifano" results in a life-giving message. This is made progressively evident by the woman's journey away from California, the conventional world of emotional plenty, and into the desert. There is "urgency" (177) in her progress, there is a desperate need (180), because only in the desert can she find the fulfillment she never found in her husband, a man of "little desire or passion" (179) who "never understood the desire in her, ... never explored her depth of passion." Only in the desert can she understand the voices in her dreams that "spoke in her soul," Epifano's "resonant voice imparting seductive images of the past" (180).¹² Only in the desert can she find meaning — a meaning analogous to that conveyed by Georgia O'Keeffe through her images of bleached bones:

¹⁰ This icon is present in "Absalom" ("...suddenly the world was old, and as bone dry as the desert," [162]; see also the "rust[y], ... twisted wreck" of the African's car, [163]). It appears also in "Childrens of the Desert" ("Sometimes he would find sun-bleached bones, and he would feel compelled to take one back to his trailer," [10]; "the bleached bones of those who had died [in the desert]," [13]; "He thought of the pile of bones around the side of the trailer, bones he had collected over the years," [14]).

¹¹ In "Children of the Desert," the man "clearly" sees his dead mother in the desert, "her red lips taunting him" (15). In "Absalom," the Bedouins keep away from the wreck of the car (163). Ghosts haunt the "lonely and desolate Llano" — a desert in its own right — in "The Silence of the Llano," "The Road to Platero," and "A Story" (all collected in *The Silence of the Llano* [Anaya 1982]). They are present in several of Anaya's short stories set in Mexico, as well as in his latest novel, *Randy Lopez Goes Home*.

¹² Cf. "[the woman] heard a voice, ...Fulfillment, the voice whispered, fulfillment" ("Absalom," 162).

... the bleached bones [are] my symbol of the desert. To me they are as beautiful as anything I know. To me they are strangely more living than the animals walking around – hair, eyes and all their tails switching. The bones seem to cut sharply to the center of something that is keenly alive on the desert tho' it is vast and empty and untouchable — and knows no kindness with all its beauty. (O'Keeffe 1939)

Under the scorching sun, the “[s]weat streak[ing] her wrinkled skin,” the old woman feels alive — there is pleasure in the commingling of sweat and dust.¹³ The dry air burns her nostrils but it also brings “[a] scent of ocotillo” (178), and when she reaches the spring near what is left of Epifano’s hacienda “[t]he smell of the air [i]s cool, wet” (180). The thirst she has suffered throughout her travel is quenched by the “precious” water of the pool “where Epifano had once wet his lips” (18).

She knows that “there is no life in the desert without the water that flows from deep within the earth,” and when she stoops to drink she does so “like a cautious animal” (180), like the desert cat or the deer whose tracks she sees by the pool — equally precious signs of the life that the desert nurtures. Like “desert seeds,” her forefathers sought the “precious water of desire” in California, but she has returned to quench this deeper thirst, her “desire from within” which only the “peaceful quiet, the mauve” of the sun setting on the desert can satisfy (181).

On his first “epiphany,” Epifano had silently warned her against tying herself to an emotionally barren man. ... For a moment she hesitated, then she had turned and said yes to the preacher’s question, only to find out that “there was no love in the arms of the man, no sweet juices in the nights of love pretended” (180). After years of unfulfilled yearning for love, she heard Epifano’s voice spurring her to return to her life-giving roots; and each spring (the season when the desert “blooms like a garden,” *Tortuga* [Anaya 1979, 204]) she set out in search of him. Finally, near the spring where her family had first taken root, Epifano reappears. This time she is ready for the encounter. Still clad in white, the symbolic “color of desire not consummated” she wore all through her life, she now sees that Epifano “w[ears] paint” (181), and knows that her life-long desire will be fulfilled.

“Old desert plants are tough,” Anaya writes, again in *Tortuga* (184): “they’ll take root most anywhere.” Contrary to both the letter of the diegesis and the prevailing lexical display, “In Search of Epifano” is not a story about dying but a story about living, not a tale of death but a tale of life. Because, as Mary Austin wrote, “[d]esert is a loose term to indicate land that supports no man,” but “[v]oid of life it never is” (Austin 1903, 3).

¹³“She knew how to live in the sun ... and how to survive, and she knew how to be alone under the stars. Night was her time in the desert.” The “molten light before night,” when “in the cool of evening her pulse would quicken,” inspires her to do “one more sketch of the desert” (178, 179).

“Even in the sand the seed of love could grow” (Anaya 2006, 17). This is the message conveyed by “Children of the Desert,” the third of our short stories.

This story, published in 1990, is about a lonely man who works in the oil fields of southern Texas. Whereas the woman in “Epifano” was “ready for death, not afraid of death” (177), he fears the desert, which he associates with death; when traveling through it, he hides bottles of water for fear of getting lost and incurring fatal dehydration. Every Christmas he spends a week in a brothel in Juárez. One day he meets a waitress, also very lonely, and brings her to live with him in his trailer. Unlike the man, however, she thrives in the heat and tries to teach him that they are both “children of the desert” (15). When she tells him of the “bubble” that their love makes her feel inside her, the man, wary of any attachment and scared that her “bubble” is but a deadly mirage, strikes her and runs away. At the entrance of the whorehouse, he tells an old woman about his pain. She draws a line in the sand, makes two little balls of spittle in the mud on either side of the line (one for *hombre* and one for *mujer*), makes a third one in the middle, and the three little balls fuse into one. “‘Amor,’ she said” (17). The man rushes back home, has an accident, and is fatally hurt. He crawls to the trailer but finds it empty. “He looked across the silent sand and understood” (17).

To an even more pronounced degree than in “Absalom,” the system of duality is central in “Children of the Desert.”¹⁴ However, unlike in “Absalom” where duality (which stresses separation) remains unsolved, here it carries a message that points to unity.

Within this system, the gender duality functions oppositionally both on the diegetic level and as regards the protagonists’ attitudes toward the desert. Whereas the man senses a haunting presence in it, the woman’s first words are, “‘The desert’s all we got. It’s both mother and father. Lover and brother’” (11). Her metaphor of the bubble points to life: “‘It’s here, between us,’” she insists. “‘It’s the most beautiful feeling on earth’” (15).

The various other dualities present in the story serve as eidetic reminders of the central paradigm of the couple. There are the bodies of two Mexicans through which the death motif is first introduced (10). There are two pairs of earrings. There are two generic locations (south Texas and Mexico), two cities (El Paso and Juárez), two balls of spittle and mud, two sides to the line drawn by the old shaman—a graphic miniaturization of the geographical duality marked by the Rio Grande. Owing to the perfect balance of the number two figure, the impasse between the two actants is heightened by the static quality inherent in duality. Only by reaching beyond number two toward the dynamism of number three

¹⁴ Anaya used this system also in “The Man Who Found a Pistol,” a story involving a *Doppelgänger*. Cf. “the ever-present Double,” (Anaya 1998, 24).

can the impasse be overcome. This is the sense of the shaman's simple magic — a magic keenly reminiscent of Genesis. The two little balls representing the *hombre* and the *mujer* become one when they fuse with the "Semilla" (16), the outcome of love. It is the message of God's first words to the archetypal couple: "Be fruitful." Understanding comes too late for the man, but not too late for him to experience a final "calmness" and to see the desert as "a space opening and receding" (17), not as an emptiness that brings only death but as a life-giving space. Ismelda, the girl who first brought water to the paralyzed boy in *Tortuga*, had said that much: "[T]he desert seems barren at first, but it isn't. When you look close you can see the life which lives in it" (Anaya [1979] 1988, 165).

"Even in the sand the seed of love could grow."

The protagonists of these three short stories are all nameless, an indication of the paradigmatic nature of their respective roles. All are lonely, emotionally unfulfilled, and aching driven in their search. They all look to the desert for an answer to their existential malaise. Most important, the journey through the desert is always indirectly postulated as symbolic of life itself. The desert, however, means something different to each. For the woman in "Absalom," it is the space where to find solitude; for the old woman, it is the space where to connect to her roots and, therefore, where to finally "know" herself; for the man, it is the stage where he has to play out his inner conflict.

Not all of them attain that of which they are in search. The present-day Tamar finds only a temporary resurgence of emotional vitality, whereas the old woman achieves her goal of connecting with her self-knowledge. The man, on the other hand, discovers that in seeing the desert only in terms of death he had lost out on life. Ultimately, however, they all find in the desert an illuminating message. A "message from the desert," indeed, as spelled out by the subtitle of Anaya's novel of 1996, *Jalamanta: A Message from the Desert*.

"Land of *nada*, kingdom of *nihilo*. God knows there's plenty of both out here. But it's a positive nothingness, as an idealist would say, rich in time, space, silence, light, darkness, the fullness of pure being" (Abbey 1993, 46).¹⁵ Expressing the tenet of the desert as life-giving well beyond mere descriptiveness and above the compass of the local horizon, Edward Abbey was voicing a concept shared by all southwestern writers of the twentieth century — foremost among them Rudolfo Anaya, whose entire *oeuvre* challenges the traditional Eurocentric view of the desert as life-denying, and who, most significantly in our present discussion, conducts his challenge in full defiance of literary and ideologic conventions.

¹⁵ Thus Stephen Crane, in *The Black Riders and Other Lines* (1895): "I walked in a desert, / And I cried, / 'Ah, God, take me from this place!' / A voice said, 'It is no desert.' / I cried, 'Well, but— / The sand, the heat, the vacant horizon.' / A voice said, 'It is no desert.'"

Nowhere, in fact, does the writer communicate his message with greater incisiveness and economy of means than in *Isis in the Heart*, a privately printed poem, perhaps his most intense mythopoeic manifesto, in which Anaya combines the directness of the bard with the complexity of the modernist writer. Through a syncretism of the Egyptian, the Biblical, the Greek, the Hindu, and the Aztec mythologies, the centrality of the desert — common to all of them — is brought to light and the basic oneness of the world's belief is manifested. Two verses trenchantly bring everything together: “the priests of Karnac walk in the desert dust, / reminding all, the Sun's path is life itself.”¹⁶

In the three short stories we have examined, Anaya couches his message in terms that force us to abandon the well-trodden paths of conventional literary communication, and to find our way through the thickets of linguistic invention. To briefly exemplify the creative *modus operandi* of our writer, we shall concentrate on one major image cluster related to love.

In affirmation of the divide between “pure” love and “impure” love (witness Titian's paradigmatic, as well as enigmatic, “Sacred and Profane Love”), western literature traditionally resorts to different semantic subfields to refer to love as opposed to sex — or, when this word was tabu, to “passion.” The two subfields are distinguished, quite prosaically, by a question of degrees of temperature. Conventionally, love is *warm* (when *tepid*, it is not yet love — and probably, it will never grow to be), whereas sex is *hot* — an open-ended, downhill path that in literature often leads to hell, and in sermonic tracts always does.

Anaya challenges this convention and, indirectly, the ideology at its origin. *Love* is mentioned ten times in “Absalom,” three in “Children of the Desert,” and five (three of which in *absentia*) in “Epifano.” *Passion* is never mentioned, although sexual encounters devoid of emotional involvement do take place in the stories — see the present-day Tamar's unfulfilling affairs and the man's bouts in the whorehouse. A comprehensive investigation would be required as to Anaya's lexical choices concerning love, but it is worth noting that at least within the present limited sample of his writing, *love* and *passion* are interchangeable, stressing the indivisibility of *eros* into different categories based on the assumption of the superiority of spirit over matter.

A point in case is the positivity of sweat in connection with both love-making and the heat of the desert in all three stories. I shall indicate just

¹⁶ As a locus of Anaya's imagination, Karnak is present in *Jemez Springs* 6. Cf. Charles F. Lummis: “[W]hen the ineffable sunshine of that arid but enchanted land falls upon [the] wondrous domes and battlements with a glow which seems not of this world, the sight is such a revelation that I have seen strong men sit down and weep in speechless awe,” (Lummis [1891] 1901, 11). See also Douglas Preston: “The landscape around us became mirrored by a similar emptiness within, an internal landscape of silence. . . . The frantic human need to talk over a silence had disappeared. . . . For all we knew, the rest of the world could have ceased to exist” (Preston 1995, 150).

one instance from each. "At night, when the breeze blew in from the desert, a trace of the acrid [body sweat of the Bedouin] made her restless" ("Ab-salom," 158). "Sweat and dust, the scent commingling. She felt alive. ... Sweat and pleasure, they came together" ("Epifano," 178). "She lay in bed. ... glowing with the sweat of their love. ... She is the desert, he thought. She thrives on the heat and sweat" ("Children of the Desert," 12).¹⁷

These last words cannot possibly apply to the man. At the end of this scene, "Sweat dripped from his armpits, trickled down his ribs. He thought of the piles of bones around the side of the trailer, bones he had collected over the years" (14). The instantaneous connection between his own ribs and the rib cage of a dead animal arching out of the sand confirms the death-oriented association between sweat and desert in the man's mind.

When the woman says, "I love the heat," his reaction is, "The heat of the desert [is] death" (13). After they make love, the trailer becomes to him "[h]otter than hell" (13, 14); he looks out at the "hot, burning land" and again equates the desert with hell. Then the woman talks about the "bubble," and he can only look at her in distaste: "[S]he was ... covered with sweat and rubbing herself, in dreamland, and the trailer was hot as an *oven*" (italics added). The Latin word for oven is *furnus*, from *fornix*, meaning an opening; hence, *fornicatio*. Through etymology, Anaya reveals the hidden nature of the man's unconscious equation of passion with sin.

Anaya's use of the color red is equally ambivalent. Red, the color of fire and, metonymically, of extreme heat, from the conventional perspective of the man is also the color of hell and, consequently, of sin. He first meets the woman when he stops at a roadhouse "to clean up" on his way back from his yearly week of debauchery — a rite of expurgation ironically reminiscent of the Communion ("his physical yearning satisfied, but the deeper communion he had sought in the women remained unfulfilled," [10]), officiated by a flirtatious waitress wearing bright red lipstick. In connections with the various red objects present in the trailer, this color starts a chain of associations that, through sex and the desert, ultimately lead to hell. In the background of the man's mental and cultural attitude loom Isaiah's words: "your sins be scarlet, ... they be red like crimson" (1.18).

From the woman's perspective, on the contrary, red is the color of blood, that is to say, of vitality. Even the plastic flowers and the curtains in their trailer are red, as are her nails, her lipstick, her dress, her earrings. But she is no Whore of Babylon, as the man is tempted to see her. Rather, she is a woman who has chosen life over death — and red, the color of coursing blood, is the color of life. Blood, of course, can also indicate death but the man's only association with blood ("When he spit he saw the red stain of blood," [17]) occurs after the budding of his comprehension brought about

¹⁷ Cf.: "I am a curandera who knows the magic of love, / potions of desert dust, profuse sweat of lovers ..." (Anaya 1998, 6).

by the old woman's "spit."¹⁸ His physical death coincides with his spiritual birth. The color red, therefore, presides over both life and death, linking the beginning and the end into an inextricable unity.

Unity is communicated also through the juxtaposition of traditionally oppositional elements. We find an illuminating example of this strategy in "Absalom" when the woman and the African meet, and the beginning of passion is made to coincide with the end of the day, the oncoming darkness is heralded by fire, and the enmity between Jews and Arabs is suspended by prayer:

The western sun began to set on Jerusalem. At the Western Wall the faithful prayed; in the blue mosque on the Temple Mount, the prayers left their resonant silence on arabesque walls ... Jerusalem was alive with fire, a white, burning city in the sunlight. ... The city was alive with prayer, alive and glowing with vibrant, living fire.¹⁹ (161)

Parallel to the system of fire images, Anaya creates a second system related to water. The contradiction is only apparent. As there is no opposition but, rather, cosmic harmony among the four classical elements — air, fire, earth, and water — so there is no opposition in Anaya's use of both fire and water to express love. In "Absalom," the woman's passion is "a stream ... that ran beneath the flesh, deep in the soul" as is life itself: "What is the stream of life beneath the flesh of woman?" (163). The African's love is "like fresh water in the desert," his voice is a "clear, quick water ... the voice of life, the dark water of the desert" (162). Similarly to the man in "Children of the Desert," the old woman in "Epifano" dies after attaining what she sought: water, as "there is no life in the desert without the water that flows from deep within the earth" (180); and, through "[t]he water of desire" (181), attaining the ultimate sense of life: connection with one's roots, which also reach deep into the earth, deep into the hot desert.

Perhaps unexpectedly, the woman in "Children of the Desert," so markedly associated with red, has blue eyes. Red and blue — symbolically, fire and water: two elements that in our collective thinking are mutually exclusive. But it is the task of the artist to challenge collective thinking, to undermine conventions, to say "No!" (in thunder, like Melville) to whatever separates that which is one. To strive for understanding and, thereby, attain harmony. This is Rudolfo Anaya's role as an artist, which he accomplishes by means of his masterful use of language.

¹⁸ The equation of blood with life is at the base of "Epifano" as well: "She was [Epifano's] blood" (180).

¹⁹ Cf.: "The morning sun had just cleared Sandia Crest, filling the Rio Grande Valley with a golden hue, the same aura that often shines on Jerusalem, a sheen on Temple Mount," (Anaya 2005, 5). On a lesser scale, the penultimate paragraph of "Epifano" presents an analogous fusion: "in the dying light of the sun a blinding flash filled her being. Like desire, ... the light filled her and she quivered" (181).

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THE POLITICS OF FAMILY HISTORY: A VIEW OF GROWING UP HISPANIC IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY CALIFORNIA

Chuck Tatum

In an important article on Chicana/o autobiography, Lauro Flores warns us that it would be a mistake to assume that all “Chicano writings — by virtue of the fact that they are part of a ‘minority culture’ — must necessarily express a class ideology that runs against the grain of the hegemonic classes” (Flores 1990, 83). He goes on to illustrate how the autobiographical narratives, *Barrio Boy: A History of a Boy’s Acculturation* (1971) by Ernesto Galarza and *Hunger of Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez* (1982) by Richard Rodriguez, embrace divergent visions of the world representing two different Chicano cultures that are often perceived as one. The two writers share the same ethnicity and some elements of their biographies have much in common. For example, they both grew up in Sacramento, attended Stanford University, and then Columbia University as graduate students. The biographical similarities end there, however, for their early lives were very different and they are separated by a generation. Additionally, Galarza lived mainly in the barrio or on the edge of it while Rodriguez was raised in a predominantly middle-class Anglo neighborhood. It is not my purpose in this paper to detail, as Flores and others have done, how their writings diverge, but to point out that they present two very different views of themselves and their relationship to both Chicano and Anglo cultures. Flores concludes that the contrasts between their two distinct perceptions “encapsulate the ideological contradiction which lies at the heart of the dialectic of Chicano culture” (89). Whether we agree with this conclusion is not particularly germane here, but Flores’s recognition and insistence that our view of Chicano culture needs to be guided by a close examination of its historical development and its specific dynamics is highly instructive.

Historians Ramón Gutiérrez, Tomás Almaguer, and Alex M. Saragoza, and cultural critics Angie Chabram and Rosa Linda Fregoso have also come to the same conclusion, particularly in the case of the reconstruction and interpretation of nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Chicano history. Gutiérrez admonishes his fellow social scientists to avoid the tendency to “describe the Spanish/Mexican-origin population of the United States as a homogeneous group” (Gutiérrez 1986, 79). Rather than being a homogeneous national immigrant group experiencing structural assimilation at the macro level via market integration,



and acculturation at the micro or personal level through exogamous marriage, English language mastery and participation in the dominant political institutions, Gutiérrez states that the Hispanic population of the Southwest is “complexly stratified and is defined by a variety of historically constituted social boundaries” (80). It is apparent to Almaguer that a class system, highly stratified along racial lines, existed prior to Anglo intervention in California. He states: “The symmetry of class and racial lines resulted in a social order in which the property-owning *ranchero* was largely Spanish or *criollo* (or at least claimed such descent), the intermediate *poblador*, a member of a small-scale farming group, was drawn from mestizo stock, and the indigenous Indian population was relegated to the bottom of the class structure.” (Almaguer 1994, 12-13). Almaguer would agree with Gutiérrez who concludes that how people define themselves and are defined by others is a dynamic process and that cultural identity is not a fixed and static entity. Rosa Linda Fregoso and Angie Chabram, in their introductory essay to a special issue of *Cultural Studies*, also convincingly demonstrate this. Like Gutiérrez and Almaguer, they are critical of the tendency among Chicano intellectuals, especially those formed during the Chicano student movement, to fix Chicano cultural identity as “a static, fixed and one-dimensional formulation” which “failed to acknowledge our historical differences in addition to the multiplicity of our cultural identities as a people.” (Fregoso and Chabram 1990, 205).

Alex Saragoza, in his interpretative essay on Chicana/o historiography, reinforces the notion advanced by Gutiérrez, Almaguer, Fregoso and Chabram, that the historical record reveals as much heterogeneity as homogeneity in the Spanish-speaking population of the Southwest. He praises historians who point to the fundamental diversity and complexity of the Chicano experience and criticizes those who have promoted a “them-versus-us history” (Saragoza 1988-1990, 8). Early Chicano historians of a cultural nationalist bent tended to emphasize the separation and conflict that existed between Anglos and Chicanos, to minimize the internal stratification and gender differences in the historical experience of Chicanos, and to exaggerate the continuities in Chicano/*mexicano* culture and obscure its discontinuities and variations (9-10). Saragoza instructs us that the conceptualization of the Chicano experience

must be anchored in the extension and penetration of capitalist development in the West. Furthermore, it must be emphasized, several factors mediated the specific outcomes of the interaction between Mexicans and an expanding American economy: local economic structure, geographic location, proximity to the border, ethnic composition of the population, and the presence of Mexicans in the area as merchants, landholders, or political figures. In brief, the interface between Mexicans and the westward movement of American capitalism and its intrinsic racism reflected a variegated, complex experience. (18)

Saragoza mentions among many elements in this variegated experience the marriage between upper class Mexicans and Americans and the busi-

ness links between the two groups. Class similarities and identity, rather than strictly ethnic or racial considerations, often influenced the decisions of the two groups to commingle in matrimony and in commerce. He cites Genaro Padilla's pioneering research, "The Recovery of Chicano Nineteenth-Century Autobiography," for offering insights into the responses of Mexicans to the development of a social and cultural world in the aftermath of the Anglo conquest after 1848.

Padilla is sensitive to the socio-historical complexities that surround and influence the multi-faceted consciousness reflected in the autobiographical works that form the basis of his study. He has found a profound and disturbing "personal and cultural schizophrenia" in some of the autobiographical narratives by, for example, the Texans José Antonio Menchaca and Juan Seguín and the New Mexican Miguel Antonio Otero (Padilla 1988, 290). He engages the autobiographical narratives by these and other Mexicans and Mexican-Americans that disclose cultural denial, the denigration of the *mexicano* lower classes, and the defense of the Anglo-American enterprise to colonize and civilize.

The studies by Flores, Gutiérrez, Almaguer, Fregoso and Chabram, Saragoza and Padilla inform my understanding and frame my analysis of a nineteenth-century autobiography/family history by Santiago Aínsa, a distant relative (my grandmother's uncle) of mine who was born in Hermosillo, Sonora, in 1840 and died in San Francisco in 1925. I have had in my possession for many years a copy of a typescript of his passed down from generation to generation. It has been personally valuable to my understanding and sensitivity to the obsessive self-identification on the part of my mother's family to the notion that somehow it had preserved its racial purity over several centuries in Mexico as descendants of European Spaniards. I need not belabor here the fact that this claim is historically indefensible nor do I wish to focus on the obvious and much discussed reasons why families such as my own resort to such racial and ethnic distortion. Rather, I offer this segment of Aínsa family history as another example of nineteenth-century autobiography that clearly demonstrates the false belief in a homogeneous and continuous Chicano past.

Santiago Aínsa's mother was Filomena de Anza Yslas, the granddaughter of Francisco de Anza whose brother Juan Bautista de Anza III adopted Filomena and her sister Rosa when their parents died. Santiago is thus maternally descended from the same de Anza who founded the Presidio of San Francisco in 1776 and who authored two long narrative accounts of the 1774 and 1775 expeditions from the Royal Presidio at Tubac in southern Arizona to northern California. Santiago Aínsa's father was Manuel Aínsa who, together with his brother Juan, were raised in the Philippines. Santiago claims that Manuel and Juan's father was commissioned as a fiscal agent of the Spanish Treasury and assigned to the Philippines. Barely two years after reaching the Philippines, he and his wife died of cholera leaving the two young sons orphaned. They were cared for by a family friend until they could fend for themselves. As young men, both Manuel and Juan were charged by their unofficial guardian with overseeing his company's transoceanic shipments to Latin America

and Mexico. When the wars of independence against Spain were declared about 1819, Juan found himself stranded in Guayaquil, Ecuador and Manuel in Mexico City. After the Republic of Mexico was declared in 1821, Manuel eventually relocated from Mexico City to Hermosillo, Sonora, where he very soon married Filomena de Anza, granddaughter of Juan Bautista de Anza. The couple soon started a family and eventually had eighteen children.

Santiago Aínsa's early years are remarkable enough to be intrinsically interesting, but an aspect of his autobiographical discourse I would like to focus on is the frequent reiteration that his paternal and maternal families descended from Spaniards. On the first page of his manuscript, he takes great care to highlight that his de Anza ancestors were a noble family from the province of Aragón in Spain. Juan de Anza I was a commissioned military officer sent to Mexico at the end of the seventeenth century. Interestingly, Santiago Aínsa provides no evidence of what he considers to be a noble lineage. Although speculative, it is reasonable to surmise that such information was probably passed down to him by word of mouth through his mother. The act of writing down such orally transmitted family lore more than two centuries later is an attempt to transform such lore into historical fact, that is, to validate and legitimize for future family generations their aristocratic Spanish ancestry.

Santiago de Aínsa continues his family narrative telling us that Juan de Anza I was stationed in the northern part of what is today the state of Sonora where he commanded the military forts established "to protect the settlers against the constant incursions of the barbarous savages occupying the mountains of what is now Arizona and a good part of New Mexico" (Aínsa n.d., 2). The identification of the native Indian population as "barbarous savages" is probably not in itself unusual given the widespread anti-indigenous sentiment of the time, but this description, juxtaposed as it is in the text with Juan de Anza's nobility, his Spanish ancestry, and his distinguished service as a military officer in the Crown's army of conquest and colonization, betrays Santiago Aínsa's intent to establish early on in his family history a chasm between the Spanish and Indians and "never the twain shall meet," at least not in his family. Curiously, in the very same paragraph, his project suddenly seems threatened when he mentions that Juan de Anza in 1710 marries Doña Ana de Padilla, "a lady of the then prosperous city of Bacuachi." No specific information is given about the Padilla family, only that inferentially it was prosperous because it resided in a prosperous community. The very omission of the particulars about the Padilla family points to a concern over the details that somehow might detract from Santiago Aínsa's overall intent to build an impenetrable wall of respectability around his immediate family and their ancestors.

Santiago Aínsa continues. Juan de Anza II, the son of Juan de Anza I and Ana de Padilla, was sent from Sonora to the College of San Ildefonso in Mexico City where he was educated. He then entered a government military school, graduated with a diploma of Lieutenant of Engineers, and returned to Sonora to serve under his father's command. After his father's death in 1744, Juan de Anza II was given command of the frontier forts and, like his father,

distinguished himself in his skirmishes against the “ruthless savages” who continued to harass “small ranches or detached miners or farmers occupied in the pursuit of business, killing and destroying whatever they found in their path” (3). Santiago Aínsa continuously denigrates the native Indian population while exalting the exploits of Juan de Anza II. For example, he describes him as a man of “wonderful energy” who would organize expeditions that would hunt “the savages in their own hiding places” in the mountains.

Santiago Aínsa not only casts the Indians of his grandfather’s day in the most negative terms, but also makes clear that almost a hundred years later they have not changed:

The savages with whom he had to do were, in every respect as their descendants, the same Apaches and Cumanches of today, indomitable, faithless, treacherous, with whom the pact was never respected, and of whom, those who had to deal with them have conceived the opinion that a “Good Indian is a Dead Indian.” (6)

Although Santiago Aínsa is unable to provide as much detail about his father’s family, he once again establishes that his paternal ancestry is every bit as Spanish as his maternal one. Santiago claims that his grandfather Manuel Aínsa was, like the de Anzas, a native of the province of Aragón, and that he was born in the city that bears the family name. Also like Juan de Anza I, Manuel Aínsa did not emigrate to the New World, as presumably people of the lower classes did, but was commissioned as a fiscal agent of the Spanish Treasury in the Phillipines.

Having firmly established the purity and nobility — at least on one side of the family — of both the de Anza and the Aínsa families, Santiago goes into considerable detail about the marriage that unified the two lines as well as marriages between members of both families and other prominent families in Sonora. As Stuart Voss has documented, this pattern of intermarriage was quite common in Hispanic society in Northwest Mexico, due mainly to the region’s tenuous existence on the periphery of the Spanish Viceroyalty and then, after 1821, the Republic of Mexico (Voss 1982, 79). The long distance of Sonora from the center of economic and political power in Mexico City, combined with the local inhabitants’ questions of identity and their vulnerability to contact by foreign interests, made family networking through marriage both desirable and necessary. A complex of notable and influential Spanish families linked together like a tightly woven tapestry made their political and economic future more certain, and although Voss doesn’t say so, most certainly more defensible against incursions by non-Spanish elements that could threaten their cultural and racial future. While not mentioned as frequently as other families, Voss does refer to the prominence of the Iñigo and Serna families, two families joined with the Aínsa/de Anza families through marriage. Santiago’s brother Manuel Aínsa married Eloísa Serna, my great grandmother, and another brother Agustín married Emilia Yñigo. They, too, sought to

strengthen the bonds between their and other prominent families to try to perpetuate an established order at the highest levels of Hermosillo society.

Santiago describes his father as a prosperous Hermosillo merchant who served as the city's mayor in 1850 and who owned and operated a successful general store that seemed to enjoy a brisk local business. The business is described as the "most popular store in Hermosillo" (15), a small provincial city of about ten to fifteen thousand inhabitants in the 1850s. Manuel Aínsa soon integrated his older sons, Augustín and Manuel, into the store's daily commercial activities as a way of training them to succeed him in the business as he got older. Even Santiago, when he was barely five years old, was encouraged to frequent the store and carry out simple business transactions with customers. This socialization of the Aínsa males thus guaranteed that the business would remain within the family. It also served to perpetuate the upper-class capitalist values on which the family's identity rested heavily. Cultural identity, after all, is intimately related to social status, an essential element of which is financial wealth and security.

Santiago's description of the family home is another indication of the high social stature the Aínsa family apparently enjoyed among Hermosillo's wealthy citizenry. The house occupied half a block, having a main court with the living rooms on one side and the stores on the other. The servants' rooms and stables were built around a second court built like a fort with one entrance, a large gate, "the largest in Hermosillo" (17), designed to monitor the passage of visitors, horses, carriages, and merchandise. Santiago tells of returning to the family home in the 1880s, more than three decades after leaving it in 1850. He describes the fresco paintings on the walls as well as the ornately framed paintings and other objects of art that still remained. In short, his composite picture of the home reflects his family's life of gentility and wealth that resulted from his father's commercial savvy and wise investments.

In addition to the main narrative of family history, an interesting discursive element are my grandmother's marginal notes throughout Santiago Aínsa's typescript, notes that were made, I can reasonably speculate, to try to reinforce and perpetuate the notion of the family's pure, non-Indian, lineage. Carmelita Aínsa, my grandmother, at some undetermined moments after she inherited the original manuscript, had scribbled statements in the margins trying to link herself with the prominence and supposed purity of Spanish ancestry, and nobility of the complex of de Anza/Aínsa/Serna/Yñigo family history. For example, on page 6 of the manuscript, she has scrawled "I, Carmelita Aínsa, am a direct descendant of Francisco de Anza, brother of Juan de Anza, and Manuel Aínsa, for whom my own father was named." (Parenthetically, despite the clarity in the text, she mistakenly associates her de Anza ancestry with Francisco and not Juan. Francisco had adopted his brother's two daughters Ana and Rosa after the death of their parents.) When Santiago discusses the origin of the Aínsa family in a city by that name in Aragón, my grandmother comments in the margin: "There is a city and a river in Aragón called Aínsa."

These hastily scribbled commentaries on the main narrative deserve our brief attention for they serve to demonstrate the tenacity of later generations of Mexicans and Mexican Americans to preserve the myth of European descentance. They also serve to remind us that there continued to be great social and cultural diversity within this Hispanic community throughout the twentieth century.

Returning now to the main narrative, Santiago Aínsa devotes a long section of his family history to a description of regional and national Mexican politics from about 1850 to the end of the nineteenth century. His commentary on the Mexican War of Independence and revolution in general, his observations of political activity in Sonora and Hermosillo, and finally his thoughts on the Mexican President Porfirio Díaz are all strongly indicative of his and his family's basic conservatism. This is not unexpected in view of the family's privileged social and financial position in Hermosillo. Santiago expresses a position shared by many Spanish citizens in Mexico at the time of the country's independence from Spain in 1821: that of support for the Spanish crown in opposition to the revolutionaries who liberated the country. What is surprising, however, is that Santiago continued to hold on to these convictions many decades later. He comments:

From the establishment of the Republic, Mexico had fallen into the hands of the lawless and criminal classes who had taken possession of the Government as a business for their personal benefit and never for a moment for the public good. Men of property and merchants dedicated to their own affairs would not take any part in public affairs which was no doubt unpatriotic and certainly unwise as the expenses of Government must be borne by those who have property while the masses looked upon revolutions as blessings since they afforded them the right to take the goods and property of the wealthy class and gave them freedom to commit all manner of excesses and crime without fear of punishment. That is the reason that it had become a saying that a revolution once started must be successful as whoever proclaimed a revolution was immediately joined by all the idlers, criminals and the rabble in general and under the guise of patriots helped themselves to the property of others wherever found. (26)

Santiago's negative characterization and condemnation of revolutionists and revolutionary actions carries through into his comments on popular political activities in Sonora and Hermosillo after the 1850s. His perspective as a member of a prominent and wealthy provincial family is one of cynicism towards national politics and their local manifestations. Mexico's "Centrals" and "Federalists" are viewed with equal suspicion; partisans at opposite extremes of the Mexican political spectrum at mid-nineteenth century are characterized as tyrants, opportunists, despots, and worse. He claims that partisans of both political parties taxed the wealthy like his father to finance their military campaigns and to line their own pockets. General Porfirio Díaz, who was first elected President of Mexico in 1871,

emerges in his brief overview of the nineteenth-century Mexican politics as a force of reason, stability, and progress, the antithesis of presidential leaders from 1821 on (26).

In addition to his thoughts on Mexican politics, Santiago Aínsa's opinion of post-independence Latin American governments in general reflects his pro-Spanish bias. For example, he denigrates Latin Americans, even those from the upper classes, because he believes they are "imbued with aversion towards unity of action, association, company or corporation, their love of individual independence, denial of the rights of majorities, rebellion to authority, and accustomed to disrespect and defy the ephemeral governments of their native Republics" (80). In contrast, he believes Americans possess a spirit of order and cooperation, two qualities that in Santiago's opinion led to the success of the Anglo-American Republic. Again, as reflected throughout his manuscript, Santiago shows himself to be pro-Spanish and Anglo-American and decidedly anti-Mexican in his preference of national character traits.

At the same time, however, he does not hesitate to criticize some of the behaviors and mores of his adopted Anglo-American countrymen. For example, he is strongly disapproving of the antics of some of the Anglo male and female passengers on a long trip by steamship from San Francisco to New York. Observing their sexual advances towards one another, Santiago comments: "All this was new to me for in the circle in which I had been raised such proceedings are unknown but I took it for granted that all this carrying on was only the peculiar method of American free and easy manners" (52). Another example of his disapproval of Anglo-American values and behaviors are his observations on the flesh trading in which his fellow male passengers engage when they traverse the Isthmus of Panama. One evening, a group of Panamanian black male pimps and female prostitutes come to the hotel where the steamship passengers are staying. While Santiago seems to excuse the behavior of the black men as something one could expect from those of their race, he is scandalized by the Anglo males' participation in buying the women's services for their sexual pleasure. He moralizes:

But what are we to say of the civilized white men who flocked around the auctioneer and started a lively bid and then carried off the chattel to the adjacent woods. These men were Anglo Saxon with fair hair and blue eyes. The very mention of this incident is degrading. It serves to show how thin is the veneering of civilization when the passions rage and the restraints imposed by the opinions of friends and home acquaintances are removed. I do not think that any of these men who flaunted their bestiality in the eyes of 400 passengers, with whom they had but a temporary acquaintance, would have dared such conduct in their home town or in the presence of old friends. The merciful night came and hid in its folds the effrontery of the blacks and the shameless degradation of the white [sic]. (59)

Like the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century businessman and politician Miguel Antonio Otero, Santiago Aínsa wrote in English which may have served to deflect those who might identify the family with its Indo-Mexican roots rather than its Spanish-European ancestry. In any event, the use of English at least as a written form would bring both writers closer to the culture of Anglo elite and distance them from the Spanish spoken by the majority of the Mexican/Hispanic population.

Santiago Aínsa's description of his own education illuminates and sets in relief his choice to write in English and provides us with a valuable perspective on which to draw some inferences. In keeping with the pattern of family networking in Sonora, Santiago's father, a successful Hermosillo businessman, tried to organize other prominent families to found a school to educate their children. His efforts ultimately failed because some families chose to send their children to France or Germany for their education. Instead of a school, Manuel Aínsa then arranged for the services of an Oxford-trained tutor to educate his own children. The school-aged Aínsa children studied "Writing, Reading, Arithmetic, English, Mathematics, Chemistry, a general knowledge of the Sciences, as far as they had advanced at that time, and General History." Later the children were taught by a Spanish-speaking tutor. In 1850, ten years after Santiago's birth, the Aínsa family moved to northern California where the father and his older sons had established a lucrative business out of Stockton and later San Francisco trading with a burgeoning gold mining industry. In 1853, at the age of thirteen, Santiago is sent away to school at St. John's, a Jesuit institution in New York City. His description of the long trek by steamship he made down the west coast of Panama, the traversing of the isthmus by mule and by train, and then up the east coast to New York City is an interesting aspect of his narrative for several reasons including what it reveals about his linguistic preparation in both English and Spanish. Santiago refers repeatedly to how haltingly he spoke English and the difficulty of communicating with fellow passengers. At the same, he refers to his role as official interpreter for a group of passengers who were traversing the Isthmus of Panama. He apparently was very comfortable and confident of his Spanish. Later at St. John's, Santiago joins with a small group of Spanish-speaking students from all over Latin America. Their association made possible by their linguistic and cultural affinity — Santiago repeatedly refers to the other boys by nationality as well as by identifying them and himself as "Spanish" — served to ward off their sense of isolation in a strange city among its sometimes hostile population. From Santiago's description of his Latin American friends, we can conclude that all of them considered themselves upper class and that they shared the same elitist values regarding race and class. The fact that their families could afford to send them to the United States to receive a private education is itself strongly indicative of at least their financial status as *ricos*.

While Santiago Aínsa says little about his later education, we can reasonably conclude that at least as a young man he was proficient in read-

ing, speaking, and writing Spanish. The decision, years later, to write his family history in English, strongly suggests that by that time — the first decade of the twentieth century — he had become irrevocably acculturated into Anglo society as a member of San Francisco's social and political elite. The common language of social and cultural interaction within this elite was, of course, English, the language of the dominant society.

Leonard Pitt, in his book *The Decline of the Californios*, discusses at length how the migration of a massive number of Latin Americans — especially Chileans and Sonorans — to northern California during the height of the Gold Rush affected the social dynamics between Spanish-speaking Californians and a surging Anglo population. Anglos refused to distinguish between the wealthy established community of Californios and the recently arrived miners, entrepreneurs, and adventurers who had come north to share in the recently discovered wealth of the region (Pitt 1970, 53). Anglo xenophobia towards both the native-born and the recent immigrant Spanish-speaking population tended to drive the two former groups together in established old communities of California. Soon after the fever of the Gold Rush began to decline, however, alliances began to form between commercial interests from several national and ethnic groups, especially but not exclusively in the Los Angeles area.

The urge to rise above racial and national barriers came naturally to the elite of Los Angeles. The members of mixed families and business partnerships, Yankee ranchers with Spanish nicknames, and “respectable” businessmen — indeed all businessmen except gamblers — held themselves aloof from the common herd. They formed a remarkably cosmopolitan class: an alliance of Californians, Mexicans, and South Americans; of Yankees, Britons, Frenchmen, and Germans; of mestizos and whites; of merchants, gentry, and lawyers; of Protestants, Catholics, and a sprinkling of Jews. (125)

Santiago Aínsa describes a very similar pattern of commercial and social relationships from the point of view of his family's integration into San Francisco's high society. Soon after a rain storm destroyed the Aínsa home and business in Stockton, the family moved to San Francisco in 1852 where they bought a house on the corner of Dupont and Lombard Streets “then the favorite residence locality for the better class of people.” (46) Due mainly to his father and older brothers' success as merchants, the Aínsa family soon became associated with the city's growing upper class. For example, Santiago describes his father's close friendship with the Catholic Archbishop Alemany and the marriages of several of his sisters to wealthy and politically influential Anglo businessmen and lawyers. In 1852, just after moving to San Francisco from Stockton, his sister Amparo married a prominent Anglo businessman Raisy Biven. The year after Santiago's sister Filomena married Henry Crabb whom he describes as “a Southern gentleman and attorney by profession” who was later appoint-

ed Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of California. Several other sisters also married Anglos or non-Mexican foreign nationals: Adelaida married a Francis Eisen; Francisca married a James O'Reilly; Lenore married a Amie Vignier; and Josefa married a T.W. Taliaferro. Santiago himself married an Anglo, Jenny Foy. The Aínsa family would thus appear to have become fully identified with San Francisco's Anglo elite through family matrimonial networking and business alliances, much the same way in which the de Anza/Aínsa/Yñigo/Serna family had done in Hermosillo a few decades before.

Santiago Aínsa ends the formal part of his narrative with a long discourse on early Greek classical philosophy. It is somewhat difficult to discern in what direction he hopes to lead the reader as he muses on Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle, but his hierarchical view of civilization, history, and religion does shine through quite clearly. The one year of college-level philosophical and humanistic studies at St. John's left a lasting impression on him and apparently were integral to the development of his own personal philosophy. In the end, he affirms his faith in the Christian God and expresses the hope that his progeny will be guided by his counsel.

It is vexing that Santiago Aínsa ends his short autobiography and family history at the point he enters college at St. John's. While there are references throughout the narrative to events that occurred later, he provides no detail about his post-college years. The answers to why he chose to do so are many, ranging from a simple and obvious one — he ran out of energy or could not sustain his interest in writing a complete history — to more complex and speculative ones. We will never know, of course, but if we focus on his implied purpose for writing the narrative in the first place, we may begin to arrive at an answer. If it was his intent — and I think it is reasonable to assume that it was — to establish for himself, his contemporaries, and future generations that the Aínsa/de Anza family was Spanish-European and not Indo-Mexican with all the social and cultural trappings that accompany such an identity, then he did not need to carry his narrative any further forward — he had already succeeded in firmly establishing such an identity.

The composite picture Santiago Aínsa draws is one of a prosperous, wealthy, and educated family of the upper classes whose descentance from two "pure" Spanish families could not be disputed. Moreover, his careful selection of details reinforces his implicit intent to depict that the family made a successful transition from Hermosillo to San Francisco with its purity, wealth, values, and traditions intact. Intermarrying with prominent Anglo-Americans, in order to preserve and fortify the family's social status, merely served to strengthen its identity as European and non-Indian. Santiago Aínsa chose to use English rather than Spanish as a discursive strategy to fix in time both his and his family's social prominence among a new elite in their adopted country. At no point in his narrative does he betray any sense of irony that by using English he has rejected and even betrayed, at least linguistically, the very cultural tradition to which he has taken great pains to link himself and his family.

Perhaps the ultimate tragedy of those Mexicans and Mexican Americans of his and later generations — including my grandmother's generation — who were so adamant in denying their mixed racial, ethnic, and cultural heritage by fortifying a myth that historically cannot be sustained is that they as well as their children and grandchildren had to live what Genaro Padilla describes as a profound and disturbing personal and cultural schizophrenia, a tortured existence in fear that someone would discover the fraud and reveal them for what they were — *mestizos*. Racial and cultural denial is not, of course, limited to Mexican Americans in the United States.

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SABORES Y AROMAS DE MÉXICO: LA COMIDA EN LA OBRA DE SANDRA CISNEROS

An Van Hecke

Últimamente se ha observado un creciente interés por el estudio de la gastronomía en la literatura. Luisa Campuzano, en un artículo de 2000, apuntaba que los estudios literarios hasta entonces no habían abordado “los nexos entre comida, civilización y literatura,” a diferencia de la antropología y el psicoanálisis. Campuzano explicaba esto por el hecho de que “hasta hace poco en los estudios literarios se dejaba totalmente de lado la importancia del cuerpo” (Campuzano 2000, 16). Esta laguna en los estudios literarios se está llenando poco a poco y recientemente se han abierto nuevas pistas de investigación muy atractivas, como la propuesta de De Maeseneer para una “gastrocrítica” (De Maeseneer 2003).

En este artículo, me dedicaré a la obra de Sandra Cisneros, hija de una madre mexicano-americana y de un padre mexicano. Cisneros nació y fue criada en el norte de Estados Unidos. Mi objetivo consiste en analizar cómo Cisneros representa lo culinario en su obra narrativa. Estudiaré a continuación *The House on Mango Street* (1989), *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories* (1991), y *Caramelo or Puro Cuento* (2003). Aunque la comida no es un tema central en su obra, tal como es en el cuento “Antieros” de Tununa Mercado (en *Canon de alcoba*, 1988), o en la novela *Como agua para el chocolate* (1989) de Laura Esquivel, por ejemplo, la importancia de la comida en Cisneros ya se observa desde los mismos títulos, que se refieren al mango y al caramelo, ambos pertenecientes al campo de lo dulce, aunque esto no excluye la presencia de lo amargo. Irónicamente, *Mango Street* está en un barrio dominado por la pobreza y la violencia. Además de esta primera oposición se distingue otra, evidente en la literatura chicana: la comida norteamericana frente a la comida mexicana. La primera se limita, en la obra de Cisneros, a unos pocos productos y platos, típicos de Estados Unidos como *donuts*, *popsicle* (Cisneros 1992, 13, 17), *corn flakes*, *popcorn*, *french fries*, *milk shake* y *Coca-Cola* (Cisneros 2004, 10, 13, 38, 44, 139). En cambio, la variedad de productos y platos mexicanos en Cisneros es mucho más amplia y rica. Destaca por supuesto el producto básico de la gastronomía de México, omnipresente en las tres obras, el maíz, y todas las preparaciones hechas a base de maíz: nixtamal, tortillas, tacos, tamales, chilaquiles, nachos etc. Pe-

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ro la autora nos seduce también con otros sabores mexicanos, ausentes en *The House on Mango Street*, pero muy presentes a partir de *Woman Hollering Creek*, donde nos habla de frijoles, carnitas, mole, sopa tarasca etc. Las delicias mexicanas se van ampliando aún más en *Caramelo*, con molletes, huevos a la mexicana, sopa de lentejas etc. De hecho, la preponderancia de la comida mexicana ya es sugerida implícitamente en los títulos: el mango y el caramelo evocan lo latinoamericano, el mango por ser fruta tropical, el caramelo por ser una palabra en español.

1. *The House on Mango Street*

En *The House on Mango Street*, la narradora es una niña joven, Esperanza, por lo que no sorprende que en toda la novela haya una preferencia por lo dulce: *donuts* (Cisneros 1992, 13), *popsicle*, *ice cream* (17). Estos recuerdos de lo dulce corren paralelo con los recuerdos de la infancia como paraíso, y el lugar paradisiaco por excelencia es el *Monkey Garden*, un jardín salvaje con árboles de duraznos, “Sweet sweet peach trees” (95). También hay peras y manzanas, como en el paraíso bíblico, y al igual que en la Biblia, la niña se ve brutalmente confrontada con el fin del paraíso, cuando los juegos infantiles dejan de ser inocentes.

Además de la insistencia en lo dulce y lo paradisiaco, la perspectiva infantil tiene aún otras implicaciones. En primer lugar, se advierte el impacto sobre los niños de ciertos olores de comida en la casa, y la manera en que éstos, en la infancia, se asocian con un sentimiento de seguridad y de protección, como el cabello de la madre que huele a pan: “the warm smell of bread before you bake it” (6). Resalta lo sensual y lo corporal de la relación calurosa entre la madre y la niña.

En segundo lugar, *The House on Mango Street* puede ser calificada como una novela de aprendizaje, y entre los diferentes mundos y tipos de gente que Esperanza va conociendo, se encuentra también con la bruja Elena, quien le lee las cartas. Así la niña aprende también que los productos alimenticios tienen poderes mágicos: “If you got a headache, rub a cold egg across your face” (64). Aunque no se dice explícitamente, lo más probable es que algunos de estos conocimientos de brujería tengan su origen en América Latina. Al ver *The House on Mango Street* en su totalidad surge una pregunta. En todas sus obras, pero particularmente en ésta, Sandra Cisneros se destaca por una descripción muy detallada de espacios, en este caso, de la casa en Mango Street: las puertas, las escaleras, las ventanas, los baños, el jardín con los árboles y las flores... Para un buen análisis de los espacios y de su valor simbólico en esta novela, véase Romero Chumacero (2004). Esperanza también describe otras casas y hasta habla en detalle de su casa soñada (Cisneros 1992, 108). Así que sorprende que, en todas estas descripciones, casi no preste atención a la cocina, sabiendo además que la mayoría de sus protagonistas son mujeres. Probablemente se explica por el hecho de que por lo general se trata de familias muy tradicionales en las que la mujer queda desplazada a la cocina, considerada no como un lugar central sino secundario o marginal de la casa, un espacio que no merece ser mencionado ni descrito por ser insignificante.

La imagen de la familia tradicional se ve confirmada en los cuentos donde los hombres tienen encerradas a las mujeres en las casas, supuestamente por miedo de que las vayan a perder. Son mujeres sumisas que no reclaman su propio espacio, ni el de la cocina ni otro, como posible lugar de enunciación para iniciar un proceso de liberación. Sin embargo, hay una excepción, una cocina en la que sí nos deja entrar la narradora, la de la bruja Elena, una cocina fuera de lo común (63). Elena hizo de su cocina su lugar de trabajo, un espacio propio. Rodeada de objetos religiosos, tanto de origen cristiano como del vudú, habla ahí con los espíritus. La cocina se convierte en un santuario, en una iglesia, y la mesa de cocina tiene entonces un doble uso: para comer y para predecir el futuro. Elena se distingue entonces de la mayoría de las mujeres descritas en la novela, que tienen más bien un papel pasivo y que sufren la dominación de los hombres. Así que a través de los fragmentos se va desarrollando cierta rebelión por parte de la niña Esperanza que desea salir de este barrio, y es sobre todo al final de la novela, donde se percibe ya cierto intento de liberarse, de ir muy lejos de Mango Street.

2. *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories*

Este proceso de liberación iniciado en *The House on Mango Street*, se observa más claramente en algunos de los cuentos de *Woman Hollering Creek*. Una de estas mujeres fuertes, por ejemplo, es Felice, que ayuda a una mujer embarazada, pobre y maltratada por el marido. Felice se deja inspirar por el mito de la Gritona: cada vez que cruza el puente del arroyo llamado la Gritona, lanza un grito muy fuerte, “as loud as any mariachi,” o “like Tarzan” (Cisneros 2004, 55). Sin embargo, parece que estas mujeres independientes se movilizan desde otros espacios, lejos de la casa, y sobre todo, lejos de la cocina. No obstante, es dentro de las casas donde mejor se observa cómo los hombres tienen controladas a las mujeres, hasta en los detalles de la mesa. Exigen que toda la comida sea servida en platos separados (49, 69). Es por el cumplimiento de estos detalles, pertenecientes a la tradición mexicana, por los que los hombres mexicanos evalúan a sus mujeres, ya que los norteamericanos tienen más bien la costumbre de servirlo todo a la vez.

La relación entre magia y comida, ya sugerida en la figura de la bruja Elena en *The House on Mango Street*, se profundiza más en *Woman Hollering Creek*. Aquí escuchamos a una “bruja,” protagonista y narradora del cuento “Eyes of Zapata.” Se llama Inés, la mujer de Zapata, y nos enumera todos los remedios usados por su tía Chucha, no sólo contra enfermedades físicas — “guacamaya feathers, eggs, cocoa beans, chamomile oil, rosemary” (Cisneros 2004, 102) —, sino también contra el mal de amores. Cuando Inés sufre por el abandono de Zapata, revolucionario y mujeriego, su tía intenta curarla a su manera, usando el *yoloxochitl*, la *flor de corazón*, “with its breath of vanilla and honey” (97). El uso de hierbas, como del *yoloxochitl*, es común en las comunidades latinas en Estados Unidos, y la gran variedad de hierbas usadas con fines medicinales es enumerada en un fragmento donde se describe la “Casa Preciado Religious Articles,” según la narradora “Mexican voodoo

shop,” lo que sorprende algo ya que el vudú no es tan frecuente en México como en otros países latinoamericanos. La narradora incluye una larga lista alfabética que va desde aguacate hasta zarzamora (159). Es como si quisiera presentarnos en toda su exhaustividad la riqueza de este mundo mágico de hierbas y plantas, que al mismo tiempo sigue muy cubierto de misterios.

Sin embargo, la relación entre la magia y la comida se vuelve más complicada. No sólo la comida tiene fuerzas mágicas, sino que hay mujeres que ejercen sus fuerzas mágicas sobre los productos alimenticios. Inés heredó de su madre estos poderes, incluso sin quererlo: “They say when I was a child I caused a hailstorm that ruined the new corn” (Cisneros 2004, 104). Este maldito suceso la persigue toda la vida. Mataron a su madre, y su familia tuvo que mudar. Todas las mujeres de su familia — su madre, su tía, hasta su propia hija — ven más que los demás (105). Cuando la gente murmura a sus espaldas: “*bruja, nagual*,” le duele, pero finalmente acepta su condición: “If I am a witch, then so be it, I said. And I took to eating black things — *huitlacoche* the corn mushroom, coffee, dark chiles, the bruised part of fruit, the darkest, blackest things to make me hard and strong” (106). Además de ser famoso por su exquisito sabor, el huitlacoche es conocido por presentar propiedades medicinales y es usado por los indígenas en México contra varias enfermedades (Guzmán 1999). Además, el uso de ciertos hongos se ha relacionado a menudo con la brujería, por ser tóxicos y alucinógenos.

Lo mágico no puede ser separado de un contexto mitológico, que al mismo tiempo puede explicar a veces el porqué de la magia. Ya surgió el nombre de *yoloxochitl*, flor de corazón, que encontramos en la “Leyenda de los Volcanes” en la que se cuenta la muerte de la diosa Xochiquétzal. Cuando el guerrero azteca que había sido su amado, la encontró muerta, se cubrió las sienes con las flores de *yoloxochitl* (Franco Sodja 1998). Vemos en el cuento “Eyes of Zapata” que la tía Chucha le cubre el pecho a Inés con la misma flor del corazón. La supervivencia de ciertos mitos se percibe también en la fuerte creencia en “*La madre tierra que nos mantiene y cuida*” (Cisneros 2004, 110). Bien se sabe que en las tradiciones precolombinas en Hispanoamérica es la tierra, la diosa madre, la que alimenta a los hombres, llamada Tlalteu en náhuatl, pero que cambia de aspecto. Entre las diferentes transformaciones llama la atención su metamorfosis en Xochiquétzal, la “seductora” (Correa Luna 2004). Es la flor preciosa, la diosa del rostro benévolo.

Si en *The House on Mango Street* aparece sobre todo la comida dulce, sabrosa y rica, en *Woman Hollering Creek*, se introduce también lo no sabroso. La niña Lucy del primer cuento pregunta: “*Have you ever eaten dog food? I have. After crunching like ice, she opens her big mouth to prove it*” (Cisneros 2004, 3). Se observa aquí cierta transgresión, ya que se traspasan los límites de lo aceptado, de lo civilizado. Se trata al mismo tiempo de los desafíos que hacen los niños entre ellos: prueban lo prohibido, lo desagradable, lo asqueroso. En el último cuento del libro, “Bien Pretty,” vuelve la idea de la comida repugnante, cuando los dos protagonistas organizan un concurso de cuentos, y uno de los títulos que inventan es “The Ugliest Food You Ever Ate” (148), aunque no se aclara a qué comida fea o asquerosa se refiere.

3. *Caramelo or Puro Cuento*

Caramelo es una novela, en gran parte autobiográfica, que pertenece al género de las sagas de familia, un género muy popular hoy día en todo el mundo, y practicado desde hace mucho tiempo en América Latina. Las innumerables referencias a la comida en *Caramelo* no han dejado indiferentes a los críticos literarios. Ana María González sostiene la tesis de que Cisneros relaciona siempre los sentimientos, como el asombro, la soledad o la alegría con “los olores, los sabores y los colores de las comidas” (González 2006, s.p.). La abundancia de productos y platos típicos de México en *Caramelo* se explica sobre todo porque, a diferencia de las otras dos obras, gran parte de esta novela se sitúa en México, llamado “the land of *los nopales*” (Cisneros 2003, 91). Es el país de origen de la familia Reyes que viaja cada verano desde Chicago hasta la casa de los abuelos en la Ciudad de México. Apenas cruzada la frontera con México, la niña Lala, bien encantadora, describe la sensación física de todos los olores, sobre todo los de comida:

The smell of diesel exhaust, the smell of somebody roasting coffee, the smell of hot corn *tortillas* along with the *pat-pat* of the women’s hands making them, the sting of roasting *chiles* in your throat and in your eyes. Sometimes a smell in the morning, very cool and clean that makes you sad. And a night smell when the stars open white and soft like fresh *bolillo* bread.

Every year I cross the border, it’s the same—my mind forgets. But my body always remembers. (18)

El primer contacto es a través de los olores, por lo que la confrontación con México es una sensación principalmente física, corporal y sensual.

El título *Caramelo* se refiere en primer lugar al rebozo de la abuela, que es de estilo caramelo, es decir, de estilo rayado, que Lala describe como “a cloth the golden color of burnt-milk candy” (58), “an exquisite *rebozo* of five *tiras*, the cloth a beautiful blend of toffee, licorice, and vanilla stripes flecked with black and white, which is why they call this design a *caramelo*” (94). Sin embargo, es este mismo color caramelo con el que la niña describe el color de la piel de Candelaria, la hija de la lavandera Amparo. La madre de Lala le prohíbe jugar con Candelaria, por ser indígena, de una clase social inferior. Ahora, Lala queda fascinada con el color de la piel de la niña: “Smooth as peanut butter, deep as burnt-milk candy” (34). “Her skin a *caramelo*. A color so sweet, it hurts to even look at her” (37).

Quisiera detenerme ahora en la manera en que Cisneros percibe en *Caramelo* la preparación y el consumo de uno de los platos más famosos de México, el mole, y más precisamente, el mole *mancha manteles*. Para una fiesta de cumpleaños, la abuela pone un plástico transparente arriba del mantel de encaje, justificándolo así: “—Why do you think they call this dish *mancha manteles*? It really does stain tablecloths, and you can’t ever wash it out, ever! Then she adds in a loud whisper,—It’s worse than women’s blood”

(53). La comparación con la sangre de mujer se hace en primer lugar por lo difícil o lo imposible de quitar las manchas, pero se añade indudablemente otro significado, más sutil: el mole se compara con lo femenino, en su carácter más íntimo. Además de que el mole provoca en todos los hijos una sensación de máximo placer por ser tan delicioso (54), la anécdota del mole tiene también su interés por lo que se refiere a la confrontación entre los dos mundos, el mexicano de la abuela, y el norteamericano, defendido por los hijos y asimilado por los nietos. La abuela contesta a los halagos de los hijos con cierto tono de ambigüedad, diciendo que no fue ninguna molestia, aunque sí lo hizo completamente desde el inicio, y aprovecha la oportunidad para criticar muy sutilmente a sus nueras: "I'm not like these modern women. Oh, no! I don't believe in cooking shortcuts! The Grandmother says, not looking at her daughters-in-law. — To make food taste really well, you've got to labor a little, use the *molcajete* and grind till your arm hurts, that's the secret." Cuando los hijos le preguntan con asombro por qué no usó la batidora que le trajeron el verano anterior, contesta con enojo que nunca la usa porque se pierde el sabor auténtico. El rechazo de todo tipo de electrodomésticos vuelve a aparecer cuando la abuela también se opone al uso del microondas, a favor del comal, para calentar las tortillas (121). Ya no sólo se trata de un conflicto entre mujeres tradicionales y modernas, o entre el mundo tradicional mexicano y el moderno norteamericano, sino que la abuela lleva el asunto a un nivel de conflicto entre mujeres y hombres: "These modern kitchen gadgets, really! What do you men know? Why, your own father's never even entered in my kitchen" (54). La cocina es un lugar exclusivamente reivindicado por la mujer. La abuela es llamada "she of the kingdom of kitchen" (167). Finalmente, resulta que la niña Lala no puede comer el mole porque pica, lo que provoca otra vez el enojo de la abuela que hasta se apoya en los antiguos aztecas para defender su mole: "a recipe as old as the Aztecs. Don't pretend you're not Mexican!" (55) y le obliga a acabar el plato. Afortunadamente para la niña, en cuanto se va la abuela, interviene el abuelo bondadoso y le da el plato a la sirvienta, y dice: "Give this to the neighbor's dog. And if my wife asks, say the child ate it." La niña le dice asustada al abuelo: "But it's a lie," pero el abuelo la tranquiliza con las siguientes palabras sabias: "Not a lie! A healthy lie. Which sometimes we have to tell so that there won't be trouble" (56). Es la primera confrontación de la niña con el mundo de las pequeñas mentiras en la familia, tema sugerido ya en el subtítulo de la novela: "Puro Cuento."

En las dos obras anteriores, hablé de la ausencia de la cocina, o de la cocina como espacio secundario apenas mencionado. Esta perspectiva cambia totalmente en el caso de *Caramelo*, donde hay un destacado interés por las cocinas. Se revela entonces una oposición entre las cocinas norteamericanas que parecen no tener tanta importancia, y las cocinas mexicanas, que ocupan un lugar central en la casa. Cuando era joven, la abuela Soledad Reyes trabajaba como sirvienta en la cocina de los que iban a ser sus futuros suegros. Aquella cocina de los suegros, en un departamento muy antiguo con balcones, en el centro de la Ciudad de México, había dejado una fuerte impresión

en Soledad: “And the kitchen! Big enough to dance in. The oven alone had six *hornillas* for coal! One of those old-fashioned types that had to be lit with an *ocote* stick bought from a street peddler.” (114). Este tipo de cocina, de la clase alta (aunque venida a menos) va junto con un estilo de vida, y aún más, de un estilo de comer, bien señalado por la abuela: “Because here is where one can most tell what class a person is. By the way one eats. And by one’s shoes. Narciso ate like the well-to-do” (121). Es bien conocido este tema de las buenas maneras en la mesa que reflejan el tipo de persona.

4. *De la realidad a la imagen*

Por lo que concierne al tema de la comida se observa una enorme evolución en la obra de Cisneros. En *The House on Mango Street* los contextos culinarios se limitan a una perspectiva infantil con una clara preferencia por lo dulce, y un interés particular por aquella cocina-santuario de la bruja Elena. En *Woman Hollering Creek* se desarrolla ya más el tema destacando sobre todo el carácter mágico y mitológico de la comida. En *Caramelo*, finalmente, se manifiesta un interés ilimitado por la gastronomía mexicana. Podríamos hablar de una mexicanidad en aumento. Esta evolución no sólo se explica por el desplazamiento de Estados Unidos a México, sino también por el hecho de que se trate de una novela que cubre la historia de varias generaciones, y en la que la abuela le traspasa sus conocimientos a la nieta. Las tradiciones culinarias forman parte de la tradición oral transmitida de generación en generación. Con su última novela, Cisneros va explorando mundos desconocidos, de sabores y olores olvidados, que se van recuperando gracias a la imaginación.

Una característica muy llamativa del estilo de Cisneros es precisamente el uso de múltiples metáforas y comparaciones para describir personajes, objetos, ambientes o espacios. Resulta ahora que en estas figuras estilísticas, el comparante pertenece a menudo al campo culinario. Los ejemplos en las tres obras son innumerables, así que sólo cito dos de cada una. En *The House on Mango Street*: “Cats asleep like little donuts” y “the ceiling smooth as a wedding cake” (Cisneros 1992, 13, 102). En *Woman Hollering Creek* encontramos por ejemplo: “The way you grow old is kind of like an onion [...] each year inside the next one,” “the damp smell of the earth the same smell of tea boiling” (Cisneros 2004, 6-7, 164). En cuanto a *Caramelo*, ya vimos la imagen principal del caramelo, para definir el color de la piel y del rebozo, pero aquí también se amplían las imágenes, como por ejemplo “The feet of the Grandmother, fat little *tamales*,” “with eyes as tender and dark as *café de olla*” (Cisneros 2003, 40, 146).

¿Qué es lo que pasa en estas comparaciones y por qué Cisneros acude a esta figura del símil tan frecuentemente? Se trata siempre del mismo procedimiento por lo que se vuelve muy repetitivo, aunque al mismo tiempo refleja la gran riqueza de imaginación de la autora. Se observa aquí un desplazamiento de la comida al mundo de la imaginación, es decir a un segundo plano. La comida es aquí siempre la imagen, nunca el objeto real. Por lo tanto, está al mismo tiempo presente y ausente. El mundo de la comida es

algo muy presente en la mente de la autora, y la inmensa cantidad de productos y platos con sabores y olores infinitos constituye un universo muy rico del que la autora se nutre constantemente para crear nuevas imágenes y enriquecer el mundo real. No ha de sorprender que también en estas imágenes haya una predominancia de la comida mexicana. Hay imágenes que vuelven, como el *donut* para describir la posición en la que se duerme, sean gatos o niños. En muchas imágenes, el referente real es una persona, (“three old ladies who smelled like cinnamon” (Cisneros 1992, 105); “My Lucy friend who smells like corn” (Cisneros 2004, 3). Esto no sorprende tanto, se trata en todos estos casos de olores, y es normal que las personas adopten los olores de la comida de la casa. Estos olores pueden ser buenos y agradables: el olor del pan (Cisneros 1992, 6-7), o del maíz (Cisneros 2004, 3); pero también hay olores malos que provocan repulsión: “he was sick of stinking of tacos” (Cisneros 2004, 37). En cuanto a las comparaciones del tacto, las que se refieren a la piel, éstas tienen una clara connotación sexual: “your skin dark and rich as *piloncillo*” (Cisneros 2004, 88).

Entre todas estas comparaciones se destacan dos en particular, ya que hacen juego y reflejan el conflicto entre las dos lenguas, el español y el inglés. La protagonista de “Bien pretty” describe la experiencia de hacer el amor en español: “I’d never made love in Spanish before. [...] those words that smelled like your house, like flour tortilla.” Las palabras de amor pronunciadas en español huelen a tortilla de harina. En cambio, hacer el amor en inglés evoca otras sensaciones en la narradora: “How could I think of making love in English again? English crunchy as apples, resilient and stiff as sailcloth. (Cisneros 2004, 153). Las referencias a la comida subrayan la oposición entre las dos lenguas: el español es suave como una tortilla de harina, el inglés es crujiente como una manzana. En un contexto de amor, como el descrito arriba, la primera lengua saldría entonces más “sabrosa” que la segunda.

Ahora, desde un ángulo más general, podemos preguntarnos cuál puede ser la función de la comida para la identidad de los chicanos en la obra de Cisneros. Por lo general, los chicanos suelen mantener gran parte de las tradiciones mexicanas en cuanto a comida. Muchos de los personajes de las novelas y los cuentos de Cisneros nacieron y crecieron en Estados Unidos, rodeados de olores y sabores mexicanos. Se podría decir casi que lo mexicano lo han “mamado con la leche.” La conservación de la comida mexicana ayuda sustancialmente a mantener también una identidad propia, diferente de la norteamericana. Para los jóvenes chicanos, nacidos en Estados Unidos, la evocación de la comida mexicana contribuye al complejo proceso de búsqueda de los orígenes, tan fundamental. No hay duda de que la comida refuerza la nostalgia y constituye uno de los caminos que les lleva a encontrar estas raíces, que son al mismo tiempo su destino. Es como si con los ingredientes y las recetas mexicanas se cocinara el “alma mexicana.” No se trata de un sentido de nacionalismo mexicano, porque los chicanos ya no son mexicanos. Sin embargo, al insistir tanto en los platos típicos y las costumbres culinarias de México (como la de presentar los platos en la mesa por separado, o la de usar el molcajete y el comal), Cisneros se inserta en un discurso que

no hace más que repetir estos estereotipos del mexicano y de “lo mexicano.” Sus obras están repletas de clichés sobre México, que además refuerzan una imagen muy tradicional del país. Así que cabe recordar aquí la tesis de Roger Bartra en *La Jaula de la Melancolía*. Después de su lectura de los estudios sobre “lo mexicano,” en particular de Samuel Ramos y de Octavio Paz, Bartra no puede sino concluir que este concepto es una “entelequia artificial: existe principalmente en los libros y discursos que lo describen o exaltan [...]. El carácter nacional mexicano sólo tiene, digamos, una existencia literaria y mitológica; ella no le quita fuerza o importancia, pero nos debe hacer reflexionar sobre la manera en que podemos penetrar el fenómeno” (Bartra 1987, 17). No hay nada malo en repetir estos estereotipos, porque, como bien lo indica Homi K. Bhabha, para distinguirse del “otro,” es necesario recurrir a los estereotipos. Según Bhabha, el estereotipo es una forma de conocimiento que vacila entre lo que siempre está en su lugar, ya conocido, y lo que tiene que ser repetido con inquietud (Bhabha 1994, 3). Aunque uno quisiera, no es evidente deshacerse de los estereotipos. El carácter necesario e inevitable de los estereotipos se observa claramente en Cisneros, quien adopta y hasta repite a menudo muchos de los lugares comunes y estereotipos del mexicano. Sin embargo, no sólo los adopta sino que al mismo tiempo juega con ellos, y es en estos juegos con los estereotipos donde se revela la originalidad del estilo de Cisneros. Ésta se debe en primer lugar al carácter muy suigéneris de muchos de sus personajes, como la abuela Soledad y la nieta Lala, de *Caramelo*, u otros personajes femeninos que justamente critican o cuestionan algunos de los estereotipos de México. En segundo lugar, se debe a la gran capacidad de imaginación, tal como pudimos constatar en la creación de innumerables imágenes cuyo comparante pertenece siempre al campo de la comida. En tercer lugar, hay que reconocer que la autora tiene el don de contar, y que sabe entretener al lector con cuentos muy amenos y divertidos. Sin embargo, todo esto no puede ocultar el hecho de que siga siendo una recuperación de materiales requeteusados, en función de un gran mercado norteamericano de lectores de *bestsellers*. Es necesario pues apreciar la obra de Cisneros en su justo valor, es decir, ni sobrestimando ni subestimando, tal como suelen hacerlo varios críticos que o bien la idolatran o bien la rechazan. También hace falta situarla aún mejor dentro de las diferentes tradiciones existentes, tanto de América Latina como de Estados Unidos. Curiosamente la propia autora se distancia explícitamente de otros autores chicanos y de autoras latinoamericanas como Isabel Allende. Cuando en una entrevista le hablan de la literatura chicana con nombres como el de Miguel Méndez, Ana Castillo y Ron Arias, Cisneros contesta:

No conozco a esos autores. Siento que mi literatura es muy distinta a la de otras mujeres de Latinoamérica como Isabel Allende. Quizás mi literatura es más anglosajona. Yo pertenezco a la clase obrera y escribo desde ese punto de vista. Creo que tengo más que ver con una china-americana, que con hermanas latinas que pertenecen a una clase media-alta. Probablemente lo único que tengo que ver con ellas es que hablamos la misma lengua. (citada en Lucio 2003)

Sorprende algo esta denegación. No es que no los conozca, sino que se quiere distanciar de ellos. De todos modos, es indiscutible que muchos rasgos se corresponden. La temática, el género y hasta el estilo de la narrativa de Cisneros se inscriben dentro del gran intertexto de las *latina-writers* en Estados Unidos, cuyo tema principal sigue siendo la búsqueda o la expresión de identidad. Dentro de esta amplia temática, el tema de la comida ocupa un lugar especial, por ser muy tangible y por ser capaz de evocar la más profunda nostalgia. Uno de los logros de Cisneros consiste indudablemente en haber traspasado al lector esta gran fascinación por los sabores y los olores de un México al mismo tiempo real e imaginario, y en haber reinventado la cocina mexicana, que es lo típico de México, en narraciones que son una fiesta de la palabra y del arte de contar.

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III

Anglo- and African-American

BLACK OKIES, MIGRANT DREAMS: THE REALITIES OF LIFE
WITH COTTON IN THE CASA GRANDE VALLEY —
A BRIEF HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Geta LeSeur

Blacks have been part of the American West since the days of the pioneers. It is a fallacy to think that only whites formed part of the search to explore the wide open spaces beyond the Missouri and Mississippi rivers. Some Blacks came West as adventurers, some as guides, and some joined the native Indian tribes.

The post-Civil War South after Emancipation was a brutal and oppressive place for African-Americans. In a mass exodus, many left the South compelled northward and westward by floridly worded advertisements for new all-Black settlements. Those who took the journey in the 1880s-1890s were called “Exodusters,” named for the Biblical Exodus of Moses and his people; people fleeing to a “Promised Land,” a new place, perhaps, in search of an edenic peace without fear, or intimidation.

The Exodus of 1879 was led by Benjamin “Pap” Singleton, a former Tennessee slave-turned-undertaker and real estate agent, and Henry Adams a Black leader from Louisiana. Former slaves and their descendants moved into Kansas and Oklahoma. One promoter described the town of Langston, Oklahoma as, “[f]ertile as ever moistened by nature’s falling tears or kissed by heaven’s sunshine.”

The advertisements worked. After the Civil War there were some fifty all-Black towns founded in the Oklahoma Territories (Oklahoma became a state in 1907). The initial settlers were Indian “freedmen slaves” who had been freed by their Indian masters. Later runaway slaves from the deep South joined them to prove that Blacks could not only govern themselves, but also prosper economically, if given the chance. And they did. Many of the towns were quite successful but they were eventually ruined by factors including the Great Depression, Jim Crow laws, intimidation by whites and urbanization. Today, thirteen of those towns still exist in Oklahoma and they all have all-Black or overwhelmingly Black populations. According to some estimates, as many as 127,000 Blacks were living in the West by 1870, including 38,000 Black cowboys.

1. *In Search of Paradise*

Toni Morrison’s 1998 novel, *Paradise*, is framed by the “Exodus of 1879.” In the novel, she names the town where a group of early migrants settled,



Ruby. Ruby for the oldest matriarch who died on the journey West. My research on Black migrant towns therefore extends this journey in which Blacks created and built communities by hard work in “Arizona’s Cotton Belt.” The fact that Morrison uses this frame to contextualize her novel, speaks well for the deep research scholars do to validate history which was often dismissed as erroneous.

In *Paradise*, Morrison states the following about these ageless, timeless people:

On the journey from Mississippi and two Louisiana parishes to Oklahoma, the one hundred and fifty-eight freedmen were unwelcome on each grain of soil from Yazoo to Fort Smith. Turned away by rich Choctaw and poor whites, chased by yard dogs, jeered at by camp prostitutes and their children, they were nevertheless unprepared for the aggressive discouragement they received from Negro towns already being built. The headline of a feature in the *Herald*, “Come Prepared or Not at All,” could not mean them, could it? Smart, strong and eager to work their own land, they believed they were more than prepared – they were destined. (Morrison 1998, 13)

After Reconstruction failed, sharecropping was not an answer for achievable ownership of land, and the oppressive situations of lynching and Jim Crow made it impossible to move forward. So the characters who people Morrison’s book *Paradise*, left the unfriendly hostile South, and travelled West seeking a haven, a paradise. So these people with whom I worked in those valley cotton towns are extensions of that long trek West, which started in the post emigration era of the nineteenth century, and continued into the mid-twentieth century.

In the Great Depression of the 1930s and postwar years, as America’s economies fell, white displaced farmers from the Dust Bowl states — Oklahoma, Kansas, Arkansas and Texas, primarily took to the road with the practical goal of starting over. John Steinbeck chronicles their journey in the novel *Grapes of Wrath* (1939). He calls them “Okies.” That work was a major inspiration for my work with the population I call “Black Okies.” Those “Okies” referred to the landless poor who were forced to leave the Dust Bowl States on Route 66. Their aim was to get to California’s fruit orchards and vegetable farms. But Black migrants primarily traveled along Route 60 because it touched on farms, and rural communities where they could find jobs and “work their way across.” Some would just do seasonal work for a few weeks, traveling in “family groups.” Family here does not always mean blood relations, but being from the same towns for example. I choose to call Route 66 the “White Migrant Road,” and Route 60 the “Black Migrant Road.” The aim of both routes was obviously to fulfill a dream, to survive, but for the “Black Okies,” the racial discrimination encountered along the way added profoundly to their daily and weekly scramble. In Morrison’s novel some are turned away by other Blacks because they

are too Black. She names them the “8-Rock!” Dorothea Lange’s images of blond children in dilapidated cars appealed visually to get the Farm Administration to make changes, but no such images of Black migrants were taken. In the oral interviews, I heard stories of white farmers, where they worked, putting a gun to the heads of Black people, should they attempt to leave before finishing work or harvesting a crop. Black woman journalist Ida B. Wells mostly remembered for her writings and anti-lynching activism in the late 1900s and early 1920s, actually led 6,000 people out of Memphis, Tennessee into Topeka, Kansas after she saw three friends lynched for having a grocery store across the road from a white grocery store. She also advised sharecroppers in Arkansas to unionize after they suffered extreme intimidation and beatings from whites. So this search for permanency in their lives, this escape from oppression, this search for work, this seeking of a refuge, a promised land, a paradise, an Eden, was perhaps their elusive “American Dream.”

2. *Randolph, Arizona*

The focus on my research for the book *Not All Okies Are White: The Lives of Black Cotton Pickers in Arizona* (2000) concentrated on the town of Randolph which is three miles south of Coolidge and 12 miles from Interstate 10 West. At the height of the cotton industry, from the late 1940s to mid-1950s Randolph had a population of about 800-1000. The decline of cotton work started when picking machines, in the early 1950s, replaced hand picking and young people started to leave for other towns and cities west and east. It now has 150-200 people as Blacks continue to leave and Mexicans are moving in, claiming lots, and the many homes lost to foreclosure, abandonment or death.

The stories I heard were various and I will cite a few. Primarily these narratives were about “each one sending for one”; of the good days and the adventure of a new life, though hard. Uncles sent for brothers, cousins, neighbors; families picking together; even when school was in session, parents would lie that a child was sick so that more picking hands were needed; of money saved to buy property, but only on the east side of Hwy. 87, because only whites could buy and live on the west side of the Hwy. 87; of those who pooled their money; bought or built a house; a gas station; a grocery store; a café; only to be cheated out of it. Of illiteracy, no schools, lack of services, no street lights, no mail delivery, no garbage “pick up,” no clinics, no hospitals, no running water (until the mid-1960s); of children who died from lack of care, of women working in the cotton fields until it was “near time” to have their baby; of women being put under a tree or the cotton wagon while the veterinarian is called to assist the delivery or tend the sick. Of the VISTA program (Volunteers In Service To America — the domestic Peace Corps) coming in the 1970s to “attach” Randolph to the Civil Rights Movement by naming the few streets there after heroes, like Kennedy, King, Malcolm. And like in Morrison’s Ruby, Bell Street is named for the community’s matriarch, Georgia Bell.

With all of this amazing, crazy context, there is the story of the great wealth from cotton work. Millions of dollars is made (even today) for Arizona's major industries. Factored in, also, is the citrus, copper and cattle businesses. At the height of the cotton industry (1940s–1970s) 11 million undocumented workers contributed \$2 billion to the US economy and 200,000 of these were Black workers who contributed \$20 million of that to Arizona alone. They, by far, outnumber the Mexican braceros and Native Indians from the reservations who arrived just at picking time — usually in the fall. Nowhere in my research was credit given to these workers' contributions to the western economy. They toiled on land they didn't own and never would own. Arizona pickers earned about \$3 for every 100 lbs. of cotton picked. Often their sacks of cotton would be "under-weighted" so as not to pay them much. Thus, entire families picked together and pooled their money at the end of the week. A second and third picking would sometimes help to increase monies owed to them for six days of work. One man told me that it was "no better than slavery."

But then there was the Obed Fields family. Obed and his uncles came West to buy land and farm their own cotton and did so successfully. The land and their crops was passed down to grandchildren. Also, the assertive Mrs Beulah Moore, with her sons, became a contractor who recruited and brought in workers from "back there" (Oklahoma, Arkansas) for the white farmers. She is perhaps Randolph's first woman entrepreneur! Some would extend their week and spread the family around to the other cotton farms in Eloy, Coolidge, Casa Grande, Chandler, Buckeye and Mobile. In the off-season, they would move on to California and other surrounding states to pick fruit or vegetables — "They worked so hard and suffered so!" says one woman who remembers those days.

Residents talk of escaping the Dust Bowl, the Depression and racism of the South for the freedom of the West. But many found the same barriers they thought they'd left behind: segregation, lack of education and poor working conditions. In the 1930s and 1940s they traveled from farm to farm along US Highway 60 through the Midwest and Southwestern towns in Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas searching for work. They toiled on land they didn't own. They received very little for their labor.

3. *Selected Quotes from Interviews in Not All Okies Are White*

"In Oklahoma, we didn't make no money. We just worked together for the crop man... You know I think we did better in them days than now; at least you knew where your kids were... The family would be all together—pickin" (N. White).

"These poor people here didn't have nothing... I think they were brave to come here... There's no tellin' what was told them back there where they came from... I look back and think... why didn't people want to help people" (L. Smith).

"Life for women cotton pickers who had to be a wife, mother and worker was very hard. Some women would be picking cotton until they near

'bout had a baby in the field" ... "They didn't even fix a decent place for them to lay down" (P. Bradley).

"They would go someplace else to harvest, pick cotton, harvest vegetables, go to California. They could go all the way up to Washington and pick apples. Those kids knew more geography than we did." (M. Batteau)

"You wouldn't see white people lettin' little Black kids eat at their table... they wouldn't let us in, not when they eat, but after they eat... we didn't know nothin' 'bout no prejudice or nothing... They know what shape were in, so we were just eatin'..." (M. White).

"The whites called you names and you ended up calling them names, and the next thing you know, you're out there fightin'. And the teachers, they'd whip you" (J. Jordan).

"They worked so hard and suffered so" (L. Smith).

4. *Migrant Labor, Migrant Dreams?*

My research, I think, moves toward a discussion of agricultural borderlands, race relations, gender concerns and environmental racism and a deconstruction of American history. Randolph, Eloy, Coolidge, Mobile, Casa Grande, and all those valley towns, meet the criteria for rural ghettos, where highways and urbanization have shifted jobs elsewhere, where the once lucrative farms are now filling with track homes or left fallow; leaving behind those too poor to relocate; or those who choose to stay because it is their perceived roots. Unable to return to those states "back there" Oklahoma, Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Texas and other parts of the South — they watch, daily, those "cotton fields of plenty" become buildings which neither they, their children, grandchildren nor great grandchildren can afford. There is a "Paradise Lost!"

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GUN AND COTTON STORIES: NARRATOLOGY, ORALITY AND THE ROMANCE OF ELOY, ARIZONA

Geta LeSeur

When I joined the Africana Studies Program in January 2003, one of the courses I was assigned to teach was AFAS 320: The Slave Narrative. First, I was a bit concerned and awed, because even though I had been trained in African-American and Caribbean Literature, read and taught various slave narratives in surveys and period courses, I had not taught an entire course solely on this genre. However, I saw this as an exciting challenge and an opportunity to be creative and resourceful. Second, I saw a “new way” to begin integrating narratives from other places within the diaspora such as the Caribbean. Certainly *Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave* (1831), *Steadman and Joanna: A Love in Bondage* (1991) and the classic narrative of *Gustavus Vassa, the African* (1789) belonged on my syllabus! Third, how do these works parallel or differ from the well known African American ones like Fredrick Douglass’, Harriet Jacobs’ and *Celia, A Slave* (1991) set in Missouri? An opportunity to extend, broaden and contextualize these important historical experiences was mine to initiate.

The voices of the speakers in these “old” narratives echoed in interesting ways those of some contemporary storytellers I encountered while working on my second book *Not All Okies Are White: The Lives of Black Cotton Pickers in Arizona* (2000). There was, in both, the uses of selective detail, colorful realistic language and metaphor, exaggeration, mythmaking, novelistic touches, personal commentary, editing, and, of course, TRUTH! My ongoing research with Blacks in the Casa Grande Valley (Randolph and Eloy) was being reinforced by what was taking place in my evening classes. There, the juxtaposition of pedagogy and research was alive, exciting, as well as poetic. The final semester projects by the students extended, further, their imaginings of a world many of them had never known of or heard.

I will share, here, an experience I had in spring 2003, with the Eloy, Arizona project which I hope will extend the African-American migrant experience. It is an edited version of a paper I presented at the Arizona Historical convention in March 2003. The original title is “Deconstructing Eloy: Gun & Cotton Stories.” It demonstrates, I think, the joys, difficulties and uniqueness of orality, memory and point of view in all narratives, and the position, place and function of the “recorder” — me.

What does a researcher/writer do when she finds that an exciting idea held for a long time which would develop into a paper, essay, a talk, or pos-



sibly a book, has been somewhat co-opted by another person? And what if that person is someone whom she thinks possesses a more “intimate” knowledge than she? And finally, what if that person is “part of the story” she wants, and plans to destroy and reconstruct a different kind of tale than the one she so enthusiastically wanted to write? What then?

I was faced with this dilemma as I tried to dig into the “real story” of Eloy, Arizona 1935-1955. Like others throughout the US, more so those in Arizona, I had heard about the lawlessness, vice, murders, and other desultory acts that took place in Eloy. It was said that they were so bad, that whenever one traveled through it they would “drive at least 70 miles an hour and don’t stop for you will get hurt or worse killed.” I had also read that, “. . .it [Eloy] is known coast to coast as the toughest town in the United States and the West’s last frontier. . . a cop killer town where killings and beatings are an every day occurrence” (Sloter ca. 1950, 3).

These descriptions, and more, are what I and others had heard for years and associated with the then (1940s) largest town in Pinal County. This curiosity peaked when I began my project on Black cotton pickers in the Casa Grande Valley, with a focus on Randolph, a town which sits about three miles south of Coolidge. Work which uses the methodology of narrative collecting, contains surprises, tangential information and, often, “little gems.” The Randolph folks pointed me to Eloy where I met other Black Okies who had similar cotton stories as to the states of their origins, their migrant journeys, the camps, cotton crops, living conditions, disappointments, the good and the bad times, the race, class, gender and education issues, and the resultant situations in which they found themselves.

But it was from an eighty-two year old Black woman from Arkansas, who had been part of a *National Geographic* essay (June 1994) on cotton, universally, that I heard some new and revealing things about what Eloy Blacks shared in common with the Randolph Okies. Many of them, for example, were brought to Arizona by the same contractors or came from the same regions and towns of the Dust Bowl States — Oklahoma, Arkansas, Texas, Missouri, Kansas.

I had purchased from the National Archives a picture which appears on a highway advertisement which read “75 colored pickers 1/4 mile North near Eloy.” On that same posting, was a political ad for Jerrie W. Lee for Governor. That date placed the year to be late 1930s early 1940s. The picture was taken by world famous photographer Dorothea Lange who did a series of photos on migrant life in the Casa Grande Valley. It appears on the back of my book *Not All Okies Are White*.

As we talked, I subsequently found out that Rupe’s Café was owned by a Black woman, Georgia Rupe, but called “Mama Rupe” by everybody, even whites, and that her story was one of “rags to riches.” Mama Rupe came from Oklahoma “along about 1936, with a one-armed husband, carrying an empty cotton sack; ended up a wealthy woman, possibly a millionaire, and years later had “sacks of money.” I asked where the café was located. “It,” she said, “was just around the corner . . . you can almost see it from here, if you look good.” What a stroke of luck this meeting was! This also

began my ongoing relationship with Mrs B who is now ninety, and is as alert and knowledgeable as when I met her in 1995.

A conscientious investigator/researcher must go beyond the suggested (first level information, so my major questions were the following: What was the relationship between places like Rupe's Café with the general lawlessness and murderous weekends when Black, White and Mexican machismo reigned? What of the pickers and migrants? Were these occurrences separated by color and class lines? Were they separated by geographic lines, i.e., different parts of town? Or, were they homogenous in terms of lawlessness? Additionally, what was Eloy really like during that time? And, how did the cotton folks figure into that equation or lifestyle?

I noticed that most of the people in Mrs B's neighborhood were Black, and that the area was called Joe Louis Heights, named for the world heavy-weight boxing champ, Joe Louis, a 1940s' Negro hero. It was "created" when Negroes and so-called "colored folks" were barred from buying on the east and north sides of Eloy. The railroad tracks which has become a metaphor and symbol of division for class and race, does separate "The Heights" from the white east side. Back then, Frontier Street had such places as, "The Cactus Bar, Silver Dollar, Frontier Café and its main Street and its skid-row (was) lined with cat houses and gambling joints..." (Sloter ca. 1950, 3).

I will leave Mrs B and Joe Louis Heights, and return to the prospect of having a research idea dissected and holes bored and a thesis punctured. My intention was to give the black (colored) version of this Eloy madness on the other side of the railroad tracks, but I recently met an old white Okie from Okmulgee, Oklahoma whom I will call QM, at the Community Library in Eloy. The librarian told me that he too was writing a book on Eloy. He knew of my book and wanted one; so that was pleasant. Of course we found comradeship immediately (possibly fear) and exchanged our findings about the area and its uncovered information. In a lively conversation, he asked if I knew of Deputy Sheriff Sloter's book *Eloy*. I said, yes, and told him that I had paid a lot of money to get a copy since it had achieved "rare book" status. The questions from him basically came more like an examination, but in time he would share, selectively, his work on the Eloy dramas. He told me the following: "We – my mother, father, two brothers and two sisters – came here in 1939. We lived in the camps and picked cotton till 1945, and yes, there was gangs and fighting and all that, but the facts in the book are not true! It's a big lie!" That caused me a moment of shock and a long pause. I asked him: "What? How do you know that?" "Well," he said, "look on the cover of Slotter's book that said we had seventeen deaths in one year...none of that is true...maybe in a seven year period we may have had twenty deaths. And, only four of those really happened in Eloy proper, and two were in self-defense!" "What proof do you have after all these years?" I asked. He responded, "I have been working on this book since 1984 and I went to the police and county records and documented every single one of those so called fights, arrests and deaths. I can take you to every single site of them, including the murder sites."

QM's refutation, claim and thesis that Slotter's book is a farce was a stunning discovery and setback. I did not know how to now handle this meeting. It also seems that QM is well known in Eloy, and many know of "the book" he has been writing since 1984. The question that arises in a researcher's mind is: Where do you go with this story since one part of it has been dashed? Is this old timer seeking publicity, a voice, or really on-to something? Is he, not me, the deconstructionist after all? My decision at this point was to return to the Rupe/Joe Louis Heights story which, to date, has not been explored enough.

Before that, however, I wanted to know what QM knew, or remembered, about the Negro side of the tracks as well as the colored murders documented in "the Eloy book." QM said smilingly: "There were no murders at Mama Rupe's. Mama Rupe's cathouse was a place of fun! One case I do remember which was not there but out near the park. Eddie Jennings who worked at the cotton gin killed another colored fella. It was murder all right, but they called it self-defense. The guy had a six-inch knife, so Eddie grabbed a fence post and gave a blow that killed him. Also, a couple of Mexicans were knifed over a Black woman." My interest peaked about the "cathouses" and other aspects of the omissions and incidents at "The Heights" in Slotter's book. "There were more cathouses during the years of cotton than at any other time. Approximately seven cathouses were in town and the women were primarily non-locals. Most came from other towns, like Tucson and Phoenix." I found this interesting and alarming. "It was not unusual," he told me, "to see men lined up to go into the little rooms which were built behind the bars and cafes."

QM then proceeded to strengthen his claim of untruths about other lawmen in the book. "The story about Sheriff Eaves who became a horse trader and was arrested for murder in Texas and whose body was found in El Paso, Texas, is not true, his body was found two miles southwest of Eloy. Chief Deputy Ed Smith claimed he was a former Texas Ranger in order to build his resume but, as it turned out, he's not even been to Texas." Why did he get the job? "Well, he was supposed to scare the Black people. He didn't like 'em and they did not like him. He was shot by a Black man who did not serve any prison time for it!" One of the most succinct statements I heard from QM was when he finished our conversation by saying: "People want to be part of things that happen, so they find a way to climb into the story. The book makes villains out of people who simply come to work." It was a profound and heartfelt statement from this rooted man.

Yet, I still needed the connection of Blacks with Whites within this community of violence, race, class and gender. The Mama Rupe Joe Louis Heights story continued with Mrs B from Arkansas and Mrs CL from Texas. Both hold and support the validity of lots of violence and lawlessness in Eloy. They told me that besides Rupe's Café, there was Gussie's, Lonnie's and J.C. King's place. J.C. King and Georgia Rupe were the first to begin buying lots cheaply in the Joe Louis Heights area. Rupe sold lots to migrant families for \$50, "and up," for lots of 150ft by 50ft. Both wom-

en's homes still sit on the lots they purchased from Mama Rupe, who allowed people to pay \$10 per week or as much as they could afford from their cotton-picking money.

Both women told me the following about the violence: "Every weekend, there was killings; bullets were going all over the place. Most of the cafes were a 'hole in the wall.' They were called a 'hole in the wall' because they had only one door... Most times, the fights were over a woman, or something like that. A black man got his stomach cut open because he had a white woman. One black boy shot a sheriff; another one killed a city judge. Cabins were built all around the bar for the prostitutes to work. These women came from Phoenix and Tucson, some from the university. The people (customers) came off the farms and camps. The Mexicans came too. There was one prostitute called "Yellow Gal" and she was something else. She carried a knife in case the mens messed wid her beyond their agreement. She made plenty money..."

When we juxtapose the conversations of QM, Mrs B and Mrs CL, it becomes problematic as to where the truth lies. All lived within the same time period, all experienced work with cotton; all were migrants from similar regions, all were poor, and came with dreams of betterment. None left for any periods of time, except to work elsewhere during the off-season, but returned to Eloy. All have been there for over fifty years. Yet, there are, possibly, three unique perspectives.

First, race enters. QM, despite his family's Okie status, was excluded from that negative racial divide, but as an Okie experienced class prejudice as Okie was always a derogatory term at that time. Prejudice and racial lines were more clearly drawn when the cotton-picking machines came in the mid-1950s and the anxiety about money, work, power, class and status became important. There is a definitive clash in various versions of this particular experience. It is historically true that what happens in Black areas to Black people is not considered important. The women's version is also known as "the Negro version."

Second, there is gender. A woman's telling of the Eloy "dramas" is different, despite the facts, than a man's. I noticed, for example, that women focused on being "outside" of the action, in order to keep the stance and perspective of "proper womanhood." When I asked them how and where they heard screams and bullets, they said: "We just drove around and observed stuff." And Mama Rupe, what about her? "Oh, she liked to play cards, gamble – a business woman you know, a respected business woman." Even Rupe escapes the negative blot.

Third, there is the romance of Eloy, "a sleepy little town basking in the sun," founded in 1903 and changed to a "cop killer town where killings and beatings are an every day occurrence." (Sloter ca. 1950, 3). All tellers of tales have a version and a style of presenting what they know or hear and their voices and attitudes change with each telling. As QM says, "people want to be part of things that happen." So, I look forward to his tour of Eloy to those "murder sites" which might take me back to a time I

can only imagine, as well as to the many stories yet to be told about life in Joe Louis Heights and that “Negro/colored” telling, which demonstrates, always, the color, drama and power of our narratives.

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(fig. 1) A man picks through rows of mature cotton in the fall. From the author's personal files



(fig. 2) Advertising sign for workers in the Eloy fields.
Courtesy of the National Archives



(fig. 3) Cotton pickers leaving the fields with their daily crop.
Courtesy of the National Archives



(fig. 4) Myrtle Jordan [center] with her children & children of an Arkansas family.
From the author's personal files



(fig. 5) Small children also picked cotton before and after school.
From the author's personal files



(fig. 6) Sons of a Randolph picker with cotton sacks. From the author's personal files



(fig. 7) Rows of cotton in the Casa Grande Valley. Taken by the author



(fig. 8) Parley Bradley picker from Oklahoma and her granddaughter. Taken by the author



(fig. 9) Rupe's Cafe and Boarding House in Eloy. Taken by the author



(fig. 10) Georgia Rupe — first woman cotton millionaire.
From the author's personal files

WILLIAM EASTLAKE'S TRILOGY: THE SOUTHWESTERN LANDSCAPE AS TRUTH AND REVELATION

Francesco Marroni

1. William Eastlake's first three novels, *Go in Beauty* (1956), *The Bronc People* (1958) and *Portrait of an Artist with Twenty-Six Horses* (1963), are generally regarded as constituting a trilogy not only because they have a common setting — the Checkerboard region of northern New Mexico, with its landscapes, languages and people — but also because of the genealogical cohesion represented by the Bowmans, a white family whose stories as ranchers and traders merge with the destinies of a number of Indian characters. Once these converging elements are identified, however, it must be acknowledged that these novels do not share the diegetic continuity and the consistency of plot-structures commonly associated with the idea of a trilogy. Specifically, their narrative organization appears to be less the result of Eastlake's response to the rich mixture of cultures and experiences he finds in the Indian Country than a comprehensive frame for different, scattered stories.

The editorial history of *Portrait of an Artist with Twenty-Six Horses* bears out this impression. It is well known that the central episode of the narration, concerning Ring Bowman's thoughts as he is sinking in the quicksand, actually derives from a short story published a few months earlier under the title "A Long Day's Dying" (1963). Although the functional segmentation of this story provides the framing event and, consequently, the unifying plot and a central formal order to the entire narrative, still *Portrait* strikes the reader less as a novel than a collection of short stories. Significantly, W.C. Bamberger, in his most perceptive monograph on Eastlake's fiction, has pointed out that "*Portrait* is Eastlake's most fragmentary novel. Some of the stories gathered to create this novel may originally have been earmarked for a collection Eastlake had planned to title *Pilgrims at the Wake*" (Bamberger 1993, 37).

An analogous structural looseness also characterises *Go in Beauty* and *The Bronc People*. Here the storyteller's voice is much louder than that of the novelist, in the sense that Eastlake is hardly interested in giving semantic, much less diegetic unity to these novels. For instance, in *Go in Beauty* the chapters centered on Alexander Bowman, the expatriate writer, establish

* An earlier version of this essay appeared in *Journal of the Southwest* 49, iv (Winter 2007).

only a superficial dialogic relationship with the chapters concerning his younger brother George Bowman who, on the contrary, never leaves the Navajo Country. From a structural point of view, *The Bronc People* is possibly the most successful component of the trilogy; at the same time, it is fairly apparent that its lack of unity depends on the fact that it includes separate stories which, tonally, often clash with the narration focused on the formative years of Little Sant Bowman and Alastair Benjamin, two boys in pursuit of their dreams while roaming the high country of New Mexico.¹

It would seem that fragmentation (with its effect of discontinuity) constitutes the limiting factor of Eastlake's art. It may be interesting, therefore, to quote from a 1978 interview in which Eastlake, however obliquely, expounds his own aesthetic ideas on the novel, starting from Conrad's deep influence, particularly as concerns his understanding of the rapport between reality and fiction:

[Conrad] gave me an insight into how things looked and felt. And also his view of life and his willingness to survive and prevail when he discovered that the universe is meaningless: it didn't discourage him ... He felt that an artist – out of the chaos of nature and out of the capricious storms at sea he went through – can make an orderly universe [...] Order is only a temporary accident of the universe. But it didn't discourage Conrad. He still went about his job of trying to create some order and beauty and meaning in a meaningless situation. And he found the symbols and characters that could create that order. (O'Brien 1983, 5)²

In this passage, *chaos* is the crucial word. Chaos also means that any artistic representation of reality must confront it creatively, as this is the only way to appreciate how the artist can extrapolate meaning out of obscurity and, ultimately, nothingness. What Eastlake seems to be suggesting is that, while imposing some orderly frame on a meaningless universe, the narrator can never forget that the reality he is trying to render is always fragmented, and that a well-structured and truth-telling plot is less important than "creat[ing] some order and beauty and meaning in a meaningless situation." In short, I submit that fragmentation and discontinuity should not be seen as weaknesses in Eastlake's art. Rather, the segmented development of his plots simply aims to present individual experience in its constant oscillation between chaos and order, blindness and vision, de-

¹ For a positive interpretation of Eastlake's use and abuse of his own short stories, see Gerald Haslam, where, in particular, he notes: "Many of Eastlake's short stories have later appeared as chapters or episodes in his novels... This may appear to be plagiaristic nonsense, but it is, in effect, the product of an artist perfecting his art, for Eastlake works and reworks his material, testing its potential in varied milieus" (Haslam 1970, 11).

² This interview was conducted at William Eastlake's home in Rio Rico, Arizona, in 1978.

ception and truthfulness. Consequently, in his novels it often occurs that a long spell of obscurity may be redeemed by an intense moment of revelation, its sudden flash providing the individual character with a startling insight into the covert plots of a final and all-framing truth.

One could apply to Eastlake's conception of the novel the very words that encapsulate the sense of Ring Bowman's response to his despairing situation. While striving for survival in the quicksand, Ring's thoughts are, at the same time, his only weapon against giving in to drowning, and his way to generate meaning out of despair and disorder:

Eight hours to relive one life. One life is composed of about ten separate incidents that you remember. Each separate. Not like a play where everything flows smoothly like a stream, but more like a spring pulsing beneath the sand. (Eastlake 1980, 204-205)

This passage is more than a sort of epiphany taking place just a few moments before Ring succeeds in freeing himself from the grasp of death. Here Ring's thoughts constitute a poignant interpretation of life in that they reflect his awareness of the fact that our life is made of fragments in a world where spatial and temporal continuity is beyond our comprehension. From the perspective of human finitude, we are mere fragments floating in a fragmentary world which often speaks to us in a mysterious language we are unable to decipher. It is quite significant that, in the passage quoted above, Eastlake's emphasis is on *spring* as opposed to *stream*, since the smooth, flowing quality of the stream cannot be part of human experience. "Like a spring pulsing beneath the sand," our life is founded on the centrifugal nature of reality. Order and totality are only dreams. Therefore, we must possess a vivid imagination to figure out what is happening under the surface, while we keep on hoping that somehow, somewhere, a spring of pulsing life will reveal itself.

2. *Go in Beauty*, Eastlake's first novel, already shows clearly that time and space combine in a very peculiar way in his narrative. In fact, temporality is represented in terms of space and, in turn, space is represented in terms of temporality. Never, in his novels, is the landscape of New Mexico regarded as a static backdrop that, at best, seems to suggest the archaic dimension of a territory doomed to lose its cultural identity. In Eastlake's imagination, the Checkerboard region must have a voice and a personality, and its dramatisation involves the exploration of the rich texture of its stories rooted in sociocultural conflicts and moral transformations. Despite its structural and thematic flaws, the very beginning of *Go in Beauty* can be read as a perfect indicator of the narrator's attitude towards the Indian Country and its narrative possibilities:

Once upon a time there was time. The land here in the Southwest had evolved slowly and there was time and there were great spaces. Now a man on horseback from atop a bold mesa looked out over the violent

spectrum of the Indian Country — into a gaudy infinity where all the colors of the world exploded, soundlessly.

“There’s not much time,” he said.

The young man was confiding things to no one beneath a single buzzard witness sailing in patterned concentric rounds without tracings in the hard, perfect New Mexico blue, way up. (1)

These opening lines are a powerful evocation of the confrontation between the young man and the spirit of the Indian Country. The landscape speaks a language that Alexander Bowman is unable to understand. This is the reason why he ends up interpreting the role of an expatriate writer doing his best to give meaning to his life far from his homeland. What is important, however, is not so much that Alexander Bowman’s career culminates in self-disintegration and death, but the fact that his existential itinerary follows a circular pattern.³ Ultimately, his body will be buried in the Indian Country where, at last, his restless soul seems to find a meaning to his meaningless life: “The Navahos knew that, from way up there with the wide clear sky of the Indian Country, Alexander could see and feel the whole world” (278-279). As these words from the last page of the novel clearly show, the ending circles back to the beginning, where particular stress is laid on the timelessness of the landscape that does not communicate temporality in terms of the linear time of social progress and urban life. In fact, the opening sentence of *Go in Beauty*, with its fabulistic, formulaic inception, and the double occurrence of *time*, can be read as a very explicit affirmation of the primacy of temporal circularity: “Once upon a time there was time.” Once upon a time there was a time pertaining to the Indian culture which was ousted by Western man’s time — a time made of violence, destructiveness, and overall ugliness. Clearly, to the extent that one believes in this concept of circular time, one can be said to believe in the moral teaching of the land.

In *Portrait*, the episode of Tomas Tomas, the medicine man, dramatizes the creative link between the Indian culture and the land. While sensing his approaching death, and preparing to ascend the mountain top where he will find his final rest, Tomas Tomas argues that in a timeless world there is no room for death:

Death will never get us all because the tribe has got something that the White hasn’t got, a belief in the earth and in the world inside everyone, and like a bear or a coyote or an elk, the Indian is still part of the earth. (38)

³ In *Portrait of an Artist*, Tomas Tomas conveys his idea of circularity to one of his wives in very simple but significant words: “The last time and the first time are really the only time we ever see anything” (Eastlake 1980, 34).

In the medicine man's view, dying is a sort of embrace with the supernatural world, in the sense that he regards his death as a return to the eternal cycle of life where everything is orderly and deeply ingrained in the perfect harmony of the universe. As Haslam has noticed: "The death of the medicine man is a minor epic, a ritual that affirms the Navajo world view and faith; Tomas Tomas is more concerned with dying properly and in the right place than with the cosmic injustice his white counterparts see in death" (Haslam 1970, 29).

By the same token, in *The Bronc People* we can see that the link between landscape and time is expressed in a lyrical language aiming at representing the Navajo land as a mythical place where nature is an artist able to create meaning and beauty:

And there was always the brilliant land, the wide country, uncharted and unknown... The land with island mesas rising from the gray sea of sage and falling away in the long canyons of the night. The land, towered and pinnacled, sculptured by the fine hand of the wind, painted red with iron and green with copper, fired in the sun. Raging in the sun, quiet in the moon. (Eastlake 1975, 57)

Rhetorical and overemphatic though it may be, this passage comes to the reader as an epiphanic utterance from the narrating voice, whose pictorial drive implies a moral participation in the destiny of that magical region that resists the time of white man's civilization.

In *The Bronc People*, against the tensions of historical and ecological transformation Eastlake emphasizes the temporal centrality of the Indian Country and its breathtaking scenery by conveying an image of great suggestiveness:

The mesa here was eroding away in five giant steps that descended down to the floor of the valley where the abandoned hogan lay. Each of the five steps marked about twenty million years of time. In other words, they had been laid down twenty million years apart, and were so marked by unique coloration and further marked by the different fossil animals found in each. It took the four boys about twenty minutes to descend these one hundred million years but they didn't think that was very good going. (83)

One hundred million years in twenty minutes — the time of the mesa and the time of four boys roaming in the high country of New Mexico. Viewed from this perspective, it is only too easy to conclude that the reference to the geological scale of time is an explicit manner of revealing a truth which is more than a truth — the ultimate truth of the absurdity of man's efforts, pride and vanity when compared with the length of time of the natural world.

This is one of the many moments of revelation which characterise Eastlake's first three novels. And the dramatisation of the contrast between

our plans and the ample and mysterious schemes of nature are in keeping with what, in the same chapter, Blue-Eyed Billy Peersall, a very old Indian fighter, says to the young protagonist of the novel, Little Sant Bowman, as an example of moral courage: “I was the only hero because I had the only kind of courage that counts. When the Texans in Tularosa wanted to throw all the Mexican kids out of school to protect the white children’s pure Texas asses I said I was a Mexican and would be studying in the first grade for a while myself and would try to see that none of us got bothered. Nothing happened. Moral courage is the only kind that counts [...]” (74-75). Beyond history and place, there are values which humanity must follow as a fundamental part of its ethical and behavioural code. No matter if one is an Indian fighter or a rancher’s son dreaming to become a bronc buster; what matters is having the moral courage to pursue one’s ideals and defend one’s dignity.

3. To be sure, moral courage is one of the main thematic threads in *Portrait of an Artist with Twenty-Six Horses*. As Ring Bowman is slowly sinking into the quicksand, he cannot but direct his eyes to the picture that Twenty-Six Horses painted high above on the cliff wall. During the interminable hours spent at the bottom of the remote arroyo, Ring finds in the work by his Indian friend the place where his mind can search for some meaning in his life — Ring’s memories seem to function as “a saving mark” (“The Secret Sharer”) which helps the Conradian hero to steer the ship *Sephora* while in total darkness. In Ring’s case, the enigmatic painting — possibly, twenty six horses running somewhere — becomes a text by which to measure his capability of going beyond egoism and indifference:

Maybe it’s supposed to be something but it is only the suggestion of something. The running bones of something. I don’t think anyone would understand. It’s done in quick strokes of red ochre against the white sandstone – splattered blood. This water is killing me. I remember when Twenty-Six Horses painted the picture he said it was for anyone dying here. (Eastlake 1980, 29)

Here it is apparent that Ring is trying to save himself, while simultaneously struggling to give a design to the segmented episodes and verbal sequences surging from his memory. What he is saying is that a human being’s life is *supposed to be something*, but it is only the suggestion of something. And in the wake of this suggestion, one must be able to understand the whole — life in its entirety.

On a practical level, Ring will be saved by Luto, “a strange horse by no mare fed” (37). More precisely, after having carried him to his fateful experience, and having listened to Ring’s monologues, the black horse falls into the quicksand; while he is drowning, his dying body becomes Ring’s footing to salvation. “It is only through the death of Luto (and the evil side he represents) that Ring is able to pull himself from the quick-

sand and get back into contact with solid ground” (Bamberger 1993, 41). However, if we look into this episode from an existential and ontological perspective, we must conclude that the real psychological salvation comes to Ring from the very painting with which he has been conversing during his hours of solitude and despair. It is from the painting high on the rock that a positive energy comes to him — an energy which endows him with the moral courage to confront life with its good and bad sides. Ring’s final words can be read as a crowning moment of revelation and truth: “I figured out what the picture above me on the cliff meant. It’s a picture of all of us.” Commenting on Ring’s interpretation, his father is ready to add: “A picture of everyone [...] who is at the mercy of everybody” (Eastlake 1980, 220). A colorful landscape, a cliff painting made in strokes of red, and a final epiphany: the brief span of our lives is too precious to spend it in egotistical loneliness and self-destruction.

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“UNBECOMING AN EDUCATED MAN AND BECOMING A KIND OF PEASANT”: STANLEY CRAWFORD’S DOUBLE WORLD

Mario Materassi

An extraordinary example of both creative and personal integration of different cultures, languages, and traditions, Stanley Crawford can be seen as the epitome, if you will, of the present-day man of the Southwest. He is an internationally acclaimed novelist, essayist, and memoirist, the 1988 winner of the Western States Book Award for Creative Nonfiction with his *Mayordomo: Chronicle of an Acequia in Northern New Mexico*. At the same time, he is known as a grower of garlic in his small farm in Dixon, New Mexico, a village in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains about twenty miles south of Taos. Here, after forsaking cosmopolitan San Francisco, in 1970 Crawford and his Australian wife Rose Mary bought some land, built with their own hands the adobe house that has been their home ever since, and turned their small property into a garlic farm. In accordance to the demands of the seasons, Crawford still alternates farming and writing.

An Anglo in an almost entirely Latino environment; an intellectual who for over forty years has been a committed member of his closed-in farming community; a political activist constantly locking horns with the Los Alamos establishment; a powerfully inventive postmodern novelist whose New Mexico Trilogy is an intense account of life in an enclave devoted to subsistence agriculture; a masterful, innovative manipulator of the English language, whose toil-hardened hands have earned him the confidence of his Spanish-speaking neighbors who have entrusted him with the key position of *mayordomo* of the local *acequia*, or irrigation ditch — this is Stanley Crawford, a complex individual who has combined two ways of life so dissimilar as to appear almost incompatible; the culmination, in short, of the coming together of different cultures, languages, and historical circumstances that the Southwest represents.

Before discussing Crawford’s work as well as the role he chose to play in his adopted community, let us listen to the story of this unique experience in the words of its protagonist.

*This essay is here republished by courtesy of the author and Firenze University Press in view of the essential contribution it brings to the overall subject of this volume.



*An Interview*¹

Stan, how did you become a writer?

Well, that's an odd one. I know that, quite young, it became very important to me to write in a kind of satirical vein. For a couple of years, a friend and I made up little satirical magazines. This is what every kid did, coming into consciousness in an absurd world, at a time when we were seeing the newsreels of the concentration camps and going through H-bombs drills in school. My writing and our ghoulish, violent little magazines were one way to cope with these news we were getting into our very gentele Southern California suburb.

Later, when I was in college, it came to me as a choice that either I could write or I could paint. My mother was a painter, a failed painter. She didn't really realize herself. Anyway, rather late in college, I made the decision to write rather than paint. Painting involved hanging something up and letting people look at it, which was a terrifying thing to put yourself through, or so I thought. Writing was something I could do privately. It was something I could do to attempt to cope with something in the world that disturbed or troubled me. But I didn't get terribly serious about that until my first and only, actually, job (aside from the odd teaching jobs) as a technical writer. This was the beginning of the space race in the early Sixties, when I worked briefly as a very inept technical writer for one of the early aerospace firms. I was not given a great deal to do. I had to revise and rewrite technical reports.

¹This is part of an interview that took place on August 1, 1988, in Dixon, New Mexico. My wife and I had met Stanley and Rose Mary Crawford in Albuquerque at a friend's reception in honor of Henry Roth, and they had invited us to visit at their home. This was the first of many a visit either in Dixon or in Florence.

From their pen just outside Stan's window, the geese raised their deafening cacophony; our eight year old daughter kept barging in, delighted at all the discoveries she was making around the farm; from the adjoining kitchen came a promising rattling of dishes. At times, the combined *joie de vivre* of geese, daughter, and cooks interfered — but to no lasting damage to the recording — with what Stan was saying. In fact, quite fittingly, the writer's candid self-portrait in the process of "un-becoming an educated man and becoming a kind of peasant" turned out to be an involuntary dramatization of a passage in his second novel, *Travel Notes*:

The tape recorder, purchased on a previous trip around the world, is proving to be a more limited device than hoped. Such a machine, which records all sound indiscriminately, can only fit, I see now, a situation in which all sound can be controlled or, as it were, be made to perform; and this would mean throwing the raw, brute moment right out the window. (Crawford 1967, 47-48)

What do you mean by "inept writer"?

Well, this was a very exciting time in language, except I didn't quite realize it. It was at the time of Sputnik — well, a little later than that — and the first American space stuff. The engineers were coping with all kinds of problems in language and in their electronic and mechanical reality. They would write these reports, which were virtually incomprehensible to anyone except themselves, and I was expected to turn them into good English. It was an impossible task. As time went on, I revised less and less because the engineers really knew what they were talking about, and all these words like *input* and *output* which we, English Department people, consider sins against the language, were the words that they needed. We didn't have any words that we could give them for these new electronic computer processes that they were attempting to name.

That's why I said I was an inept writer. I was faced with a very challenging situation, and I didn't actually realize how challenging it was until afterwards. I did not have to work very hard because there wasn't really a great deal to do. I would clean up the reports and organize them, and then I would spend the rest of my workday writing a novel, if you want to call it that.

Did you ever finish it?

Yes, I finished it. Probably it exists somewhere in a trunk. I had a lot of fun writing it, and that was the first time that I had fun writing since I was a kid. And that was important. The second book was a Young-Man-Going-to-Europe thing, and that was very bad. I don't think I ever finished that.

I only worked for that job for about fifteen months, and I was transferred (to a great expense to the company and to great profit to myself) fifty miles from Los Angeles to Riverside. They paid me fourteen hundred dollars to move my pathetic possessions, so I was able to quit that job early. I had intended to work only long enough to save enough money to go to Europe and write for three or four years. In the early Sixties this was already an old-fashioned thing to do but, you know, when you are young you don't know what's old-fashioned. But I did it and I went to Greece. I taught briefly in Athens but there was no point in that — I only needed the money. Then I moved to Lesbos, to the village of Molivos, the contemporary Greek name of Mithimna. It is a little Venetian village with a fort on the top looking over to the Turkish coast. Well, I met people there like Ignazio Silone, William Golding, Peter Green. Peter became a friend. There were a couple of other writers also, on and off, and this was the first time that I met and spent any time with writers. That summer I wrote *Gascoyne* (1966). Peter Green was my second reader at that point, and he helped me connect with an English publisher. I should say that summer, the summer of '62, I believe, or '63 ... I may have my dates off. In fact, I think I wrote *Gascoyne* in the summer of '64, because it was accepted the winter of '65. Somewhere in there. Peter

Green read an early draft and liked it, and told me who to send it to. Jonathan Cape was about the third on the list. That's how I got started.

So if you don't count your first book, the one à la Ian Fleming, Gascoyne was your second book?

Really the third. I'd spent a lot of time on the second one, the one of the young man going to Europe.

After this, did you take some time off?

I went to Paris. I was in Paris when *Gascoyne* was accepted. I don't think I wrote well in Paris — most of the time I don't write well. I went back to Greece and to Crete. I think it would be '65, Fall of '65, when I wrote my second novel, *Travel Notes* (1967); that winter. Again, I may be a year off. That one, again, was published by Cape, and by Simon & Schuster in New York. Then I had what seemed to be like an eternally long time — it was only a couple of years before the third novel, which I wrote mainly in San Francisco but I finished here in Dixon.

This would be The Mrs Unguentine?

Right. The *Log*. I have trouble finishing things. My old method of writing used to be that things would come in a blinding flash, and I would work non-stop for five weeks and it would be done, but then I would take a year to finish it because the ending was never right.

When we moved to San Francisco, I was in such a state of cultural shock coming back to the States after a long time that I stopped writing completely for about six months. In fact, I had not spent very much of my more or less adult life in the States. Then, when I resumed writing, more came to me very fast and very intensely but, again, I had trouble finishing. It took another year. It was the first year here in Dixon when I finished the *Log*.

Then we built the house, and all that. Back into farming, and everything. So the next one did not come until '75 or '76, which again seemed like a very long time.

Then there was Some Instructions.

Which in fact I wrote first. I was given a house in Santa Fe for a month, which was a real godsend, and I wrote most of it there until my time was up and I came home and finished it here. And again it took what seemed like a very long time.

Was there anything else between Some Instructions and Mayordomo?

There have been two novels. One was quite bad. It was turned down by Knopf. I don't know how you turn a bad novel down well but I took it truly badly. I thought they turned it down badly. That was about 1980.

Did you know yourself it wasn't good?

Well, I didn't think so at that time. Now I know it was.

Did you go back to it and reworked on it?

Well, it sort of recycled itself into another one — almost a variation on it, which I wrote in '84-'85 or '83-'84, I can't remember. Which I was happy with, and I submitted it again to Knopf — and they didn't like it. They weren't nice about it. I didn't send it anywhere else. I wasn't confident enough about it. I sort of felt I had solved some of the problems I had not solved with its previous incarnation, but most of the friends I showed it to were not particularly moved, so, again, it's in a trunk somewhere and I don't think I'll ever ... It doesn't have what to my mind a book needs, which is some kind of magic. But it was useful, actually. It was a stream of consciousness kind of thing, and was set in New Mexico — not in Dixon but in an imaginary Albuquerque. And I can't remember what I was working on when *Mayordomo* came into existence but I think I may have been tinkering with that when the *Mayordomo* project came into being.

Actually, you have been writing quite steadily. There have been pauses but there has been no significant break in your production.

No, I write every winter. That can mean from October, an hour or two in the morning, until June. Increasingly, it has meant more like December until April at the worst — or at the best. It gets really hard in the Spring because the claim of the farm gets heavier and heavier. The two really don't go together. You know, if you spent the morning at the desk and then you go out into the field, you're going from a relatively abstract or two-dimensional world into a four- or five-dimensional world, and you can hurt yourself or you can make mistakes very easily.

Mistakes as a farmer?

Yes. You can make physical mistakes. You can have accidents. This is what it does to me. Writing makes me very absent-minded and very mental, you might say, or intellectual, or whatever. It interiorizes me. It's kind of interesting. I have suffered a sort of reversal of values through all of this. I think that most people see something like farming as being relatively low on the scale of human complexity. Now, what society honors, of course, is intellectual and artistic achievements of a high symbolic or abstract content — and rightly so, in many ways. In a sense, society honors very specialized achievements. Now I began to see things a little differently. One day a painter friend, Dennis Larkin, who used to live down the road, set up his easel right up their upper window. We used to park our old pickup in the orchard there. We'd wash our vegetables in the orchard and load the truck

up and keep it in the shade. Dennis thought this was a charming see — he painted somewhat realistic paintings but they were heightened in an almost surrealist way. So he painted this thing called “Crawford’s Orchard” with the truck and the trees and a bench on which we have our washtubs. And I found this a very interesting experience because I realized that, of course, the painting is a terrific simplification and abstraction of everything I know. I know much more — I know what goes on in that orchard and with that truck and with those washtubs, and the elaborate process that leads to that over the seasons; and you can carry it even further over the millennia that farming in these ways carried out. So I began to see artistic representation in a large sense as involving a degree of simplification and abstraction that was, again, fascinating; yet, looking at it from the other side, which I had stumbled into in the course of unbecoming, you might say, an educated man and becoming a kind of peasant, I began to see the real complexity of that life.

In writing, when you isolate yourself in a room with whatever your machinery is, dealing with language, that most complex of abstractions, you eliminate a lot of the multi-dimensional facets of, say, the life out there in the garden or in the farm. The point that I was going to make is that those moments of transition, when I have to come inside in the winter, often when I start writing I get very depressed — and that’s because I have to abandon the very rich, sensual world out there that I have become habituated to in the summer, and in which I move around constantly. So I’m almost in a kind of mourning, having to exchange that summer life of physical work and incredibly rich sensations for a piece of paper, a pencil world, a word processor. But then, at the end of the writing season, which ends anywhere from, say, March until June depending on what I am working on, then I have to go outside — and I have to re-habituate myself to the multi-dimensional complexity of working with crops, with the earth, with machinery, with time in a different way. Time that’s imposed on you. When you are writing, you create your own time; but when you’re out there you have it imposed on you in a very strong way, and that transition is also very hard. I don’t get depressed — I get frustrated, then, because it’s as if I have to expand my mind again in another way. So it seems at times that I spend most of my writing time in making these long transitions.

This is very interesting. Both of your activities are dictated by the seasons. During the winter, your hands hibernate along with your farm. You pull in. It’s a form of further isolation from everything else.

Well, I discovered that there is such a thing as too much isolation ... I need a little time for that, but it’s very tricky to isolate yourself while your children are growing up.

Tricky? I find it impossible!

When the kids were young, I’d say, Oh, I’ll get away from it all! But I wasn’t happy being away from it all. You know, there is a kind of balance. You do

want a certain amount of distraction because, after all, the random is an important factor in what makes us spark. If you shut yourself off in the random and turn off the telephone and chase the kids away and don't see anybody, you may find yourself in a very dead and non-creative place. So when I'm feeling most positive about it all, I almost welcome the distractions as long as they only take so much time. However, if you fight them, you may destroy too much. You know, you are always going to have distractions of some sort. I'd as lief have somebody drive up the driveway at the wrong time when I'm writing — it's much more efficient for me to go out and be pleasant and deal with them than to throw a tantrum, which involves a lot of distractions.

How do you manage to combine the two activities?

Discipline. There's no other way. Even as small a farm as ours requires continuous attention and hard work, no matter how easier today's mechanical help makes it. But writing also requires hard work. One has to fit both in. It's not easy. And it pays very little! But to have another activity is essential to writing. In my opinion, the writers that are mass-produced in these university Creative Writing courses end up not knowing anything outside the little academic world that raised them. And their writing shows it.

Right. Changing subject: do you have another project for the next winter?

I do have a number of prose pieces scattered around — essay-type things I have written over the years, and for the most part never published because they are too long, too original. There was no place to publish them here. I haven't looked at most of them for a very long time so they may look as bad as I once thought they were. But maybe they'll look better! And the Los Alamos essay that I talked about earlier, maybe as a kind of centerpiece to that. So what I'm kind of planning to do is to work on this collection. But it doesn't mean I'm done with fiction. I would like to write something but I don't really know what. In order to finish *Mayordomo* I had to deny myself the pleasures of writing fiction because I had been putting things off too long. And *Mayordomo* was difficult to write in a new sense. The difficulties always take a new shape, but this particular difficulty was that I can work out for two or three days, and then I would have to drop it in exasperation and come back to it a week later.

In exasperation over the demands of your job as a mayordomo, or over the writing?

No, just the demands of writing nonfiction prose, having spent most of my life writing what I felt like as a fiction writer; the demands of reality within the body of experience I was trying to write about. I could not make it up,

and that was very frustrating. So I had to walk away from it every three days, often for a week. I would go back to whatever fiction I was working on, and I would kind of relax and get involved with that. But that was becoming too habit-forming, and I had to stop it.

So I'm not certain, really, what's there. I've spent last winter working on a fiction which is — I don't know what it is. It's probably something that will go into a box, but I felt I had to do it and now it's done, and I don't have to worry about doing it.

You know, Dixon is not a place where to be writing with an eye to the market. I mean, the media of course makes such distances irrelevant in one way, at least from the point of view of consumption, but we also have a fairly steady stream of remarkable people coming to the area so we often feel at the center of things, you might say. One of the reasons for leaving a place like San Francisco and coming to a place like this was that I did not want to become a writer writing for a market, a writer who was doing anything just to keep in print. I'm not interested in that. It has taken me a long time to get to this point and maybe it won't last, but I feel that what I have to say as a writer isn't going to take a lot of books, and so the other way that we make a living is a reflection of that.

Of course I would like to have a year to be able to write. I would love to write in the summer when you can keep the doors open and you feel better and you can jump in the river instead of farming, but ... When I was in Europe, and I was very lucky as a young writer, I had that time. I know a lot of people would never have that time, and so from my first book I had the prospect of almost unlimited writing time. You know, I can write twelve months seven days a week, which is what I'd like to do. What I discovered was that I didn't have that much in me to write because perhaps I had come from a relatively protected, isolated middle-class suburban existence in southern California, where things were extraordinarily pleasant but the main events of life were conducted somewhere else, offstage — people never died, they seemed never even to be born.

I had a lot of living to catch up with, and that also has to do with coming to a place like New Mexico, doing the things we are doing. The waste is not a waste — it's what I feel good about it. Sometimes we feel, yes, it's a terrible waste. But when I try to be a little wise, I suppose, I feel that it all gets recycled, it all gets used. The Los Alamos material, which seemed to take an awfully long time and effort, trained me to write the ditch work, trained me to observe what I was experiencing and then to take notes of it a day or two later. So it wasn't lost, and I'm not finished with it. I'll go back to it. And the obsessions of the fictions that I had been writing seem to go nowhere but maybe, eventually, they'll go into something. I felt that actually, with most things I've written, even though in terms of pages the final books seem very small, somehow it's a summing up of some kind of problem I could not even positively articulate that I set for myself several years before and finally, eventually, has some kind of fruition in this form.

How distant are you, as an individual, from the subject matter of your fiction?

As far as humanly possible. I mean, that's the illusion that I seem to be able to create when I've written these things. What I feel like, or I have felt like with the set of four novels that have been published, is that I have played the part of an actor, and the lines come to me as an acting part. Which is to say that I'm very far from the person I imagine myself to be. Later — five or ten years later, when I read these things — I can then say, "Ah yes, I know where that comes from." But in the course of writing them it seemed to me as if I were possessed by this voice.

And the voice tends to be satirical.

Yes. Almost without exception, there haven't been any good voices that have not been satirical. So, obviously, this is how I grind my axes. Probably the *Log* is the least satirical of the books, the most rhapsodic. In fact, I would not consider that a satirical novel. *Gascoyne* is satirical, or a pastiche. It's a kind of fake detective story because it doesn't really have a plot — which is what the movie makers discovered when they tried to turn it into a film. There is no real plot. There is an *illusion* of a plot.

I am not a good architect in that way at all. I must not believe in plots, even though I read plotted books quite gleefully. I've spent one winter reading John Le Carré, to whom to my surprise I became quite devoted. With his many limits, he's a masterful, wonderful writer; there's something quite marvelous there. The second novel, *Travel Notes*, is satirical again — of what, I'm not certain. So is the third one, *Some Instructions*, although the way it was finally edited, with my consent, does not appear to be a novel. The sections were contiguous. It was written as a flow — it came to me that way. But when Knopf got it, they suggested that all the sections be numbered and that they be titled. And I liked that. So, it is a fiction. Whether it is a novel, it's a topic for a seminar.

So, Mayordomo was your first published venture in a different genre.

Right.

I understand a friend of yours convinced you to write it because he saw how deeply involved you were in your work as the mayordomo of the acequia.

Well, this was an Australian family friend who visited with us just before going back home, where he died. Before leaving (we didn't know whether he knew he was ill or not) he stopped to say goodbye, and he was here for a few days. The time was March and we were cleaning the ditch, so I had to supervise the crew. I finished at five and came back home. We were sitting around, and he said, "Well, show me the ditch." So we climbed up

the bank, and the ditch was cleaned out. No water. Nothing much to see. We walked up and down a bit, and he said, "You know, Stan, you ought to write about it." I said, "Yes, I know, but I don't know how. I know everything I need, I just don't know how to write about it." And that was that. And he went off the next morning to San Francisco and then to Australia.

The way this conversation was taking place, it planted something in my head, I guess. We had one more day to go, which was to clean the ditch up from this place next door to the dam. It was a Saturday. A relatively small crew. And I just remembered everything. This was my Los Alamos training, I might say. I remembered everything from the beginning, from the morning until the end. We finished in midday. I came home, and I thought about it. The next day or the day after I sat down and I wrote down a long-hand account from my point of view. This was what was missing in my Los Alamos writings: there was no point of view. There wasn't anybody there — it was just words. Judgments. I took the part of a character, as the Marlow with this ditch crew, supervising this crew. Wrote it out in longhand in the back of a notebook, writing let's say Japanese-style or Hebrew-style from the back of the book forward, kind of saying to myself, "I didn't really want to be writing this, this wasn't happening ..." Then, as you probably know, the first day I put the water on, the ditch broke and we had to fix it. So I just kept writing — every time we did something to the ditch, I wrote it up in the same way within a day or two. I learned from Los Alamos I could very profitably wait for a day and sometimes two days because in that time you learn what obsesses you, what interests you, because this is what you go to bed with and what you wake up with. So I kept doing that. I think I may have missed one day in the course of one year. Well, after I started typing it all up in the Fall, I wrote well into the next summer because I did not know what shape the book would have and how long it would go. I think I read a bit of it to Rose Mary who got very excited — this, after ten years of her reading my things and not being excited ... And then I typed what became the first chapter and sent it off to Gus Blaisdell of the Living Batch Bookstore in Albuquerque. He called back and said, "Hey, for heaven's sake, if North Point Press does not take it and the UNM Press does not take, I'll publish it!" That was on the basis of twenty odd pages. North Point looked at it and they did not like it. Then Gus trotted it over to Beth Hallas [of the University of New Mexico Press], and she was very interested. That's how *Mayordomo* got published ...

"Language, that most complex of abstractions ..."

When Rose Mary and Stanley Crawford left San Francisco to begin a new life as garlic farmers in the backwoods of northern New Mexico, they knew perfectly well what they were turning their back to. They were giving up, respectively, a very promising career in the theatre, and a distinguished future as one of the foremost postmodern American novelists. They knew

that this momentous decision was to drastically change their life. Both had to start anew, Rose Mary trying to break into the world of regional theatre as playwright, actress, and teacher, and Stanley "unbecoming an educated man and becoming a kind of peasant." For both, it was a hard and costly process; so costly, in fact, that as the passage quoted above indicates, occasionally they are tempted to see their new life as a "waste." The recurring temptation, however, is always short-lived. True, at times daily existence leads the "educated" and the "uneducated" men to find themselves at odds with each other, the former having to bow to the impelling needs of the latter; in the long run, however, the two merged to make of Stanley Crawford a more complex individual than he was before the great 1970 watershed.

Working hard to make ends meet, and getting more and more involved in local politics over environmental and economic survival issues, provided Crawford with the schooling in life he had missed before the move to Dixon. As he said, he had "a lot of living to catch up with." Understandably, his writing reflected this change in perspective. All he learned as a dedicated member of his peripheral farming community found its way into his work as a writer, lending it a new sense of awareness of and compassion for the human lot.

Gascoyne and *Travel Notes*, the first two novels, display many of the distinctive traits of postmodern fiction: the ludic, disenchanting, decontextualized stance of the first-person narrating voice; the parody of different literary genres variously combined; the instability of facts and of interpersonal relationships; the inconsequential discourse that constantly trips the reader in his vain search for some stable ground of psychological or diegetic development, denying all gratification to either level of expectation. Specifically, an ironical mixture of surrealism and hard-core novel à la Mickey Spillane characterizes *Gascoyne*, while *Travel Notes* results in a dizzying pastiche of unentangleable mystery and haphazard travelogue. Both novels exhibit an amazing command of language, both flaunt the author's ingenious manipulation of the literary taste of the period. There is no doubt that the early Crawford was on a par with John Barth, Donald Barthelme, Thomas Pynchon, Stanley Elkin, or Bruce Jay Friedman, that is to say, with the most celebrated of his postmodern contemporaries.

All this changed with the move to Dixon. First, the period of adjustment: having to learn from a neighbor how to build — with their own hands — their adobe dwelling; the farm to be tended; the back-breaking work in the field; the need to establish a constructive rapport with the new community. It was a while before Crawford was able to write again. When he did, the masterful craftsman of language had acquired a new dimension. His rapport with the world around him — with nature, with history, with the people — had become deeper. His perspective had changed and, consequently, so had his aesthetics.

The title of the first book Crawford published after his move to New Mexico is very much in line with the previous novel's tone: *Some Instruc-*

tions to *My Wife Concerning the Upkeep of the House and Marriage*, and to *My Son and Daughter Concerning the Conduct of Their Childhood*. A small jewel of parodic writing, *Some Instructions*, although set in the contemporary world of machinery, supermarkets, and trash classification systems, ingeniously mimes the eighteenth-century pamphlets on Good Husbandry and Correct Behaviour. What is new is that the typically postmodern abdication of all moral and social commentary gives way to an apparently playful but, in effect, unmistakable — if silent — denunciation of this obtuse and emotionally barren husband and father.

In *Log of the S.S. The Mrs Unguentine*, published in 1971, playfulness vanishes. The guiding tone is now one of deep understanding of human suffering and of intense sympathy for the hapless protagonist in her struggle against a senseless fate. With all its bizarre inventiveness, there is no irony in this splendid novel, perhaps Crawford's crowning achievement in fiction to date.

Playfulness as a means to underlay the hidden message reappears in the most recent novel, *Petroleum Man*, published in 2005, conceptually a sort of sequel of *Some Instructions*. Here satire runs above as well as underneath the surface of the first-person narrator's discourse, damning present-day American values as understood by the protagonist, an archconservative industrialist, and his pathetic attempts to condition his grandchildren along the lines of what he considers the "real" world.

Seen in their spaced succession, Crawford's works of fiction evince that by becoming a farmer and shouldering his responsibilities as an active member of the community (in his own words, by "becoming uneducated"), the "educated man," who had long learned all there is to learn about the craft of writing, went on to learn how to infuse a deep, warm sense of life into his craft. Stanley Crawford the fiction writer was giddily, almost recklessly imaginative. Stanley Crawford the essayist and memoirist is sober, pensive, at times almost lyrical, at others charmingly self-ironic. The difference in literary stance is the result of the transformation of the early intellectual hippy into an intellectual farmer, whereby the young cosmopolitan grafted himself onto the trunk of an old, peripheral Hispanic culture that for centuries has known only this narrow, barely supportive valley — a culture forever focused on its struggle to make the most of the little water that trickles down from the mountains, runs past these meager fields, and two miles down plunges into the chasm of the Rio Grande. But while he had chosen to share the economic plight as well as the restricted cultural interests of his neighbors, he had to preserve his own integrity as an "educated man."

This growing process is recorded in the New Mexico Trilogy, which includes *Mayordomo: Chronicle of an Acequia in Northern New Mexico*, *A Garlic Testament: Seasons on a Small Farm in New Mexico* (1992), and *The River in Winter: New and Selected Essays* (2003). Until *Petroleum Man*, for over twenty years Crawford did not publish any fiction. Fiction, the only genre that the writer had ever practiced, had to be shelved as just an

occasional source of relief from the bounds of referential reality — a sort of respite from the renuncements of the freedom of imagination. For nothing is "invented" in the three panels of the triptych. The entire trilogy concentrates on the author's life as a farmer — the daily chores in the fields; the pressing decisions concerning crops; the machinery that needs fixing or replacing; the politicking that conditions the farmers' market where the Crawfords sell their produce from the back of their truck; the trite jokes about vampires that the buyers feel compelled to make, and to which the sellers patiently submit. At the same time, the trilogy also concentrates on the author as a member of his community — his responsibility as *mayordomo*, requiring that he organize and supervise the crew for the maintenance of the *acequia*, and that he carefully apportion the water among farmers (his neighboring *parciantes*) who for generations have been locked in their feuds over the precious trickle. With equal attention and respect, the New Mexico Trilogy addresses both the small and the large issues around which the life of the community rotates — the beavers that during the winter have dammed up the ditch, the neighbor's horse that once again has knocked down its fence, the curtailing of one's basic rights consequential from historical marginality. Crawford writes about the destruction wrought on the land by developers who care nothing about the cultural and economic integrity of northern New Mexico, and about the political dynamics that ignore local interests to accommodate (and benefit from) interstate financial schemes. He writes about how to plant his various types of garlic, about the vanishing art of making mud floors by hand, or about the organization of political protest in Los Alamos, the citadel of technological, life-destroying power. He looks at things so small that one must bend to the ground in order to see them, and things so large, so distant and impalpable, that only the eyes of the mind can perceive them.

The telling detail, and the overall view: the abiding ingredients, sustained by the controlling passion that urges the writer to tell it as he sees it. "*Mayordomo* was a book that had to be written," Crawford once told me. "Somebody had to write about these lives and about this world ... One of the reasons to write is to fight the oblivion to which those who are emarginated are condemned. But we also write — or at least, *I* write — as a form of defense of my own individual reality. Television and the movies have taken over the role that used to be the storyteller's. They don't speak of my neighbors, of their drama when the little water we have is sold in order to fill swimming pools in Los Angeles. And it is about the owners of these pools that today's myths speak. That's why I must defend myself. I must reappropriate my role as storyteller, as creator of myths—which is the role of the writer."

Crawford's world as depicted in the trilogy is the same world that another Anglo author, John Nichols, also immersed in the Hispanic culture of northern New Mexico, had written about in *The Milagro Beanfield War* (1974) and in his own New Mexico Trilogy. It is the same hidden world that in 1944 Robert Bright had brought to light in *The Life and Death of Little*

Jo: an analogous village in northern New Mexico, the same subsistence agriculture, the hopeless marginality vis-à-vis the State capital, the sense of impending destruction looming over this enclave of old Hispanic values and traditions. Dixon is but a few miles from the Taos of tourists and of the devastating ski runs; it is but one hour north of Santa Fe (Bright's nameless village was also little over twenty miles north of the capital), where the water, which is essential for the community's survival, is sold away for the idle pleasure of rich Californians. In this respect, two other books come to mind, both by Italian writers well known in America: Ignazio Silone's *Fontamara* (1933), and Carlo Levi's *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli* (1945) — the authors being, respectively, an antifascist exile from the Abruzzi mountains, who told the story of a village deprived of its water by the Fascist authorities, and a doctor and artist from Turin, confined by the regime in the backwoods of the Italian Deep South and forbidden to cure the malaria ridden peasants. In all these works we have the same universal paradigm: the struggle of man for water. Indeed, not a paradigm that the graduates from the schools of Creative Writing know anything about.

Only when he became a *parciante* among *parciantes* was Crawford able to tap the timeless source of universal truths that the land holds in store for those who elect to work it, and are humble enough to listen to its silent message. Only when he came down to earth — literally, as well as metaphorically — did he develop into the complex writer we now know.

Let us listen to this beautiful passage from *Mayordomo* — a passage born out of a personal experience that only a farmer could keenly internalize and only a great writer would be able to express:

Pitchfork in hand, I walk up the winding channel to meet the descending water. By the time it gets here the flow will be pushing a large roll of debris, and I will walk it back down through my place and into the next if need be, to fork out as much as I can. The ditch is about four feet wide through here. The fine sand of the bottom glares in the sun. All is quiet. This is a strange wait... something will arrive here at this place by means of this channel, soon, perhaps very soon, unless something has gone wrong up there—a tree could have fallen across the ditch, a bank could have collapsed. I am about to walk a little further up when a brown and grey tongue slips into view around a bend and rolls toward me, its dry leaves hissing softly, twigs snapping, approaching like some creature... Here and there the tongue pauses, jammed by a dam of its own making until freed of its own accord or until my efforts release it. The water behind the first twenty feet of floating dry leaves is the brown of coffee and cream. (Crawford 1988, 66-67)

Some time ago, at the Santa Fe Farmers' Market, I was waiting by the Crawfords' truck while the last buyer was considering her purchases. We were going to have lunch together after the market closed, and I stood nearby, watching Stan and Rose Mary beginning to wrap things up. What I could see was a tall, lean, Anglo-looking couple of farmers going through the usual

motions of produce sellers, helping their customer choose her bunch of garlic or her garland of dry flowers, discussing the price, giving advice about storage, patiently smiling at the inevitable jokes about vampires. I tried to put myself in the buyer's shoes. Did she know that this lanky farmer who weighed her bunch of garlic, wrapped it up, handed her the package, took the money, gave her change, and courteously said goodbye, is an extraordinary writer, one of the great ones of his generation? She gave no sign that she did.

Then I turned my question around. Would the reader of *Log* or of *Some Instructions* who may have ignored the flaps of these novels have any idea of how their author makes his living? How could she know that, every spring, he, pitchfork in hand, helps clear a ditch of the choking winter debris to let the water flow, then runs ahead of it and, one after the other, raises the gates of his neighbors' little fields — a *parciante* among *parciantes*, a farmer among farmers? She could not possibly know. Unless, of course, she were from the area — in which case she might wonder about the vaguely familiar craggy face that looks at her from the dust jacket; then suddenly she may remember the hardened hand that once, at the Santa Fe Farmers' Market, handed her a bunch of garlic from the back of a truck. If the two images connect, she may realize that there is no contradiction here. She may understand that, actually, this apparent *mestizaje* is a perfect example of the deep integration of languages, cultures, and traditions that makes of the Southwest the unique world that it is.

Stanley Crawford may not have become a better farmer for having sacrificed, at least in part, his vocation as a writer, but he certainly became a greater writer for having embraced the lot of the farmers of his elected community; for having chosen to share their hard life.

Integration of diversity, rather than its repudiation, is the key to human richness. This is the lesson that Stanley Crawford silently teaches through his books, as well as from the tailgate of his old pickup.

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“ONE STEP AHEAD OF HIS DOOM”: LARRY McMURTRY,
RUDOLFO ANAYA, AND BILLY THE KID

Roberto Serrai

This paper is a spin-off of a broader research on Henry McCarty, the young outlaw better known as “Billy the Kid.” At the present time, I will not touch upon the “fact versus fiction” debate, a question already convincingly resolved by such historians as Robert Utley and Maurice Fulton, in, respectively, *Billy the Kid* (1989) and *History of the Lincoln County War* (1968). Instead, taking an exclusively literary approach, I will compare two among the countless fictional incarnations of the “Kid,” namely, Larry McMurtry’s novel *Anything for Billy*, published in 1988, and Rudolfo Anaya’s play *Billy the Kid*, published in 1995. These texts share the theme of impending doom and of the impossibility to avoid falling into its clutches with most of the accounts, tales, and legends surrounding the young gunslinger. They do so, however, by focusing solely on the last few months of the Kid’s “short and violent life,” to borrow from Utley’s subtitle. McMurtry’s and Anaya’s concentration on this relatively short time span, therefore, makes the comparison of these works particularly rewarding.

I will begin with *Anything for Billy*. The story is narrated by a Mr Sippy, an avid reader and successful writer of dime novels from Philadelphia who eagerly sets out across the United States in order to experience “the real West” (McMurtry 1989, 37) he has tasted in such pulp masterpieces as *Hurricane Nell*, *the Girl Dead-Shot*; or, *The Queen of the Saddle and Lasso*, and *Mustang Merle amid the Geysers*. Sippy’s single-minded hobby is the core subject of the book, which turns out to be quite a well-wrought instance of metafiction: *Anything for Billy* is, in fact, a dime novel on dime novels. Through the Kid’s sad story of wasted youth constantly suspended between tragedy and comedy, McMurtry delivers the point that the West of fantasy, the West that lives on in the public’s imagination, is possibly more real than the historical one. To quote old Samuel Fuller in Wim Wenders’s 1982 movie, *The State of Things*, “The world’s in color, but black and white is more real.”

Significantly, the first time Mr Sippy encounters Billy Bone, the young gunman is seen “walking out of a cloud” (3) like a mythical creature. His reputation as a cold, ruthless killer precedes him — although very early on (precisely, on page six of four hundred and eight in my edition) Sippy begins wondering “why [Billy] even had a reputation at that time” (6). In fact, Billy proves to be “a dud as a cowboy” (76), is utterly clueless about women, and, above all, is barely able to squeeze a trigger: whenever he



hits a target, it is only by sheer chance. Nevertheless, Mr Sippy immediately falls under the youngster's mysterious spell. He soon declares that he "would have done anything" (4) for him, as in the rather bleak area around Greasy Corners, the fictional town that stands for historical Lincoln, New Mexico, and a place where "people are only interested in two things, [...] killing and dying" (62), Billy actually lives (or tries to live) in "a world of his own" (90). Billy keeps constantly on the move, because he does not "intend to be found" (38). "If you stop too long," he tells his new friend from the East, "people will figure out where to find you" (147).

Sippy is captivated by the "sad boy's appeal" (185) (which Billy capitalizes upon), by his "lonely eyes" (292), and by his stubborn "determination to defy any order" (218). The would-be dime novel hack is moved to tenderness when he realizes that, "asleep, [Billy] looks about twelve" (31). More than anybody else among the Kid's few true friends, he understands that the young outlaw is merely "a puppet to his instincts" (170) which he seems unable to master. In Sippy's sensitive eyes, Billy is "jerked this way and that by strings whose pull he couldn't predict" (170). He is awkward with people. He is tortured by frequent, piercing headaches. He is impaired in his processes of decision-making by his superstition — for example, on stormy nights, he often believes he sees "the Death Dog in a lightning flash" (45), a particularly alarming bad luck omen. Above all, Billy is afraid of dying, although he is frightened less by any specific human enemy than by the *idea* of passing away. *This* is what he is unable to face — not another gunslinger, nor Will Isinglass, the powerful rancher, the "one literate Texan" (239) who is a stand-in for the historical Murphy-Dolan machine. Not even Mesty-Woolah, Isinglass' white-turbaned, seven-foot-tall African hitman, can emotionally undo him as does the abstract idea of death.

Prey to a perpetual state of confusion that leads him to a long string of senseless killings, Billy listens only to the advice of la Tulipe, an old pipe-smoking, blue-eyed Greasy Corners "witch woman" (57) who "knows the past and the future" (118). She allows him to "ride up and down the Pecos" (112) because, "even if it still means bloody luck," at least the blood "will not all be [his]" (112). However, she strongly recommends that he never cross any river, especially the North Canadian, the Rio Las Animas, and the Rio Grande. Of course, the prohibition to cross the Rio Grande denies Billy access to Mexico, the traditional haven for fugitives. This is even more painful for the young man because it prevents him from rejoining Katerina Garza, the only woman to whom, in his clumsy way, he feels attracted, and about whom he continues to dream. As a result, the classical pattern of redemption through love is denied him. Just as the historical Kid never moved far from Lincoln, McMurry's Billy Bone finds himself stuck in and around Greasy Corners. He will not, he *cannot* run away. Fundamentally, he is not allowed to turn his back on his destiny. As la Tulipe says, "we've saved him a grave here" (373).

Towards the end of the novel, Billy comes to the realization that his days are numbered. Sippy repeatedly tells the reader that the Kid could kill "so easily, in such a conscienceless way" (383) mainly because "he

apprehended no future, neither his own nor his victims' ” (383). When, at one point, Billy suddenly disappears from Greasy Corners, Sippy, full of wishful thinking, creates a “happy life” (374) for him. In his fantasies, he imagines Billy “running a busy little telegraph office [in Illinois]” (374) while Katerina is “fomenting revolution in Patagonia, or somewhere” (16). Unexpectedly, however, the young man comes back, and Sippy’s fantasies are shattered. When for the last time he urges the Kid to “ride fast and [...] ride far” (307), the young man answers: “I’m getting too big a reputation, Sippy [...]. Sometimes I wish they’d just let me fall” (307).

In the end, this *cupio dissolvi*, this will to disappear, will be satisfied by Katerina Garza herself. As the Kid’s enemies close in on their quarry, when all hope is lost, the boy’s obscure doom eventually catches up with him, and Katerina shoots him in the heart. With her gun still smoking, she declares: “I didn’t want nobody who didn’t love him to kill him” (394-395). For the record, however, the kill is credited to Sheriff Roebuck, the fictional stand-in for Pat Garrett, who “got politics to think of” (391).

Sippy is left grieving over his doomed young friend. Back home in Philadelphia, he writes a true account of the Kid’s last months, which he entitles *Billy the Kid: or, The Wandering Boy’s Doom*, thus coining the famous nickname. As Sippy himself points out, he can do it only because Billy is dead. In fact, “nobody in the New Mexico Territory would have been fool enough to call him a kid while he was alive and well armed” (83). Ironically, his publisher turns the manuscript down, as well as all the other dime novels inspired by Sippy’s foray into the “real West” which he keeps submitting. As stated in the final rejection slip, “readers [won’t] tolerate cowboys now; what [they] want are detectives; Pinkertons, especially” (404). The wind of literary fashion has changed.

Let us now move on to Rudolfo Anaya’s *Billy the Kid*. In this play, two characters comment on Billy’s story while it is being re-enacted on stage. They are Paco Anaya, perhaps an ancestor of the author, and Ash Upson, the journalist who helped Pat Garrett out with his *Authentic Life of Billy the Kid*, first published in 1882 — the bestseller that shut poor Sippy’s version out of the market. Although, to some extent, they mutually question the truthfulness of each other’s version, Paco and Ash eventually manage to piece together a reasonably accurate chronicle of the Kid’s final days. The play ends with the bittersweet remarks that “there [is] truth to history [...] if you put it in” (Anaya 1995, 353), and that sometimes “history [is] a myth we write to please ourselves” (353). Ash and Paco then leave the stage to drink the night away as friends.

Paco, who claims to have been an eyewitness to the Kid’s killing, repeatedly intervenes to fill in the blanks in Upson’s narrative. For example, he introduces a love triangle involving Billy, a young woman called Rosa, and Josefina Maxwell, the woman who gives him away to Garrett, thus playing a key role in the Kid’s demise. Even more significantly, Paco represents the “voice” of the Mexicans, those whom “nobody [ever] mentions” (509), “la gente humilde” (521) who are never spoken of or spoken

to, but always spoken *for*. In this respect, surely it is not incidental that the play is bilingual.

In Anaya's text, the Mexicans show a friendly attitude towards the Kid partly because they share the same enemy, although they may experience it differently. In the eyes of the Mexicans, the legal system that in historical Lincoln County was cunningly stretched to accommodate Murphy and Dolan's financial greed is a "rotten" law, (512) working "in mysterious ways" (537), enforced by "bull[ies] with badges" (515), and serving the interest of the "manifest destiny to Christianize these lands" (534) — or, as Governor Wallace puts it, the "white man's destiny" (532). In the course of Act II, in a scene partially published by Anaya already in 1993, Wallace promotes his mission to a perplexed Kid with words that closely recall Rudyard Kipling's "The White Man's Burden" — written in 1899. From the Mexicans' point of view, Wallace is just "another expert" who comes and "thinks he knows what's best for us" (536). Whereas in McMurtry's novel "death lives in Mexico" (McMurtry 1989, 111), as la Tulipe says, in Anaya's play, as everybody tells Billy, the place to avoid is *el norte* (509).

Anaya's Kid, unfortunately, *will* cross the border to meet his destiny in Fort Sumner. The play opens and closes in that town. The opening and the concluding scenes are similar: in Don Pedro Maxwell's house, unaware of the young man's impending doom, Billy and Rosa discuss the issue of change. Just as in countless *film noirs* and crime novels, Billy — the "gangster" — tries to convince himself that "any man can change" (519) and "settle down [...] give up being a vagamundo" (497). "Voy a cambiar" (498), Billy says: he's half earnestly planning to start over with a clean slate, buy some land, and become a farmer. As is often the case, this will prove just a daydream — *un sueño* (498). Billy, in fact, is "curse[d]" (524): first by the untreatable tuberculosis inherited from his mother, and then by the highly symbolic value of his violent death at Garrett's hand. After all, as Upson points out, Billy is "a product of his time" (501). Once again, redemption through love is denied to the young outlaw. Rather, by killing his old friend, Garrett (significantly, a "redeemed" horse rustler) performs an act of collective redemption through violence. Serving the interests of Governor Wallace's "manifest destiny", Garrett must literally make a "kid" of his former associate. Barring any intimation that he may be viewed as a Christ figure, Billy needs to become a sacrificial lamb on the altar of civilization that steadily advances from the East to take over the lawless frontier and put an end to disorder but also, indirectly, to dissent.

In Anaya's play, the force that eventually destroys Billy is not as undetermined as that at play in McMurtry's novel. There is no Death Dog here, no dangerous rivers to cross, no exotic camel-riding killers. Also, the Kid's actions and reactions are far from senseless as they are in the novel. They are never the result of a reckless, brash, impulsive nature. If anything, Billy is driven by a strong sense of suffered injustice and, failing any *legal* alternative, by a consequent thirst for revenge. The Kid is vainly begged to give up his thirst for vengeance, first, by old Manuelito, his Mexican friend, and

then by his mother's ghost, who implores him to "get rid of [his guns]." Anaya seems to reverse the lyrics of the popular 1973 Bob Dylan song, *Knockin' on Heaven's Door*, where the Kid, again to no avail, begs his mother to "put [the] guns into the ground, so [he] can't see them anymore."

Billy *must* die to prove that a "Christianized" frontier (to, again, quote Governor Wallace) and the industrial society advancing from the East can and *will* bring forth the strongest and best world possible. This is the core assumption that underlies the Kid's first mythical construction, the all-negative one, which lasts until the first decades of the twentieth century, and portrays him as a bloodthirsty, fiendish beast. Later, as the shortcomings of industrial society become harder and harder to deny, the Kid's image will be partly amended — eventually, somehow, avenging him.

I would like to conclude with a quotation from a controversial book, *Fugitive Days*, the 2001 (reprinted in 2003 with a new Afterword by the author) memoir by another Billy and another young outlaw, William Ayers, a former member of the Weather Underground, the radical organization active in the US in the late Sixties and Seventies. Just like the other Billy, except for the fact that he has survived, Ayers spent a good part of his youth as "a wandering boy one step ahead of his doom" (McMurtry 1989, 87). Without endorsing the two Billy's actions (although I understand and share some of their motives), but hoping for a less simplistic and more humane approach to these young, burned, runaway lives, I will borrow Ayers' words because they seem, to me, to convey the Kid's message, had he been able to articulate it:

[I often think] how fleeting life is, how precious and how fragile our experiences. Like the fireworks following the Fourth of July finale, our time is fading and will soon be gone. "Swifter than a weaver's shuttle," Job laments, "remember that my life is but a breath, my days have passed and vanished." Every one of our lives, then, is urgent, exquisite, and lived forever on the run. (Ayers 2003, 306)

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FROM VISUAL LEGEND TO VOICE:
ENTERING THE DREAM WORLD OF “BABY DOE” TABOR

Judy Nolte Temple

The lush, sensual body of “Baby Doe” — or more accurately her body as a male fantasy — dominates the legend of the western United States mining frontier in which she plays the role of femme fatale. This is a legend about unbridled female sexuality encountering masculinity in the frontier era versus the civilizing role of women in the post-frontier urban West. In the process of writing *Baby Doe Tabor: The Madwoman in the Cabin* (2007), I have been immersed in another body, the huge body of life-writing that *Lizzie* (the name she preferred) Tabor left: a diary, her correspondence, and her religious “Dreams and Visions.” In many ways that I hope to illuminate, the voice of *Lizzie* Tabor contests the legend of “Baby Doe.”

First to the legend and its iconic images. Elizabeth McCourt, born in Wisconsin to an immigrant Irish Catholic family in 1854, was gorgeous enough to lure Protestant Harvey Doe into marrying her. In the tradition of other mortified families, the Does encouraged Harvey and his bride to “go West” to Central City, Colorado, where they were encouraged to mine the family’s gold claim. Upon her arrival in Central City, Elizabeth was dubbed “Baby” Doe, which implied a particular familiarity with the men who greatly outnumbered women in mining towns. “Baby” thrilled the miners by donning men’s clothes to help Harvey, but the more proper townspeople gossiped when Harvey left his new wife in Colorado over the winter, a long winter in which she suffered from the stillbirth of a son. She was befriended by another marginal character, Jewish merchant Jake Sandelowsky. Then as either a “grass widow” or “divorcee,” Baby Doe ventured with Jake to the silver mining boom town Leadville, Colorado. There she encountered the richest man in the West, “Silver King” Horace Tabor. Tabor had made his millions not as a working miner, but rather as a merchant who was lucky when he grubstaked two men who discovered silver. Tabor was married to a dour woman named Augusta, who in the legend represents everything loathsome in a western frontier woman: she clung to her eastern roots, she was highly suspicious of unearned wealth, she was middle-aged, and she had a voice that condemned Horace’s lavish new lifestyle. Probably forever unknown is whether the womanizing Tabor seduced “Baby Doe” or her beauty entrapped him, but this is the fulcrum upon which the gender tale balances. For we are intrigued by the fatal attraction between youthful female beauty and male power that leads to tragedy, whether it be the story of Samson and Delilah, Caesar and Cleopatra — or President Clinton and Monica Lewinsky.



Horace Tabor could have lived the double life that was winkingly permitted in the mining West, that of having a mistress in the camps and a wife down in Denver, but he instead chose to legitimize his beloved Lizzie by marrying her. This entailed a long and scandalous divorce proceeding, in which those representing the new urban/urbane West sided with deserted Augusta. Yet I posit that one of the reasons this tawdry story has remained popular is because Tabor's folly fulfills other men's fantasies. As popular historian John Burke mused in *The Legend of Baby Doe*, "It almost seemed – and this thought has struck American men for continuing generations – that a man needed one wife to help him through the early struggles and one to help him enjoy his success" (Burke 1974, 50). Horace and "Baby Doe" were married in a lavish ceremony during his short term as a substitute senator in Washington, DC, in 1883. Congressmen and President Chester A. Arthur all kissed the bride but not one of their wives attended. The priest who performed the ceremony was shocked to later learn he had joined two divorcees in matrimony and no record of the marriage remains in the diocese records. Horace and the infamous "second Mrs Tabor" then moved back to Denver, where not even the birth of their two beautiful daughters, the second of whom was optimistically dubbed "Silver Dollar," could buy "Baby Doe Tabor" social acceptance. By 1893, Horace's luck had run out: he unwisely clung to the value of silver when most American investors were diversifying. Bankrupt, Tabor died in 1899 and, according to the legend, told his beautiful widow to "Hold onto the Matchless mine up in Leadville" as the one solid investment that would revive.

In some versions of the legend, Horace's death led to the "conversion" of "Baby Doe" from the wanton into the good widow, because contrary to expectations, she did not remarry or seduce another man. Rather, she eventually inhabited a tiny miners cabin at the Matchless, where she suffered and endured for over thirty years. Her eldest daughter Lily moved away, while the younger daughter Silver showed some promise. When a photo of Silver Dollar and Theodore Roosevelt was published in the 1909 *Denver Post*, Lizzie Tabor felt pride in her daughter, while others said the publicity-seeking girl carried the bad blood of her illegitimate parents. When Silver became an exotic dancer in the Midwest, even Lizzie could not deny that her child was becoming her worse nightmare, the very embodiment of the sexuality that had exiled "Baby Doe" from Denver. The more troubling Silver became, the harder Lizzie worked in her Dream World to rescue her daughter. Let us "hear" the authentic voice of Lizzie Tabor, a woman who never called herself "Baby Doe," from one of her writings:

July 15 — 1921 I dreamed a sad & terrible dream of my darling child Silver—she was sitting down she had I think white wrapper on and she looked sad and on her knee sat a small long black snake with its body standed (part of it) straight up & its terrible head up high the snake was sticking out its terrible tongue and (O my God save her) for she was putting out her finger and touching that snakes tongue every time he stuck it out &

that was all the time quickly it was the devil & the snake showed it was the devil My heart was broken I should die of grief to see my precious child touching a snakes tongue & it sitting up on her lap. O she is in trouble O Blessed God let me get to her [...].¹

Although the impoverished Mrs Tabor did indeed get to her daughter in time to discover that Silver's vague "female illnesses" were the result of a "mis-carriage," Silver was doomed. In 1925, she died from scalding at age thirty-five, alone in a boarding house. In even the cruelest versions of the legend, this tragedy was a sympathy-evoking "Station of the Cross" that Mrs Tabor bore. She now became the "madwoman in the cabin," a woman doomed to outlive her daughter and be found frozen to death, her arms outstretched in the shape of a cross, at age eighty. A postcard from this era shows the commonly-used visual bookends to the Legend of "Baby Doe." The beautiful young woman, having sinned, is sentenced to thirty years solitary confinement, in which she becomes the witch-like hermit. The cruelest part of the story to me as a feminist-historicist literary critic, is that the *thousands* of words with which Lizzie Tabor explored her life, her relationships and her psyche were muted until thirty-five years after her death. Lizzie Tabor had deposited most of her "important writings," as she called them, with Leadville nuns and this treasure trove of writing was revealed only after her death. Lizzie's "Dreams and Visions" were carefully placed in little bundles, reminiscent of Emily Dickinson's packets of poetry, to form a compensatory text that fell into the wrong hands.

Lizzie's papers were immediately sealed by a Leadville judge, due to the explicit nature of Mrs Tabor's dream descriptions and the important Colorado men that she wrote about as cheating her and seducing her notorious daughter. Indeed, as feminist pioneer critics Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar theorized about early women writers, this was not a madwoman shut up in her cabin, but a *mad* woman whose anger could not be shut up. She wrote thousands upon thousands of "Dreams and Visions" that show numerous signs of editorial agency, a clear indication that she intended them to be read. Yet in the three decades in which a protective and patriarchal state employee kept guard over the papers, probably burning the most shocking of them, the legend of "Baby Doe" grew in the silenced vacuum. My research analyzes the mythopoeic "industry" that commodified "Baby Doe" in sensationalist books, pamphlets, paintings, and a Hollywood film.

The best-known and most frustrating version of the legend is the opera *The Ballad of Baby Doe*, a product of the 1950s, that is still the second-most performed American opera. It was the creation of Pulitzer-prize winning composer Douglas Moore, who was intrigued by the Baby Doe story and photos

¹ The "Dreams and Visions" written by Elizabeth B. McCourt Tabor are part of the enormous Horace A.W. Tabor archive collection housed at the Colorado Historical Society in Denver, Colorado. They are located in MSS 614, Box 11, File Folders 922-1037, in chronological order.

that repeated the legend at the time of her 1935 death. After a litigious battle with the only woman to write a pseudo-autobiography impersonating the voice of “Baby Doe” and who felt daughter-like solicitude and ownership of that persona, librettist John Latouche turned to earlier, more hurtful versions of the legend. Ironically, just as Latouche was creating his “Baby Doe,” Lizzie Tabor’s papers ever so briefly were made available to a *Denver Post* reporter, who wrote a series of articles that introduced readers to samplings of the authentic voice of Lizzie Tabor. Was librettist Latouche too lazy or too “Eastern” to dig up old issues of *The Denver Post* for “Baby Doe’s” authentic voice? Or did he find Mrs Tabor’s rantings too raw for opera? Or was the entire production so much a product of the Freudian-fraught 1950s that an elderly woman’s religious mysticism was left off-stage? *The Ballad of Baby Doe* addresses 1950s anxieties about weak men and too-powerful women, despite its Victorian costuming. It is Horace’s two willful wives who propel the drama. Augusta fights valiantly to retain her husband, while “Baby Doe” also knows what she wants and ultimately pays a high price for investing her heart in an ineffective man. As Horace’s end nears, Augusta returns to taunt him with foreknowledge of his two daughters’ sad fates. At the end of her tirade, Augusta removes the hood of her cape to reveal that she has become none other than Horace’s cruel *mother*, the true villain who long ago misshaped Tabor into a womanizing fool. In Moore’s mind, once the western male hero (or anti-hero) Horace is dead, the curtain must fall. In the closing scene after Horace’s melody-filled demise, “Baby Doe” sings her final aria:

Proof against the forms of fear / No distress shall alter me
I will walk beside my dear / Clad in love’s bright heraldry.
Sound the trumpet’s loud alarm / Any foe I shall withstand
In the circle of his arms / I am safe in Beulah Land.

As she walks toward the Matchless mine, shown through a translucent screen behind the stage, the mantle falls from her head to reveal white hair, symbolic of her thirty years of fealty. The opera directions say, “As a white drift of snow begins to fall, Baby Doe sits by the mineshaft, waiting.”

Yet it is clear from Lizzie Tabor’s prolific writings that this widow did *not* fall silent nor merely wait. Like Horace’s first wife Augusta, the “second Mrs Tabor” had a strong voice. She dutifully chronicled both her spiritual life and her earthly efforts on behalf of her daughters. Her diary and her “Dreams and Visions” are filled with the very passion that epitomizes opera. For example, she grieved over her daughter Lily, absent for so long that Lizzie Tabor relegated her to the community she called her “living dead,” where many of her estranged family resided in the Dream World. How beautiful an authentic aria would have been this lament that Lizzie wrote:

Dawn of sorrow

I see the day breaking
my tired hearts aching

Snow is falling ore mound & forest
 Winds are wafting the flakes around us
 Our blood is congealing and freezing
 As the tinkle of burying bells come nearer
 Mocking the sying of the trees as they sound
 The death Knell
 Through the woodland
 They are bearing the shroud of pines for
 our Lilys sad and living grave

God help me I love her so (June 21, 1912)

Let us venture more deeply into one corner of the Dream World labyrinth where Lizzie Tabor processed “the trouble with Silver,” her errant youngest daughter. My transcription and analyses of the thousands of “Dreams and Visions,” a project that has taken more than a decade, has shown five ways in which the dreams served the agonized mother. Some dreams simply *relive* in concentrated form the growing defiance and danger that Silver embodied. The very recording acknowledges the mother’s worst fears so that she can give up her load, the mother’s lode, to God:

June 2—1915 I dreamed this terrible thing I was walking on a Denver St Phil [Elizabeth’s brother Phil McCourt] was standing on the edge of the sidewalk several people were standing near him as I passed he jeered at me & said “your daughter your daughter” & sneered at me ... Then I ... saw my poor darling child Silver all bent over drest in light with a white cloth tied over her head her face was O so white & her eyes were the blackest & she was so drunk she was unconscious she was talking to trying to some men that stood in a door way she was looking so hard at me O I thought I would die of grief in this terrible dream ... I gave it to God when I woke up.

Other dreams *reify* the battle between good and evil that Lizzie Mrs Tabor felt was going on within her daughter, whom she characterized as “hypnotized” by bad people rather than being intrinsically bad. In 1914 when Silver was first being “tarnished,” Lizzie tried to break up her girl’s relationship with Ed Brown, which infuriated the willful Silver. Mrs Tabor feared Ed was after not only her daughter but also her “other silver,” the Matchless mine. In her Dream World, Lizzie dressed her child in the white of innocence and saw her as a victim of rape — a crime that occurred symbolically on the grounds of the beloved mine:

Sunday May 3 or Monday May 4—1914 I had a Vision first I heard Silver say “Wait I want to bid you good by, then I saw her in the whitest dress O so white and the front of it was all covered with blood very red then I saw her face then I saw her on the Matchless Mine near the water boxes & I saw a tall young man the form & size of Ed Brown throw her hard & terrible down on the ground & he stood over her his hand pushing as hurting her & he was leaning over her it was terrible [...].

Other dreams *recast* the dreaming mother's deepest sorrows onto more neutral animals. They seem crazy — until they are integrated with the dozens of dunning letters that Lizzie Tabor was receiving from her penniless daughter — letters that were tidily separated from the irrational writings by archivists who spent thirteen years processing them. Thus the generative, organic essence of Lizzie Tabor's world in which she code-switched from lucid correspondence to glowing visions was destroyed when her papers were sorted by genre. Here, I believe, is Lizzie Tabor's response to Silver's first of many "miscarriages:"

Aug 7—1916 I dreamed I had a little all white Poodle dog on my lap & its front leg was bent to its back & I did not pull it around to the front soon enough & it was dying & blood was on it & I could see its stomach swell out & see the dark red blood bulged out in the stomache through the skin it died & its face was calm & lovely & I kissed it and Silver was with us & she kissed it. I am sad over this dream.

The ongoing presence of babies — buried, hidden, unearthed — in Lizzie's Dream World is beyond the scope of this essay. But I am convinced that they "age" in many of her dreams, from baby, to toddler, to a charming little girl Lizzie grew to affectionately call the "Matchless mine girl."

As Silver approached the nadir of her life, her letters about liquor, drugs and her own lost hopes must have tortured Lizzie Tabor, causing the nightmares she so religiously recorded. But just when her despair seemed overwhelming, Lizzie experienced a rare ecstatic dream in which she could *resurrect* her daughter, rendering her into a "dream child" in both senses of the word:

Easter Sunday April 16—1922 I dreamed Jesus Blessed me to ease my sorrow. I saw my darling Silver come she had on a table the most wonderful, most beautiful Marvelous Magnificent snowy Pure White Marble Statue a Bust of her Father H.A.W. Tabor—her darling papa. ... She had made all by herself it was her Masterpiece hers alone, she stood close to the Statue her hand resting on it she was in a long blue & white large plaid gingham apron which she wore while making the wonderful Statue—O Bless Jesus our Divine Saviour.

I have "mined" this Dream World through multiple scholarly perspectives in an attempt to discover just what kind of life-writing "Baby Doe" created. She reportedly called her writings her "memoirs." Unfortunately, they are more a morass than a memoir: they contain puzzling codes, multiple incoherent narratives, crude illustrations and repetitive ravings of a tortured figure akin to *The Ancient Mariner*. I find the writings form an "interior journal," a hybrid genre that attempts to trace the connections between Lizzie's spiritual experiences and her daily trials. Her assiduous concern over correct dating of her entries, combined with her own speculations about the omens within her Dream World, convince me that this was a woman trying to make sense of her trials, not a senseless, senile old

woman. She inhabited a world similar to that created by the authors of marvelous realism in which the dead visit to chat with the living and in which dreams can foretell the future as well as process the past.

Feminist semiotic theory suggests that much madness is divinest sense, that manipulation of language may be the only way a woman within patriarchy can speak. Yet it was difficult for Victorian Lizzie Tabor to write the body. Clearly troubled by her own body when it appeared for voyeurs and admirers in her Dream World, Lizzie hid behind codes within the dreams, dreams which we know are themselves codes to the dreamer. Yet these very codes, based on a simple numerical system, serve to arrest the eye in a dance between hiding and highlighting her sexuality. In fact, I believe that Lizzie Tabor used her aging body to become a grotesque specter in society, to continuously “perform” her penance before those who had shunned her. She cross-dressed in increasingly eccentric men’s shoes and a miner’s coat adorned with a crucifix, carrying her ever-present mysterious “little bundle.” She roamed the streets of Leadville and Denver in this costume, becoming like the southwestern folk figure *La Llorona*, who wept after her children. I have termed this performance “strategic madness,” for it kept “Baby Doe” always in sight and therefore always in mind. Although some children stoned “Baby Doe” when she went into Leadville, some people began to leave bags of food outside the cabin of the madwoman and a kindly merchant gave her groceries on a line of credit he knew could never be paid.

I have shared some of the “Dreams and Visions” with theologians who are as divided in their opinions today as were the priests in “Baby Doe’s” era over the fate of her soul. Silver Tabor clearly thought her mother was a mystic and wrote several accounts of miraculous mercies to their spiritual advisor, a Denver priest. The visitations by devils and the rescue by the divine led one Oxford-trained theologian to call Mrs Tabor mystical, while another found her prose “crazy.” He said, “the mystics *flow* while this woman raves.” Without an education, without a confidant, without scribes, a library or servants, how could this dreamer compare with Julian of Norwich or Theresa of Avila? I posit that she was a *rough-draft mystic*, a former sinner like Saul and Augustine, who indeed had some contact with the divine. From a more secular perspective, Lizzie Tabor’s Dream World demonstrates a Jungian archetypal quest of heroic proportions in which she valiantly tries to rescue her daughter Silver — and the silver ore that had once made her infamously rich. In the Dream World in which she vanquishes foes and seducers, Lizzie becomes the Warrior Mother.

Yet, like much of early women’s writing, the life-writing of “Baby Doe” is left only in the form of fragments. Lizzie Tabor was so impoverished that she resorted to scribbling in pencil on grocery sacks. She was so famous that her little cabin was looted after her death by treasure-seekers who, like the Widow Tabor, simply couldn’t believe that all that silver was gone. Her papers have been pilfered, auctioned off, scattered to the winds. But to return to the mining metaphor, fragments indicate to geologists that disruption is occurring, that something is shifting. Just as “Baby Doe” was

adulterously disruptive in the old West, her “Dreams and Visions” disrupt the pat legend of a shunned and silenced sinner, disturb our notions of narrative and undermine the very idea of controlling female voice and desire.

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(fig. 1) Portrait of “Baby Doe” painted by Waldo C. Love in 1935. This depiction is often used on opera programs and has become the major image of Baby Doe.
 Courtesy of Colorado Historical Society



(fig. 2) Last-known photograph taken of Mrs Tabor outside her cabin, probably 1933.
Courtesy of Colorado Historical Society



(fig. 3) Silver Dollar Tabor, daughter of H.A.W. Tabor being presented to President Roosevelt by Sheriff Alexander Nisbet and Senator Irby, President of the Press Club at the Chuck Dinner given by the Press Club, August 29, 1910.
Courtesy of Colorado Historical Society

MARY AUSTIN AND THE CHALLENGES OF CAPTURING WESTERN AMERICAN RHYTHMS

Judy Nolte Temple

Mary Hunter Austin, a prolific and influential writer about the American West in the first three decades of the twentieth century, is the focus of this essay, just as she was the focus of controversy in her day. Austin's fiction and essays stirred up debate much like the dust devils in her twice-adopted home, the arid American Southwest. Austin provoked conversations among her contemporaries that still engage literary, environmental, ethnopoetic and feminist thinkers today. Austin was interested in (and opinionated on) questions fully "in the American grain:" who are authentic Americans, what is "the proper destiny" of scarce western waters; how does landscape shape poetics; what are the politics of depicting western writing as "regional" rather than fully "American?"

During her lifetime, Mary Austin published over thirty-five books and hundreds of essays. She was lauded by George Bernard Shaw and honored by the National Arts Club. Yet her reputation declined by the time of her death in 1934 due to two factors, I believe. First, she diluted her talents by writing in so many genres for so many different publishers that, particularly in the area of poetry, she might be considered a dilettante. Secondly, Austin embodied the American geographical restlessness that gave her no stable intellectual base: born in 1868 in the Midwest, she was transported after graduating from college to California's San Joaquin Valley by her natal family, then on to the Owens Valley by her husband, then lured to the Carmel, California, writers' colony by the opportunity to become a serious author, then to New York to be "near the heart of things" as fellow writer and colleague Willa Cather put it. But Austin was not comfortable in New York, where she sometimes repeated Navajo chants while walking in order to compose herself. She made yearly trips back to California and was seduced anew late in life by the blooming yellow palo verde trees surrounding Tucson, Arizona. She eventually spent the last decade of her life in Santa Fe, New Mexico, amidst its fledgling colony of Anglo artists. (The role these artists played in commodifying the Southwest and re-colonizing its non-white inhabitants has been explored by scholars such as Barbara Babcock, Lois Rudnick, and Molly Mullin.) Perhaps Austin spread herself too thin and too widely because, as a divorced woman with a daughter who remained dependent well into adulthood, Austin relied upon writing for her income. Using the apologia women have used from the time of Christine de Pizan, Austin protested that she wrote so much because she needed the money.



Due to the undying interest in topics near to the heart and pen of Mary Austin, however, her writing has undergone resurrection. Currently, at least ten of her books are in print, as are two collections of her essays, as well as her “Indian” plays. Austin scholars have produced two biographies and two collections of academic essays. Panelists at Western American Literature Association conferences regularly and heatedly debate whether Austin was an Anglo who epitomized “imperialist nostalgia” despite her good intentions, or a “woman of genius” far ahead of her time in recognizing Indian voices and their spiritual power in the American Southwest. I will briefly touch upon areas of controversy addressed by Austin’s work that continue to vex the West today, then turn to what I consider her most ambitious and bold book, *The American Rhythm* (1923), for a closer case-study of the complexities of Austin’s thinking. I will focus on (1) the role of Anglo intellectuals in the early twentieth-century “cycle of conquest” of the West, where they became new residents among indigenous and Hispanic peoples; (2) the tension between population, conservation, growth and preservation in the precarious southwestern environment; and (3) the ethnocentrism, racism and sexism that writers like Austin both voiced and resisted.

Austin’s first book, *The Land of Little Rain*, published in 1903, put both the author and her beloved eastern Sierra Nevada region of California on the map of American letters. It describes in great detail the landscape, flora, fauna, and myriad peoples inhabiting the area between the Mojave desert and the east slope of the awesome mountains which contain Yosemite National Park on their west slope. Austin’s view of this land was distinct from that of her predecessor, naturalist John Muir, for she devoted many chapters to the people living in that landscape, rather than finding them a distraction as Muir did. Austin also departed from her mentor Charles Lummis by taking a stand in this and other early books as a *resident* within a desert community of eccentric “outliers” rather than as a visitor or a tramping tourist en route to somewhere else. On the other hand, Austin’s opening in *The Land of Little Rain* later irritated Edward Abbey, who wrote of his frustration with her “petticoat” descriptive language and her circumlocution about the exact location of this land. She began her book, “East away from the Sierras, south from Panamint and Amargosa, east and south many an uncounted mile, is the Country of Lost Borders. Ute, Paiute, Mojave, and Shoshone inhabit its frontiers, and as far into the heart of it as a man dare go. Not the law, but the land sets the limit” (Austin 1903, 3). This opening passage simultaneously shows both Austin’s best intent — and her awkward gesture still germane to postcolonial Western studies: what is the position of the reflexive Anglo resident newcomer in a land previously Indian? Austin stated in her Preface that she would not describe her beloved places by names that appeared in geography and “originate in the poor human desire for perpetuity.” Rather, she chose to employ “the Indian fashion of name-giving.” Thus Austin boldly ignored the masculine Anglo names from the landscape in an anticolonialist gesture, but then went on to appropriate Indian names via English translation because she found them “always beautifully

fit" (3). To Austin's credit, she specifically named the varied Indian groups who resided in her newfound land, but later in her book again generalized and homogenized native people, particularly in her chapter "The Basket-maker." Austin pronounced, "Every Indian woman is an artist – sees, feels, creates, but does not philosophize about her processes" (93). Thus within Austin's very first book we find the delicate dance between acknowledgment and appropriation of American Indians. This author who has been praised by Mark Hoyer for creating syncretic symbols that combined Indian and Anglo religious world views in her first book, is the same one who described herself as "lapping up Indians" while she roamed the Mojave desert region researching that book.

Austin was also embroiled in a more concrete debate in this land of little rain, one regarding *preservation* versus *wise use*. She became passionately involved in the California water wars that opened the twentieth century (and continue today) in the ongoing American dispute over preserving natural resources while at the same time "lapping them up." Austin understood the vital role of water in the arid West; her first book in fact followed various water trails and closed with the long-awaited arrival of the renewing rains, which she called "Nurslings of the Sky." She even devoted a chapter, "Other Water Borders," to the irrigation ditches that criss-crossed the landscape. While she wrote "it is difficult to come into intimate relations with appropriated waters," Austin and her husband Wallace had moved to this region of the Sierra Nevada in order to assist (and benefit from) a United States government plan for a massive agricultural irrigation program that would water the desert and create 250 million acres of crop land. In fact, many of the trails described in *The Land of Little Rain* were first opened to Mary Austin because she walked along with her husband, who was surveying the land in preparation to altering it. Ironically, it was Mary Austin's own brother-in-law who bragged to Los Angeles planners that the Owens River would someday support a network of farms like today's Imperial Valley and who took Los Angeles officials to see this river treasure in the land of little rain. In the ensuing decades-long battle that pitted the little desert towns against the city of Los Angeles and its inconceivable engineering plans to bring water 270 miles through mountains to feed the growing metropolis, Mary Austin's husband appealed to President Theodore Roosevelt, while she wrote powerful essays in the rival *San Francisco Chronicle* newspaper. Mary Austin argued not for preservation, but for wise use of the precious water on behalf of small farms, a Jeffersonian stance she would maintain for the rest of her life. As late as the 1920s, she argued on behalf of dividing the waters of the Colorado between seven western states so that the small farming communities like Phoenix, Arizona, would benefit.

Although Austin was a feminist, she was not an eco-feminist nor even a preservationist, despite her eloquent word-portraits of sacred western spaces. Her 1906 book *The Flock*, for example, portrays the Basque sheep herders of the eastern Sierra with engaging intimacy while downplaying the enormous impact their grazing charges had on the forest environment, a stance that

landed her a position as consultant to the US Forest Service. I see Austin as a prescient eulogist, for by her very presence in the fragile landscape she so movingly depicted, she embodied the Anglo wave of settlement that would marginalize Indians and appropriate waters in that arid region to create an irrigated verdant garden whose very fecundity would invite more settlement. It is sadly ironic that Austin, who was criticized during her years in the Owens Valley as an "Indian-lover" and as a bad mother who preferred to roam the wilds instead of tending to her domestic role, was later lambasted for not returning to speak and write on behalf of the little communities who watched their life-giving waters being diverted to Los Angeles. Austin had moved on, in the restlessness so characteristic of the American rhythm.

Although Austin lived for over a decade in New York City in order to promote her literary career, she remained intellectually and emotionally tied to the desert Southwest and her ideas about its native inhabitants. As early as 1911, she was writing essays about what she variously called *aboriginal* or *Amerind* expression and its place within American literature. The culmination of her thinking appeared in *The American Rhythm*, a book published in 1923. In it, Austin demonstrated what she thought she had learned from her adopted desert home and its native inhabitants, and then applied it to American poetics. The book is a complex case study of all that is engaging (and embarrassing) about Austin: her earnestness in speaking on behalf of others that included her audacity to speak for others; her risk-taking theories about literary modernism, coupled with an over-general pontificating style she used to construct her essentialist arguments.

The American Rhythm was Austin's response to the intellectuals who were claiming that the roots of the new American blank verse poetry which displaced romanticism lay in classical antiquity. In contrast, Austin argued that the core rhythm of this emerging American verse lay in Indian rhythms drawn from the human heartbeat and the western landscape. She urged the poets to look to the West, as she had, for invigorating inspiration. Austin claimed, for example, that the primal rhythm of wood-chopping that powered President Abraham Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address" was more virile than the modernist male poets. She lamented the "braying of maimed voices/Hybrids of art and sociology/Blaming the world and us for their lost potency" (quoted in Metcalfe 1999). Austin associated her own writing style with the western American rhythm by asserting that when she re-read her very first book with an ear to its meter, she discovered within it the cadence of the tug and pull of the Mojave stagecoach which had transported her across the landscape. While Austin's boast that she could listen to a recording of an Indian chant and thereby identify its origin in desert, plains or woodlands seems today preposterous, Austin's contemporaries such as critic Mark Van Doren were impressed by her "challenge which will make every honest American poet stop to examine himself" (Metcalfe 1999, 70).

Austin's intellectual argument on behalf of Indians as the "American race singing in tune with the beloved environment" (Austin 1923) is still compelling. But her generalizations about "the Dawn Mind," her theories about a pan-Indian collective unconscious, and her lamentable poetic re-expressions

“in the Indian manner” demonstrate that even this woman who advocated for Indian voices felt entitled to appropriate them as raw material. The most-criticized “Austinism” in *The American Rhythm* is her claim that during her association with Paiutes in the Owens Valley, she had learned to embody “the Indian manner” of poetics due to her mimetic temperament. Austin wrote, “that when I say I am not, have never been, nor offered myself, as an authority on things Amerindian, I do not wish to have it understood that I may not, at times, have succeeded in being an Indian” (41). Some scholars like Dale Metcalfe defend Austin’s honesty about her status as an “Indian wannabe,” in contrast to the more cautious language of today’s non-Indian scholars. I also defend Austin’s claim to “being an Indian” as a brave albeit insensitively expressed act in which she viscerally located herself standing *with* Indians, a group literally on the geographical and economic margins of American society.

Several feminist scholars have argued that Anglo women like Austin found opportunities via “playing Indian” that they otherwise would not have in a male-dominated world. To me, this is confirmed by the literal location of an Austin essay on Aboriginal poetics printed in the prestigious *Cambridge History of American Literature* (and reprinted in Blackbird, 2005). Austin’s essay, “Non-English Writings II: Aboriginal,” is placed in the *Cambridge History* as the very last — after an essay on Oral Literature (that includes Scottish Ballads and Cowboy Songs) and after essays on non-English writings in German, French and Yiddish. Austin’s hypothesis about the origin of an American rhythm within Indian ritual might have been at the forefront of a small group of intelligentsia, but it appears to have been an afterthought in the Cambridge series that codified what was important in American letters.

Near the end of her life, Mary Austin returned to yet another land of little rain, this time near Santa Fe, New Mexico. She again repeated her pattern of residing in a new “exotic” place, resplendently writing about it in 1924 as *The Land of Journeys’ Ending*, and then participating in the inevitable reordering of the landscape in her final resting place. Larry Evers, in his preface to a 1983 edition of *The Land of Journeys’ Ending*, has aptly called Austin’s book about her new homeland, the mature companion piece to her first southwestern book, a “frame for the whole of her work.” In this late-life meditative book, Austin takes on the role of the prophet, in contrast to that of the modest walker in the much-earlier *The Land of Little Rain*. Again, her standpoint is complex, for as she observes Inscription Rock, she finds it a palimpsest for the history of the Southwest and castigates “men whose record, so far as we know it, was of violence and destruction; men to whom all Indians were ‘varmints’ and all Spanish-speaking, ‘Greasers,’ and therefore plunderable” (Austin 1983, 222). However, by the end of her book she invites her implied Anglo reader to come taste the chiles of Santa Fe. Indeed, Austin as a new resident of little Santa Fe, inviting others to join her in the Southwest, was a self-fulfilling and self-reproducing prophet of the new West: today’s Santa Fe, alas, is an Anglo-dominated town for the first time in its 400-year recorded history.

Despite her sympathies and her studies of southwestern places, Austin did not seem to understand that multicultural spaces can only exist when people of

color retain a “critical mass.” Austin’s physical body in the Southwest, as well as her body-of-work, changed the desert places so that Anglo-dominant cultures made them out-of-balance. Austin’s effect on the cultures of the Southwest is far more complex than briefly presented here. For example, she led a movement to preserve the nearby Hispanic folk chapel of Chimayo and she left her estate to the Indian Arts Fund of Santa Fe. But overall, Mary Austin unwittingly embodied the lamentable “American rhythm” that still haunts us today. We “discover” a beautiful western landscape and peoples, we relocate to that place, changing it. We then eulogize that very place we have loved to its death.

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PECOS NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK: AN INTERPRETIVE VORTEX

John Warnock

It would appear that there is a concentration of vortexes in the American Southwest. A Latinist might want to say “vortices” but I believe those in the know about these matters prefer “vortexes.” These vortexes are located, I understand, on “power centers” that have been identified, not just in the Southwest, it must be acknowledged. There’s one at Mount Fuji in Japan, for example, we are told. Mount Shasta in northern California is considered a power center. Like Mount Fuji, it is a dormant stratovolcano.

Power centers and vortexes aren’t always to be found at the sites of dormant volcanoes, however. A strong vortex, maybe even more than one, is to be found in northern Arizona in the town of Sedona, according to the town’s Chamber of Commerce. It was in Sedona (as well as at Mount Shasta) that in 1987, a group of people gathered at what was thought to be an especially propitious planetary moment in an attempt to employ techniques of group meditation to generate a “harmonic convergence” that would usher in a New Age of spirituality. The results of this effort were, I believe, ambiguous.

Vortexes are suspected elsewhere in the American Southwest, for example at the sites of the many exceptionally scenic National Parks that have been established in this region, and in Santa Fe in northern New Mexico, though not all that many have been authoritatively identified, as far as I know, so far. If volcanic activity is a good indicator, as the examples of Mounts Fuji and Shasta might suggest, a likely candidate might be the Valle Grande at the top of the Jemez Mountains some forty miles west of Santa Fe. The Jemez Mountains were created by a volcano just over a million years ago, not so long ago in geological terms, and the Valle Grande at the top is the huge caldera that remained when that volcano exploded with a force estimated by Ted Taylor, a nuclear weapons designer at Los Alamos National Laboratory, at a thousand megatons. Los Alamos National Laboratory is the descendant of Site Y, the secret site in the Jemez Mountains where the first atomic bomb was designed during World War II. A thousand megatons is about seventy times more than the force released by the largest Hydrogen Bomb the United States has detonated, which also was designed at the Lab.

We may be getting our powers confused here, but the current uncertainty about just where vortexes and power centers are to be found might



well put us in mind of the situation in the American Southwest during the late 1940s and early 1950s, when prospectors with Geiger counters prowled the Colorado plateau in search of uranium deposits suspected to be there. As we now know, these deposits were found in abundance. We may locate many more vortexes than have been identified so far but unfortunately we will have to do it without any indicators as reliable as a Geiger counter. As far as I can tell, one locates a vortex by having the experience of being in one and it is the experience of being in a vortex that tells us we are at a power center. That seems to be how it works. The experience of being in a vortex is like ... well, I guess you know it when you experience it. Clearly it is something more than a little out of the ordinary.

Pecos National Historical Park has, of course, been officially certified by Congress as an "historical park."¹ To my knowledge, the Park has not yet been identified as a power center or vortex. It has, however, been a site where not a few sensitive observers have had experiences that were out of the ordinary. I'd like to consider some of those here and ask whether they do not suggest that Pecos National Historical Park might deserve to be considered a site of particular power, perhaps even a vortex, though maybe not of the usual sort. In the usual case, if we may speak in this way of something as unusual as a vortex, one comes by the extraordinary experience, it seems, in an unmediated way, simply by virtue of natural powers found to reside at the site, assisted, it may be, by the alignment of the planets. To experience the power at Pecos National Historical Park, I suspect it may be necessary also to learn a little history.

But first, the setting. If you depart from Santa Fe, New Mexico on Interstate 25 North, you will head not north but south and east. This is necessary in order to get around the bottom of the Sangre de Cristo Range, which is itself at the bottom of the Rocky Mountains that run north from this spot to the Canadian border and beyond, before turning north again to head up the east face of the Rockies toward Raton Pass and Colorado. About fifteen miles from Santa Fe on I-25 North, the highway crests Glorieta Pass and enters a river valley created by the Pecos River, which rises some miles north of the highway in the Sangre de Cristo range and flows south into what is now the Upper Pecos River Valley, then south and east out of the valley and on down to the Rio Grande on the southern border of the United States with Mexico. If you drive about ten miles past Glorieta Pass into the Upper Pecos River Valley and look to your left, you may find that it is just possible to glimpse through the piñon and juniper

¹ Established on June 28, 1965 as Pecos National Monument, re-established and expanded as Pecos National Historical Park on June 27, 1990, the Park was expanded again on November 8, 1990 to include the Glorieta unit. In 2003 it covered 6,670 acres in three separate areas in the Pecos and Glorieta units. The Visitor Center offers an excellent selection of books on subjects pertinent to the Park and the region. Thanks to the Summer 2004 Park staff for generous assistance, especially Judy Reed, Chief of Cultural Resources.

scrub, some adobe ruins lying on a low ridge. These ruins are what is left of a pueblo called Cicuyé by the people who were living there when the Spanish arrived, and, by the Americans, Pecos Pueblo. The ruins of Pecos Pueblo are what brought the Pecos National Monument into being in 1965 and they are a kind of eye for the vortex that is Pecos National Historical Park. They are not the only source of interest, or power, in the current park, however. The National Monument was converted into a National Historical Park because of a number of other significant historical and cultural resources that are found nearby, all of which, it seems to me can be seen to flow into each other in interesting ways.

The ruins lie in a beautiful setting, as power centers are wont to do. North and west of the Pueblo rise the big evergreen-clad slopes of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. To the south stands the high table-top of Glorieta Mesa. I freely admit, however, that this valley, beautiful as it is, does not have the slightly unearthly beauty of the red rocks of Sedona or lonely snow-capped symmetry of Mounts Shasta and Fuji. It may also be true that the presence of ruins disqualifies a place as a possible power center. The power centers at Sedona and Mount Fuji seem to rely on a purely natural beauty for their power. Some ruins are quite lovely, of course, but it must be admitted that the ruins of Pecos Pueblo do not have the grandeur of those to the west at Bandelier or Chaco Canyon or Mesa Verde. The ruins at Pecos Pueblo are pretty much, though not quite when you look more closely, just rounded hills of dirt on a low ridge, punctuated here and there by the entrances to excavated *kivas*, with some higher adobe walls rising at the end.

But now let us see what kind of power we might access by considering further the history of this place. The first Europeans ever to see Cicuyé were the members of the Spanish expedition led by Francisco Vázquez de Coronado, an expedition that was financed by him and others including the Viceroy of Mexico, that had come north from Mexico in 1540 in search of certain cities of gold that Friar Marcos de Niza reported he had seen, from a distance, to be sure, just a few years earlier. Coronado had found early on in the expedition, unfortunately, that, as he said, nothing was as Fray Marcos had reported it. Fray Marcos was sent back to Mexico before they even arrived at Cíbola. The cities of gold Fray Marcos had said he saw turned out to be the adobe buildings at Zuni Pueblo in what is now central New Mexico. The Indians at Zuni had resisted Coronado's troops (this was not their first experience with the Spanish) but in the first battle between Europeans and Indians on the North American continent, they were defeated on the plains at Hawikuh.

Coronado still hoped to find something like what Cortez had found at Tenochtitlan/Mexico City only twenty years earlier and, encouraged in this hope by the reports of a native informant from Cicuyé named Turk about a place called Quivira that lay in the plains to the east, Coronado had continued on past Zuni to the banks of the Rio Grande where the expedition wintered in another group of pueblos called Tiguex. A group from the expedition continued east across Glorieta Pass to visit Cicuyé. Neither was it a city of gold but on the day the Spanish arrived there, eighty years

before the first English Pilgrims arrived on the Atlantic coast some two thousand miles to the northeast, Cicuyé was in all likelihood the greatest city within the present-day boundaries of America.

Archeologists now agree that Pecos Pueblo came to the apex of its power in the mid- to late 1400s, as the last settlement surviving of a number that began to be built in the Upper Pecos River Valley in the 1200s. The Pueblo, with more than six hundred rooms, four to five stories, and many *kivas*, had become home to more than two thousand people. It isn't known why it was the last survivor, perhaps there was some power there. It is known that the Pueblo was unusual in that its wealth came not from agriculture, as did the wealth of the Puebloan people living west of them in the Rio Grande Valley, nor from hunting *vacas* (which is what the Spanish called the buffalo), as did the wealth of the plains tribes (whom the Spanish called *vaqueros*). It came from trade. The Pueblo was positioned ideally between those two groups. Great trading fairs were held in the large basin at the foot of the Pueblo. Peace was maintained at these trading fairs by a fighting force from the Pueblo that had proved to be invincible. Just before you leave the Visitors Center at the Park, you can see on the wall a large painting that depicts one of these trading fairs. As you walk through the basin toward the ruins of the Pueblo, is it possible still to hear the hubbub and see the swirls of motion and smell the smells? Might it have that power? In any case, this was Pecos Pueblo in 1540, just before the Spanish came over Glorieta Pass with their horses, their steel, their crossbows and arquebusses, their germs and their God, and a vortex began to turn for the people of Pecos Pueblo.

Cicuyé did not resist the Spanish at this first encounter in 1540. They knew what had happened at Hawikuh and had developed another strategy. In the spring of 1541, Coronado passed by Cicuyé and on out into the Great Plains east of it in search of Quivira. He covered a lot of ground in the Great Plains that spring and summer, over a thousand miles in several different directions, never for one day, he reported, being out of sight of the great dark *vacas*, the buffalo, that then covered those plains, whose meat fed them. In the end, the Quivira they found (now thought to have been in what is now central Kansas) was just a small village of straw huts beside a river, the biggest disappointment yet. Coronado's informant, the Indian called the Turk, now confessed that he and the Indians of Cicuyé had hoped to lead the Spanish out into the plains and lose them there or at least weaken them so that they could be defeated on their return. Coronado had the Turk strangled and returned, indeed quite weakened, to Cicuyé. We may imagine the feelings of the Indians as they saw the horses coming toward them along the banks of the Pecos River. They did not invite the Spanish in this time. The Spanish, in their weakened condition, passed on across Glorieta Pass to their encampment on the Rio Grande.

Coronado did not go back right away to Mexico where he knew disgrace and unhappy investors awaited. But while racing his horse at Tiguex, he fell and was kicked in the head, and, seemingly disheartened by this experience, in 1542 he ordered the return. He left behind an elderly friar, at the friar's request, of whom nothing was heard again.

We may again imagine the feelings of the Pueblo Indians, this time as they saw Coronado depart. But fifty years later the Spanish were back, in the form of an authorized expedition mounted by Gaspar Castaño de Sosa. This time the people of Cicuyé did fight. They were defeated. When the authorized colonizing expedition of Juan de Oñate arrived seven years later, in the summer of 1598, the Indians chose not to fight them.

The Spanish came to settle this time and the evangelizing was no doubt more serious. In the early 1600s, the Franciscan Mission of Nuestra Señora de los Angeles de Porciúncula was established at Pecos. New World churches were often built on top of sites that had been sacred to the native peoples, a practice that was hoped both to repress the native practice and to exploit any spiritual power the site might have. In 1620, the year the Pilgrims arrived on the Atlantic coast two thousand miles to the northeast, construction began of a mission church at the Pueblo. It was, when finished, a huge structure, with side walls eight to ten feet thick and a back wall that was twenty-two feet thick with six great towers along its one hundred and forty-five foot length. It was in all likelihood the largest single structure in North America at the time. It stood there, however, but sixty years.

In 1680, Puebloan people from Pecos in the east to Hopi in the west managed to organize themselves in spite of their tribal and language differences and to surprise the Spanish in a combined attack, driving the Spanish from the region, all the way south to El Paso del Norte. Pecos Pueblo had an important role in this, the only successful revolt by indigenous peoples against the Europeans ever to take place in North America. As soon as the Spanish were gone, the Pecos people demolished the great mission church, which, given its size, was no mean feat in itself, and reopened the *kivas*. Only thirteen years later, however, in 1693, the Spanish returned, reoccupied Santa Fe, and began to subdue the surrounding pueblos. Before long, within the foundations of the great church that had been destroyed, another mission church had been constructed at Pecos. It is the ruins of this second smaller church that visitors to the Park see today at the end of the Pueblo. Those ruins, which lie upon other ruins, which lie upon other ruins, may of course retain some of the power they had. They are still a site for worship at the Pueblo, as we will see later.

For another century, Pecos Pueblo remained the easternmost outpost of Spanish colonialism in the area and a significant trading center, though in a state of punctuated decline. Diseases brought by the Europeans took their usual toll. So did internal conflicts in the Pueblo and the depredations of the Plains Tribes, who had been empowered by the acquisition of horses and firearms. These depredations fell both on the Pecos people and on the Spanish colonists who had ventured east from Santa Fe across Glorieta Pass, some of them settling on lands in the Pecos River Valley (Remains of some of these early Hispanic settlements have been found within the present Park). In 1786, the Spanish General Juan Bautista de Anza finally achieved peace with one of the fiercest of the Plains tribes,

the Comanches, by defeating them in battle, and Hispanic settlement began to increase east of Glorieta Pass. Soon that trading center in the Pecos River Valley was moved thirty miles east from Pecos Pueblo to the colonial town of San Miguel del Vado, on the ford across the Pecos River that led out east into the plains, the *llano*. Pecos Pueblo continued to dwindle, its power, it would seem, continuing to diminish.

By 1838, Pecos Pueblo and the rest of the Upper Pecos River Valley, as well as Santa Fe to the West, was part of the new nation of Mexico by virtue of the Mexican Revolution that in 1821 had succeeded in throwing off the Spanish. We may suspect that the Revolution didn't make much difference to the few Indians who remained at the Pueblo in 1821, except that after 1821, they would have begun to see American, not just native, traders approaching from the east and departing back that way on the Santa Fe Trail, which ran hard by the Pueblo (Trail ruts are found in the Park. Can the turning wheels and the huffing of the animals be heard?). One of those traders was Josiah Gregg, author of the classic *Commerce of the Prairies* (1844), an account drawn from his experiences as a trader in this region from 1831 to 1840. Here is Gregg's characterization of what traders of the time might have seen if they had looked from the Trail toward the Pueblo that was once the greatest city in North America:

[T]he traveler would oftentimes perceive but a solitary Indian, a woman, or a child, standing here and there like so many statues upon the roofs of their houses, with their eyes fixed on the eastern horizon, or leaning against a wall or a fence, listlessly gazing at the passing stranger; while at other times not a soul was to be seen in any direction, and the sepulchral silence of the place was only disturbed by the occasional barking of a dog, or the cackling of hens. (Gregg 1971, 190)

Pecos was one of only two Towa-speaking pueblos in the region. The other was Jemez Pueblo, some eighty miles west in the Rio Grande Valley. Some time around 1838, the last few Pecos people gave it up and departed for Jemez Pueblo, two years short of the three hundredth anniversary of the arrival of the Spanish. It had taken a while, but history had swallowed Pecos Pueblo. Or perhaps not quite, as we shall see.

Still, in 1846, there was no one left in the Pueblo to gaze upon the American General Kearney's Army of the West or to be seen by them as that Army marched west along the Santa Fe Trail on its way to occupying Santa Fe before pressing further south along the Rio Grande and the Camino Real into Mexico in the Mexican-American War. Traveling in the train of General Kearney's army with her trader husband Samuel was the eighteen-year-old, newly-wed Susan Magoffin, who, the day before she arrived in Santa Fe, visited the Pueblo site, and for whom

[i]t created sad thoughts when I found myself riding almost heedlessly over the work of these once mighty people. There perhaps was pride, power and wealth, carried to its utter most limit. [...] The only part

standing is the church. We got off our horses at the door and went in, and I was truly awed. I should think it was sixty feet by thirty. [...] The ceiling is very high and doleful in appearance; the sleepers are carved in hieroglyphical figures, as is also the great door, altar and indeed all the little woodwork about it, showing that if they were uncivilized or half-civilized as we generally believe them, they had at least an idea of grandeur. Some parts of it, too, have the appearance of turned work, though it is difficult to decide, it is so much battered to pieces. [...] All around the church at different distances are ruins; the side of the one house remains perfect still, and 'tis plain to see a three storied building once was there. [...] The place too has the appearance of having been once fortified, from the number of great stones lying all around it, and which they must have used in this way as they are too large for the building of houses. (Magoffin 1982, 99-102)

Eighteen-year-old Susan Magoffin clearly did not ride her horse among these ruins “heedlessly.” The church whose ruins had this powerful effect on her was the smaller church built within the foundations of the great mission church that was destroyed in 1680, smaller but still for her powerful in its effect. Their effect was to make her feel “sad” and “awed” and also respectful and curious, to the point that she found herself questioning some of the received wisdom about the low level of “civilization” of the former inhabitants. Two years after the ruins of the church and the Pueblo had this effect on Susan Magoffin, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed and the site of Pecos Pueblo became for the first time part of the new American Southwest.

The events of Willa Cather’s novel, *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, which was first published in 1927, follow very closely actual historical events from the period soon after 1848 when the area became incorporated into the United States following the Mexican-American War. In 1850, an actual Bishop in the Catholic Church (later to be made an Archbishop) named Jean Baptiste Lamy (b. 1814 in France) was appointed by the Church to protect and consolidate the position of the Church in this new portion, and a big portion it was, of America. Granting that Cather allowed herself some license in novelizing this history, it is apparent that in many respects she composed it very closely along the lines of actual historical characters and events. Though Bishop Lamy and his fellow priests appear under invented names — Lamy is renamed Latour in the novel — a number of actual historical personages, Padre Martínez and Kit Carson among them, appear in the novel under their own names. Father Latour’s crowning achievement in the novel, at least in the world’s terms, is the construction of a handsome Romanesque cathedral in Santa Fe that is just like the one Father Lamy did in fact have built there at the end, *la fonda*, of the Santa Fe Trail, between 1869 and 1886, also on the ruins of an earlier church.

At about the middle of Cather’s novel, Father Latour sets out from Santa Fe on horseback, accompanied by his faithful Indian retainer, on a journey to attend to a priestly companion who, he has been told, has fallen ill

in Las Vegas, a settlement some sixty miles east up the Santa Fe Trail. At the end of his first day of travel, Latour finds himself at Pecos Pueblo, as in fact one likely would do after a day riding on horseback from Santa Fe. A storm is approaching. The retainer accompanying Father Latour, Jacinto, is, we learn, a Pecos Indian and Latour spends the night in the Pueblo as Jacinto's guest. This event is in fact an historical anachronism because, as we are told in what is Cather's only historical footnote in the novel, the last Pecos Indian had left the Pueblo some years before the Americans came to occupy New Mexico. Cather's novel shows the Pueblo as still inhabited at the time of Latour's visit, though clearly in serious decline, with only a few Indians remaining. Most of the dwellings are empty, "ruined by weather and now scarcely more than piles of earth and stone" (Cather 1971, 123). Latour sees that the Pueblo is a doomed place.

It turns out that Latour has heard things about Pecos Pueblo and its people, disturbing things, about their continuing worship of a great snake they keep hidden some place, to which, it is said, they may have fed and may still be feeding some of their children. Latour is not inclined to believe these tales but he also suspects that there are mysteries about the Indians that "white men" will never be able to understand.

In the morning after their overnight stay in the Pueblo, Latour and Jacinto set out on the next leg of their journey but they are quickly caught in a blizzard and find themselves in desperate circumstances. Jacinto, it turns out, knows a secret place where they might find refuge and they just manage to reach it. It is a cave, the entrance to which lies between two ledges that look like "two great stone lips." Inside, it is a "lofty cavern, shaped somewhat like a Gothic chapel." A ladder leads down into the cave and on his way down the ladder, Father Latour is "struck by a reluctance, an extreme distaste for the place." He detects "a fetid odour, not very strong but highly disagreeable." Jacinto becomes agitated and tells Father Latour that he is not sure it was right to bring him to this place and that when he leaves he must never mention it. Father Latour assures him he will not. Jacinto then goes to the rear wall of the cavern where "there seemed to be a hole" that was "about as large as a very big watermelon, of an irregular oval shape," and he proceeds to wall up this hole with stones and mud. The fetid odor disappears. (Cather 1971, 126 ff.)

Jacinto then builds a fire and now Latour perceives "an extraordinary vibration in the cavern" that "hummed like a hive of bees, like a heavy roll of distant drums." He asks Jacinto if he too hears this and Jacinto then takes him deeper into the cave and tells him to put his ear to a fissure there. Father Latour remains there listening for a "long while." He tells himself that he is "listening to one of the oldest voices of the earth." He decides that

[w]hat he heard was the sound of a great underground river [...] far, far below, perhaps as deep as the foot of the mountain, a flood moving in utter blackness under ribs of antediluvian rock. [...] [It was] not a rushing noise, but the sound of a great flood moving with majesty and power. (Cather 1971, 130)

I'm not sure how Father Latour knew that he was listening to an underground river and not something else, but even if he was right to assume that, it seems clear enough that he felt himself to be in the presence of the kind of thing people in vortexes may feel. He was hearing not *just* a river but "a great flood moving with majesty and power." The experience he has in this cave is not something the Catholic Archbishop can embrace as a welcome source of a new spirituality, but the spiritual dimensions of the experience are beyond doubt. The patch of daylight they can see between the stone lips fades and they sleep, but neither Latour nor Jacinto sleeps easy.

In the morning, they set out again, the ill priest is found, and is found to have already mended. Father Latour never speaks of the cave to anyone, as he promised Jacinto he would not, but he remembers it from time to time, always with a "shudder of repugnance" and remains curious about the "dark legends" (Cather 1971, 122) concerning the Pecos Indians. Cather does not satisfy this curiosity, for him or for us.

What Father Latour felt was clearly something more powerful than the "Isn't that interesting?" response many of us may have to learning about such legends. Was this sense of a special power in this place simply a romantic attribution by a Euroamerican colonizer? Perhaps. Perhaps not. It turns out that Indians have also felt that there is a power associated with the people of this place. In his novel *House Made of Dawn* (1968), Scott Momaday gives us the following characterization of a group in residence at Jemez Pueblo in the 1950s called The Eagle Watchers Society.

It was an important society, and it stood apart from the others in a certain way. This difference — this superiority — had come about a long time ago. Before the middle of the last century, there was received into the population of the town [of Jemez Pueblo] a small group of immigrants from the Tanoan city of Bahkyula, a distance of seventy or eighty miles to the east. These immigrants were a wretched people, for they had experienced great suffering. Their land bordered upon the Southern Plains, and for many years they had been an easy mark for marauding bands of buffalo hunters and thieves. They had endured every kind of persecution until one day they could stand no more and their spirit broke. They gave themselves up to despair and were then at the mercy of the first alien wind.

[...] It is said that the cacique [of Jemez Pueblo] himself went out to welcome and escort the visitors in. The people of the town must have looked narrowly at those stricken souls who walked slowly toward them, wild in their eyes with grief and desperation. [...] They carried four things that should serve thereafter to signal who they were: a sacred flute; the bull and horse masks of Pecos; and the little wooden statue of their patroness Maria de los Angeles, who they called Porcingula. [...] [T]hose old men and women [...] had made that journey along the edge of oblivion. There was a look about these men, even now. It was as if, conscious of having come so close to extinction, they had got a keener sense of humility than their benefactors, and paradoxically a

greater sense of pride. [...] They had acquired a tragic sense, which gave to them as a race so much dignity and bearing. They were medicine men; they were rainmakers and eagle hunters. (Momaday 1968, 14-15)

Momaday, a Kiowa Indian and long-time resident of Jemez, invokes here a power that is believed to have come to the descendants of the Indians of Pecos Pueblo by virtue of what the Pecos people had suffered there, a suffering that stood out among the sufferings of other native peoples. Euroamerican scholars now know that when the last of the Pecos Indians left their Pueblo, probably in 1838, they did in fact go to Jemez Pueblo, “some seventy or eighty miles” to their west, which was the only other pueblo where the language of the Pecos people, Towa, was spoken. Momaday is here helping us to imagine what their arrival at Jemez might have been like and suggesting also that the desperate experience of these people has given them power as medicine men. No snakes in this story, but power, certainly.

When Father Latour stops at Pecos Pueblo on this journey, he ponders why it has fallen to its present state and reflects that it might have “had more than its share of history.” (Cather 1971, 122) This is an interesting expression. What can it mean? We have the history we have and just like Abraham Lincoln’s legs, they are just long enough to reach us to the ground. But of course, “history” here means something like “suffering and loss.” In Cather’s account, that history is imagined to offer the grounds for a kind of empathy but in Momaday’s account, the matter is taken a step further and imagined to confer real spiritual power.

Two miles north of Pecos Pueblo was the town (“town” is *pueblo* in Spanish) of Pecos. In some historical accounts, the two sites seem to have been confused. But the town of Pecos was an Hispanic rather than an Indian enclave, first settled by immigrants who had come east across Glorieta Pass from Santa Fe into the Pecos Valley after it became reasonably safe to do so. The town of Pecos is not part of Pecos National Historical Park. But before the last Pecos Indians left the Pueblo in about 1838, they removed from the sanctuary of the mission church the painting of Our Lady of *Porciúncula* that was there and offered it to St. Anthony’s Parish in the town of Pecos on the condition that it be returned to the mission church every Feast Day, the first Sunday in August, for a Mass. Almost continuously from that year to this, the people of the town of Pecos have honored this commitment and in a procession from the town have returned the painting and celebrated Mass, converging there with descendants of the Pecos Indians who come back from Jemez for the occasion. In this spot, within the ruins of a church that had been built within the ruins of an earlier church that had in all likelihood been built on the ruins of the most important *kiva* in Cicuyé, an annual festival of worship has happened for almost a hundred and fifty years, continuing a spiritual practice that antedated the arrival of the Europeans in North America. Power centers have been declared on slimmer evidence than this.

But this consideration has taken us ahead of ourselves. There is more evidence of power here in the historical record, with a twist in the vortex. Let

us return to 1848, the year when this area first became part of the American Southwest, along with (if you count the California coast) about half of what had been Mexico, by virtue of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo that ended the Mexican-American War. After 1848, trade along the Santa Fe Trail continued. In 1858, seven years after Bishop Lamy arrived in Santa Fe to begin his work for the Church, an entrepreneur from Poland named Martin Kozlowski established a stage stop within sight of Pecos Pueblo to serve travelers on the trail. Kozlowski salvaged timbers and adobe bricks from the mission church that Susan Magoffin had visited twelve years before. He said he believed he had permission from the people now claiming to be the private owners of the Pueblo to do so. It is not certain how much damage Kozlowski's actions caused. Photographs taken thirty years after Kozlowski's salvage operation show that even at that later date there was about twice as much building as there is today. The remnant of this church now being preserved in the Park is still, however, the largest remaining structure at the Pueblo site. Not far away, across Highway 63, visitors may also see the buildings of Kozlowski's ranch, built in part from timbers taken from the church.

Before we come down too hard on Kozlowski, we might recognize that he had done no more, in fact much less, than the Pecos people did in 1680. Furthermore his buildings were shortly to do service to the nation. In 1861, the War came, the American Civil War. In 1862, in a little known chapter of that War, a group of Texans under General Henry Sibley who had allied themselves with the Confederacy undertook to capture the American Southwest with its gold fields and its unblockade-able Pacific coastline. Sibley's troops, about two thousand five hundred of them, came west from Texas through the northern part of Mexico, entered the United States at El Paso del Norte, pressed up the Rio Grande, challenged and then bypassed the Union detachment at Fort Craig, and in short order occupied Santa Fe, intending next to cross Glorieta Pass, continue on up the Santa Fe Trail to capture Fort Union, and then take the gold fields in southern Colorado. As Sibley's soldiers rested after occupying Santa Fe, a force of thirteen hundred fifty Union soldiers and volunteers from Colorado and New Mexico set off down the Santa Fe Trail from Fort Union to oppose them. The Union soldiers set up camp at Kozlowski's ranch.

On March 26, 1862, advance forces from the two armies ran into each other just west of Glorieta Pass. After a day of fighting, the Union forces retreated back east to Kozlowski's ranch, the Texans west to Apache Canyon west of Glorieta Pass. Both sides waited for a day for reinforcements. On March 28, the main battle was joined, this time east of Glorieta Pass because the Texans had pushed so far forward. At the end of the day, the Confederate Texans had driven the Union forces from the field and appeared to have won the day. But during the fighting a detachment of Union soldiers, guided in all likelihood by Hispanic locals, had set out over Glorieta Mesa in an effort to flank the Texans. In Apache Canyon, behind the Confederate lines, they had come upon the eighty wagons of the Confederate supply train, very nearly all their supplies, very nearly undefended. The

Union detachment had streamed off the mesa into the canyon, burned the wagons, killed the animals, spiked the weapons. When news of this event reached the leader of the Texans, he knew the day was lost and much more than that. He withdrew from the field. There was no means of resupply. The Texans had left no friends behind them in Santa Fe. The Indians throughout the region were more active now too since the attentions of the United States military were elsewhere. Sibley's troops faded away. It is not known how many of them made it home. The Confederate campaign in the American Southwest was over. A granite memorial to the Texans was later erected by the Daughters of the Confederacy on the side of the road that runs through the battlefield site. It has been pock-marked by bullets, how recently, it is hard to tell. The nearby memorial to the Union forces, erected later, is unmarked.

Do battlefield sites have vortex power? Many who visit them seem to be searching for something like this experience, for more than information or history at any rate. We may suspect that those who know something of the history of the War and the battle have an advantage here, as might those with some experience of ground combat, as might those with healthy imaginations. Within the Park, hard by the two-lane road, Route 50, that leads from the town of Pecos to the Interstate and passes through much of the battlefield site, there is a small square adobe building called Pigeon Ranch that served as a field hospital during the battle, for both sides at different times. Evidence has been discovered there of the arms and legs that were tossed out the window after amputations.

If that Union detachment had not happened upon that supply train, if the supply train had been well defended, how would things have been different? In matters of what has been called alternative history, one never knows, but it is not difficult to imagine that matters might have gone very differently in this War, that at the very least the war would have gone on much longer than it did. Is attaining harmonic convergence a matter of developing the power to imagine such possibilities? If so, this aspect of the Pecos site seems to me to offer that power. Significant portions, but not all, of the Glorieta Battlefield have been incorporated into Pecos National Historical Park. Much of the battlefield site remains on private land, which means that the invitations to the imagination have not yet been developed by the Park Service as thoroughly as they might like, but this may be an advantage, since when some possibilities of imagination are developed, others must be foreclosed.

Northbound Interstate 25 runs right through Apache Canyon, the place where the Texans' supply train was surprised and the tide turned. Thousands of people a day drive through Apache Canyon on this Interstate highway, many, no doubt, without knowing what happened there or feeling any vortex power that may abide. At the approach to Glorieta Pass, northbound drivers will come upon a small but colorful stand on the right hand side of the Interstate that memorializes this battle that some call the "Gettysburg of the West." It's worth a stop. When I stopped, it wasn't clear to me who had built this intriguing roadside stand, but it was clear enough that he was one who had found power at the site.

With the discomfiture of the Texans at Glorieta Pass, organized fighting in the region of Pecos Pueblo was over, but there would be other kinds of conquests and changes. The railroads came down the Trail next, bringing with them their power to transform.

The Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad arrived in the Upper Pecos River Valley in 1880, eighteen years after the decisive Battle at Glorieta, six years before Archbishop Lamy's cathedral was completed in Santa Fe. It had closely followed the route of the Santa Fe Trail from Kansas (Quivira?) to Pecos, as, in another kind of convergence, the Santa Fe Trail had no doubt followed some of the old trade routes of the Indians. The railroad opened up a number of possibilities in the American Southwest, including possibilities for the imagination. One of these possibilities began to be realized in the Pecos River Valley when in 1925 one Tex Austin bought five thousand acres along the Pecos River not far from the ruins of Pecos Pueblo and established there a ranch he called the Forked Lightning. The ranch house, which also is now included in Pecos National Historical Park, was one of the first buildings designed by John Gaw Meem, a transplanted architect then living in Santa Fe who would go on to become one of the principal sponsors and creators of the Pueblo Revival Style, also known as the Santa Fe Style, and, even more loosely, as the Southwestern Style. Meem, that is to say, was an important creator of the American Southwest as a style, as was Tex Austin in his way. Tex Austin's ranch was a new kind of ranch that was emerging in this era, called a "dude ranch," that is, a ranch for people who were not ranchers (Austin recruited heavily in the East) but who could now come on the train to the area on vacation. Born in St. Louis in 1886 as Clarence van Nostrand, Tex Austin had re-named himself and become a promoter of rodeos, staging a number of them back East, including in London, before he established the Forked Lightning Ranch on the banks of the Pecos River. Some of the dudes who patronized his ranch were those other purveyors of fantasy, the newly famous movie stars. Movie stars have a taste for the area even today. Jane Fonda and Val Kilmer both have owned spreads along the Pecos River.

Tex Austin's promotions were successful for a while but in the Great Depression he lost the Forked Lightning Ranch. Before he did, however, another transforming presence had appeared. An automobile roadway, the now iconic Route 66 had come into the valley following the track of the railroad that had followed the track of the Santa Fe Trail that had followed the Indian trading routes. Route 66 was later re-routed to the south but cabins that served tourists on old Route 66 have been identified in the Glorieta unit of Pecos National Historical Park. Interstate 25, a four-lane divided highway that is a far cry from Route 66 and an even farther cry from the Santa Fe Trail that preceded it through the valley, now sweeps through the area. Along its margins we see the gold and brown signs that mark the route as the Historic Santa Fe Trail.

At just the time that the Southwestern style was being created in this fashion in the Pecos River Valley, the foundations of a science of South-

western Archeology were being established there in work being done at Pecos Pueblo by Alfred V. Kidder, an archeologist with a PhD from Harvard who had conceived a serious interest in the American Southwest. In 1915, Kidder had begun work in and around the Pueblo, which was still taken to be privately owned. When in 1925 Tex Austin bought the nearby land for his ranch, Kidder was still at it at the Pueblo and would be for another four years. By digging through the tips on the hillsides below what had been the walls of the Pueblo, and analyzing the different layers of what the residents of the Pueblo had dumped there, Kidder was able to develop a system for dating the kinds of artifacts he found, principally potshards but also tools and weapons, a system that spanned the more than thousand-year history of the Pueblo people. These findings could then be used to date sites elsewhere in the American Southwest whose dates were at that time entirely unknown. Kidder's findings were also able to document the thousand-mile reach of the trade at Pecos Pueblo at its peak. His *Introduction to the Study of Southwestern Archaeology*, published in 1924, was the first synthesis of North American prehistory based on empirical science. In this work Kidder developed, we could say, ways in which imaginings about the peoples and histories of the region could be informed by scientific research, surely another source of harmonic power.

Kidder shipped what he found at the Pueblo back East to his sponsor, the Peabody Museum in Massachusetts. He knew that descendants of the last inhabitants of Pecos Pueblo were to be found in Jemez Pueblo to the west, but at the time, the anthropological community did not imagine that those people had any claim on the artifacts or human remains Kidder had dug up. Attitudes about this changed over time. (We might wonder what power was at work in this change?) In 1990, the same year that Pecos National Monument, established at the Pueblo in 1965, became Pecos National Historical Park, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act was passed by the United States Congress. This Act gave the descendants of the Pecos people a clear legal right to the artifacts. Soon after the Act was passed, many of the artifacts Kidder had shipped east were returned to Pecos National Historic Park for cataloging. Many artifacts were eventually entrusted to the Pecos National Historical Park and are now kept in the archives on the site, but in 1999, a number of the artifacts were re-buried at the Pueblo by descendants of the former inhabitants. When the repatriation was complete, a celebratory Mass was held in the ruins of the mission church, on Feast Day in 1999, attended by the descendants of Pecos people along with others who had sponsored the repatriation. We can expect the power of this place to have been enhanced by these actions, it seems to me, for those who have some knowledge of them, Indian or not.

What can happen now when one visits this site? We have some recent testimonials of interest. One is from Douglas Preston, who in his *Cities of Gold* (1992) recounts his experience of recapitulating on horseback Coronado's 1540 *entrada* 450 years later, riding from the point on the Mexican border where Coronado entered what is now the United States through

the *despoblado* in northern Arizona to Cibola, now known as Zuni, in northern New Mexico, and ending at Pecos Pueblo. Preston's rich and vivid narrative is filled out with well-researched accounts of Coronado's journey and experiences and with accounts of more recent history and of what the region is like now along the way.

About Pecos Pueblo at the time of Coronado, Preston writes:

In 1540, Cicuyé—Pecos—was probably the greatest city within the present-day boundaries of America. For over three centuries, the Pecos Indians had held sway over the Pecos River Valley, and they had grown wealthy and proud. In 1540, they were at the apex of their power. [...] In the decline and fall of this city, which took place across three centuries, the history of the Southwest would be reflected in microcosm. (Preston 1992, 448)

Preston then offers a condensed account of what happened in those three centuries. In the next chapter, he describes his own arrival on horseback at Pecos Pueblo on a darkening day not unlike the day on which Father Latour arrived there, and observes:

Once the very life of the Southwest revolved around Pecos; it stood at the center of the world. Now it lay at the darkening edges of history. I felt here, more than anywhere else, the silent dumb amoral weight of history. This was the endpoint of our journey, but it was an ending of another sort. There was a kind of death squatting here among the ruins of Pecos, a death worse than mere loss of life. This was the death of a people, a culture, an entire world. (Preston 1992, 459-460)

It is not difficult to see how Preston was brought to this point in his reflections, a point at which he is painfully aware of what has been lost in the vortex. On the other hand, as we have seen above, that earlier world is not yet entirely dead and one could at the site reflect instead on how the story of this place has been given new life, by excellent accounts like Preston's, for example, by the Park, and by the repatriation of artifacts that happened not long after Preston's visit.

In his *Majestic Journey* (1987) Stewart Udall offers his own account of Coronado's *entrada* as part of a larger effort Udall makes in this book to re-position the Spanish history in the region, recovering it from the four centuries of neglect and disdain it has suffered at the hands of Anglo-Europeans and -Americans. About our subject, Udall writes:

The narrow valley occupied by the Pecos Indians is drenched in history. [...] Here one can absorb a millennial story of human striving that begins with antiquity and ends when the first railroad engines surmounted Glorieta Pass in 1880. (Udall 1987, 96-97)

This is a place, he has written, "to pause and ponder where our civilization came from — and where it is going."

Preston begins the account of his recapitulation of Coronado's *entrada* by telling a little story of something that happened to him before he conceived the project, not long after he arrived in Santa Fe as an immigrant from the American Northeast. One evening in March, he had walked to a little hillock behind his house to watch the sun set. He noticed at his feet "what looked like a few shards of glass glinting in the sun."

Disgusted, I reached down to collect them, only to discover that they weren't glass at all, but flakes of obsidian, each chip as thin and precise as a contact lens. Many centuries ago, an Indian had stopped here and deftly flaked out an arrowhead before continuing on his way. It was a perfect little spot to stop for a rest, with a view of the bosque surrounding the Santa Fe River, and out across the plains south of town; an excellent place to search for game or an enemy. Or maybe, to this unknown knapper, it was just a lovely view.

It was a moving, and unsettling, little discovery. In coming to New Mexico, I had unexpectedly felt myself an alien—an immigrant—in my own country, and this lithic scatter reinforced this feeling. I was reminded that we Americans are interlopers on this continent; that we have built our great and towering civilization on the wreckage of a past that we know almost nothing about and can scarcely comprehend. This sprinkling of obsidian, this trash of a distant time, represented something that had once been alive and vibrant, and that had left its ghostly traces all over the Southwest. (Preston 1992, 18-19)

We might wish to note that "we Americans" now must be imagined as including the descendants of the Pecos people now living at Jemez Pueblo, for example, not just immigrants from the American Northeast. But this is a common enough error, and what is more important here, I think, is that it would seem that Preston found a place of power on that little hillock, the power coming in this case both from Preston's realization of his own great ignorance about what had come before in this place and from his powerful sense of connection with those who had preceded him in time.

It is time now for a confession. I'm not really sure what a harmonic convergence is or how I could be sure I had achieved one, or been part of one, since it seems to be a communal achievement. I do feel confident, however, in joining Willa Cather, Josiah Gregg, Susan Magoffin, Scott Momaday, Douglas Preston, Stuart Udall, and others, including the dedicated and enthusiastic Park Rangers I have spoken with at Pecos National Historical Park, in saying that this is a place of power. In this place one may access this power from a number of different starting points, and enter a range of what might be described as vortexes of imagination and interpretation. The power that is in this place is not, however, to be achieved in some purely aesthetic or technical fashion. The Pecos River Valley is a beautiful place but not one, it seems to me, whose beauty seems all by itself to produce the power that is there. Nor would I expect that someone standing among the remains of Pecos Pueblo, now not much more than humped piles of dirt, excavated ki-

vas and parts of the walls of a ruined mission church, would be able to sense this power simply by employing techniques of group meditation. As I see it, the power of this place is accessible only, or perhaps I should be more careful and say primarily, when the observer has attained a kind of knowledge we might call humanistic, that is, historical and literary and, I would want to say, rhetorical since the rhetorical kind of knowledge, I believe, entails a special appreciation of specific situation and dramatic action. From the rhetorical point of view, for example, we may appreciate more readily how the power of the place might differ substantially depending on whether the person attempting to get access to that power was, say, a current resident at Jemez Pueblo, a resident of the town of Pecos, a neo-native from Santa Fe, a native from elsewhere in the American Southwest, a Civil War buff, an American historian, a Secretary of the Interior concerned with Indian issues, as Stewart Udall was; a trader, a trucker, a Texan. I can certainly imagine that this place could speak powerfully to all such people and that it might, furthermore, help the people visiting the place to imagine themselves as other people, that the power here could be in this way sympathetic, harmonic, convergent. This, it seems to me, is a kind of power especially to be cherished.

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(fig. 1) Photograph of a Feast Day Mass in the Mission Church at Pecos National Historical Park with painting of Our Lady of Porciuncula over the altar. Taken by the author



(fig. 2) Photograph of the ruins of the Mission Church with an excavated kiva in the foreground. Taken by the author



(fig. 3) Photograph of North Ruins of Pecos Pueblo. Taken by the author



(fig. 4) Photograph of Tex Austin's Forked Lightning Ranch. Taken by the author

THE CREATION OF THE AMERICAN SOUTHWEST AS A SITE FOR MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL ADVENTURE

John Warnock

In “The Southwest: An Essay on the Land,” written to accompany a collection of photographs of the Southwest by Ansel Adams, Lawrence Clark Powell, the well-known and devoted modern commentator on the American Southwest, evoked the region and its history in the following terms:

I have taken my place in the company of travelers in the Southwest, and I go with their books in my baggage and their ghosts at my side. They are friendly ghosts. Some are heroic, more are obscure. First came Don Francisco Vasquez de Coronado. Although he did not find the Golden Cities of Cibola (they proved to be the adobe pueblos of the Indians), Coronado surely had a great trip. If there was no poetry in him when in 1540 he and his men marched up the valley of the San Pedro, deep into Arizona and New Mexico and as far as the present-day Nebraska, was he indifferent to the sky’s blueness and its glitter at night? To his dying day did he not remember the smell of mesquite with which his men made their fires? Four hundred and thirty-six years later, the valley of the San Pedro is still thicketed with huge mesquites. If Coronado came for gold and Kino for God, now in our time the poet and the photographer come for the glory of form and the color of earth and sky. (Powell, in Adams 1976, xix)

A reading of the scanty documentary record of Coronado’s expedition makes it clear why Professor Powell felt he needed to put into interrogatory form his speculations about whether Coronado appreciated the landscape of the American Southwest. There is in fact no evidence that Coronado and his troops were anything but indifferent to the southwestern sky’s “blueness” and its “glitter at night” or to the smell of mesquite with which his men made their fires, or to the “glory of form” that Powell and other modern commentators take to be a fundamental feature of the American Southwest.

Coronado has not been alone in his apparent insensitivity to what we now take to be the charms of the American Southwest. His project in coming to the Southwest, or what for him was the Northern Frontier of New Spain, was of course conquest and plunder, on the model of what Cortez had achieved just twenty years earlier in Mexico City/Tenochtitlan. He was seeking the Cities of Gold not to appreciate their splendor but to get the gold. Because he didn’t get the gold, his expedition was accounted a failure.



We may be able to make Coronado's motives more palatable by recognizing that he was accompanied, as were all the conquistadors, by Friars whose official aim was to save the souls of any heathen inhabitants who might be encountered by converting them to Christianity. The Friars' expeditions could be accounted a success if they saved one soul, even if they lost their own lives in the process, which not a few did over time, including, perhaps, those who stayed behind when Coronado went home.

The Friars' contribution here is a form of what Mary Pratt calls "anti-conquest." In her wonderful book, *Imperial Eyes* (1992), which is a study of how Southern Africa and the New World were "produced" for European colonization by the travel writing of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, notably that of the German naturalist Alexander von Humboldt, Pratt shows elegantly and convincingly how these regions were depopulated, not only in actuality by virtue of disease and military conquest, but by virtue of the representations like von Humboldt's, even and maybe especially because they were offered under the aegis of natural science, as they were in the case of von Humboldt. "Anti-conquest," as she adumbrates the idea, is

a series of strategies of representation whereby European bourgeois subjects seek to secure their innocence in the same moment as they assert European hegemony. The term "anti-conquest" was chosen because [...] in travel and exploration writings these strategies of innocence are constituted in relation to older imperial rhetorics of conquest associated with the absolutist era. The main protagonist of the anti-conquest is a figure I sometimes call the "seeing-man," an admittedly unfriendly label for the European male subject of European landscape discourse — he whose imperial eyes passively look out and possess. (Pratt 1992, 7)

In this treatment, I will employ Pratt's idea of anti-conquest as a lens for considering some of the "strategies of representation" that have made American Southwest a site for what I'm calling military-industrial adventure.

When Coronado didn't find gold, he went home, that is, back to Mexico, dying there thirteen years later in much reduced circumstances. Not until about fifty years after he left, did the Spanish return to the region, coming this time not as gold seekers but as colonizers and defenders of Empire, and also, we may say, as anti-conquerors, as civilizers and savers of souls. Friars did sometimes venture forth without benefit of the military but not often, and it was usually unwise to do so, unless martyrdom was one's aim. In the absence of the powers of conquest, anti-conquest tends not to thrive.

In 1680, about a hundred years after the settlers came, the Indians of what is now northern New Mexico came together and drove the Spanish out of the region, all the way south down the Camino Real to El Paso del Norte. The mission churches of the anti-conquest did not survive for long after the Spanish retreated. But they were back in 1698, accompanied by a Marian statue that came to be called La Conquistadora after prayers to her

on the army's approach to Santa Fe were followed by a peaceful reoccupation of the city. This peaceful reoccupation has been recapitulated and celebrated in Santa Fe almost every year since, for over three hundred years now, in an annual procession in La Conquistadora's honor.

For another hundred and twenty-three years, as the colonies along the east coast of what is now the United States consolidated their position and became the United States of America, what is now the American Southwest remained a part of the northernmost region of New Spain. Throughout that time Americans were not welcome there. My guess is that Lewis and Clark stayed as far north as they did on their mission to the Pacific Ocean not just because of the interposition of the Rocky Mountains but also because they didn't want to end up in a Spanish jail.

This state of affairs changed in 1821 with the success of the Mexican Revolution. Perhaps partly because the new nation of Mexico didn't have the resources to protect its northern frontier and partly because the new Mexicans imagined they might benefit from American trade, it now became possible for Americans to enter the region, traveling southwest down the trail to Santa Fe, the erstwhile capital of the northern provinces. That, however, was just the first leg for most traders, who turned south at Santa Fe and continued another thousand miles or so on the Camino Real, through the Mexican state of Chihuahua to Durango. At this stage of the game, the Americans came as traders, not as potential settlers, even if settling was what they ended up doing.

This era is nicely represented in one of the important representations of the region, Josiah Gregg's classic *Commerce of the Prairies*, first published in 1844, while what is now the American Southwest was still the Mexican north. Gregg, who interestingly enough was one of the first of many travelers who would come to the American Southwest with lungs impaired by tuberculosis, had traded energetically on the Santa Fe trail and points south between 1831 and 1840. His book is rich with detail and story, but I can remember in my school days thinking that Gregg's foregrounding of "commerce" in his title marked him as particularly venal and insensitive to his historic mission of settling the West. I had it backwards, of course: Gregg's title indexed the fact that the Santa Fe trail was about trade first-of-all, not settlement, let alone touristic appreciation. Trade was an important part of what was going on in the American Northwest too, but the not-yet-American Southwest was different in that it, unlike the rest of the American West, had been settled to some extent already by Europeans, not only by aboriginals whom, as Pratt shows, we Eurocentrists already had well-developed strategies for "disappearing." The presence of the Europeans made the civilizing motive not as immediately available as a strategy of anti-conquest.

Another traveler who came down the Trail before it became part of the American Southwest, just before, was young Susan Magoffin, who came in 1846 as the eighteen-year-old bride of the established trader from Kentucky, Samuel Magoffin. The Magoffins, like Gregg and other American traders,

had no intention of settling in the West or Mexico. They came only as traders, innocently enough, we might say, except that in this case the Magoffins came in the company of General Kearney's Army of the West, which was at that moment manifesting America's destiny in the Mexican-American War. At the same time that they plied their trade, Samuel Magoffin and his brother, also a trader on the Trail, clearly saw themselves as in service to Kearney's army. Susan Magoffin, however, was on her honeymoon and though she was not without patriotic feelings, she saw herself primarily as having a wonderful adventure, which indeed she was.

We Anglo-Americans developed strategies soon enough for, if not exactly disappearing the Hispanic Europeans who already inhabited the region, then at least marking them as obviously in need of our civilizing services. One of the engaging features of Susan Magoffin's journal is the way in which — even though she was a young girl and a member of one of the first families of Kentucky — she resists the already conventional ways of not-seeing the Mexican and Indian people she moved among. She was pregnant as they approached Santa Fe on the trail. Susan compares the European attitudes and practices around childbirth to the ones she observed among the Indians, by no means entirely in favor of the former (Magoffin 1982, 68).

After the Mexican-American War, in the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the new state of Mexico ceded half of its territory to the United States constituting that territory for the first time as the American Southwest and opening it to whatever purposes Americans might have. One of the very first purposes was, as Coronado's had been, the acquisition of gold, since the California Gold Rush began the year the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed. In the interior of the American Southwest, however, one of the principal occupations soon became that of the map-maker and surveyor. Surveying and map-making may be imagined as relatively innocent activities, as can the botanizing of Alexander von Humboldt, but of course they are not. They consolidate conquest and attempt to domesticate their objects of consideration. Here are two frequently-quoted representations of the region by people who were engaged as government surveyors during this time. The first is the famous not-to-say notorious observation by one Lieutenant Joseph Christmas Ives in 1857 concerning what is now considered one of the glories of the American Southwest, the Grand Canyon.

It [the Grand Canyon] looks like the Gates of Hell. The region [...] is, of course, altogether valueless. Ours has been the first and will undoubtedly be the last, party of whites to visit the locality. It seems intended by nature that the Colorado River along the greater portion of its lonely and majestic way, shall be forever unvisited and undisturbed. (Ives 1965, 75)

Lieutenant Ives' language gives us an American Southwest that is "altogether valueless," at least to "whites," though it does show him not altogether impervious to the "lonely and majestic" nature it affords. Lt. Ives was not good at foretelling the future, however. Not long after he wrote these words, he joined the Confederate Army to fight in the American Civ-

il War, for one thing, and for another in 2001 alone the South Rim of the Grand Canyon was visited by over 2,000,000 people most of whom were probably white. Lt. Ives can of course be forgiven for not foreseeing the Age of Tourism and seeing instead, as he stood on the rim of the Grand Canyon, a region that was and would remain depopulated, an empty quarter, an obstacle to volition.

The Civil War did touch the American Southwest in interesting ways in spite of the region's distance from most of the action. A little known chapter of that war is an audacious military adventure by a group of Confederate Texans who came up from the south along the Rio Grande into New Mexico Territory in an attempt to capture the Colorado Gold Fields and then go on to open a path to the Pacific Ocean as a way of defeating the Union blockade. The adventure produced some early successes in southern New Mexico, and the Texans actually occupied Santa Fe for a short time before their enterprise came to an inglorious end some ten miles further up the Santa Fe Trail during a battle with Union forces in the region of Glorieta Pass. The Battle of Glorieta Pass could easily have gone the other way, and for sheer military adventure, this episode would be hard to top, but it is an episode that is infrequently taken to be a significant part of the history of the American Civil War or of the region, except perhaps for those New Mexicans who see it as yet another instance of the perfidy and over-reaching of the good citizens of the state of Texas.

After the Civil War, the American Southwest became for a time a kind of refuge for the "cowboy" and the "outlaw," not to mention the robbers and profiteers of the group of entrepreneurs known as the Santa Fe Ring, while government surveys of the region and the suppression of the Indians continued apace. Nonetheless, before the railroad penetrated the American Southwest, it remained a forbidding region. Consider this characterization by Clarence King in an article that appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1871 about a journey King had taken in the desert Southwest in 1866.

Spread out before us lay the desert, stark and glaring, its rigid hill chains lying in disordered groupings, in attributes of the dead. The bare hills are cut out with sharp gorges, and over their stone skeletons, scanty earth clings in folds, like shrunken flesh: they are the emaciated corpses of once noble ranges now lifeless, outstretched as in a long sleep. Ghastly colors define them from the ashen plain in which their feet are buried. Far in the south were a procession of whirlwind columns slowly moving across the desert in spectral dimness. A white light beat down, dispelling the last trace of shadow, and above hung the burnished shield of hard, pitiless sky. (King 1871, 611-612)

King finds even less to recommend the region than did Lt. Ives. Not a hint of "lonely and majestic" nature here. This kind of death-drenched description of the region would not be out of place in that apotheosis of the "hard" and the "pitiless" — Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian* (1983), a novel that is set in the region and during the time immediately following the

Mexican-American War. King is as hard put as Ives was to find “value” in the region. We might be tempted to say that both King and Ives were responding to the southwestern desert as a European or a Eurocentric American would. Europe is, we may want to recall, the only continent that has no deserts and in the European Judeo-Christian tradition, the desert is usually an infernal Dantesque place of exile and punishment. Travelers from the eastern United States may take it as such even today. It can also be a place of spiritual renewal in that tradition, but that is not a dynamic we see operating in King’s remarks or McCarthy’s novel.

In the work of Major John Wesley Powell, we see a number of the motives we have been considering coming together in a particularly interesting way. Powell was a veteran of the Civil War, a Unionist, who had served as a military engineer and lost an arm at the Battle of Shiloh. Powell’s first major venture into the American Southwest occurred in 1869, a few years after King made the grim observations reported above, when he undertook to float down the lonely and majestic course of the Green and Colorado Rivers, through what was at that point the last unmapped region of the United States, into the great unknown of Grand Canyon and beyond. He managed this remarkable feat with several companions (losing some along the way), in wooden boats (losing some of these along the way also), carrying with him scientific instruments he used to take measurements. Two years later he repeated the feat, doing even more measuring and mapping. In the end he was able to report back to the eastern authorities an important datum that applied to the whole region beyond the hundredth meridian: it was dry out there and unsuited to agriculture. This, we may think, wasn’t exactly news but at the time it also was not the characterization of the area that was being promoted by the railroads and other entrepreneurs who at the time were urging young men to “Go West.” It is not an exaggeration to say that Powell spent the rest of his life trying to rescue the American Southwest from the visions of these promoters, first in his post as the second director of the new United States Geological Survey (1881-1894) and from 1879 on as the founding director of the Smithsonian Institution’s Bureau of Ethnology. His dedication to the work of the Bureau of Ethnology makes it clear that he saw the American Southwest not as an empty quarter nor as a region destined to remain forever unvisited but as a region with cultures worthy of study and respect. He did not object to the industrial project of, as Rebecca Solnit puts it, turning landscape into real estate, but he did want it done honestly and with respect for what had come before, impulses not likely to endear him to the developers. In these impulses, we can see him operating in relation to the industrial conquerors in a way not entirely unlike that of the Friars in the New World, who were not always mere collaborators in conquest, but sometimes also forces for restraint. We must acknowledge, I think, anti-conquest can do this too, that it is not a mere facilitator of conquest.

At the turn of the century, however, when it began to be recognized that the conditions beyond (that is west of) the hundredth meridian that

made it unsuited to agriculture and settlement might be greatly ameliorated by the building of dams on the rivers of the American Southwest, Major Powell's observations might have been found more than a little useful to the promoters of this new industrial enterprise in the region. The turn of the century marked the beginning of what is often referred to as the heroic age of dam building in the American Southwest. At about this time, planning began for what would be the world's first mega-dam, the Hoover Dam in the Black Canyon of the Colorado River, the dam itself being built, with considerable loss of life, during the depths of the Great Depression and opened by President Roosevelt in 1935. During the heroic age of dam building, the American Southwest was clearly seen as an engineering challenge, but not just that. As the adjective suggests, meeting that challenge was seen to call for a kind of heroic enterprise, which was part of a new kind of adventure, perhaps more innocent than the military ventures that had preceded it, perhaps less innocent than the heroic and disinterested explorations of explorer-scientists like Major Powell or the aesthetic appreciations of visitors like John C. Van Dyke, to whose manner of seeing the desert Southwest we now turn.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, a decade or two after the railroads had penetrated into the American Southwest, there is a turn in how the desert is represented, a turn I will exemplify in a passage from John Van Dyke's *The Desert*, a book first published in 1901.

The first going-down into the desert is always something of a surprise. The fancy has pictured one thing; the reality shows quite another thing [...]. [T]he desert has none of the charms [of landscapes in New England, France, or Austria]. Nor is it a livable place [...]. It is stern, harsh, repellent. But what tongue shall tell the majesty of it, the eternal strength of it, the poetry of its wide-spread chaos, the sublimity of its lonely desolation! [...]. Everything within its borders seems fighting to maintain itself against destroying forces. There is a war of elements and a struggle for existence going on here that for ferocity is unparalleled elsewhere in nature. (Van Dyke 1901, 23-26)

Van Dyke, an art historian at Rutgers University in New Jersey, finds in his "first going-down into the desert," positive aesthetic values there, a "majesty," at the same time that he sees it as a site of a ferocious Darwinian "struggle for existence." Himself he sees as engaged in a kind of struggle to free himself from the "fancy" of the representations of the desert he came down into it with. He sees it, as Ives and King had, not as a "livable place" but as "stern, harsh, repellent." He is clearly in the tradition of those who, beginning with Coronado, came into the American Southwest as visitors, intending not to stay there but to return to some more congenial home, in Van Dyke's case to the regions in the American Northeast that the American Southwest was southwest of. But Van Dyke does find value in the desert Southwest, seeing it as a place of "majesty" and "sublimity" and, by analogy with the struggle for existence, a place of spiritual struggle and renewal.

Van Dyke seems more conscious than do many other observers that while the American Southwest is an actual place, it is also an idea, something that has been and is being represented in many forms and discourses, literary ones among them. Painterly representations were certainly a part of the picture. In the twentieth century, photographic representations have been salient. In any case, except those who were born and grew up there, the American Southwest is known first-of-all not as a place but as a representation of a place. When it comes to the American Southwest, Baudrillard's claim that the *simulacrum* precedes (or "precesses") the real is for most people of European ancestry a statement of simple historical fact.

Van Dyke is clearly one of the "seeing-men" that Pratt postulates. He was, as we said, an art historian before he became a solitary and, he invites us to conclude, heroic sojourner in the desert Southwest. His project, as he saw it, was to re-present the desert Southwest in ways that recovered it from the misrepresentations of his predecessors, a common rhetorical staging strategy for writers, as Harold Bloom helped us see a while ago in his *A Map of Misreading* (1975). Van Dyke claimed to be setting out the "truth" or the "facts" of the desert, as against the misrepresentations of those who saw it only as a barren place, and also as against those of the "poet with his fancies who [will] come hereafter" (Van Dyke 1901, ix). His account is also characterized by an active nostalgia for what had already disappeared in the rest of the Euro-centric world, as he saw it, and was soon to disappear in the desert Southwest, he had no doubt. Finally, it is characterized by an eliding of the history of the region, a history that would require foregrounding the presence of the Indian peoples and the Spanish who had anticipated his "first going-down." His representation, like those of many other modern writers who have written about the American Southwest, is one that removes the region from its lived and living history and projects for it a future of inevitable degradation and loss. In the light of Pratt's ideas, we may see all these moves — his claims to be telling truth, his nostalgia, and his elision of the history of the region — as strategies for securing not only a primacy but also a kind of innocence for his work of representation.

Van Dyke first came down into the American Southwest on the train. I don't know that for a fact, but by 1898 he certainly had that option and it would be more than a little surprising if it weren't so. When the trains penetrated into the American Southwest, they enabled a kind of appreciation of the region that had been hard to come by for those who could travel only on foot or horseback. When the Atchison Topeka and Santa Fe railroad had come down the Santa Fe Trail into the American Southwest in 1880, however, it had made a fateful turn. Twenty miles short of Santa Fe, the railroad was diverted south away from that storied city, south toward the more commercially convenient Albuquerque. That turning almost killed Santa Fe. The city that had been the northernmost capital of New Spain and the terminus of the Santa Fe Trail quickly fell on very

hard economic times. Its population declined significantly. In the 1920s, however, not long after New Mexico became a state, a group of immigrants from the eastern United States moved to Santa Fe and, doubtless motivated in part by a reading of Van Dyke, very consciously set about re-creating Santa Fe as a place of special charm and authenticity, drawing not just upon the natural beauty of the region, as Van Dyke had, but also upon its history and its indigenous cultures, the Hispanic as well as the Indian. They undertook, we may say, to develop and consolidate the idea of the American Southwest not just as a place where fortunes might be mended but as a place where souls might be, as a land not just of opportunity and freedom and heroic enterprise, but as a “territory” that we, like Huckleberry Finn, might “light out to” when things got too complicated, or maybe just too worn out, at home. Pratt would like us to notice that this idea of the American Southwest did not just co-exist with the idea of it as an engineering challenge and a place for mending fortunes. As a form of what she calls “anti-conquest,” it was both enabled by the economic and industrial development in the region and an enabler of it.

As the construction of the dams started, and big agriculture began to spread throughout the Imperial Valley in California and any other part of the region that could get access to the dammed water, the Southwest became all too obviously a place that was being “conquered” by American enterprise. At just this time, a very important figure in the anti-conquest of the West and Southwest emerged, Ansel Adams. Adams’ photographs have acquired an extraordinary salience as simulacra for the American Southwest. It is apparent that they are aspects of the anti-conquest of the American Southwest in precisely the way Pratt adumbrates the idea. Adams is nonpareil as a “seeing-man” (when a photograph of him appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine in 1979, it was over the title “The Master Eye”). Whatever else they may be, his photographs are, I am arguing, “strategies of representation whereby European bourgeois subjects seek to secure their innocence in the same moment as they assert European hegemony.”

About his project of photographing the West, Adams wrote, in a comment on his 1942 photograph “White House Ruin.”

The early settlers of the West brought back to civilization tales and images of wonder from the vast domains beyond the Mississippi. The carefully conducted government surveys were as accurate as they could be at the time, but there were tall tales in descriptive literature and impossibly theatrical paintings, mostly by inferior artists, that sent hordes to visit or migrate to the wondrous lands. While extraordinary to the adventurous spirit, many of these lands were inhospitable and dangerous, yielding disaster as well as excitement, poverty more often than bonanza, to men and women hardy enough to reach their geographic goals. [...]

I have thought about this land while traveling through it and observing its precarious status quo: beautiful, yet on the verge of disaster. [...] [T]he numerous ruins of abandoned settlements tucked away in

the canyons, caves, and cliffs throughout the arid lands, have an important message for our society, endangered by its arrogant exploitation. (Adams 1983, 130-131)

In this comment, Adams joins forces with Van Dyke in several respects: in seeing himself as “correcting” earlier representations, in recognizing the “inhospitable” quality of the land, and in seeing himself as portraying in the western landscape an “endangered” subject. His invocation of the surveys, which he says were “as accurate as they could be at the time,” suggests that he, like Van Dyke, sees his own work as offering greater “accuracy” than earlier representations.

But when we consider Adams’ practice more carefully, some interesting wrinkles emerge. In his later years, Adams was often praised for his compositional skill as a photographer and as an artist in the darkroom, and he himself never pretended that he was simply “taking” pictures of “nature.” In *Examples: The Making of 40 Photographs* (1983), a book published near the end of his life, he noted the following about “Monolith, The Face of Half Dome, Yosemite National Park,” the famous 1927 photograph of Yosemite’s Half Dome he claimed as a point of origin for his career as a photographer:

Over the years I became increasingly aware of the importance of visualization. The ability to anticipate—to see in the mind’s eye, so to speak—the final print while viewing the subject makes it possible to apply the numerous controls of the craft in precise ways that contribute to achieving the desired result.¹ (Adams 1983, 5)

Here Adams privileges a priori “visualization” over the actuality of the subject and puts his technical skills in the service of that visualization, just as, we might think, the designer of Hoover Dam did, or perhaps as one of those “poets” denigrated by Adams might. In comments about other photographs, as for instance “Moon and Half Dome, Yosemite National Park, California, 1960,” the consequences of this position are played out further. In one of these comments, Adams seems to commit himself to taking the land as he finds it:

There is always the chance that the best visualized remote images cannot be achieved; the optimum viewpoint may be physically inaccessible and the view cluttered with unexpected and unmanageable foliage, etc. I have had many such disappointments, taxing both patience and ego! One photographer, around 1870, trimmed all but the top branches of a fir tree so that a clear view of Yosemite Valley could be obtained from the old Wawona Road. The effect was horrible, both in the photograph

¹The photographs by Ansel Adams and Richard Misrach henceforth discussed are visible in the volumes by either author listed below, in “Works Cited”.

and in the landscape! I might remove a dead twig or a beer can from the field of view, but the original scene (excepting the beer can!) should be preserved for future observers. (Adams 1983, 134)

Removing a beer can is, we might think, no more (and no less) a violation of “accuracy” than is correcting a student writer’s grammar. But in a comment about what is certainly among Adams’ best known photographs, “Winter Sunrise, Sierra Nevada, from Lone Pine, California, 1944,” he ingeniously tells us the following story:

The enterprising youth of the Lone Pine High School had climbed the rocky slopes of the Alabama Hills and whitewashed a huge white L P for the world to see. It is a hideous and insulting scar on one of the great vistas of our land, and shows in every photograph made of the area. I ruthlessly removed what I could of the L P from the negative (in the left-hand hill), and have always spotted out any remaining trace in the print. I have been criticized by some for doing this, but I am not enough of a purist to perpetuate the scar and thereby destroy—for me, at least—the extraordinary beauty and perfection of the scene. (Adams 1983, 165)

We may disagree as to whether Adams should have done what he did — “ruthlessly,” as he says, to alter this photograph in this way, but I assume we will not disagree that doing so removes the photograph from the realms where we ought to concern ourselves about the “accuracy” of the representation, taking it instead into the realms where our response to the photograph may be governed by the conventions we associate with fictional art, where we can notice an innocence being created by Adams’ gesture that isn’t really there at the site. Adams asserts, interestingly, that only a “purist” would insist on *not* “spott[ing] out” the letters, but it is equally clear that the spotting out is itself an act of purification. “The scene” that possesses “the extraordinary beauty and perfection” represented by the photograph is not the scene-as-it-is-in-reality but the scene that Adams visualized and realized for us by altering what the camera recorded. We may feel that Adams’ spotting out is an act that should be judged differently from the spotting out of the native peoples in the literary representations of the New World that were offered by the nineteenth-century travel writers that Mary Pratt deals with. But if we do, it cannot be because one representation is more accurate than the other. It will have to be because we consider that his ends justify his means.

A particularly dramatic appearance of the workings of both conquest and anti-conquest in the development of the American Southwest as a site of military-industrial adventure is found, it seems to me, in the story of Site Y of the Manhattan Project, now known as the Los Alamos National Laboratory, the place where during World War II the first atomic bombs were designed and built. When President Franklin Roosevelt made the decision in 1942 to authorize an effort to build such a bomb, the person put

in charge of the project was the American Army General Leslie Groves, an officer in the Army Corps of Engineers who had just overseen the building of the Pentagon, an engineer through and through. The Manhattan Project had several divisions. Two of its divisions were primarily industrial, the one at Oak Ridge, Tennessee, that would be devoted to producing the highly enriched uranium necessary for the bomb and one at Hanford in western Washington state, where the newly discovered fissile fuel, plutonium, would be produced in big nuclear reactors (plutonium is always one of the byproducts of the fission of uranium in a nuclear reactor) and chemically extracted from irradiated fuel rods, and finally a Scientific Division that would do the actual design and testing of the bomb. To head the Scientific Division, Groves chose J. Robert Oppenheimer, a physicist working at the time at the University of California at Berkeley, the place where plutonium had been discovered only the previous year by two of Oppenheimer's colleagues.

Oppenheimer was an Easterner who had grown up in Manhattan in privileged circumstances, but who had frequently vacationed in northern New Mexico during the '30s and by 1942 had even bought a small place on the Pecos River in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains east of Santa Fe. He had ridden horseback a good deal in the Sangre de Cristos, in the Rio Grande valley to the west of those mountains, and in the Jemez Mountains that rise there west of the Rio Grande valley. He recommended that Groves place the headquarters of the Scientific Division, also known as Site Y, in the Jemez Mountains.

Groves, an engineer, was concerned about two things, secrecy and security, and he thought that the site Oppenheimer showed him on the Pajarito Plateau in the Jemez would indeed offer both. Oppenheimer, however, was concerned about something else also, about finding a site where the scientists he was going to have to recruit, who clearly would be working under great pressure, might have a place for recreation, for getting their minds off their work. There was much near Site Y that might perform that function, the spectacular Valle Grande at the top of the Jemez, which was actually the caldera of the huge volcano that had created the mountains not so long before in geological terms, the streams, the forests of Ponderosa pine, the beautiful vistas out east across the Rio Grande valley, not to mention the spectacular Ancestral Pueblo ruins just off the Pajarito Plateau at Bandelier, also not to mention the living pueblos at the base of the Jemez, such as Jemez Pueblo, and Cochiti, and Santa Clara, where Pueblo Indians now lived on sites their people had been occupying when the Spanish first arrived in 1540.

The engineer wanted secrecy and security, the scientist wanted that too, but he also wanted a place for the scientists, especially, but also for the engineers and workers to recreate. Oppenheimer was enough of an engineer to think about this in functional terms, as a matter of helping the scientists to do their work better. He was also thinking functionally when he argued with Groves about two matters having to do with secrecy and

security. Groves wanted the scientists to be inducted into the military so that they would be subject to military discipline, and he wanted to impose “compartmentalization,” which is the idea that secrecy is preserved best when the people working on something know only about what they are working on, not about the big picture. Oppenheimer thought the first of these, induction into the military, would put a serious hitch in his ability to recruit, and that the second of these, compartmentalization, not only would contradict the spirit of scientific inquiry, it would impede progress in reaching the goal of building an atomic bomb. He prevailed with Groves in both arguments. The scientists remained civilians and Oppenheimer was left in charge of secrecy and security at the site, with the military being responsible for secrecy off site.

When we read the memoirs of the scientists and others who worked at the site, we see that Oppenheimer chose well in this respect. The designers and builders of the first bombs were in fact working under great pressure and were furthermore working on a project that sometimes gave them pause, in spite of the fact that they all agreed they had to do this thing to keep the enemy from beating them to it. Having the “charms” of the American Southwest at hand was important to them, in functional and in other ways.

The cultural difference between engineers and scientists that is reflected in this story, which we could characterize as a focus on function versus a focus on understanding, can be analogized, it seems to me, to the ideas of conquest and anti-conquest as Pratt adumbrates them. It is not that these two operations oppose each other, as the terms conquest and anti-conquest might suggest. As Pratt demonstrates, anti-conquest exists only in relation to conquest, sometimes as a denial of it perhaps, but in the service of it nonetheless. Here we see the charms of the American Southwest as they emerged into cultural awareness in the early twentieth century put clearly in service to the project of building the all-killing bomb.

The first atomic bomb to be exploded was tested on July 16, 1945, about three years after the Manhattan Project was initiated, at a remote site in New Mexico a hundred and eighty miles south of Site Y, remoteness being an undeniable virtue when it comes to testing nuclear weapons. The site, now called Trinity after the name Oppenheimer gave to the test, was later to be incorporated into a military reservation that was established in the area, the White Sands Missile Range, which remains one of the largest military reservations in the United States. In what might be seen as another gesture of anti-conquest, a herd of ibex was imported into the site and is today to be found grazing there among the coyotes, the road runners, the aliens, and the unexploded ordnance.

About those aliens. Once when I visited the Trinity site, which is currently open two days a year, I overheard a Military Policeman on duty at the site to keep people from picking up the bits of Trinitite they might find — Trinitite is a mildly radioactive green glass that was produced at the site by the explosion and everyone there, myself included, was look-

ing for a piece of it — explain to a visitor that they did have to patrol for “aliens” at White Sands. For a while I was taken aback, until I realized he was talking not about the pilots of the Unidentified Flying Objects that have been reported in this area since 1945 but the immigrants from the south who these days are recapitulating the *entrada* of the Spanish conquistadors, like them, without benefit of documents, and like them, probably without much appreciation of the beauties of the country through which they are traveling.

For a last look at the dynamic of conquest/anti-conquest in the creation of the American Southwest as a site for military-industrial adventure, let us turn to another set of photographic representations of the American Southwest, representations that seem to me to put us in an especially good position to consider what may be the limits of this set of concepts. Richard Misrach (b. 1949) is an American photographer who has produced a considerable body of work and has photographed in a number of different locations, but it seems fair to say that his principal place, his “lucky place,” if we wanted to use the expression the director John Ford used about Monument Valley as a setting for his films, has been the American Southwest, in particular the desert Southwest, and even more particularly the Nevada Test Site, established in 1951 as a place to test nuclear weapons, and other military sites nearby. Most of Misrach’s work has been collected and published in an on-going series he calls the *Desert Cantos*, the first of which he published in 1979. The titles of the first fourteen cantos convey a sense of his subject matter. In order, they are *The Terrain*, *The Event*, *The Flood*, *The Fires*, *The War (Bravo 20)*, *The Pit*, *Desert Seas*, *The Event II*, *Project W-47 (The Secret)*, *The Test Site*, *The Playboys*, *Clouds*, *The Inhabitants*, and *The Visitors*.

It is often remarked that in his photographs Misrach finds ways of making the unbeautiful beautiful, as in a series of photographs he took of carcasses in a pit in Nevada where dead horses had been dumped. But that just scratches the surface of what is interesting in his work for our purposes.

In visual representations of the American Southwest, the straight highway or fence running out to the disappearing point in the distance is by now very nearly a visual cliché. “Bravo 20 Fence” is a photograph by Misrach that plays with that cliché. Here we have many of the elements of that cliché, the high sky, the space, the sparse vegetation (in this case so sparse as to be quite absent), the fence disappearing in the distance (the disappearing point precisely at the center of the photograph), a low blue mountain range beyond with a breast-like peak at its high point. But everything “picturesque” or “authentic” has been emptied out of this image. Emptied out also — to speak in terms that the photographs of Ansel Adams can evoke — is everything “mysterious,” “awe-inspiring,” “wild,” “natural.” Here instead we have a land that would seem to be as desolate, as infernal, as the ones Lt. Ives and Clarence King gave us or, more recently, some of the landscapes Cormac McCarthy gives us in *Blood Meridian*. “Natural” it surely is, of course, just not in the sense that an anti-conqueror of the American Southwest might wish.

It would seem “natural,” that is, if the fence were not in the picture, and not just in it but crucial to it. The fence changes everything. It is not a consoling, familiar fence, like the split rail fences in the cliché, so old and wobbly and fallen down that they seem almost to have become part of the nature. This fence is intrusive, disturbing, it provokes questions. It is straight and tight and uniform and new, like a line on a blueprint, clearly a creation of engineers, bespeaking not accommodation or assimilation, but volition, even violation, unconscious of itself as bespeaking such, perhaps, but bespeaking it nonetheless. This much we might infer even before we read the legend for the photograph that tells us we are looking at part of the fence around a bombing range in Nevada called Bravo 20. When we know this, the ground shifts again a little. The question now might be which side of the fence we viewers are on, that is, whether we are in the bombing range or outside it. That didn’t seem to matter much before. If we had to guess, it would probably be that we are outside of it. They don’t let just anybody inside those bombing ranges. In more ways than one, we may not be welcome here.

Using many of the symbols of anti-conquest, the photograph gives us conquest back. We do not see anything we are inclined to call “natural” or “charming” or “authentic” or “awe-inspiring.” What we see is both entirely real and entirely artificial, and the effect is finally, I would say, unnerving.

More about Bravo 20, after taking a look at another photograph by Misrach, “Shuttle Landing, Edwards Air Force Base, 1983.” If we were to call up in our minds a picture of something to do with the Space Shuttle (forgetting, if we can, the pictures of the two that broke apart in flight), I’m guessing we would probably be picturing one of those mighty steaming erections on its launch pad or arcing upward at the tip of those pure white billows, or the handsome black and white shuttle itself, slightly scorched but home again, having touched down and rolling, its drogue chute deployed. NASA, we probably all know, is the unacknowledged child of the military missile program in the United States. It was created, in 1958, to take the “military” out of the idea of “military-industrial” adventure. The images we get from NASA, and I admit I am an avid consumer of them, do their best to show us something that is clean, competent, well-organized, light-hearted, innocent, adventurous, a representation of good people doing good things for the good of us all, anti-conquest in every way. During the Cold War, the Russians saw the space shuttle program in somewhat different terms, as a sneaky new way we had devised of allowing the United States to launch and recover spy satellites, and they were not wrong to think that, but that is a story for another time.

Misrach’s photograph of the shuttle landing is not the usual NASA fare. In this photograph, there is another of those lines that disappears into the distance but this time it is a line of the people who have come to Edwards Air Force base to watch the shuttle land. They stand in line on parched land that is as desolate and flat as the land on the border of Bravo 20, under the same high bleached-out sky, reduced in their disappearing

multitudes to individual insignificance. But the shuttle is also so reduced. It appears in the photograph as an off-center speck in that bleached sky, so small that one could be forgiven for thinking that it was an imperfection in the print, an item of even less significance than the people in the line, who are neatly arrayed with their lawn chairs and motorcycles, a collection of seeing men and women lifting their binoculars toward the sky, by virtue of which they expect to see...what? Something that looks much more like the pictures they've seen of the space shuttle than Misrach's photograph does, no doubt. No doubt they *will* see this, or think they have seen it, and no doubt they will, like the sports fan, feel themselves to have participated in some way in this heroic and innocent adventure, despite being almost infinitely distant from it. When it's over, the riders of the motorcycles will mount up and roar away with extra verve.

Misrach's photograph does not set out to represent a triumph of military-industrial adventure. Nor, however, does it aspire to offer something like a straight-up critique of the shuttle program as, say, a waste of money that could be better spent on mass transit. Both of those potentialities are emptied out of this photograph. Instead, what we get is a new kind of nature, not nature unspoiled by humanity, as it is so often in Ansel Adams' photographs, nor nature that has been spoiled by human intervention, as it sometimes is in the work of "environmental" photographers and in other work by Misrach. This is a nature somehow beyond conquest and anti-conquest. We humans are in the picture here but what we are doing doesn't amount to much, as astronauts *or* as spectators. We are just out there somewhere.

I'd like to conclude with a consideration of another of Misrach's photographs, "Bomb, Destroyed Vehicles, and Lone Rock, Bravo 20 Bombing Range, Nevada 1987." In this photograph the standard lone peak appears in the background, but here rather than looking like a kind of guidepost or symbol of promise, it is clearly something that functions as a target, something to be attacked, reduced. It has not been entirely reduced, but the earth everywhere around it has been rendered nearly unrecognizable as earth, churned up like chewed food, with debris and ordnance protruding here and there in "response-to-impact" positions. Here is landscape transformed by the hand of man not into real estate but into something both real and unreal. It does not, however, to my eye, seem dead. The earth here, including the dark pit in the foreground, seems about to swallow these efforts of man. The debris and ordnance are returning to their origins. There is no conquest here nor, obviously, is there the kind of anti-conquest we see in the cliché. If we see beauty in this photograph, it is not a beauty that is easily aligned with good. Adams' photographs do not confront us with this kind of anomie.

At the end of his book of photographs taken at the Bravo 20 site, Misrach proposed that a national park be created at the site and offered designs for the project (Misrach 1990, 95 ff.). This was, as far as I can tell, not a tongue-in-cheek proposal though I'm sure he had no expectation

that it would be taken seriously by the powers-that-be. But why not? The National Park Service has many battle sites in its park system. Still, I expect most Americans would feel that this site would be something different from those, that it would be ... inappropriate as one of those National Parks that Adams photographed so beautifully in the 1940s. They would feel this way, I'm guessing, because the site doesn't function as anti-conquest in the way we want our National Parks to do. The Civil War battlefield sites I've visited bespeak a process of healing more than they do the actualities of battle. The battle, we are to infer, was of course terrible but the cause was just and the outcome worth the sacrifice. The feelings one has at the Little Bighorn, also known as the Custer Battlefield, are more complicated perhaps, especially if one is an American Indian, but not entirely of another order. The Bravo 20 site takes us to a place different from either of these kinds of battlefield sites. There is no aligning of conquest and anti-conquest here, as there usually is at our National Parks and monuments.

Misrach is an activist. So, for that matter, in his way, was Ansel Adams, who was a stalwart in the Sierra Club. But all we can do on the basis of Adams' representations — his visualizations — is dream the impossible dream and set ourselves up for inevitable disappointment. We can't do anything with his nature except see it, appreciate it, and probably mess it up. Misrach's images are bleak and horrific, some might even say hellish in a Dantesque way. But to me they offer more room to move, more possibility of conversation, dialogue, about where we might need to go from here.

When Adams died, Congress named a peak in the Sierra Nevada range after him. I suspect they won't be naming Bravo 20's Lone Peak after Misrach or accepting his proposal that a National Monument be established there. Misrach's anti-conquest isn't as convenient to hegemony as Adams' is, even though Adams' work is usually seen as entirely resistant to the work of, for example, military-industrial adventure. As I see it, however, Misrach's representations might support a more meaningful effort to consider the vicissitudes of military-industrial adventure in the American Southwest, and maybe even help us find a newer and better way of seeing and coming to terms with it.

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PONTIAC ON THE PINNACLE:
THE AMERICAN SOUTHWEST AS RHETORICAL *TOPOS*

John Warnock

Topos is a Greek word usually translated into English as “place.” The word’s association with rhetoric goes back to Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, in which the great philosopher developed an account of the “places,” or English speakers might want to say “topics,” where speakers might look for arguments in a given case. Some of these “topics” were general, possibly generative of arguments across a wide range of situations, like questions of greater/lesser, better/worse, like/unlike. Some topics were special, offered as generative of arguments in more specific domains.

When *topos* was translated into Latin, the word became *locus*, the root of the English word “location,” and in this form it seems to have lost some of its Aristotelian rhetorical salience, though not all of it, as we can see in expressions like *locus communis* or *locus classicus*, the second of which carries the implication that what is being cited is not just commonly cited but is historically authoritative.

The Greeks didn’t have a word for “reality,” as far as I know. We might sometimes translate the word *physis* so, but that word is more commonly translated as “nature.” In any case, for the Greeks, the question of the relation of a *topos* to what we call “reality” wasn’t as important a question as it was for, say, Jean Baudrillard, whose work was importantly devoted to arguing that in our postmodern world reality could be argued not to exist, and representations of reality, if I may translate his idea of *simulacra* so, have become more real than reality. For the Greeks, a “place” seems always to have been understood as something that wasn’t *only* real but also something that, more importantly, was taken to be real. The New World wasn’t really new, nor was the American Southwest the “empty quarter” Euroamericans have sometimes taken it to be, but both of those *topoi* have clearly on occasion been taken to be real, real enough to motivate major actions.

From a rhetorical point of view, I shall claim here, the question of what reality *is* will usually be translated either into a question of what proofs of reality will be accepted by a particular audience as demonstrative, or, into a question of how a particular representation of reality *works* with a particular audience, leaving aside questions of whether that reality is *really* real (except perhaps as a way of moving from one *topos* to another). In this paper, I will be developing an argument on the latter point, not



just about what the current *topos* of the American Southwest is but how it has been created, how it has changed, and how it can be seen to *work* in certain contemporary discourses, automobile advertising for one, and Hollywood films for another, with particular attention to the 1991 film *Thelma and Louise*, directed by Ridley Scott.

The “American Southwest” is a real place, certainly. But we might begin here by noticing the fact that a descriptor like “the American Southwest” is not an innocent, simply objective descriptor for that real place. For one thing, it invites the question “southwest of what?” which is just the question Reed Way Dasenbrock asks in his provocative 1992 essay by that name in which he undertakes to adumbrate important features of classical “southwestern” literature. To this may be added the historical fact that the region we now call the American Southwest was properly to be referred to, in European circles, at least, as the Spanish *Norte*, or more precisely the New Spanish North, for two hundred and eighty-one years, which at the moment is a longer period than the one during which it has been proper to refer to the region as the American Southwest. With the success of the Mexican Revolution in 1821, it became proper to refer to the region as the northern provinces of Mexico. Only with Mexico’s defeat in the Mexican-American War and the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 did it become appropriate to refer to this region as the American Southwest. Even today, it is referred to by the economic immigrants from the south who come into the United States from Mexico as “El Norte,” a datum that accounts for the title of the excellent 1983 film by that name that tells the (fictional, but so very real) story of two young economic emigrants from Guatemala to the United States.

We might pause here to notice another current and not-entirely-innocent descriptive term used by some geographers, the “Greater Southwest,” which is a region taken to include not just the current American Southwest, but portions of the current Mexican north. We could say that there is an historical justification for the term Greater Southwest since the region is roughly co-extensive with the region that the Spanish colonialists referred to as the Provincias Internas of New Spain. There are, furthermore, geographical and biotic justifications for taking the area to be one region. Still it may come as no surprise to learn that Mexican geographers do not favor a term that characterizes the region as part of “the Southwest.”

To the Spanish and the Mexicans who entered the Provincias Internas from the south and to the Americans who came into the region from the east during the first three decades of its existence as the American Southwest, the region was strikingly not the kind of place it is now imagined to be. Antonio de Otermín, the governor of the province of Santa Fe de Nuevo Mexico from 1678 to 1682, referred to the region as “this miserable kingdom.” Otermín was governor, unfortunately for him, during the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 that drove the Spanish out of the province of New Mexico all the way down south to El Paso del Norte in the only successful action of that kind conducted against Europeans by indigenous people.

But it seems it wasn't only administrative problems that colored Otermín's vision. Diego de Vargas, the governor who in 1692 led the reoccupation of Santa Fe by the Spanish, called the region *remote sin igual*. The region enjoyed relative peace in its relations with the Pueblo people, at least, during the next hundred years, but its image (to use one of the modern variations on the idea of *topos*) did not improve. In 1804, another Spanish governor, Alberto Maynez, declared "The country is inherently miserable." Nor did the image improve when the region became part of the American Southwest after 1848. In 1857, one Lieutenant Joseph Christmas Ives, then engaged as one of the government surveyors working their way through the new American Southwest with the Army Corps of Topographical Engineers, declared of the Grand Canyon:

It looks like the Gates of Hell. The region [...] is, of course, altogether valueless. Ours has been the first and will undoubtedly be the last, [sic] party of whites to visit the locality. It seems intended by Nature that the Colorado River along the greater portion of its lonely and majestic way, shall be forever unvisited and undisturbed. (Ives 1965, 75)

Ives either did not know that the Spanish had been there before him or else he did not consider them to be "white." He did find a "lonely and majestic" quality in the Grand Canyon, but that did not keep him from concluding that the region was "altogether valueless."

Not that much later, however, in the year 1892, we can see a very different image, and *topos*, emerging. In this year Charles Lummis, an aspiring journalist, born in Massachusetts, that is to say, in the American Northeast, though, as Dasenbrock observes, it is almost never referred to as such, published his book *A Tramp across the Continent*, which is an account of a three thousand five hundred mile journey he had made in 1884, on foot, he said, from Cincinnati, Ohio, through the desert Southwest to Los Angeles, California, to take up a new job with the *Los Angeles Times*. In *Tramp*, Lummis describes his sense of what he thought was to be found in the American Southwest.

My eyes were beginning to open now to real insight of the things about me; and everything suddenly became invested with a wondrous interest. It is not an inevitable thing. Thousands live for years beside these strange facts, too careless ever to see them; but the attention once secured never goes hungry for new interest. (Lummis 1920, 190)

To Lummis, the region was not "inherently miserable" or "altogether valueless." It was, or was becoming, a region "invested with a wondrous interest." Nor was it only the natural beauties of the region that spoke to this Northeasterner but also its native people. He wrote most respectfully of the Pueblo people he encountered on his tramp and when he returned to northern New Mexico from Los Angeles some years later to recuperate from a stroke, he became, and remained until his death, an activist for Indian rights.

Nor was it just to Lummis that the American Southwest now became a place invested with a wondrous interest. In 1898, John C. Van Dyke, an art historian from Rutgers in the American Northeast, also came to the region, sojourning for much of the next three years not in northern New Mexico, but in the Colorado, Mohave and Sonoran deserts of Southern California, Southern Arizona, and northern Sonora, Mexico, in that region sometimes called the "greater Southwest." What Van Dyke found in this place was a something he felt had not been seen and understood properly by his predecessors, a place of great natural beauty and light, a place where there was a desperate struggle for existence going on, all right, but a beautiful and powerful place nonetheless, and deeply threatened, unfortunately, by "man."

What had happened here? Were these just two unusually sensitive people who saw what others had missed and whose writings about the place changed thereafter the way everyone else saw the region? Writers may hope that their productions might have so great an effect and students of literature may wish to attribute this kind of power to their objects of study. I don't wish to deny such effects entirely. But I believe that the *sine qua non* for this new attitude toward the American Southwest was not literary efforts such as these but the advent of the railroad. The railroad came into the American Southwest, both into Lummis's northern New Mexico and Van Dyke's southern deserts, in 1880, just four years before Lummis made his tramp across the continent. Lummis claims he made his tramp entirely on foot and that it took him one hundred and forty-three days. If we note that this is an average of more than twenty-four miles a day, and note also that Lummis reports making side trips during his tramp to the top of Pikes Peak and the bottom of the Grand Canyon, along with suffering a "severely sprained" ankle on the descent from Pikes Peak and a broken arm on another side trip in northern Arizona, we may wonder whether his trip was indeed all tramp, as he insisted it was and as no one has been able to prove otherwise, as far as I know. We may also want to note that the route of his tramp, except for his side trips, seems to have followed rather closely the route of the Santa Fe Railroad down what had been the Santa Fe Trail before the railroad gobbled it up and that he had stayed along the route of the railroad as he continued across New Mexico and northern Arizona and the California deserts to Los Angeles.

Even if he did walk the whole way, it is apparent that the railroad was a great facilitator, allowing him to send items ahead to be picked up later, providing him, in its way stations, places to eat and sleep, and offering the means of sending his dispatches back to "civilization" (his word), not to mention simply showing him the way west. Lummis doesn't hide his dependence on finding "the tracks" from time to time, and just after he enters the desolate area of northern Arizona that Coronado had known as the *despoblado*, he offers the following tribute:

I find few Easterners who travel out this way have any conception of the difficulties of operating a transcontinental line. If they had, their

foolish grumbling would be less obtrusive. It is one thing to build and operate a railroad one, two, or three hundred miles long in the flat Eastern States, where there is a population at every few miles, where timber, rock-ballast, fuel, water, and cheap labor abound, and where local fares and freights pay expenses and dividends. It is quite another to build and maintain a road some thousands of miles long through some of the bleakest, barest, most inhospitable areas on earth [...]. (Lummis 1920, 230)

When his focus is on the challenge of building and maintaining the railroad, the region through which it tracked was seen as bleak, bare and inhospitable, just as it had been for earlier Euroamerican travelers in the region. But when the railroad is simply assumed to be in place, Lummis can open his eyes to what the earlier travelers had been unable to see.

John C. Van Dyke began his sojourn in the deserts of the American Southwest in 1898, which, as it happens, was also the year the Southern Pacific Railroad founded *Sunset* magazine in a conscious effort to counter images of the American Southwest as a wild and inhospitable place. Van Dyke does not report having made any use of the railroad in his travels. What he does report is prodigious feats of covering the difficult terrain on foot or on horseback, bringing only what he could carry himself, with only his dog for company. My late colleague Peter Wild noticed, however, that Van Dyke's route takes him precisely into the regions that had just been penetrated by the Southern Pacific, including the tracks that went south into Mexico and the "Greater Southwest."

Could the railroad have had this effect on the *topos* that was the American Southwest? Jaded as we are today by our experiences of automobile and air travel, it may be difficult to grasp just what a force for topical perceptual change the railroad was. In her wonderful rich book, *River of Shadows: Eadweard Muybridge and the Technological Wild West* (2003), Rebecca Solnit observes:

In the decade before the railroad the time [to cross the North American continent] had been whittled down to six or seven grueling weeks, barring accidents. With the completion of the railroad, those three thousand miles of desert, mountain, prairie, and forest could be comfortably crossed in under a week. No space so vast had ever been shrunk so dramatically. (Solnit 2003, 5)

We need to recognize, however, as Solnit does, that the train offered more than just ease of travel. Solnit writes tellingly about the railroad's phenomenological effect upon its riders.

In some psychological and spiritual way, we became a different species operating at a different pace, as though tortoises became mayflies. [...] Out the train window, the landscape disappeared into a blur; traveling was no longer an encounter, awkward and dangerous. [...] It was

as though the world itself was growing less substantial. [...] It was as though the Victorians were striving to recover the sense of place they had lost when their lives accelerated, when they became disembodied. (Solnit 2003, 21-22)

At a level no doubt beyond the consciousness of most who rode it, but certainly not without an effect on perception, and therefore not without an effect on *topos*, the railroad offered a kind of apotheosis of the Industrial Revolution. Solnit writes:

The Industrial Revolution preceded railroads, but railroads magnified its effects and possibilities unfathomably, and these roaring puffing machines seemed that revolution incarnate. [...] Nothing annihilated [space] more dramatically than the railroads. [...] In Marx's view capitalism itself was the engine of the annihilation of time and space, the locomotive its tangible form, and time and space were being annihilated to increase profits.

Not surprisingly, then, for some riders, like Thomas Wolfe, it seems, we could add to what the railroad enabled a sense not just of "wondrous interest" but of "fabulous promise."

The train gives one a feeling of wild and lonely joy [...] a wordless and unutterable hope as one thinks of the enchanted city toward which he is speeding, the unknown and fabulous promise of the life he is to find there. (Wolfe 1939)

When Lummis and Van Dyke traveled by train in the American Southwest, if they did, they denied it. They wanted their accounts to show them still with their feet planted on the ground. They were in this respect transitional in their relation to what became the *topos* of the American Southwest. When travel by train became the norm, when it got to be simply assumed, in the *topos* we could see pictures of cowboys on horseback racing trains, as I did in a Marlboro ad not long ago, the implication being not that the train is what enables the romance of the horse and cowboy but the horse and cowboy represent a spirit of freedom the train does not.

All this took hold in the *topos* even more firmly with the advent of the automobile, but with a twist.

Karl Benz created the first practical automobile in 1885, and in the United States Horatio Nelson Jackson made the first-ever cross-country trip by automobile in 1903, from San Francisco to New York, thirty-four years after the golden spike was driven at Promontory Summit, Utah, to complete the first transcontinental railroad. In 1903, the United States had only one hundred and fifty miles of paved roads. The first paved road from coast-to-coast, the Lincoln Highway from San Francisco to New York, was not completed until 1923. Jackson's first cross-country trip took him sixty-five days, which to us might seem like a lot, but which was, even without

any paved roads to speak of and the frequent flat tires, certainly less than a third of the time the same trip would have taken someone on horseback. What we now call off-road travel was the norm, not the exception. It was faster than wagon travel, but still, two decades after the railroad penetrated into the American Southwest, it was more than a decade short of becoming a mode of travel for anyone but the hardy and adventurous. When it did become the norm, it took the place in the *topos* not of the train but of the horse, as we shall see below.

In 1880, as the Santa Fe Railroad approached Santa Fe, a political enemy, it seems, had turned it south toward Albuquerque twenty miles short of its arrival at the erstwhile capital of the Northern Provinces, making it necessary for travelers to take a wagon the rest of the way into Santa Fe if they wanted to go there. Santa Fe quickly went into a serious economic decline, losing population in each of the next three decades, before experiencing a jump of 44% in the 1920 census, and large increases every decade thereafter down to the present. That striking recovery in Santa Fe's fortunes came importantly by virtue of the efforts of some immigrants from the Northeast who came to the city shortly after New Mexico and Arizona achieved statehood in 1912 and began consciously to recreate it as "the city different," the ethnically colorful, aesthetically pleasing, charming, "authentic" place we now take it to be, the place that has given its name to a style that is almost synonymous with the *topos* of the American Southwest. In Chris Wilson's rich book *The Myth of Santa Fe* (1997), we may read the story of the cultural and rhetorical work of these "neo-natives," as Wilson calls them, who were for the most part Anglos, and who knew their rhetoric, but who clearly also found, as Lummis did, a "wondrous interest" in the history and culture of the region.

The famous Route 66, for automobiles now, was built into Santa Fe at about this time. The arrival of the automobile both consolidated and altered the new *topos* of the American Southwest. Like the train, the automobile annihilated time and space and permitted an appreciation of the region's wondrous interest with the difference that one might do this appreciating in many more places, on and off the road, as one might on horseback. A trip by train was something you took on its tracks. A road trip was from the beginning imagined as a more wide open proposition, something that could get you away not just from where you came from but from everyone and everything and out into the wild, or at least away from ordinary life ("ordinary life" also being part of the *topos*, of course, the part in comparison to which the "American Southwest" is found to be, well, all those things the American Southwest is supposed to be). A little known work by Thomas Wolfe, written just before his unexpected early death and published as "A Western Journey," is the journal of a strenuous road trip he took from June 20 to July 2, 1938 with two friends from Portland in a "white Ford" on a big circuit that hit just about every one of the great natural sights in the Rocky Mountain west, Mount Hood, Mount Shasta, Yosemite, the Mohave Desert, the Grand Canyon, Bryce, etc. etc.

The number of miles covered each day is noted at the end of each entry, the smallest number being two hundred and ten miles. Most days they covered four or five hundred miles, all distances that would have been inconceivable twenty-five years earlier. Sustained speeds of sixty miles per hour were remarked on. “Hit” these sights is what they did, we may infer, and the sights are described by Wolfe in prose that makes no bones about that.

So out of Needles—and through heat-blasted air into the desert world of Arizona. The mountain slopes are now more devilish—and down in and up and up among them, now and then passing a blistered little town, a few blazing houses, and the fronts of stores. Up and up now, the fried dirt slopes prodigious, and into Oatman and the gold-mine shafts and Mexicans half-naked before a pit. Then up and up and climbing up and up through Goldroad, and at last the rim and down and down through blasted slopes, volcanic “pipes” and ancient sea erosions, mesa table-heads, columnar swathes, stratifications, and the fiendish wood. Below us lies the vast, pale, lemon-mystic plain, and far away, immeasurably far, the almost moveless plume of engine smoke and the double-header freight advancing—advanceless moveless—moving through timeless time. (Wolfe 1939)

Today the *topos* of the American Southwest continues to do yeoman’s service selling automobiles. In ads, cars are often pictured parked off-road on high red bluffs or tearing along flat open roads that wind out toward lone peaks, racing trains sometimes. The promise of the automobile is offered in these ads in terms of the *topos* of the American Southwest. Not the “prestige” vehicles, of course. These require urban settings. The vehicles promoted by means of the *topos* of the American Southwest tend to be “off-road” vehicles. For several years now Hyundai has been offering an SUV that is called the “Santa Fe” and another called the “Tucson.”

In the movie *Thelma and Louise* (1991, Ridley Scott, director), the *topos* of the American Southwest can be seen operating in a striking way, not to sell cars, exactly, but to sell the *topos* of the American Southwest itself. A *topos* must always do that if it is to work, of course. It must offer us a way of being able to take it *as* real or else (or at least) to wish we might. This is one way we might characterize the difference between what we ask of the two genres known as non-fiction and fiction. Fiction need not, usually should not, be taken to be creating a real place but if it is to succeed it clearly must create a place we wish at some level to inhabit.

The cover art on the DVD of *Thelma and Louise*, and, as I remember, the original promotional poster, offers a picture of the smiling faces of the two women in front of a classic Southwestern backdrop, Monument Valley, the “lucky place,” as John Ford called it, where he made the early John Wayne movies like *Stagecoach*. In the film itself, Monument Valley makes no actual appearance, but other *topoi* of the American Southwest certainly do. The opening image in the film is one of the classic images associated with the *topos*, a dirt road heading out away from the viewer to the dis-

appearing point at the foot of a lone peak. The image starts out black and white and, as the initial credits roll, it acquires color, a visual updating of the *topos*. The opening scene of the action, however, shows Louise at work as a waitress in a diner that could be just about anywhere.

The central characters in the film are Thelma, played by Geena Davis, who starts out as a ditzzy and sheltered middle-class housewife living in a suburban house under the thumb of a domineering husband, and Louise, a more independent-seeming single woman, played by Susan Sarandon. The two are friends, that's just obvious, a given, and at Louise's instigation (Thelma is afraid to ask her husband for permission), they head out for a two-day fishing trip in the mountains, driving Louise's sleek little green 1966 Ford Thunderbird convertible, a classic automobile if ever there was one, which at the beginning of the film gets an appreciative shot of itself parked nose out in front of the diner where Louise works.

Louise picks up Thelma and off they go. Out of a kind of unanchored fear of the crazies and bears out there, Thelma has brought a handgun but she doesn't know how to use it so she asks Louise to keep it and it ends up in Louise's purse. En route, the women stop at a cowboy bar, this time at Thelma's instigation. Thelma, who is starting to try her wings a little, ends up having several drinks and dancing with a man in the bar who gets her to go out to the parking lot with him and tries to rape her there. The rape is interrupted by Louise, who has Thelma's silver pistol in her hand. He stops but he makes the mistake of saying something manly and insulting to Louise, as guys inhabiting his *topos* are bound to do, and she shoots and kills him with Thelma's gun. Louise is convinced the authorities won't believe their story (and there is the issue of her having killed him just because he insulted her) and so the two friends drive off into the night, on the lam now, weaving their way through blinding headlights of the threatening big rigs looming over them on the dark road. They decide they'll try for Mexico. They are in Arkansas, we learn, and the quickest way would be through Texas but Louise won't go through Texas. (We learn near the end of the film that she was raped there, we might have guessed.) So they head west, top down and hair flying, scooting through fields of industrial agricultural operations and past dark forests of rising and falling oil field pumpjacks.

They have other adventures now, all of which make us pull for them at the same time that we see them getting deeper and deeper in trouble with the law, to coin a phrase, almost, but not quite, through no fault of their own. They aren't bad guys, they are just trying to get out of a jam. By this time, the law is on their trail in the form of one Inspector Slocum, played by Harvey Keitel, who sees them getting more and more jammed up and sympathizes with them at the same time that he knows he has to catch them and bring them in because, well, that's his role in this world. As we enter the last third of the film, the landscape the two women are driving through becomes for the first time the iconic Southwest, the high sky and wide open spaces we haven't seen since the opening frames.

They then come, at night — Thelma is asleep in the passenger seat — to a magically beautiful set of free-standing bluffs, where Louise stops and we see her being wordlessly and deeply moved. The bluffs are real enough and to be found in the region of southern Utah where this part of the movie was filmed. They are, however, illuminated in the film from the bottom in a way no actual bluffs ever were, but fairylands and *topoi* can be. With the advent of a rosy cloud-struck dawn of the sort frequently found on the covers of *Sunset Magazine* and *Arizona Highways*, they move on.

Here is a sampling of some of the lines Thelma now utters as she comes to inhabit the *topos* in a more direct way and becomes transformed from the inept housewife she was, both sheltered and abused, into the strong, competent and decisive figure she is at the end of the film.

“Boy, the law is some tricky shit, isn’t it?” (Yes, that’s just what it is in the *topos* of the American Southwest we are considering.)

“I always wanted to travel. I just never got the opportunity.” (Yes, the American Southwest is a place you travel to, not a place that is really anyone’s home.)

And perhaps most telling for the purposes of this discussion of the *topos* of the American Southwest,

“Don’t need the east coast any more.” (It’s just everything the American Southwest is not.)

They are driving alone along a lonely road somewhere in the Southwest in a scene that would not be out of place in a car ad when we hear our first police siren. They are pulled over by a classically good-looking, white, dour and laconic highway patrolman, who, as he pulls his car up behind them, guns his engine gratuitously. It appears the jig is up but Thelma, now having become entirely confident in her ability to handle a gun, gets the drop on him. At Thelma’s command, Louise takes the cop’s gun and shoots his radio with it. After thoughtfully shooting some air holes in the cruiser’s trunk, they lock the now whimpering cop in it and drive away. Soon they come again up behind a big tanker truck with a beastly driver who earlier had made lewd gestures at them as they passed. They entice him to stop and then demand that he apologize for being the beast he is. He refuses, and they both raise their guns and blast away, at his truck, which explodes in a most extravagant and satisfying way. Down the road they go again.

They are drinking pretty steadily now and Thelma is now smoking instead of just pretending to as she did when they started on their vacation. Two more lines from Thelma:

“Something’s crossed over in me and I can’t go back.” (What’s possibly to go back to? The east coast?)

“I feel awake. Wide awake. I don’t remember feeling this awake.” (Thelma wouldn’t use the words Lummis did, “wondrous interest,” but they are clearly on the same page here. She has arrived in “the American Southwest.”)

Cut to a scene that combines iconic elements of the *topos* of the American Southwest, a long freight train in the distance passing beneath high

bluffs under a high sky, panning then to a dirt road on which we see the green Thunderbird scooting along followed by its trail of dust. What's next?

Cut now to what seems to me the most inventive, certainly the most off-the-wall scene in the film. We see a Rastafarian in a helmet and colorful bicycle gear pedaling his bicycle along a lonely road in the Southwest somewhere (How did *he* get out here?) in a *most* leisurely fashion, a big joint in his mouth, listening to a cassette tape of the song "I Can See Clearly Now" by Johnny Nash. He comes upon the highway patrolman's cruiser sitting on the side of the road, its police lights clicking. He stops nearby and his attention is drawn, ever so slowly, to a thumping coming from inside the trunk. He approaches the car. The voice from inside identifies the speaker as a police officer, asks whoever is outside to get the keys to unlock the trunk, and points out the direction the keys are in by poking a finger through one of the breathing holes the women had shot in the trunk. The finger almost gets stuck but the speaker does manage to withdraw it. Slowly, the bicyclist takes a large toke, leans over the trunk, and blows the smoke inside through the hole. End of scene. It's a scene from another kind of movie and another *topos* that I'm not quite sure how to name but one that is not entirely unrelated to the one we are considering, the *topos* of the counterculture perhaps. It doesn't fit as part of the romance of the Southwest but it does fit as sponsoring a mode of intoxication as the beauty of the American Southwest is sometimes said to offer, and a way also of sticking it to "the man," perhaps even of drawing "the man" into the intoxicating spell of the *topos*. It works beautifully in the movie, I think, delivering both a kind of relief from the building tension and a preparation for a return to the *topos* and the final events of the film, which unfold quickly thereafter.

An off-road car chase ensues, with the green Thunderbird being pursued across a dirt flat by a phalanx of police vehicles, each vehicle with its own individualized trail of dust rising behind. Police vehicles wreck in profusion, and finally Thelma and Louise get away when the low convertible slips under a railroad trestle and the police vehicle behind them gets jammed in it and blocks all the others.

The women are next seen driving fast along the edge of a canyon, by themselves now, followed only by their own dust trail, in relative peace, but then the camera pans left and shows us down over the edge of the canyon where the women can't see or hear it a bug-like helicopter flying in silence parallel to their path. Louise doesn't notice that she is driving toward the edge of the canyon. When she does notice, she slams on the brakes and manages to stop the car just in time in a cloud of dust. In the quiet that ensues, the women wonder where they are. Thelma thinks it might be "the goddam Grand Canyon." "Isn't it beautiful?" she says, clearly moved deeply. And then, after this beatific moment, in one of the most striking scenes in the film, the blunt forehead of helicopter ascends straight up in front of the Thunderbird's windshield on a column of pounding noise. Louise wheels the car around to escape but their way is now blocked by approach-

ing police vehicles. The police vehicles stop at a distance, the officers get out and unlimber their firearms and we see close-ups of cartridges being caressed and magazines being slammed home and weapons being cocked.

Louise has wheeled the car around again and the women are now stopped facing the canyon. In the final conversation between them, Louise declares that she isn't going to give up (fastening her seat belt as she does so) and Thelma, whose transformation from a ditzy housewife to a brave and decisive adventurer, which is the primary development of character in the film, after a pause, says "Let's don't get caught." Louise looks at her questioningly. "Let's keep going," says Thelma. Tilting her chin out toward the canyon, with a wonderful expression on her face that says that she is almost weeping with excitement, Thelma says, "Go." Louise kisses her strong (*eros* embracing *thanatos*) and floors it (we have had several shots of her foot flooring the gas pedal before in the film). Holding hands, the women fly off the edge of the canyon at high speed. The car rises into the air, crests. The final frames of the film hold the green Thunderbird suspended in the air over the canyon just past the apex of its flight.

It turns out that Ridley Scott first planned to show the car going all the way down. He chose finally to leave the women suspended, which seems to me unquestionably the right choice for a movie that wishes to leave the *topos* intact, as this one must, I think. Had the Thunderbird been followed all the way down, we might have found ourselves wondering if the *topos* was holding up, or if, rather, the women had experienced the kind of moment reported by the jumper off the Golden Gate Bridge who survived to report that after he jumped it occurred to him that of all his problems, the only one that couldn't be fixed was the one created by the fact he had just jumped off the Golden Gate Bridge.

The *topos* of the American Southwest was first produced, or enabled, I've argued, by the advent of the railroad, that apotheosis, Marx argued, of the Industrial Revolution. It was consolidated soon afterward by the automobile, which permitted not just the annihilation of time and space the railroad had enabled but the argument of individual freedom. Contemporary advertisements for the automobile invoke of the "freedom of the road." While the train may be able to take us "further on down the line," we do not hear of the "freedom of the tracks." It is impossible to imagine the dramatic events of *Thelma and Louise* in the American Southwest without the little green Thunderbird convertible, or something like it, in the picture. As the women tear through the plunging pumps in the oil field early in their try for the American Southwest and freedom, we see the oil wells as something they are escaping from, not as that which enables them to put gas in their little green Thunderbird to make it go. At the end of the film, at the moment when the two women are perched on the edge of what Thelma wonders at as maybe being the "goddam Grand Canyon," which pre-railroad explorers might have referred to in just such language but with rather a different affect, the *topos* is still intact for them and is furthermore working at a high intensity because of the threat to it

that they and we all know is near. I can think of no better characterization of the awful loud emergence of the police helicopter in front of the Thunderbird's windshield than the return of the repressed. It produces, as such returns do, a crisis. The women make their choice, a choice not to "get caught," a choice to "keep going," a choice that entails the maintenance of the *topos*, rather than their own survival. But they do survive, in the film, in suspension over the canyon ... it's the movies, after all. If Ridley Scott had allowed them to fall, as he did in another version of the ending, this *topos* for the American Southwest, and the movie, as the kind of movie it has been up to this point, would have been imperiled. With the little green Thunderbird suspended in the air over the canyon, we need not ask any number of questions the movie has been getting us to postpone.

Earlier in the film, at the moment where the iconic images of the train and the approaching Thunderbird appear and the women are first seen to be firmly placed in the American Southwest, the sound track is B.B. King singing a song entitled *Better Not Look Down* ("if you want to keep on flyin' "). Knowing how the film ends, I have found it hard not to think here of those moments in the Warner Brothers cartoons that feature Wile E. Coyote chasing the Roadrunner through the *topos* of the American Southwest when without realizing it Coyote charges off a cliff in his latest doomed-to-fail attempt to catch the Roadrunner. He runs out into the air and slows to a stop but does not fall, not until he "looks down." His erect ears droop in a dawning realization, and only then does he fall. We usually follow him all the way down to the canyon floor where his latest schemes eventuate in that ignominious and hilarious-because-so-understated plop far down below on the canyon floor, a denouement that would have been horribly inappropriate in *Thelma and Louise*.

In the cartoons, Coyote is always making use of the latest technology in his efforts to catch that cheerful and more-than-a-little-irritating bird, technology he usually receives in the mail from "Acme Industries." As he assembles the latest device, he giggles with delight, sure that this one will do the trick. The technology is then shown backfiring on him in wonderfully elaborate ways, as we knew it would. I don't recall that he has ever tried to make use of a helicopter to catch Roadrunner, but it is fun to think of how that one might unfold. He has tried rockets a number of times. In these cartoons, though not in *Thelma and Louise*, we are implicitly invited to recognize the limits of our devices and I find that comes as a relief. Some of the devices that have found a home in the American Southwest are anything but consoling. We may think here of the Nevada Test Site or the White Sands Missile Range, both important aspects of another *topos* of the American Southwest, one I have considered in another essay, the *topos* of the American Southwest as a site of military-industrial adventure.

Coyote will always rise again, of course, no matter how badly his devices backfire. Roadrunner will always run free. She (He? It?) doesn't need gas the way we might realize the little green Thunderbird does if the *topos* didn't prevent us from thinking about that. In cartoons like these, we are obviously in a *topos*, not in a place we are to take for a moment as real.

I claimed earlier that certain of our devices, specifically the railroad and the automobile, were enablers of the *topos* of the American Southwest as a place of charm, authenticity, free play. We should also recognize, I think, that the American Southwest, imagined as an empty quarter and thus a suitable place for military-industrial adventure, has also enabled the development of certain technologies. The Colorado River at the place where it emerges from the Grand Canyon did in fact provide the stage for the first mega-dam, Hoover Dam; the Bonneville Salt Flats in Utah are in fact a place where land-speed records in a range of different vehicles have been sought and set; the White Sands Missile Range in southern New Mexico is in fact the place where the United States was able secretly to test the first atomic bomb and later develop its first military rockets; the Nevada Test Site not far from Las Vegas is in fact the place that was found sufficiently remote to offer a site on the North American continent for the continuing testing and development of our nuclear weapons. The American Southwest has in fact been a place that has accommodated all these developments, and more. It is also the place where we have our greatest concentration of National Parks, a large number of which Thomas Wolfe was able to visit on his whirlwind road trip. We may take it that the Parks represent the *topos* of the American Southwest best, and maybe they do. I'm arguing here that that *topos* rides upon technology in a way that may be under-recognized and that this under-recognition may be just what the *topos* is designed to maintain.

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IV

About the Border

SIGN-CUTTING: THRESHOLDS, BORDERS,
AND OTHERS IN *THE DEVIL'S HIGHWAY*

Abraham Acosta

In *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) describes the reality of border-crossing in the following manner:

Faceless, nameless, invisible, taunted with “Hey Cucuracho” (cockroach). Trembling with fear, yet filled with courage, a courage born of desperation. Barefoot and uneducated, Mexicans with hands like boot soles gather at night by the river where two worlds merge creating what Reagan calls a frontline, a war zone. The convergence has created a shock culture, a border culture, a third country, a closed country.

Without benefit of bridges, the “*mojados*” (wetbacks) float on inflatable rafts across *el río grande*, or wade or swim across naked, clutching their clothes over their heads. Holding onto the grass, they pull themselves along the banks with a prayer to *Virgen de Guadalupe* on their lips: *Ay virgencita morena, mi madrecita, dame tu bendición.*

The Border Patrol hides behind the local McDonalds on the outskirts of Brownsville, Texas or some other bordertown. They set traps around the river beds beneath the bridge. Hunters in army-green uniforms stalk and track these economic refugees by the powerful night-vision of electronic sensing devices planted in the ground or mounted on Border Patrol vans. Cornered by flashlights, frisked while their arms stretch over their heads, *los mojados* are handcuffed, locked in jeeps, and then kicked back across the river.

One out of every three is caught. Some return to enact their rite of passage as many as three times a day. Some of those who make it across undetected fall prey to Mexican robbers such as those in Smuggler’s Canyon on the American side of the border near Tijuana. As refugees in a homeland that does not want them, many find a welcome hand holding out only suffering, pain, and ignoble death.

(Anzaldúa 1987, 33-34)

Let us juxtapose this image, conceived and written by Anzaldúa in 1987 with an eye on the Southwest Texas border, with another, one written in 2004, presenting another scene of border-crossing, but this time not in Texas, but through Southern Arizona. This from Luis Alberto Urrea’s *The Devil’s Highway*:



Five men stumbled out of the mountain pass so sunstruck they didn't know their names, couldn't remember where they'd come from, had forgotten how long they'd been lost. One of them wandered back up a peak. One of them was barefoot. They were burned nearly black, their lips huge and cracking, what paltry drool still available to them spuming from their mouths in a salty foam as they walked. Their eyes were cloudy with dust, almost too dry to blink up a tear. Their hair was hard and stiffened by old sweat, standing in crowns from their scalps, old sweat because their bodies were no longer sweating. They were drunk from having their brains baked in the pan, they were seeing God and devils, and they were dizzy from drinking their own urine, the poisons clogging their systems.

...

They were walking now for water, not for salvation. Just a drink. They whispered it to each other as they staggered into parched pools of their own shadows, forever spilling downhill before them: *Just one drink, brothers. Water. Cold water!*

They walked west, though they didn't know it; they had no concept anymore of destination. The only direction they could manage was through the gap they stumbled across as they cut through the Granite Mountains of Southern Arizona. Now canyons and arroyos shuffled them west, to toward Yuma, though they didn't know where Yuma was and wouldn't have reached it if they did.

They came down out of the screaming sun and broke onto the rough plains of the Cabeza Prieta wilderness, at the south end of the United States Air Force's Barry Goldwater bombing range, where the sun recommenced its burning. Cutting through this region, and lending its name to the terrible landscape, was the Devil's Highway, more death, more desert. They were in a vast trickery of sand.

...

In the distance, deceptive stands of mesquite trees must have looked like oases. Ten trees a quarter mile apart can look like a cool grove from a distance. In the western desert, twenty miles looks like ten. And ten miles can kill. There was still no water; there wasn't even any shade.

...

The men had cactus spines in their faces, their hands. There wasn't enough fluid left in them to bleed. They'd climbed peaks, hoping to find a town, or a river, had seen more landscape, and tumbled down the far side to keep walking. [...]

Now, as they came out of the hills, they faced the plain and the far wall of the Gila Mountains. Mauve and yellow cliffs. A volcanic cone called Raven's Butte that was dark, as if a rain cloud were hovering over it. It looked as if you could find relief on its perpetually shadowy flanks, but that too was an illusion. Abandoned army tanks, preserved forever in the dry heat, stood in their path, a ghostly arrangement that must have seemed like another bad dream. Their full-sun 110-degree nightmare. (Urrea 2004, 3-5)

Read side by side, these two reflections on border-crossing read like night and day; like scenes from two radically different borders, and seemingly,

one could argue, from two different eras (pre- and post-NAFTA, operations “gatekeeper,” and “hold the line”). Whereas in the former, crossers navigated through the waters of the Rio Grande, in the latter, walkers traverse desolate, arid terrain. Whereas, in the former, the river itself is the border, for the latter, the actual border is nowhere to be seen, lying somewhere between the beginning and end of their journey. Whereas in the former, the crosser’s immediate destination, Brownsville, is visible from the other side of the river, in the latter, their immediate destination, whether it be Tucson, Yuma, or Interstate 8, lie miles away. Whereas in the former, Border Patrol lies in wait under the bridges connecting Matamoros to Brownsville, or next to certain area fast-food restaurants, in the latter, Border Patrol will not only not find walkers until they emerge from the Devil’s Highway, but also, and perhaps more critically, not until these walkers already find themselves abandoned at the threshold of life and death. Indeed, given the striking differences between Anzaldúa and Urrea’s borders, and given that almost twenty years separate the appearance of their writings, they are nevertheless both still reflecting on the same border.

It is also important to remind ourselves, however, that Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands* and Urrea’s *The Devil’s Highway* constitute two different critical projects. The former seeks to present and affirm a mestiza Chicana cultural identity that emerges from within these borderlands, but also to affirm a new mestiza consciousness that both appropriates and resists dominant structures of race, gender and sexuality in the US. Urrea, on the other hand, seeks to tease out the political implications of the very act of crossing the state border, and what this means for the subjects attempting it, and what that meant for those who do not survive it. So while the former attempts to forge a mestizo, gendered, and queer epistemological base onto the insider/outsider subject of the borderlands (*zoe*), the latter seeks to unconceal the juridical limits of the outsider/outsider subject of the border (*bios*) seeking to break into. But again, what is of critical interest here is that both critical projects are grounded from/within a primordial scene of border-crossing.

Having said this, and seeking to further tease out the critical reality that is revealed only from their juxtaposition, there is one other tension between Anzaldúa and Urrea’s reflections on border-crossing that I wish to attend to: the semiotic grounds upon which the border-crosser is constituted. Or rather, how crossers themselves become constitutive of the border they attempt to cross. For Anzaldúa, the Borderlands is itself the site of productive signification in which are contained variants of English and Spanish, but from which emerges its linguistic heterogeneity — *el lenguaje de la frontera*. Note for instance, Anzaldúa’s registering of the border-crosser as active semiotic ingredient in the Borderlands.

From *los recién llegados*, Mexican immigrants, and *braceros*, I learned the North Mexican dialect. (Anzaldúa 1987, 78)

From this little, short sentence we are told many things, for instance, that in the Borderlands, those *recién llegados* contribute to *el lenguaje de la frontera*,

that those *recién llegados* constitute the *zoe* of the Borderlands by bringing with them the North Mexican dialect, that those *recién llegados* are indeed productive of signification in the Borderlands. However this statement simultaneously implies a certain number of conditions and exclusions. The first of which is that only being a *recién llegado* will do; only those who have successfully crossed the border can gain entry into the Borderlands. And further, that in order to be heard, read, or understood, in order to be included within the *zoe* of Borderlands, one need be a *recién llegado del Norte*, and from nowhere else. Those who have failed to *llegar*, or those who have died *llegando*, do not belong in the Borderlands and cannot be understood within it. The latter — *ellos que nunca llegarán* and/or those who do not bring with them a North Mexican dialect — come to inhabit the borders of the Borderlands, neither inside nor outside, neither silent, nor intelligible. Or as Urrea would argue, “aliens before they ever crossed the line.” The critical question, of course, becomes, do they [*ellos que nunca llegarán*], leave a sign, a trace, a legible marker of their never having made it that can be read in the borderlands?

Whereas in Anzaldúa the semiotic contributions made only by those who have already successfully made it past the border (*los recién llegados*) becomes constitutive of the Borderlands, for Urrea, *The Devil's Highway* reflects upon the residual, though empirically relevant signs left by those who will have never had made it, an investigative technique the Border Patrol calls “sign-cutting.” The notion of “sign-cutting” appears as the name given by Border Patrol to the act of tracking migrants through the forensic trail left behind as they walk through areas known as “drags” or lines of smoothed-over sand which, when traversed, inscribes into itself the very act of traversal, of its trespassing, the trace of *recién pasados*. Urrea remarks:

Cutters read the land like a text. They search the manuscript of the ground for irregularities in its narration. They know the plots and the images by heart. They can see where the punctuation goes. They are landscape grammarians, got the Ph.D. in reading dirt. (Urrea 2004, 29)

And, as in the case of the Wellton 26, the group of twenty-six men originating from Veracruz, Mexico, who in 2001 attempted to cross the US-Mexico border through the Yuma sector of the Arizona desert, and from which Urrea's narrative is based, the sign-cutters were there to finish the story for them.

From the Vidrios Drag, the signcutters started back into the wasteland, cutting, cutting. They read the ground and found, after an amazingly long haul, where the journey had gone all so wrong. Some of the illegals had walked over sixty-five miles — a couple of them fell in sight of the freeway.

All you can do...is cut sign, cut sign, cut sign.

The sign tells the story.

The sign never lies.

And the whole investigation became a series of drag-cuts. [...] The

footprints wrote the story. And after the footprints ran out, it was a trail of whispered stories and paper sheets. It was the big die-off, the largest death-event in border history. (Urrea 2004, 31)

If we again juxtapose this scene in Urrea with Anzaldúa's affirmation of *los recién llegados*, we are presented with a critical semiotic disjuncture at the border. In other words, while Urrea utilizes the idea of sign-cutting to depict the Border Patrol's tracking of border-crossers along the Devil's Highway, we are also seeing the process of sign-cutting manifested between Urrea and Anzaldúa. In short, a border exists between two sets of border signs: the North Mexican dialect brought by *los recién llegados*, and the footprints, discarded items and bodies left in the desert by *ellos que nunca llegarán*. The cultural imaginary that assumes the only border-crossers are Norteños, and the fact the Wellton 26 originated from Veracruz. The assertion that only those *recién llegados* are productive of *frontera* signification, while the signs left behind by *ellos que nunca llegarán* remain, illegible, incommensurate, radically insignificant and consequently suspended in a state of exception. We must also warn ourselves of the possibility that the contradictions that emerge from this sign-cutting are irresolvable, irreparable, nor accidental; *los que nunca llegarán* represent the radical negative limit to the Borderlands, the latter cannot exist without the *a priori* existence of the former. In short, the Borderlands, as a singular and homogeneously mestizo site of enunciation, requires and indeed reproduces its own form of subalternity to constitute its own seemingly borderless borders.

In short, how else can we conceive of the semiotic tension between *los recién llegados* through whom Anzaldúa learns and appropriates the North Mexican dialect, and, for Urrea, the "aliens before they ever crossed the line" who present the trace of radical negativity, abandonment, as the biopolitical exception upon which the Borderlands is erected? These traces of negative signification, one can argue, are equally constitutive of the Borderlands, to the degree in which they continue to be ignored or neglected in affirmations of a border culture (mestizo, transcultural, hybrid, or otherwise). Ultimately, *ellos que nunca llegarán* remain, to the degree that they are excluded, neither inside nor outside; it is the trace that both binds and separates, the sign that threatens inside/outside with indistinction, the conceptual figure that ultimately ruptures the idea of a seamless and borderless borderlands. Sign-cutting, or the biopolitical tension between figures of semiotic production along the borderlands — in this case, *los recién llegados* and *los que nunca llegarán* — should come to constitute the site of radical, critical inquiry into the nature, state and culture of the US-Mexico border.

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IMMIGRATION: HISTORICAL OVERVIEW, MEXICAN BASHING REVISITED AND NECESSARY REFORM

Celestino Fernández and Jessie K. Finch

1. *Global Migration*

The history of humanity is one of migration; that is, throughout history and in every part of the world, people have moved — and this process continues today. The reasons for human migration are many and varied but are due primarily to natural disasters (earthquakes, tornadoes, etc.), to changes in weather (e.g., droughts and floods), to escape from war or persecution based on religious or political beliefs, and to search for adventure (moving to the city from the country or from one culture to another that might be perceived to be more exotic or more in tune with one's vision of life or lifestyle).

However, the foremost critical reason for the overwhelming majority of people moving, both within and across national borders, is for economic reasons (Borjas 2007); first and foremost people move in search of a better job or in the case of the unemployed and the severely underemployed, they migrate simply in search of *a* job, *any* job. As discussed below in greater detail, this has been the experience of the majority of Mexican individuals and families who have migrated to the United States since the formation of the current US-Mexico border in 1848 (González 2008).

On a global scale, one can document some clear, albeit broad patterns of human migration. In the past, for example, migration tended to originate in the Northern Hemisphere, principally in Europe, with destinations to almost everywhere, including the Western Hemisphere, Africa, and India. One can readily think of the movement of people led by various empires, including, for example, the Roman Empire, the Spanish Empire, and the British Empire.

In modern times, during the past fifty years, the broader patterns include movement from the Southern Hemisphere to the Northern Hemisphere: from Latin American countries to the United States; from Africa to Europe (including Italy, Germany and Spain, for example); from the Middle East to Europe and the US; and from Asia to Europe and the US. Today, approximately three million people migrate annually; one million to the US and 1.4 million to Europe (Population Reference Bureau 2006). According to the United Nations Under-Secretary General for Economic and Social Affairs, 62% of all international migration that occurs is from



the Southern Hemisphere to the Northern Hemisphere (Ocampo 2006). Mexico is one of the countries that has lost population due to migration and the United States has, of course, gained. By 2003, over ten million Mexicans had left Mexico for the United States, which represents about 9% of the Mexican population (Borjas 2007).

2. Major Immigration Waves to the US

The United States has most broadly experienced three major waves of immigration (Martin 2010). The first was roughly between 1600 and 1880 and was comprised of immigrants from a variety of nations in the northern and western parts of Europe, including, for example, England, Holland, Sweden, Germany, France and Spain. In fact, approximately 90% of the immigrants in this first wave came from northern and western Europe. Apart from the explorers, many of these early immigrants left Europe in search of freedom, particularly religious freedom, and they came with their families to settle in colonies that later became states. These groups of immigrants are commonly identified as the “settlers” of the United States (Martin 2010).

Generally speaking, this first wave of immigrants was fairly homogenous in appearance (e.g., skin color) and religious practice (Protestant). These immigrants were “welcomed” to the colonies and later to the states; in many cases they were even welcomed by the indigenous peoples that lived in the Americas at the time. In other words, these early immigrants did not see each other or themselves as being so culturally different as to be threatening to American culture. Although slavery was practiced during part of this period, African slaves were not viewed or treated as equal human beings and their forced migration was not seen as a threat, but an asset. Furthermore, slaves had no legal power to withstand assimilation or to influence American culture; for example, they were given American names in English (including surnames), taught to practice Christianity and forced to learn basic English.

The second major wave of migration to the US was different from the first in several respects, including immigrants’ countries of origin and reasons for emigrating (Rystad 1992). As a group, these immigrants came from the countries that comprise southern and eastern Europe, such as Italy, Greece, Czechoslovakia and Poland. They generally emigrated from these countries due to economic reasons in an effort to escape poverty; they migrated to the United States specifically in search of opportunities for employment.

The existing population in the United States, mostly first-wave immigrants and their descendants, were not welcoming of this second wave of immigrants. Particularly by the early 1900s, they viewed the people of southern and eastern Europe as being “too different” in, for example, language, customs and traditions (Rystad 1992). The Americans complained that the “new” immigrants were not interested in assimilating to

American culture, including adopting the English language. Additionally, these second-wave immigrants were viewed as having different religions, such as Catholicism and Judaism, which threatened the traditional Protestant population. Thus, many American cities and states established local ordinances and laws against the new immigrants and they pressured the Congress to establish federal laws forbidding or greatly limiting immigration from countries in southern and eastern Europe. Congress listened to these pleas and enacted the National Origins System (described in greater detail below) that greatly disfavored immigrants from southern and eastern Europe (as well as Asia) and favored those from northern and western European nations.

The third major wave of immigration started in 1965 and continues to the present (Zolberg 1989). This current wave was triggered by a critical change in US immigration policies and laws. The Immigration Reform Act of 1965 established a somewhat more universal approach to immigration by eliminating the quota system that had been in place since 1921 and, thus, opened immigration to countries and regions previously excluded or greatly limited, such as Asia (China, Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, etc.) and Latin America (Mexico, Guatemala, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, etc.). Hence, since 1965, the majority (about 80%) of legal immigrants to the United States have come from Asia and Latin America, particularly China and Mexico. These “newest” immigrants have also been viewed as not wanting to assimilate to American customs and traditions and being resistant to learning English (Rystad 1992).

Empirically, however, the reality of the immigration process clearly demonstrates that assimilation is a generational phenomenon and that by the third generation, almost complete assimilation has occurred; even if a few traces of the original culture remain, they tend to be symbolic rather than genuine everyday practices (Rystad 1992). Still, the general American public, particularly its conservative element and conservative politicians, tend to focus on the present-day situation and fail to take a longer view of the immigration process. Thus, this portion of the American public is intent on establishing laws and policies to stop or greatly restrict immigration of people they define as undesirable — often undesirable simply because of their culture, such as Mexicans. Since the attack on the Twin Towers in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington, DC, on September 11, 2001 (these events have been popularly known since then as 9/11), anti-immigrant sentiment has led to policies and practices that target people from the Middle East as well (Critelli 2008).

3. Brief History of Mexicans in the US

Mexicans have resided in what is now the United States since long before the current borders were established, particularly in the area known as the American Southwest. They were here as explorers and as settlers. However, the common history of Mexican migration to the US usually begins with

the establishment of the current US-Mexico border in 1848, which was finalized in 1853 with the Gadsden Purchase (Gutiérrez 1995). At the end of the Mexican-American War, Mexico was forced to cede almost half its territory to the United States as part of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, including California, Nevada, Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and part of Texas (the other part had already been lost to the US).

In the years after the present-day border was established and into the early part of the twentieth century, the US-Mexico border was mostly unregulated and unprotected. Mexicans were encouraged by American farmers and ranchers to come to work in the United States, and many did. Furthermore, during the early part of the twentieth century (the period of the Mexican Revolution, roughly 1910-1920), many Mexicans immigrated to the United States to flee the war. Even when the national origins quotas were established in 1921, Mexican immigration was not restricted by the quota system.

US immigration laws and policies pertaining to Mexican immigration have changed over time. At times the border has been open and any Mexican wishing to enter the US simply had to pay fifty cents (or be vaccinated at the border, as when the lead author first entered the US in 1957). At other times, particularly during periods of economic downturns, such as during the Great Depression of the 1930s or during the current one, the border gets sealed and Mexican immigrants are not welcome. Of course, given the US's dependence on cheap labor from Mexico, even during difficult economic times, a certain number of Mexicans are needed to do menial labor, such as harvest crops. Thus, the border has never been completely sealed to Mexican immigrants nor, we believe, is it in the best interest of the US to seal it completely. Mostly, America wants to regulate the volume of immigration — the number of immigrants that enter at any given period — to allow more immigrants during periods of high economic growth and low unemployment and fewer immigrants when the economy is in a recession.

Although during the 1930s Mexicans were rounded up and deported as a part of what was termed “Mexican Repatriation” (Balderrama and Rodriguez 1995), by the early 1940s they were being actively recruited by American farmers. During World War II, the US experienced a shortage of male laborers and thus proposed the Bracero Program to Mexico. This bilateral program was signed by both the US and Mexican governments as a four-year (1942-45) wartime measure and permitted the recruitment and immigration of Mexican men to perform seasonal farm and agricultural work in the US (incidentally, the lead author's father served as a *bracero* for several years in the 1940s). The Bracero Program was deemed to be so successful by both governments that even long after World War II ended, the program was still operating, with as many as one million participants (Gutiérrez 1995). Although the US government wanted to continue the Bracero Program, the program officially ended in 1964 because the Mexican government refused to sign the continuation agreement. Mexico halted negotiations primarily because the US government would not agree to a

minimum wage and help with other issues such as housing and sanitation for the *braceros* (as these workers were known).

The Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 ended the national origins quota system and created a more balanced approach to legal immigration. Thus, the countries and regions that were previously disfavored (Asia and Latin America) were now able to compete for available slots. Additionally, one of the major goals of this legislation was “family reunification.” Both the more level playing field and the family reunification approach gave Mexican immigrants an opportunity to immigrate legally in larger numbers than was possible before. Since then, Mexican immigrants have formed the largest number of legal immigrants from any single country (Escobar Latapí and Martin 2008). Still, the number of legal slots for Mexican immigrants has never been enough to meet the demand, both in terms of the number of Mexicans interested in immigrating and of the number of low-paid employees needed in the US, particularly in seasonal work such as agriculture. Thus, since at least 1964 with the ending of the Bracero Program, the volume of *unauthorized* Mexican immigrants has been rising and currently numbers approximately 6.6 million (about 60% of the estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants in the US). More recently, several scholars have documented the consequences of North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) on illegal immigration, including the dismantling of jobs in Mexico and the creation of jobs in the US such as in the poultry industry (Alba 2008; Schwartzman 2009).

In sum, the history of Mexican migration out of Mexico and into the United States has been based on both push factors (low wages, unemployment and underemployment in Mexico) and pull factors (jobs and higher wages in the US). The nature of this migration has been greatly influenced by US immigration laws and policies as well as by the state of the economy. Thus, at times Mexican immigrants have been welcomed, indeed actively recruited, and at other times they have been aggressively rounded up and deported and there has been an attempt to seal the border. Every time the economy turns sour, Mexican immigrants become a “problem” and anti-Mexican bashing becomes popular, as is presently the case. When the economy is doing well and the unemployment rate in the US is low, Mexicans immigrants are more welcome.

4. *INS and ICE*

Since 1949, Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) has been housed in the United States Department of Justice. This federal agency was responsible for both enforcement and services pertaining to all matters of immigration and citizenship. That is, enforcement of all immigration laws and the provision of various services such as issuing passports and processing those individuals seeking US citizenship through naturalization. As a result of the events of 9/11, however, a new Cabinet-level department was formed: the US Department of Homeland Security. It was at this juncture that border enforcement and naturalization services were separated into

two agencies. Enforcement, including the Border Patrol, is now housed under Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Although the Border Patrol's main purpose today is to keep out undocumented Mexican immigrants (and other unauthorized border crossers), this population was not the primary reason for initially creating the Border Patrol in the late 1800s. This agency was originally established primarily to keep out Chinese immigrants who were excluded from entering the US directly (as a result of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882) and who were entering the US through Mexico.

By using the terrorist attacks of 9/11 as justification, immigration enforcement became a matter of "national security" and the Border Patrol's budget became almost a blank check — i.e., this agency received all (and more than) the funds it reported that it needed to do its job of "securing the border." As a result, the size of the Border Patrol force increased rapidly, from approximately 2,500 agents in 1992 to 12,000 in 2006 and over 20,000 in 2011. In addition to the many agents (about 80%) assigned to the US-Mexico border, both Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama assigned thousands of members (at one time, as many as 6,000) of the National Guard to assist the Border Patrol along the US-Mexico border. There are now so many Border Patrol agents and National Guard members along the border compared to the relatively few unauthorized border crossers that the agents are frequently found sitting playing video games or sleeping in their vehicles. A recent newspaper article in the *Arizona Daily Star*, the local Tucson newspaper, noted that Border Patrol agents are "bored" on the job because there is nothing to do (Marosi 2011).

The overwhelming majority of Border Patrol agents are assigned to the US border with Mexico which measures 2,000 miles (the US-Canada border is twice as long, 4,000 miles but relatively few agents are patrolling it). Additionally, the Border Patrol's budget increased rapidly to cover expanding investments in such items as: vehicles, aircraft (small airplanes, surveillance drones, helicopters, etc.), dogs, horses (for mounted patrol), fences (from physical to virtual), stadium lighting at night along various sections of the border, and other technology and gadgets, some of which, although extremely costly, did not work. For example, a virtual fence (made up of surveillance cameras) was developed by Boeing at a cost of \$20.6 million and was intended to cover a twenty-eight-mile area of border south of Tucson (Hsu 2008). Large towers were installed in a portion of the Arizona border with Mexico to hold the cameras for the virtual fence but when the cameras were mounted, they were useless, they simply did not work. After only a few weeks, the cameras were removed, though the towers remain. After spending nearly \$1 billion (\$15 million per mile) on this program and doing nothing to improve security, the Obama administration finally ended it on January 14, 2011 (Jessup 2011).

5. Major Border Patrol Operations

As a para-military organization, the US Border Patrol regularly plans and implements enforcement initiatives under the nomenclature of "opera-

tions” (Hernández 2010). The following is a list of some of the major operations carried out by the Border Patrol, particularly those that relate to Mexican immigrants and the US-Mexico border.

- Repatriation, 1930s: About 400,000 Mexicans were deported during the period of the Great Depression.
- Wetback, 1952: Over two million Mexicans were rounded up, as far as in the Midwest, and deported.
- Blockade, 1993: This operation was focused on the border around El Paso, Texas. The goal was to dramatically decrease undocumented immigration through this urban border area (Ciudad Juárez-El Paso) by increasing the number of agents and equipment. The two-week operation was launched the morning of September 19, 2003 with deployment of 400 Border Patrol agents along a central twenty-mile segment of the border. The initiative was deemed so successful that it was continued in this area as Operation Hold the Line and was also implemented in other areas under a different name (see the next bullet point). The El Paso Sector’s Border Patrol Chief, Silvestre Reyes, was later promoted to Director of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the agency under which the Border Patrol operated until ICE was formed after 9/11.
- Gatekeeper, 1994: Launched on October 1 under President Bill Clinton, this initiative continued Operation Blockade to the San Diego Sector. The operation included increasing the number of Border Patrol agents in that sector, as well as implementing technology such as infrared surveillance cameras, seismic field sensors, and real-time data maps. By 1997, the Border Patrol’s budget had doubled to \$800 million (Nevins 2010). Operation Gatekeeper was continued under President George W. Bush: “In the past two years, the Bush administration has spent \$100 million on sophisticated surveillance gear and a high-powered information network to keep undocumented immigrants out” (Mechanic 2003). Additionally, on Thursday, October 26, 2006, President Bush signed into law the Secure Fence Act which approved building 700 miles of fencing along the US-Mexico border. This law also authorized more checkpoints and lighting as well as increasing the use of modern technology like cameras, satellites, and unmanned aerial vehicles such as drones. Operation Gatekeeper was also implemented in the Tucson Border Patrol Sector, which includes most of Arizona’s border with Mexico, as Operation Safeguard.
- Jumpstart, 2006: This initiative incorporated the use of 6,000 National Guard military personnel along the US-Mexico border to assist the Border Patrol in surveillance and building the fence.

The result of these recent initiatives that concentrate Border Patrol agents, fencing and technology along urban areas has been termed the “funnel effect:” since it has become more difficult for undocumented immigrants to cross in populated areas, they have been forced to cross in rural areas (Rubio-Goldsmith 2006). Indeed, the funneling has resulted in a significant increase in both the number of apprehensions and migrant deaths in the Arizona desert. For example, the number of apprehensions

in the Tucson Sector increased from 139,473 in 1994 to 491,771 in 2004 (USBP 1998; USBP 2004). Even more dramatically, the number of recovered human remains increased from nine in 1990 to 201 in 2005.

6. *Major US Immigration Legislation*

Migration is highly dependent on the laws of both the sending and receiving countries. Although in modern times we tend not to focus on emigration, those leaving a country, but only on immigration, those who enter, even today, most countries control both who can leave and who can enter and under what conditions. Hence, emigration and immigration are dependent on laws. This control is undertaken through laws enacted and implemented at the level of the nation states, thus the distinction between “legal” emigration and immigration (that movement of people that is sanctioned by law) and “illegal” emigration and immigration (the movement of people not sanctioned by law). In other words, the categories of people (ages, ethnicities/races, religions, genders, political beliefs/practices, health status, occupation, etc.) and nations of origin and destinations are highly controlled by laws, independent of the social or ecological forces driving migration.

In the United States, one can easily see how the nation’s laws have resulted in who gets in, when, and under what conditions. Major Congressional immigration legislation, includes for example, the following:

- Chinese Exclusion Act. Enacted in 1882, this legislation was specifically aimed at keeping Chinese immigrants out of the United States. Although the Chinese were recruited to help complete the transcontinental railroad, once the railroad was completed and with the bust of gold mining in California where most of these Chinese immigrants then lived, Chinese people were no longer welcome. Initially enacted for a ten-year period, the Chinese Exclusion Act was continually renewed until finally repealed in 1942.

- Gentleman’s Agreement: Enacted in 1908, this informal agreement was entered into between the US and Japan and its goal was to prevent Japanese citizens from both leaving Japan and entering the United States. This agreement was in place until 1924.

- National Origins System: This legislation, enacted in 1921 that remained in place (with some modifications along the way) until 1965, established a quota system based on county of origin. It intentionally had the goal of privileging certain countries (those in northern and western Europe) and diminishing (almost stopping) immigration from others (those in southern and eastern Europe and in Asia). For example, Great Britain was permitted 65,721 immigrants per year while Greece was only allowed 307 (Ngai 1999). Initially, Mexico, Latin America and other countries in the Western Hemisphere were not included in the quota system but they were added later.

- Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965: This legislation included several components, including two critical changes: 1) ending the national

origins quota system that had been in place for some countries since 1921; and 2) establishing a family “reunification” system, giving preference to immigrants with family already in the United States, particularly members of the nuclear family (parents, spouses and children).

- Immigration Reform and Control Act: Enacted in 1986, this legislation had three main components: 1) a one-time legalization (“amnesty”) program; 2) employer sanctions for employers who knowingly hire undocumented (“illegal”) immigrants; and 3) enhanced border control and surveillance.

- Illegal Immigration Reform and Responsibility Act: This legislation was enacted in 1996 and included two main components: 1) deportations for criminal activity; and 2) additional border control and surveillance.

7. Congressional Action and In-Action

For the past fifteen years, the US Congress has been unwilling to take any dramatic action on immigration reform. Although Congress has had opportunities to undertake comprehensive immigration reform (President George W. Bush proposed a plan as did Senators Ted Kennedy and John McCain, two of the most powerful members of Congress), it has only approved minor legislation dealing with enforcement (such as the building of the fence along the border with Mexico and additional funds for ICE and the Border Patrol). Congress has been unwilling to pass legislation, for example, such as the DREAM Act, a bill that has been before it several times. This bill would give young undocumented immigrants who graduate from American high schools the opportunity for legalization through either service in the military or attending college.

During his campaign for the presidency in 2008, President Barack Obama supported both the DREAM Act and comprehensive immigration reform. Yet, during his first two years in office and even with a Congress controlled by Democrats, he was unable to move either one of these measures through Congress. During the launch of his re-election campaign in April 2010, President Obama again spoke forcefully in favor of both the DREAM Act and comprehensive immigration reform and promised to pursue both initiatives through Congress. Given the anti-Obama Congress, now controlled by Republicans, it is unlikely that either issues will pass, and certainly not before the elections in November 2012. Thus, in the near future, we are likely to see more of the same: Congressional inaction on comprehensive immigration reform and action only for greater enforcement.

8. Anti-Immigration Rhetoric

The following are only a few examples of the thousands of vitriolic pieces of rhetoric regarding undocumented immigrants, specifically Spanish-speakers, that can be found in newspapers, magazine, the Internet and on radio and television:

- “The best way to help illegal aliens is by stopping illegal immigration.” (Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner, R-WI)
- “This is what Americans want. They want safe borders and they want safe ballots.” (Rep. John Mica, R-FL)
- Springfield, Tennessee, considers banning Hispanics on public parks because some visitors are speaking Spanish.
- “If they’re speaking Spanish, I tend to think they are illegal.” (Alderman Ken Cherry)
- “The fence will safeguard the nation.” (Sen. Bill Frist, then Senate Majority Leader, R-TN)
- “The fence will protect the American people.” (Pres. George W. Bush)
- “We need the National Guard to clean out all our cities and round them up [illegal immigrants]. . . They have no problem slitting your throat and taking your money or selling drugs to your kids or raping your daughters, and they are evil people.” (Chris Simcox, co-founder of the Minuteman Project and president of the Minuteman Civil Defense Corps. As quoted in the Southern Poverty Law Center’s Intelligence Report Magazine, Summer 2005.)
- “My message to them is, not in two weeks, not in two months, not in two years, never! We must be clear that we will not surrender America and we will not turn the United States over to the invaders from south of the border.” (Rep. Virgil Goode (R-VA), at the March for America, Washington, DC, June 18, 2007.)
- “I don’t care if Mexicans pile up against that fence . . . just run a couple of taco trucks up and down the line. . .” (Neal Boortz, anti-immigrant talk radio host on WSB-AM in Atlanta on June 18, 2007.)
- “Terrorists are also walking in unopposed; our southwestern border is littered with Arabic papers and Islamic prayer rugs.” (Jim Gilchrist, founder of Minutemen Project. From a press release announcing the forthcoming publication of a new book co-authored with Jerome R. Corsi, February 2006.)
- “What we’ll do is randomly pick one night every week where we will kill whoever crosses the border. . . step over there and you die. You get to decide whether it’s your lucky night or not. I think that would be more fun.” (Brian James, anti-immigrant talk radio host with KFYI-AM in Phoenix. Suggesting a solution to the immigration problem in Arizona while filling in for the regular host, March 2006.)
- “We’ve got to make it in this country so (immigrants) can’t exist here. . . We’ve got to rattle their teeth and put their feet to the fire!” (Terry Anderson, anti-immigrant talk radio host with KRLA in Los Angeles. Speaking at a “Hold Their Feet to the Fire” anti-immigrant rally organized by the Federation of American Immigration Reform, April 22, 2007.)
- “We have the inherent right to enforce federal immigration law. If Washington doesn’t like it, I recommend they change the laws.” (Sheriff of Maricopa County, Joe Arpaio)
- “The majority of the illegal trespassers that are coming into the state of Arizona are under the direction and control of organized drug cartels and they are bringing drugs in.” (Arizona Governor Jan Brewer)

- “I will not back off until we solve the problem of this illegal invasion. Invaders, that’s what they are. Invaders on the American sovereignty and it can’t be tolerated.” (Russell Pearce, Arizona State Senator)

9. *Recent State Immigration Bills*

Although historically and across the globe the control of both emigration and immigration has been the purview of federal governments, and so it has been with the United States, beginning in 1994 with the passage of Proposition 187 in California and escalating rapidly from 2000 to the present, almost every state legislature in the US has introduced bills specifically directed at controlling immigration, particularly unauthorized (“illegal”) immigration from Mexico, or legislation aimed at a particular immigrant group. Proposition 187 was passed by the voters with 59% voting in favor. This law, although quickly challenged in the courts and struck down as being unconstitutional, would have prohibited undocumented immigrants from receiving public education and health services in California. Since then, many states have passed some form of anti-immigration legislation, Arizona being the most notable both because of the number of bills introduced and for the passing of Senate Bill 1070, the most comprehensive and draconian anti-immigration legislation passed by any state to date. This law, also challenged in the courts and still under review, received worldwide attention. Other examples of anti-immigration and anti-Hispanic legislation from Arizona follow:

- 1986: English-Only; This law, passed by the Legislature and then ruled unconstitutional, made English the “official” language of Arizona and was aimed at Spanish-speaking immigrants, particularly from Mexico.

- 2000: Proposition 203; this law was passed by the voters and prohibits instruction in any language other than English beyond a two-year transitional period. Despite the fact that bilingual education became common educational practice, particularly in schools in the American Southwest, after the US Supreme Court ruled on *Lau vs. Nichols* in 1974.

- 2006: Although the earlier English-Only law was found to be unconstitutional, the conservative Legislature continued to pursue the theme and passed a somewhat narrower law requiring that all official actions “be conducted in English.”

- 2006: The voters passed a Referendum with various components prohibiting the use of state funds for: 1) adult education of undocumented adults; 2) child care for undocumented children; and 3) waivers, grants and other financial assistance for college students who are not US citizens or permanent residents.

Additional anti-immigration bills were introduced in every session of the Legislature since then but most did not pass, including making it illegal to rent housing to undocumented immigrants or issue them a state driver’s license.

10. *Update Since 2006*

The trend for states throughout the United States to enact anti-immigration legislation has continued to the present. However, Arizona has become known as the most anti-immigrant, anti-Mexican state for many reasons: Senator Russell Pearce's pushing of bills against these groups through the Republican controlled Legislature; Sheriff Joe Arpaio's (known as "the toughest sheriff in America") harassment of Hispanics and raids of residences and work places in search of undocumented immigrants; and Governor Jan Brewer's comments against immigrants and signing the anti-immigration legislation passed by the Legislature, particularly SB1070 (described below). As Sheriff Clarence Dupnik of Pima County put it after the shooting of Representative Gabrielle Giffords: "Arizona has become the Mecca for racism and bigotry" (Barr 2011). Following are some of the laws that were passed in Arizona in more recent years:

- 2008: Legal Arizona Workers Act: this law requires employers to use E-Verify, a national data base, to determine the eligibility/legality of employees to work in the United States.

- 2010: SB 1070; this law, with several specific components, is unequivocally the most draconian state legislation passed to date. Among other things, police must question anyone they presume to be "illegal" about their immigration status and pursue deportation through the legal system. As a result of Gov. Brewer signing this bill into law, Congressman Raúl Grijalva called for a boycott of Arizona. The legality of this law was challenged in court and the judge placed an injunction on various sections that need to be reviewed. Since its passing in Arizona, several other states have enacted similar legislation.

- 2010: HB 2281; This law was pushed by the previous Arizona Secretary of Education, Tom Horne, and bans ethnic studies programs in public schools, specifically in Tucson Unified School District.

- 2010: Although not a bill, the AZ Dept. of Education enacted a policy that targets teachers who speak "heavily accented" English. But as the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) wrote, what matters most is not the "accent" of the teacher, but whether or not the teacher "understands students and the dynamics of language learning."

- During the 2011 legislative session, Senator Pearce submitted (although they did not pass because of the pressure he and other legislators received from the business community which had been negatively impacted by the boycott over SB 1070), several anti-immigration bills, including:

- A bill that would require public schools to count undocumented children and require the state to withhold funds for such children.

- Citizenship by birth, challenging the 14th Amendment to the US Constitution, would only be granted to children born in Arizona if at least one parent was a US citizen (the US constitution grants citizenship to anyone born in the United States, regardless of parents' immigration status).

11. *What is needed?*

How is the United States going to emerge from this mess, where states have hijacked and run amuck with immigration legislation? Ideally, and particularly in the case of Mexico, where the majority of unauthorized immigration originates, the issue would be addressed bilaterally; that is, two governments working together, recognizing that migration has its push (in Mexico) and pull (in the US) factors. Such an approach is not uncommon; recall, for example, the Gentleman's Agreement with Japan or the Bracero Program with Mexico.

Regardless of whether immigration reform is approached bilaterally or unilaterally, such reform must be both enacted at the federal level and it must be comprehensive. State-level immigration legislation is simply inappropriate and piecemeal reform that will not solve the issues of greatest concern. At the minimum, comprehensive immigration legislation would address the following (not listed in any particular order):

- **Legalization program:** At the beginning of 2011, it was estimated that there are approximately eleven million undocumented immigrants in the United States and most of them are part of mixed-status families — families in which some members are US citizens by birth, others hold permanent resident alien visas and others are in the country without any proper documents. Thus, the question arises as to what should be done with unauthorized immigrants already living in the US, most of who have lived here for many years, have jobs, pay taxes and are law-abiding residents. Comprehensive immigration reform should provide a path to legalization for these individuals, similar to the successful legalization program of the mid-1980s.

- **Guest worker program:** Establish a guest worker program for seasonal workers with appropriate safeguards for both employees and employers.

- **Legal “permanent” immigration:** Increase the number of visas based on employment needs in the US and help close off undocumented immigration.

- **Enforcement:** No one who proposes or supports comprehensive immigration reform argues against enforcement being one of its components. On the contrary, a reasonable enforcement program is taken as a given. Still, when there are so many Border Patrol agents that they are bored on the job or when two fences are built (as is the case along the Tijuana-California border) and a third is proposed, one can question the reasonableness of, and rationale for continuing to increase the Border Patrol's budget.

- **Promote integration:** Although those on the political right complain that immigrants are not assimilating, there are few services to help immigrants integrate into American society, such as through the teaching of English and citizenship classes that teach American democracy and its foundational principles, including civic involvement, including voting.

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BETWEEN BORDERS AND MARGINS: RECONCEPTUALIZING ALTERITY

Carlos Gallego

I would like to begin with a quote from a young female resident of Clichy-sous-Bois who is responding to the violence that has exploded in the Parisian suburb following the deaths of two youths in late October 2005. It reads:

We just want to be recognized as human beings, instead of being seen as Arabs or blacks. We don't all want new mosques—that's only important for a few people, yet that's what the state does. Burning cars does not help anyone. It just gives a bad impression—we are not animals. (Sabek 2006, 11)

I begin with this quote because I believe it to be representative of a certain mentality concerning the ubiquity of borders in our world. The situation in France, I believe, *is* one that arises from borders — not only the international borders that ascribe secondary citizen status to immigrants, but also to the geographical, racial, and economic borders that reinforce such prejudice. While some argue that the problem in France is mostly due to an antiquated secular and universalist vision that fails to account for ethnic and religious differences, I would argue that it is the obsession with differences, characteristic of our historical moment, that is at the root of this civil unrest.

I make this claim because I feel that the situation in France is disturbingly similar to the problems that racial minorities face in the United States. Most recently, the aftermath of hurricane Katrina made evident how race and poverty continue to be systemic problems in this nation, born out of a legacy of colonialism, slavery and oppression. But we do not have to wait for or look to natural disasters to confirm the persistence of historically validated structural inequalities. In the US Southwest, for example, the legacy of colonialism takes on many forms, such as the violence that permeates Native American reservations or the countless deaths attributed to undocumented immigration along the US-Mexico border, that “1,950 mile-long open wound” poeticized by the late Gloria Anzaldúa (1987, 2). Like France and most other first world nations, the United States has exploited foreign lands and resources without fully accepting the peoples affected by such exploitation. In fact, contempt seems to be the institutional policy toward colonized, and eventually marginalized,



peoples; and as the young woman from Clichy-sous-Bois observes, recognition is lacking in most of these communities — a recognition that promises, if not political and economic equality, then at least equal opportunity. The difficulty, however, is in determining what form this recognition takes, or, more problematically, if recognition is even the answer.

The problem of recognition is one that the Chicano/a literary community has been addressing for decades. Whether expressed through the rhetoric of nationalism, multiculturalism, or identity politics, recognition has been a central concern for Chicano/a poets and writers, often serving as a guiding philosophical principle in many literary texts. One reason for this is the fact that the politics of recognition entail a concrete sense of identity, another issue central to Chicano/a studies. The problem of representing a subject position that can be ideologically defined, socially located, and politically recognized has been key in the formation and development of Chicano/a literature.

A brief comparative analysis of Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales’ famous poem, *I am Joaquín* (1967), and Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987), might help clarify this point. The principal aim of Gonzales’ epic poem is to define the Chicano/a community by creating a historical-literary genealogy that connects a heroic Mexican past with a modern American condition of economic immobility and cultural assimilation. The poem tells the story of a young narrator, Joaquín, who feels alienated by modernity, and who questions the basis and value of his contemporary existence. Understanding that his ancestors’ refusal to assimilate to the American mainstream has resulted in economic and cultural marginalization, Joaquín seeks refuge in the strength of his culture, in “the safety within the / circle of life — / MY OWN PEOPLE” (Gonzales 1972, 12). Here, the poem reverts to a typical, epic examination of the past as a method of understanding the self and, more importantly, the role of the self as citizen of a nation. Joaquín’s genealogical examination reveals that he is the incarnation of a Hegelian dialectical tension between master and slave, that he is the product of a violent Spanish-Aztec marriage. Rather than critically reflecting on the ontological-existential nature of this condition and the possible insight that such a condition enables, Joaquín utilizes his complex history as a rallying cry for Chicano unification, claiming ties with Mexican history and iconography, particularly the figures of Zapata, Villa, and Cuauhtémoc, as a means of differentiating himself from Anglo-American culture. The poem thus strives toward the unification of a disconnected community by advocating cultural pride through historical awareness and political resistance to institutional assimilation.

The success of the poem is evident in its canonical status as one of the first major literary works to identify itself as “Chicano.” It did, in many ways, provide a recognizable subject position that gave voice to a marginalized community. Nonetheless, the poem’s definition of what it meant to be “Chicano” was questioned by members of the community who could not, or would not, identify with that subject position. One of the most insightful criticisms was voiced by Chicanas who called attention to the poem’s sexist underpinnings — to the fact that the only active agents in the

poem are men, while women are relegated to a position of passivity and servitude. Finding the ideology of *I am Joaquín* to be lacking and misrepresentative of the Chicano/a experience, writers like Anzaldúa responded with alternative subject positions that provided less deterministic possibilities. The “new Mestiza,” as defined in *Borderlands/La Frontera*, provides an example of such an alternative. In this work, Anzaldúa defines the new Mestiza as a hybrid that “undergoes a struggle of the flesh, a struggle of borders, an inner war” (Anzaldúa 1987, 70), and who resolves such tensions by “developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity. . . [and by having] a plural personality, [and operating] in a pluralistic mode” (79). Responding to the sexism underlying traditional representations of the Chicano experience, Anzaldúa’s new Mestiza incorporates a simultaneous multiplicity that is considered exemplary rather than problematic: “Because I, a Mestiza, / continually walk out of one culture / and into another, / because I am in all cultures at the same time” (77).

Anzaldúa’s overcoming of the ideological limitations inherent in previous conceptions of Chicano/a subjectivity makes her a champion among those who advocate a model of recognition founded on a philosophy of difference and multicultural awareness. However, years after the publication of *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Anzaldúa herself would question such a model. In her preface to the anthology *this bridge we call home* (2002), she states: “Twenty-one years ago we struggled with the recognition of difference within the context of commonality. Today we grapple with the recognition of commonality within the context of difference” (Anzaldúa and Keating 2002, 2). Anzaldúa’s refocus from an emphasis on difference to commonality is an important first step toward a re-conceptualization of subjectivity. However, I would also argue that this critique has been present in Chicano/a literature for decades, yet has somehow suffered from its own lack of recognition. As Juan Bruce-Novoa (1990) argues, authors like Oscar “Zeta” Acosta and Cecile Pineda have remained at the margins of the Chicano/a literary canon due to their “troublesome” representations of Chicano/a subjectivity. Acosta, for example, in *The Revolt of the Cockroach People* (1989), describes the Chicano insurrection of the 1960s and 1970s as a collective moment of *méconnaissance* or misrecognition. In this work, Acosta explores the dark, carnivalesque underside of the Chicano civil rights movement, depicting the world of sex, violence, and drugs that existed alongside the more publicly celebrated political activism (yet another reason why Acosta remains a problematic figure for many critics). Similar to the situational ethics of Alain Badiou (2001), who states that only by abandoning the “ideology of victimhood” — of oppressor and oppressed — can a radical politics be achieved, Acosta also de-subjectifies his ideological critique in *The Revolt*. Rather than continue with a politics of recognition and difference, Acosta posits a more radical vision founded on a logic of sameness, which he locates in the metaphor of the “cockroach,” his symbol for an anonymous collective composed of the disenfranchised, the marginalized and the dispossessed.

This shift from a politics of identity and difference to a politics of non-identity and sameness is even more evident in Cecile Pineda's novel *Face* (2003), which I read as an allegory for that unspeakable, unnameable and undecidable point that — again, paraphrasing Alain Badiou — marks the emergence of a truth in a given situation, thus allowing for the possibility of a radically new model of subjectivization. For those unfamiliar with the novel, it is important to note that *Face* is based on true events, narrating a remarkable story of lost love, social rejection, economic hardship, isolation, and the psychological effects of alienation.

Face is, like many of Kafka's tales, a fantastic yet ordinary narrative — that of a man (Helio Cara) who has the unlucky experience of suffering an accident and remaining permanently scarred as a result of it. He, in fact, loses his face and, alienated by a society unwilling to recognize his non-identity, is forced to seek shelter in the interior of Brazil. Yet, as in Kafka's "Metamorphosis", this is not a simple tale of misfortune. There is a uniqueness — a particularity — to Helio Cara's story that manages to astound, to beg the questions "is this real?" and "how is this possible?" This, of course, refers to the fact that Helio takes it upon himself to reconstruct his countenance, grafting sections of skin from his chest and sewing them to his face, thus slowly rebuilding one of nature's most essential signifiers.

I find that the novel's power, however, lies not in the triumph of constructability — which would align it with a politics of identity and recognition — but rather in its presentation of failure and of the will power required to endure the difficult truths that emerge from failure. As the experiences of Helio Cara demonstrate, the limitations or radical finitude commonly associated with failure can also bring to light a hopefulness usually associated with infinite possibility. Helio's anonymity — his reduction to an amassment of "particles tattooed onto the skin" (Pineda, 2003, 19) — makes manifest the latent truth of our generic being, the fundamental commonality that binds our existence. This is the reason why his face remains nondescript, absent of any differentiating characteristics that would sustain a sense of identity. Helio's lack of face reveals, in Badiou's terms, an infinite multiplicity, a terrifying void, that, like a blank page, is capable of reflecting back innumerable possibilities.

Thus, rather than focus on the differences attributed to marginal identities, and the recognition of such differences, "troublesome" authors like Acosta and Pineda concentrate on the issues of sameness and impossibility. By sameness I mean that improbable yet constantly present genericity that binds our "being" together — that universality made momentarily apparent by seemingly impossible causes and events that go beyond the limits of a given situation — like the non-identity of a cockroach revolution or a faceless man. Such radical subjectivity invites a sameness that exists on the "outside," beyond a politics of recognition and representation, rendering difference and identity irrelevant. And it is precisely this beyond — this "being" at the threshold of subjectivity — that makes marginality an important area of study, especially when liberated from particular versions of multicultural-

ism. Thus, marginality should be analyzed, not on the basis of recognition, but rather as an example — a symptom if you will — of non-recognition, of the failure of demarcation and the limits of ideological confinement.

To conclude, I would like to return to that quote from the young resident of Clichy-sous-Bois. I believe that her observations on the riots in France speak to many of the issues I have touched upon. First is the obvious yet easily overlooked desire to be recognized as human, and not differentiated as Arabs or blacks. This request speaks to the negative outcome of a politics founded on difference. As Badiou reminds us, “since differences are what there is, and since every truth is the coming-to-be of that which is not yet, so differences are then precisely what truths depose, or render insignificant. No light is shed on any concrete situation by the notion of the ‘recognition of the other’ ” (Badiou 2001, 27). In other words, a politics founded on the recognition of difference is practically doomed toward a policy of institutionalizing the obvious — different people are different. The unspoken conclusion to such thinking is, ironically, also a common theme in contemporary comedies addressing issues of race — different people are different and should thus be treated differently. While this may seem comical in a situation dealing with a new colleague at work of a different race and the awkward attempts at political correctness, it is not so funny when situated in a context of colonial oppression. In the latter scenario, different treatment for those deemed different — in other words, the recognition of difference — entails a completely different form of politics that has less to do with correctness and more to do with mastery and slavery. I assume we all agree on which side of the master-slave divide most “Arabs and blacks” currently fall.

Another similar point regards the young resident of Clichy-sous-Bois’s complaint that, although new mosques are not a priority, “that’s what the state does” (Sabek 2006, 11). Again, I believe this to be an insight into the limits and misguidance of recognition politics. The mosque, in this scenario, is representative of the recognition of difference — of a “correct” form of acknowledging the differences of those who are different. The problem is that this does little to resolve the deeper, more important structural issues of inequality. In fact, as the young woman observes, difference here helps maintain inequality, which leads to her next statement — that burning cars does not help anyone and that it gives a bad impression. As sociologists have observed, one of the main motivations underlying a riot is the expression of repressed frustration and anger. A riot is in many ways a social catharsis. However, what is brought into question is its strategic value. As the young woman observes, burning cars is of no political or social value. It helps no one, and it gives a bad impression. However, one thing it does do is send a smoke signal; it functions as a sign, a marker signaling a frustration with, and the possible destruction of, socially constructed borders.

Finally, the young resident claims that they are not animals. This is perhaps the most telling of all her observations. The fact that she feels com-

pelled to make such a statement speaks to the extent of the problem. As Badiou reminds us, there is very little difference in being a victim or being an animal. Both positions equally undermine your humanity. To say that they are not animals is also to state that they are not victims. They may endure violent structural inequalities, but this does not lessen their humanity. They are equally capable of transcending their animality in order to pursue a higher truth, of going beyond themselves and their given finitude in search of the infinite and impossible.

Thus, as writers like Acosta and Pineda, as well as the residents of Clichy-sous-Bois, make evident, it is not in the center of society — in the mainstream or *status quo* — where we will find the truth of our social condition or a clue to understanding our humanity; rather it is in the margins, in those unfortunate locations unlucky enough to pay testament to our failed, artificial barriers, that we find the truth of our falsehoods, the genuine artificiality of promises like “liberty and justice for all.” Those in the margins do not celebrate difference but instead suffer it. To recognize difference in this case is to perpetuate the problem of inequality — it is the same as offering a mosque, a statue, a holiday, or a stamp. It’s a nice gesture, but it does little to address the problem. To not exist as animals, we must first understand that we are more than the material differences that bind our existence — that we share in a radical genericity that underlies our being. Only then will we be able to re-conceptualize our differences in terms of sameness and leave behind a failed politics of recognition and identity.

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CROSSING THE IDEOLOGICAL DIVIDE:
THE US-MEXICAN BORDER IN CHICANO/A LITERATURE

Carlos Gallego

For those of us interested in literary cultures of the US Southwest, the current international crisis concerning border crossings and undocumented immigration in places like North America and Europe is certainly not a new phenomenon. We know, for example, that questions regarding the impact of borders on human existence have been at the center of Chicano/a literature for years. In fact, one could easily argue, as many critics have, that Chicano/a subjectivity is founded on the divisions created by borders, whether cultural, linguistic, ethnic, or national. The work of Gloria Anzaldúa and Guillermo Gómez-Peña, for instance, address the problematic relationship between borders and human subjectivity. Anzaldúa in particular is recognized as a paradigmatic figure in revolutionizing traditional interpretations of border politics and Chicano/a subjectivity. Her most influential work, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, examines the overlap between geopolitical, sexual, linguistic, and psychic borders:

The actual physical borderland that I'm dealing with in this book is the Texas-U.S., Southwest/Mexican border. The psychological borderlands, the sexual borderlands, and spiritual borderlands are not particular to the Southwest. In fact the Borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle, and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy. (Anzaldúa 1987, 19)

As Anzaldúa notes, physical borders are only one manifestation of the many borders that permeate our existence. Her understanding of the borderlands as an ambiguous space created by border tensions, and the new Mestiza as the embodiment of these tensions, underscores Anzaldúa's belief that hybrid, border subjects can exist outside specific geopolitical regions.

Along similar lines, Guillermo Gómez-Peña also addresses the consequences and effects of border crossings in his work *The New World Border* (1996). Weary of the fact that border experiences like hybridity

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can be easily appropriated and romanticized for ideological purposes, Gómez-Peña reminds us that it is the structures and networks of power that determine who can legally cross a border, thus limiting the negative experiences of border crossings to those without politico-economic privilege:

A willingness to cross borders and good intentions are not enough. Crossing the border from North to South has very different implications than crossing the same border from South to North; the border cannot possibly mean the same to a tourist as it does to an undocumented worker... "Transculture" and hybridity have different connotations for a person of color than for an Anglo American. (Gómez-Peña 1996, 9)

Although the experience of crossing borders may be readily accessible to any individual with enough politico-economic privilege, i.e., the tourist, Gómez-Peña is careful to point out that crossing the same border does not necessarily entail the same experience. While the privileged may willfully experience hybridity at the level of spectacle and simulacra, the less privileged are condemned to this condition due to socioeconomic marginalization and cultural displacement.

In addition to the creation of new subjectivities like the new Mestiza, the experience of crossing the border also serves a transformative function in Chicano/a literature, as demonstrated by Sandra Cisneros' bestselling novel *Caramelo* (2002). The novel centers on the trials and tribulations of the multigenerational Reyes family, as they travel back and forth between the United States and Mexico. Though the story deals with the particular histories of family members, especially Awful Grandmother, it also addresses the effects of border crossing on cultural memory, as Lala Reyes, the novel's narrator, recalls how "everything switches" once the family crosses the bridge separating Mexico and the United States (Cisneros 2002, 17). An even more recent example of the border as transformative space can be found in Alicia Alarcón's collection *The Border Patrol Ate My Dust* (2004), which recounts various immigrants' stories concerning their undocumented entry into the United States. The personal accounts range from the absurd, e.g., a Cuban family that boards a plane to New York only to land in France, to the tragically violent, e.g., a man witnesses the rape and possible murder of three young girls at the hands of their "coyotes." Overall, the twenty-nine anecdotes speak to the endurance these immigrants must exercise in the face of extreme existential displacement.

I mention these various examples in order to call attention to the philosophical tensions underlying the common interpretive model used in the study of borders and Chicano/a subjectivity, a model which I believe reinforces an ideological understanding of how these situations and subjectivities function. What I mean by this is that the common trend in all these examples is the tendency to define the border as a space of radical difference and transformation, as the space where a new subject

is created or through which a new world is entered. While it is difficult to argue against such an interpretation, especially in light of the apparent differences noticeable after crossing the border, like those described by Lala upon entering Mexico — “Sweets sweeter, colors brighter, the bitter more bitter” (Cisneros 2002, 17) — I believe that it is nonetheless important to question the logic — the actual thinking — that underlies our common understanding of how borders function. For example, can the pleasurable hybridity of a tourist experience be related to the fragmented condition of the undocumented immigrant? Why do we experience our everyday existential difference differently — more intensely — in border situations? And, perhaps most importantly, what divisions are borders meant to protect? And what happens when human individuals cross these divisions? What exactly does that crossing signify?

My point here is not to argue against the reality of the border experience. I do not wish to question the accuracy or validity of what a particular undocumented immigrant describes as his/her journey to the United States, like the accounts published in Alarcón’s collection; nor do I doubt the ambiguous existentiality of individuals who exist in a border region, as exemplified by Anzaldúa’s new *Mestiza*. My main intention is to critique what I see as the main cognitive or interpretive model by which we create meaning out of these border experiences. I actually agree that crossing the border entails an experience of displacement and that those who exist in these borderlands develop a unique, hybridized understanding of human existence. What I question, however, is the newness of this hybridity — whether or not it is a “new” human experience — and how the notion of “difference” in this context is being defined? Different from what? What is the basis for comparison?

As I previously mentioned, the two main features of border crossing that I wish to examine are its transformative qualities — the fact that the border is a space of difference and change — and also the idea that new, hybrid subjects are created out of border experiences. I think that these models of understanding continue to exert influence for two main reasons: first, the hybrid-subject model — with its romantic revolutionary aspirations — seems innovative because it complicates traditional notions of subjectivity while in actuality remaining conventional by working within the established structure of identity thinking. In other words, the idea of a new, border-hybrid subject adds another option or alternative to the existing structure of categorized and given subjectivities, but it never questions the basis of the structure itself. Second, the notion that borders function as transformative spaces, places where change and difference are intensely experienced, is in reality more misperception than it is fact. What I mean by this is that borders are actually vulnerable spaces within situations where difference needs to be promoted and enforced as a means of maintaining a specific definition of sameness. That is, borders, like the US-Mexico border, function as policed situations where institutionally defined makers of difference — undocumented versus documented immigrant,

for example — help reinforce a common ideological understanding of sameness (what makes one American, and how that particular form of sameness is defined and maintained).

I use the term situation here purposefully, as a means of evoking the philosophy of Alain Badiou, which I believe can help shed new light on how we understand borders, border crossings, and Chicano/a subjectivity. Badiou defines a situation as any consistent or structured multiplicity that is defined by a count-as-one (Badiou 2005). An example of such counting-as-one can be found in the situation we define as the “United States of America.” The political nation signified by this count-as-one is simply a situation in which a certain type of structuring takes place. Such structuring facilitates the boundaries of definition, helping differentiate between what belongs to the situation and what does not. Such structuring functions according to certain rules or axioms, such as the rule that any person with United States citizenship belongs to the situation termed the “United States.” Thus, although billions of people inhabit the Earth, only certain people will be counted in this situation. This is why social problems regarding certain groups of individuals who technically live their lives in the geographic space of the “United States” are usually expressed in terms of whether or not such people “count.” Do felony criminals count as citizens? Do undocumented immigrants? Such questions highlight the constructability of the count-as-one, foregrounding its inherent structural quality. The reality of who is an American and who is not is much more complicated and inconsistent than the simplistic count of citizenship. Nonetheless, we claim to understand what is meant by the oneness of the “United States.” We understand that it participates in international relations, like the war in Iraq, even though the various groups and individuals (what Badiou terms “elements”) who compose the “United States” differ on the purpose and definition of the count-as-one; that is, they differ on what the “United States” is or should be.

When the United States is understood in terms of a situation as opposed to an actual entity, borders and border crossings take on a new significance. Rather than being the cohesive unit it is known to be, with walls and barriers to protect itself from the dangerous differences that lurk beyond, much like a house or fort, the United States can actually be viewed as a fragile collection of relationships founded on an ever-weakening idea of sameness, on an increasingly fragmented count-as-one that seems weakest precisely at its margins — at its borders. The reason why the United States government is securing a new, more improved border between itself and Mexico is not to protect its population from the difference that a foreign invader represents but rather to reinforce and maintain a questionable idea of sameness that seems more and more divorced from reality. As stated above, the very definition of what is America and who counts as American is at stake in this debate. This is why established institutions of power, like the US government, would rather build a higher, thicker wall than consider rethinking the terms of how we define the nation and how

we recognize a citizen. Such a rethinking would entail acknowledging that the way we determine American-ness is highly artificial and subjective, and that many people who are not typically defined or viewed as American actually exhibit traits that are classically associated with American-ness. However, thinking in terms of such similarities is too complicated; it does not lend itself to easy answers or easy resolution. In fact, too much sameness between peoples undermines the very need for borders, which threatens the foundation of nation-building ideology. Thus, rather than complicate the matter by thinking in terms of sameness, we simply accentuate the differences between “us” and “them” and build walls to reinforce and remind us of these differences.

Unfortunately, we in Chicano/a studies usually subscribe to this mentality of difference in our analysis of borders and border subjectivities. We, too, are guilty of searching for new experiences and new subjects to emphasize what makes Chicano/a studies different as a discipline, even when the subject of this difference is described in terms of a borderless multiplicity, as with Anzaldúa’s new *Mestiza*. I suggest that instead of viewing borders strictly as spaces of difference that we also begin to see borders as spaces of repressed sameness — spaces where artificial differences are institutionally imposed for the sake of maintaining and reproducing the *status quo*. I believe that this is one of the prevailing features in Chicano/a studies that has yet to be fully explored — the symptomatic rather than novel nature of Chicano/a subjectivity. Instead of celebrating the fragmentary existentiality of the border or Chicano/a subject in terms of a new and revolutionary difference, I believe we may be better served analyzing such fragmentation as a contemporary manifestation of longstanding contradictions and tensions — such as those created by the artificial divisions of class, gender and race — that date back centuries, perhaps to the origins of modernity. When interpreted in this manner, Chicano/a subjectivity becomes important, not for its newness or difference — both of which will inevitably fade in the cultural imagination while other, newer, more different cultures emerge — but rather for its unique ability to symbolize structural limitations and contradictions in a given situation within a specific moment in history.

I think that the ability to discern Chicano/a subjectivity as a recent historical example of structural inconsistencies and ideological contradictions is what constitutes the literary genius of writers like Oscar Zeta Acosta, who incorporates the experience of border crossing into both his novels, *The Autobiography of a Brown Buffalo* (1972) and *The Revolt of the Cockroach People* (1973). Acosta’s use of irony and self-deprecation provide the foundation for his apparent commentary on the nature of Chicano/a subjectivity. In *The Autobiography of a Brown Buffalo*, he uses the experience of crossing the border into Mexico as a trope for self-discovery. Although his first impression upon crossing is, naturally, that of difference — the people in Mexico being almost all brown, and the poverty much more pronounced — he soon thereafter confesses that he “couldn’t concentrate on those things” because his mind “was in a quagmire, twisted

with the delights of the most beautiful women [he'd] ever seen." In his typical, self-deprecating manner, Acosta undermines a serious moment of cultural observation to indulge in a sexist representation of women, noting "graceful asses for strong children" and "full breasts for sucking life." In fact, he claims that he "learned how to be a serious Mexican for the first time in [his] life" (Acosta, 1972, 188) by sleeping with two Mexican prostitutes. What this offensive language does is call attention to the sexism that permeates the entire novel, thereby demonstrating how Acosta has not changed, despite his border crossing and the sense of difference he experiences. He remains the same, shallow, sexist philanderer he is at the beginning of the novel. This sameness is further reinforced by his getting arrested and tried in a Mexican court, raising parallels between the legal structures of the US and Mexico (Acosta was a controversial lawyer for the Chicano Movement in California during the 1960s and 1970s). This explains why the novel ends with the same powerful image with which it begins — with Acosta undergoing an identity crisis, standing naked before a mirror, reflecting on the nature of his being.

I do not intend to analyze here Acosta's second novel, *The Revolt of the Cockroach People*, except to state that it also raises the complex issues of underlying structural sameness and existential discontent due to politico-economic marginalization, which is portrayed through the theme of revolution in the novel, thus the genericity suggested in the title by the figure of the cockroach — it is, after all, a cockroach revolution, not Chicano revolt. Rather, in conclusion, I would like to return to my opening remarks concerning the problem of undocumented immigration in the United States and its relation to the emerging field of border studies. This new academic discipline can be a key component in how we think about and address the many problems surrounding the complex issue of illegal immigration. One example of visual-literary culture that is working within border studies and is utilizing the interpretive method I am suggesting here is the Border Film Project. The project was started in 2005 by "three friends—a Rhodes Scholar (Brett Huneycutt), a filmmaker (Rudy Adler), and a Wall Street analyst (Victoria Criado)—who spent three months on the US-Mexico border filming and distributing hundreds of disposable cameras to two groups on different sides of the line: undocumented migrants crossing the desert and Minutemen volunteers trying to stop them." They describe their intentions in beginning this project in the following terms:

To simplify the complexities of immigration and the US-Mexico border, and to show the realities on the ground. The pictures speak for themselves. They capture the humanity present on both sides of the border. They tell stories that no news piece or policy debate or academic study could convey. They are non-partisan and inclusive. (Adler, *et al.* 2008)

It is precisely the Border Film Project's attempt to "capture the humanity on both sides of the border" that I want to highlight. As the founders of the

project explain, when the “complexities of immigration and the US-Mexico border” are further confused by corporatized media representations and partisan policy-making, not to mention the overly-romanticized ideologies of difference often celebrated in academia, then the problem becomes impossibly overwhelming. The Border Film Project aims at demystifying the ideological state of confusion surrounding this issue by grounding it in actual human experience. As demonstrated in these sets of comparative photos, the complex issues surrounding immigration, borders, and border cultures can become surprisingly simpler when we approach the problem through the interpretive model of sameness rather than difference. As the Irish writer, Samuel Beckett, emphasizes in so many of his works, the act of waiting — the boredom, anxiety, and timelessness of such an experience — brings out the most universal of our human traits. And that is exactly the experience that many of these photos capture — the act of waiting, for either an opportunity to move while eluding capture (migrant), or the opportunity to observe with the intent of capturing and detaining (minuteman). Viewing these photos, it is easy to observe the apparent differences, like the difference in clothing and camera positioning in figure 1, or the differences in existential comfort seen in figure 3. However, considering that these photos were grouped together from over 1,500 photographs, the similarities emerge as striking.

Consider, for example, the similar ontological examination of human being — of what constitutes humanity and how one is human — evident in figure 1, which suggests the humanization of an otherwise anonymous problem. Clearly, one face is looking into the camera, as if pleading for empathy, while the other suggests a vigilance that is indifferent to curious bystanders, the sunglasses accentuating this distance. The overlap, however, is in the facial representation, the need to ground the issue in real human experience, almost as if the pictures can substitute for the face-to-face conversation that such a complex issue necessitates. These photographs, moreover, speak to the uncanny human tendency to seek out a presence, an otherness that mirrors and thus reinforces our sense of self, even when that otherness consists of a simple shadow, as in figure 2.

Figure 3 is perhaps the most revealing in that it demonstrates our capacity for sympathetic identification with those we view as similar to us. Here we see the human ability to perceive and empathize with situations of fatigue or physical pain. In such instances we see beyond the superficial differences of nationality, of Mexicans and Americans, and witness the underlying humanity that the Border Film Project calls attention to. We see the fatigue resulting from watchful, even restless, vigilance, as well as the scars left behind by a long journey on foot through hostile and dangerous terrain. Such comparisons make it difficult to use the rhetoric of borders as a means of justifying a difference in the humanity of the two individuals pictured.

Yet it is precisely this ideology of difference that pushes people like this suffering migrant to the existential limit. One lesson we can learn from this photo exhibit is that the painful experiences often associated with border

crossings are indeed real and tragically unnecessary. The human search for a manageable, reasonable, and peaceful form of coexistence should not entail so much suffering. But, as these pictures testify, modern barbarism continues, as we create and strengthen unnecessary borders and boundaries that later come back to haunt us, both individually and collectively. This is why I believe that Chicano/a studies, as well as the emerging discipline of border studies, will continue to play important roles in intellectual conversations concerning how it is that we exist as human beings and what practices can improve and accentuate our shared sense of humanity. This, of course, will require that we start to analyze these problems in terms of sameness rather than the ideologically established differences that have already proven themselves historically dysfunctional and harmful to the very humanity we are attempting to define and protect.

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(fig. 1) Migrant and Minuteman. From the author's personal files



(fig. 2) Minuteman and Migrant. From the author's personal files



(fig. 3) Sleeping Minuteman and Migrant. From the author's personal files



(fig. 4) Close up of migrant's feet in Figure 3. From the author's personal files

ETNICIDAD E HISTORIA SOCIAL EN LOS ESTUDIOS RECIENTES SOBRE LA FRONTERA NORTE DE MÉXICO

Manuel Plana

La frontera norte de México pertenece desde época antigua a la superárea cultural llamada Aridamérica, denominación propuesta en los años de 1950 por el antropólogo alemán Paul Kirchhoff, para distinguir las sociedades recolectoras de estas zonas áridas y semiáridas de las de Mesoamérica — el territorio entre los ríos Sinaloa, Lerma y Pánuco hasta el lago de Nicaragua —, donde alrededor del 2500 a.C. tuvo lugar la domesticación del maíz. Mesoamérica, como superárea, se estableció sobre la base de la agricultura sedentaria y del tributo, dando lugar a una civilización fundada en dos niveles, sociedad y cultura. El mosaico geográfico de Aridamérica se hallaba en contacto con otras superáreas colindantes. Alrededor del 500 a.C. algunos pueblos aridoamericanos empezaron a practicar el cultivo como actividad complementaria; sin embargo, estas sociedades agrícolas encontraron enormes dificultades a causa de la aridez del ambiente y sólo en determinadas zonas u oasis se podían utilizar sistemas de irrigación, razón por la que los grupos mantuvieron su economía de recolección y caza. En esta región que fue denominada Oasisamérica se suele admitir que las plantas domesticadas fueron introducidas desde Mesoamérica, así como la alfarería y la cerámica. Esta superárea en el corazón de Aridamérica fue dividida por Kirchhoff en siete áreas, basándose en los grupos lingüísticos del siglo XVI, aunque otras divisiones distinguen, en cambio, cinco regiones desde el primer siglo de la era cristiana al XVI (Anasazi, Hohokam, Mogollón, Fremont, Pataya): en realidad, comprenden el suroeste de Estados Unidos y el noroeste de México, es decir, partes importantes de Utah, Colorado, California, Baja California y Texas, Arizona y New Mexico, además de Sonora y Chihuahua.

En la zona Mogollón del área oasisamericana surgió el gran centro comercial de Paquimé en el altiplano occidental de Chihuahua junto al río Casas Grandes y, según los resultados de las excavaciones de los años de 1960, tras varios siglos de auge esta localidad habría decaído en el siglo XIV o XV antes de la llegada de los españoles. Es probable que algunos de sus habitantes emigraran; en general se admite que la mayor parte de la población permaneció y que sus descendientes fueron los tarahumara o raramuri del oeste de Chihuahua, los ópatas del centro y oeste de Sonora y los cahita, entre los cuales se cuentan los yaquis y mayos. El antropólogo mexicano Alfredo López Austin escribe en una reciente síntesis:



La colonización europea afectaría seriamente a los aridoamericanos. El proceso expansivo iniciado en el siglo XVI significó la imposición del sedentarismo a algunos grupos nómadas; el acoso, que llevó a otros a regiones inhóspitas de refugio; el hostigamiento militar y el exterminio. Los gobiernos de México y de Estados Unidos continuarían con estas prácticas genocidas declarando una guerra abierta a los recolectores-cazadores. A pesar de ello, a principios de este siglo [XX] el nomadismo no había desaparecido por completo en nuestro país. (López Austin 1996, 27)

Las exploraciones hacia el norte del espacio de la Nueva España, tras el descubrimiento de las minas de plata de Zacatecas en 1546, constituyeron la premisa de la colonización que, en estas regiones, se basó esencialmente en la institución de los presidios y de las misiones jesuitas y franciscanas desde finales del siglo XVI y principios del siglo XVII. Los trabajos históricos pioneros de Hubert H. Bancroft y de Herbert Eugene Bolton se concentraron en el estudio de las formas de la evangelización de los indígenas y de la organización militar del territorio. La historia del periodo colonial, de hecho, hasta los años de 1950 había privilegiado el análisis de las estructuras político-administrativas y de la economía y de la sociedad de la frontera norte de la Nueva España. En los decenios sucesivos se ha prestado mayor atención a la etnohistoria empezando por el estudio de la cultura de los grupos nativos que habían sobrevivido; los trabajos de Edward H. Spicer sobre los yaquis de Sonora plantearon el problema de los *ethnic enclaves* que, a través del estudio de las lenguas, de las formas rituales y de la defensa del territorio, habían señalado las persistencias étnicas. Las investigaciones de los años de la década de 1990 modificaron la óptica de la etnohistoria a partir del concepto de “ethnogenesis” — “ethnic rebirth” —, es decir, la resistencia étnica y la consiguiente adaptación a la dominación colonial externa, analizando mejor los cambios de la vida social y de la identidad cultural de los grupos que sobrevivieron hasta el siglo XIX.

Este cambio de perspectiva ha sido posible — en el caso de México — gracias a la disponibilidad de nuevas fuentes tras el rescate de archivos locales y municipales en los estados de Coahuila, Chihuahua y Sonora — contienen documentos redactados por alcaldes, jueces auxiliares, soldados y señores de la tierra —, de los mismos archivos diocesanos y parroquiales, así como de los fondos documentarios de algunos colegios de los cuales dependían las misiones del norte novohispano. En el decenio de 1990 se han publicado varios libros como el de Cheryl English Martin sobre los tarahumara de Chihuahua en el siglo XVIII, el de Cecilia Sheridan sobre las misiones franciscanas de Río Grande en el territorio de los nómadas del noreste o el importante trabajo de Cynthia Radding sobre los grupos de las tierras altas de Sonora (ópatas, pimas, eudeve), sedentarios y nómadas al mismo tiempo (cazadores y agricultores), con demarcaciones étnicas fluidas: los criterios lingüísticos y territoriales para indicar los varios grupos han cambiado en el tiempo, sin embargo el grupo lingüístico

pima-tepehuán que ocupaba el desierto y las tierras altas a lo largo de la Sierra Madre Occidental se extendía desde Durango y Chihuahua hasta Sonora y Arizona.

Los pueblos nativos de Sonora adaptaron el simbolismo cristiano a sus propias exigencias; en la vida cotidiana recurrieron a los bienes de los españoles, tejidos y moneda, y además domesticaron los animales — en particular el caballo — que facilitó su movilidad, es decir, que modificaron las bases de su cultura material. Los varios grupos se caracterizaban por su movilidad y por la capacidad de aprovechar los varios ambientes ecológicos. Los asentamientos de españoles en el noroeste novohispano aumentaron a medida que se encontraron nuevos distritos mineros, lo que comportaba apropiación de tierras agrícolas y campos para la ganadería, con la consiguiente introducción de formas de trabajo forzoso; las mismas misiones, que se propusieron reunir la población dispersa en pequeños núcleos, se transformaron en centros de intercambio. A estas presiones sobre los nativos se añadieron las consecuencias de las enfermedades, la conquista micróbica; todos estos factores determinaron una grave crisis a finales del siglo XVII.

Merece recordar aquí sólo las varias estrategias de resistencia: la fuga y el abandono de las misiones, el traslado a las zonas de refugio, las guerras de frontera y las grandes rebeliones. La rebelión de 1680 de los indios “pueblo” de Nuevo México contra la presencia española, fue seguida por la de los ópatas en el norte de Sonora y en 1684 hubo levantamientos en la zona entre Sonora y Chihuahua; en 1690 se sublevaron los tarahumaras y siguió la rebelión de los pimas en 1695: este ciclo de rebeliones representó una reacción a las primeras fases de la creación de las misiones y a los excesos de la militarización del territorio a través de los presidios. A mitad del siglo XVIII hubo otro ciclo de rebeliones desde la de 1739-1741 de los mayos, yaquis y pimas hasta la de los seris de la costa en 1748. En el caso de los yaquis, la mejor estudiada, varios aspectos explican esas rebeliones: ante todo cabe señalar que el surplus de la producción agrícola de la región — la del Río Yaquí, caracterizada por la alternancia de abundantes lluvias y sequías — había sido destinada por los jesuitas a las misiones de Baja California, lo que determinó frecuentes crisis agrícolas; los yaquis protestaban ante la política comercial de los jesuitas que creaba dificultades a su economía de subsistencia. Por otro lado, la población sufría la presión externa que se proponía reclutar fuerza de trabajo para las minas y los campos a medida que aumentaba la colonización española. En definitiva, los yaquis defendían la integridad de sus comunidades y el control directo del intercambio con los centros coloniales; estas mismas razones, con mayor o menor intensidad, se presentan en los casos de las otras rebeliones.

Alrededor de 1740 distintos grupos athapaskan de cazadores-recolectores (bajo el gentilicio apaches: mogollones, gileños, mimbrenos y chiricaguas), que se hallaban fuera del control de las instituciones del sistema colonial español, empezaron a actuar una serie de incursiones para procu-

rarse alimentos y animales. Inició así el ciclo de las guerras apaches, que se prolongó hasta finales del siglo XIX, en el que se alternaron momentos de hostilidades y de acuerdos, más o menos duraderos, con las comunidades indias que tenían relaciones con los españoles, estableciendo puntos limítrofes de intercambio. Las autoridades coloniales, que temían perder el control de la riqueza minera y comercial de Sonora, llevaron a cabo, desde 1768, expediciones militares, con la colaboración de ópatas de las misiones como tropas auxiliares, para controlar la región; por otro lado y al mismo tiempo, en el norte de Chihuahua — entonces Nueva Vizcaya — se crearon cinco nuevas colonias militares de Namiquipa a Casas Grandes con asignación de tierras para los nuevos colonos españoles y numerosas facilidades para sus habitantes; esta política llevó a una nueva fase de acuerdos de paz con los nómadas (intercambio de mercancías, concesión de cotos de caza) que perduró hasta la Independencia de 1821.

Cynthia Radding, que ha estudiado en detalle los registros parroquiales de Sonora, sugiere que entre 1760 y 1800 hubo una contracción demográfica de las comunidades indias a causa de las epidemias que afectaron a la región, además del recrudescimiento de las enfermedades endémicas, mientras aumentó la presencia de no-indios. Las estrategias para sobrevivir en aquellas condiciones fueron en parte antiguas, la migración hacia las zonas de refugio de la Sierra, y nuevas, la incorporación al sector hispánico en busca de trabajo y tierra; de los registros de las misiones resulta una cierta presencia india y un aumento de las mezclas étnicas: las relaciones exogámicas y la movilidad se enmarcaron en una estrategia de sobrevivencia interétnica que contribuyó a cambiar la sociedad rural. Sin embargo, a partir de 1820 con la Independencia se desarticuló el sistema de presidios y se derrumbó la política de mantener campamentos de paz con los apaches, como ha documentado David J. Weber, por lo que la presión de estos últimos se hizo más fuerte.

La principal reacción de los grupos nativos fue la petición de tierras a las nuevas autoridades mexicanas que se orientaban, en cambio, hacia la secularización de las misiones y la cesión de las antiguas tierras comunales a la población no-india. Ópatas, tarahumaras y yaquis se opusieron a la división de las antiguas tierras comunales y a los nuevos impuestos de las autoridades estatales; a mediados del decenio de 1830 pedían libertad para elegir sus propias autoridades y solicitaron abiertamente la creación de un estado étnico autónomo en las tierras altas de Sonora con una visión que se proponía reconstruir las garantías coloniales del sistema de misiones. Empezó entonces una continua desintegración de los ópatas porque se enfrentaron a un poder político más fuerte en términos económicos y militares, es decir, el del Estado mexicano post-independiente. La resistencia de los yaquis fue, en cambio, duradera.

El abandono de los presidios, por otro lado, ofreció la oportunidad a los grupos nómadas de las praterías texanas, comanches y lipanes, y a los apaches de aumentar sus incursiones hasta determinar un escenario de conflictos prolongados por casi medio siglo, aunque sin batallas, ni combates; robar caballos y mulas, tomar cautivos, incendiar los hogares, liquidar o herir a los pobladores, eran las tácticas que el nómada empleaba

en su guerra de sobrevivencia. No se trató de un hecho coyuntural; adquirió gran intensidad entre 1840 y 1845, perduró durante la guerra con Estados Unidos y se recrudeció una vez concluida la guerra civil americana y la ocupación francesa. Como nos explican los trabajos de algunos historiadores mexicanos, como Víctor Orozco para Chihuahua y Martha Rodríguez para Coahuila, la presencia de un enemigo difícil de combatir contribuyó a crear la imagen agigantada del “bárbaro” a quien había que exterminar; se trataba de una construcción mental — la “invención del bárbaro” — que derivaba de la inseguridad de las villas y localidades del norte ante la ineficacia de las medidas tomadas por el gobierno nacional y los gobernantes locales. Las ideas que se recaban son, por un lado, que a partir de la época independiente los proyectos de colonización cultural como estrategia de pacificación — que habían sido implantados en la época colonial —, se debilitaron ante la fuerza que fue adquiriendo la ideología del progreso como justificación moral del exterminio; por otro lado, la importancia de las guerras indias en el norte de México a lo largo del siglo XIX contribuye a acentuar la diferencia con la “raíz indígena” de la organización social y cultural del centro y del sur de México.

En realidad, de todos estos estudios se recaba una visión más compleja y dinámica de la frontera que se configuró como una realidad fluida y permeable, no marginal, entre el mundo indígena y el mundo cultural hispánico y que a lo largo de los siglos se transformó radicalmente, pues en ella confluyeron espacios ecológicos y culturales muy distintos.

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LA REVOLUCIÓN MEXICANA Y LA FRONTERA CON ESTADOS UNIDOS: HISTORIOGRAFÍA Y PERSPECTIVAS DE INVESTIGACIÓN

Manuel Plana

La revolución mexicana de 1910-1920 es la única del siglo XX que tuvo lugar en un país limítrofe y con una contigüidad territorial con Estados Unidos. La transformación de la frontera nómada en una zona de crecimiento económico a finales del siglo XIX había llevado a profundos cambios en la estructura productiva de los estados mexicanos norteros donde los intereses económicos de las compañías americanas se habían afianzado en varios sectores (ferrocarriles, minería, ganadería y empresas forestales), además de las importantes inversiones en el del petróleo en la región del Golfo de Veracruz. La política del presidente William H. Taft, ante la insurrección maderista en la región fronteriza en 1911, se propuso evitar que las actividades insurreccionales involucraran el territorio americano, impedir la exportación de armas para los grupos revolucionarios y rebeldes en general, y, finalmente, reforzar la presencia de las fuerzas federales estadounidenses. Cuando estalló la segunda revolución de 1913, tras el asesinato del presidente Francisco I. Madero y la afirmación del general Victoriano Huerta, el presidente Woodrow Wilson, fundándose en su visión ética de la política, no reconoció su gobierno — a diferencia de las potencias europeas — estableciendo que México tenía que consolidar el sistema democrático además de garantizar las inversiones extranjeras. La historiografía mexicana y mexicanista ha analizado, desde los años de 1960, los varios aspectos de la política diplomática del periodo con los importantes trabajos de Lorenzo Meyer, Berta Ulloa y Friedrich Katz entre otros historiadores, así como la actividad política de los exiliados y de los revolucionarios y contrarrevolucionarios que usaron la frontera como base de sus actividades ante el estallido de la primera guerra mundial. Las repercusiones sobre la vida política en los estados americanos fronterizos han sido objeto de una amplia gama de estudios entre los que cabe mencionar el de Don M. Coerver y Linda B. Hall.

Los constitucionalistas, desde 1913, para organizar la lucha contra Huerta aprovecharon la simpatía hacia su causa de parte de la población de origen mexicano en las regiones fronterizas. El gobernador maderista de Coahuila Venustiano Carranza, quien consiguió controlar el norte de este estado

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hasta mediados de 1913 trasladándose a Piedras Negras, intentó establecer desde el principio, a través de sus colaboradores, relaciones cordiales con el gobernador de Texas Oscar B. Colquitt; hasta principios de octubre de 1913 las fuerzas de Carranza dominaron la zona fronteriza de Coahuila con Texas, aunque luego quedó en manos del ejército federal huertista hasta el verano de 1914, cuando los constitucionalistas volvieron a recuperar el dominio sobre Coahuila, Nuevo León y Tamaulipas. Entre marzo y abril de 1913, los revolucionarios de Sonora controlaron las ciudades fronterizas de Nogales, Naco y Agua Prieta, mientras Ciudad Juárez había pasado bajo el control de Pancho Villa en noviembre de 1913 que además dominó el estado de Chihuahua.

Los problemas más inmediatos para los revolucionarios del norte desde 1913 fueron el reclutamiento de fuerzas y el de conseguir armas y municiones que se procuraron, en parte, sustrayéndolas al ejército federal y comprándolas en Estados Unidos, lo que dio lugar al contrabando — ante el embargo mantenido por el presidente Wilson hasta febrero de 1914 —, objeto de denuncias y contrastes con las autoridades judiciales americanas. En general, en las zonas del norte controladas por los constitucionalistas se mantuvo el respeto de las compañías americanas para evitar problemas políticos y diplomáticos. El control de las aduanas fue objeto de numerosas disposiciones respecto al pago de derechos, pues aumentó el paso de ganado y de productos agrícolas, como el algodón de La Laguna, mientras la minería conoció continuos parálisis en Chihuahua y Durango. Desde principios de 1913 surgió, sobre todo, el problema de la escasez de dinero para pagar los haberes y el equipo de las tropas revolucionarias y se recurrió a las emisiones de papel moneda garantizadas por las entradas fiscales de los estados del norte. En los archivos mexicanos que he consultado en preparación de un trabajo sobre la política de Carranza en 1913-1914 se halla una rica información sobre el intercambio comercial fronterizo durante el año y medio que duró la dictadura de Huerta.

Con la llegada de Huerta al poder en febrero de 1913 y la lucha armada, hubo una fuga de capitales y desapareció la circulación de moneda metálica, sobre todo a causa del atesoramiento; el gobierno de Huerta, con dificultades para conseguir crédito exterior, obligó a los bancos a utilizar sus reservas para emitir billetes de curso forzoso en sus operaciones, con una continua devaluación. Huerta, en fin de cuentas, subordinó la política monetaria a la adquisición de fondos para financiar la guerra civil y consolidar su régimen. Los historiadores han hecho propia la tesis de Edwin W. Kemmerer en el sentido de que la revolución fue financiada a través de la inflación provocada por las emisiones de papel moneda, mientras los impuestos recaudados por las fuerzas revolucionarias tuvieron menor importancia. El mismo Carranza, en el informe presentado al Congreso el 15 de abril de 1917 tras la aprobación de la Constitución, señalaba que no pudo establecerse ningún sistema de finanzas, pues cada jefe militar tenía que procurarse recursos de donde podía obtenerlos. A partir del 1 de mayo de 1916 las varias emisiones fueron canjeadas por otra de quinientos millones de pesos, conocidos como infalsificables, contratada en Estados Unidos por Carranza.

Las crecientes exigencias, a medida que los constitucionalistas dominaron las regiones del norte en 1913, indujeron Carranza y sus colaboradores a racionalizar las emisiones de los estados del norte controlados por los revolucionarios, evitando su proliferación y las falsificaciones. A principios de 1914 parecía urgente disponer de papel moneda “constitucionalista” y fueron contactadas varias casas impresoras americanas: Carranza comisionó en Estados Unidos la emisión de treinta millones de pesos el 12 de febrero de 1914; sus colaboradores en la gestión de esta emisión fueron los exdiputados maderistas Roberto V. Pesqueira y Luis Cabrera en Washington, Rafael Zubarán en Hermosillo y Alberto J. Pani en Ciudad Juárez. Fue encargada pues la impresión de los billetes (de 1 peso y 5 pesos, en realidad) en Nueva York pagando los costos en dólares, mientras luego los billetes eran enviados por agentes de confianza americanos y mexicanos a Ciudad Juárez, donde desde abril de 1914 se habían trasladado los responsables de la tesorería constitucionalista y donde fue instalada una “oficina selladora” del gobierno de Carranza que autentificaba los billetes con la firma autógrafa de un funcionario autorizado; esta oficina tuvo hasta unos cuarenta empleados y fue activa hasta junio de 1914, cuando empezaron los desacuerdos entre Villa y Carranza. Entonces, como recuerda Pani en sus memorias, fueron adquiridas tres máquinas de las usadas por los bancos americanos para sustituir la firma autógrafa e imprimir el sello mecánico en los billetes, agregando algunas marcas de infalsificación. De Ciudad Juárez, los billetes sellados eran colocados en petacas enviadas a las varias ciudades de la frontera desde Nogales a Matamoros, donde los bultos eran entregados a los jefes locales de Hacienda, quienes los pasaban a los jefes militares. Los billetes de esta emisión constitucionalista representaron el papel moneda con el que los revolucionarios intentaron sustituir los vales huertistas en el norte en 1914. Después del colapso del huertismo, Carranza utilizó las planchas y clichés de los bancos de Ciudad de México para una nueva emisión, mientras Villa en Chihuahua siguió una política autónoma al respecto.

En un telegrama de principios de enero de 1914 a Rafael Zubarán, director del diario del movimiento *El Constitucionalista*, Carranza afirmaba que no había razón para preocuparse por la depreciación del papel moneda constitucionalista

pues debe tener presente que fue creado para la circulación interior y que la garantía que tiene hasta ahora es la probabilidad del triunfo de nuestra causa. Así es que el valor en oro a que lo pagan depende de la confianza que tengan los que quieren recibirlo, lo que a nuestro triunfo el valor que representan dichos billetes será pagado en la forma que nuestro gobierno decreta; por consiguiente, el valor en oro de nuestros billetes no ha sufrido en depreciación, sino por el contrario, la moneda de circulación interior ha pasado a exterior sin garantía efectiva. Respecto a la circulación interior de nuestros billetes debe ser protegida únicamente haciendo desaparecer los vales al portador y demás mo-

nedas de papel creadas por casas comerciales, industriales y billetes de los estados... Vuelvo a repetir a Ud que no tenga cuidado por el crédito de nuestra moneda, el que irá subiendo en el extranjero por los triunfos que obtengamos y, con el definitivo, nuestros billetes tendrán más crédito que los de todos los bancos de la República. (Plana 2011, 294)

Este telegrama — cuya referencia de archivo indico tomándola de la reciente publicación de mi investigación — resume la visión de Carranza de la época, más allá del aparente optimismo sobre la posibilidad de un triunfo en breve tiempo y de la capacidad de encontrar una rápida solución política que no llegó tan temprano como esperaba. ¿En qué medida circuló la emisión constitucionalista de 1914 en la zona fronteriza? ¿Cuál era el valor de cambio respecto al peso oro y al dólar? Según la correspondencia entre Venustiano Carranza y su hermano Jesús, entonces responsable militar en Laredo y conocedor de la realidad local, resultaría que en mayo de 1914 se vendían a razón de 3-4 billetes constitucionalistas de un peso por un dólar; en los bancos locales de Brownsville, por ejemplo, se pagaban 35 centavos oro por peso, pero probablemente las oscilaciones fueron mayores. De todos modos, las operaciones de tesorería de los varios grupos revolucionarios se llevaban a cabo apoyándose a las sucursales de bancos como el First National Bank o El Paso Bank & Trust Co. Se trata de algunos ejemplos que mereceren ser explorados para comprender mejor el *modus operandi* de los varios agentes.

A medida que los revolucionarios recuperaron las plazas en el norte desde Torreón, Saltillo y Monterrey, así como Tampico y Tuxpan en el golfo de México, surgió el problema de sustituir el papel huertista para controlar la especulación, la inflación, los precios de los bienes de consumo popular, así como los vales en los pagos de salarios en los campos, industrias y minas. En varios casos se llegó a distribuir una cierta cantidad de billetes constitucionalistas a las clases menesterosas para el comercio al menudeo, excluyendo el canje del papel huertista. El mismo Pancho Villa, que desde diciembre de 1913, había imprimido billetes del Estado de Chihuahua, pero sin la técnica protectora del sello mecánico y por lo tanto fácilmente falsificables, cuando ocupó Torreón y la región lagunera en abril de 1914, encontró dificultades: distribuyó los billetes de Chihuahua para el pago de haberes a la División del Norte y para la vida cotidiana, pidiendo a Carranza billetes de la emisión constitucionalista para amortizar la suya. Villa afirmaba entonces que necesitaba dos millones y medio de pesos mensuales para el sustentamiento de sus tropas fuera de Chihuahua y que efectivamente hasta el mes de junio le fueron entregados. El problema continuó pues, todavía en el mes de julio, Villa constataba que el billete de Chihuahua circulaba en Estados Unidos y que era comprado y vendido por los especuladores a precios bajos, viéndose obligado a amortizar esa depreciación con los nuevos billetes constitucionalistas. Por lo que se deduce de la documentación consultada, Villa, no obstante el comercio internacional a través de Ciudad Juárez, dependía en parte de las remesas

de la moneda “constitucionalista” para mantener la estabilidad del papel moneda de Chihuahua, lo que mitiga parcialmente la imagen tradicional de la autonomía financiera del movimiento villista desde el principio. Este factor constituye probablemente un elemento ulterior de las fricciones políticas que habían surgido entre Villa y Carranza y que llevaron poco después a la ruptura entre ambos.

Carranza, por su parte, estableció en esta fase de la lucha revolucionaria contra Huerta una red de colaboradores en la frontera y en la región del Golfo más solida de lo que se piensa y que le permitió una supremacía sobre los grupos revolucionarios y el control directo de buena parte de los puertos fronterizos hasta junio de 1914. En definitiva, la investigación llevada a cabo en los archivos mexicanos y americanos me lleva a hipotizar que la capacidad política de Carranza como dirigente revolucionario con una proyección nacional, desde finales de 1914, encuentra elementos de fuerza en las actitudes asumidas en los años de la lucha contra Huerta, cuando estableció y consolidó la red de colaboradores políticos y jefes militares en el norte y estrechas relaciones en Estados Unidos.

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MEXICANOS EN LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS: ASPECTOS DEMOGRÁFICOS Y SOCIALES EN LA SEGUNDA MITAD DEL SIGLO XX

Manuel Plana

La Academia Mexicana de Ciencias organizó en octubre de 1999 el foro *Población y Sociedad en el México del siglo XXI* que tuvo lugar en El Colegio de México, bajo la responsabilidad del Centro de Estudios Demográficos y de Desarrollo Urbano, y con la participación de representantes de organismos internacionales con el propósito de abrir una reflexión sobre las perspectivas del nuevo siglo. El director del Centro de Estudios Demográficos Manuel Ordorica Mellado resumió su “viaje por la demografía de México” con estas palabras:

En nuestro país, la población pasó de 13,6 millones en 1900 a 97,7 millones en 1999, es decir, la población se multiplicó casi por 8 en este siglo. La esperanza de vida aumentó de 30 años en 1900 a 74 años en la actualidad... En el decenio de los sesenta pasamos por el crecimiento más elevado del siglo. Curiosamente nuestro país empezó el siglo y lo terminará con una tasa de crecimiento demográfica cercana a 1%. La diferencia es que en 1900 la natalidad y la mortalidad eran elevadas, mientras que actualmente se encuentran en niveles bajos... En 1977 el Consejo Nacional de Población planteó la meta de crecimiento demográfico de 1% al año 2000, lo cual implicaba llegar a una población de 100 millones de mexicanos. Dicho objetivo reflejaba el interés del gobierno por definir una imagen objetivo de largo plazo en el ámbito demográfico. Esta meta no se alcanzó, ya que llegaremos a una tasa de crecimiento natural de 1,76% anual y a una tasa de crecimiento total de 1,45% anual, aunque sí seremos 100 millones de mexicanos. Este hecho se explica porque, cuando se planteó la meta en 1977, no se tomó en cuenta la migración internacional, la cual ha sido muy significativa en este periodo. Es decir, se consideró a México como una población cerrada. (García Guzmán 2002, 65)

El censo estadounidense del año 2000 registraba una población inmigrante de nacidos en México de 9 millones, pero al mismo tiempo registraba que 20,6 millones de personas censadas se declaraban hispanos o latinos de origen mexicana, es decir el 58,5% del total de los hispanos que comprendían los emigrantes de Puerto Rico, Cuba, Centroamérica y otros países del sur del continente, cifra que correspondía al 7,3% del total de la población americana (Durand and Massey 2003, 56). Este aumento



de la presencia de mexicanos, más allá de las redes históricas de la migración, se explica por las sanatorias previstas por el Immigration Reform and Control Act del 1986, por la política de reunificación familiar, por la migración clandestina y, en fin, por las tasas de crecimiento demográfico de los residentes de origen mexicano a causa de una alta natalidad y baja mortalidad. Jorge Durand y Douglas S. Massey afirman, en la introducción del libro publicado en México en 2003, que esta ley cambió el curso tradicional de la migración mexicana hacia Estados Unidos hasta convertirse en un “torrente imprevisible, sin contar que el cruce “subrepticio” de la frontera como línea imaginaria se transformó en una pesadilla en los años de 1990 cuando la franja fronteriza adquiere la característica de un “muro infranqueable.”

Quienes han estudiado el fenómeno migratorio mexicano hacia Estados Unidos han subrayado que, en general, las estadísticas son imperfectas y fragmentarias, pues las encuestas americanas encuentran dificultades para registrar a los “no autorizados” e “indocumentados,” así como resulta difícil registrar las salidas a causa del retorno temporáneo o definitivo a través de la vía terrestre, mientras para las estadísticas mexicanas los emigrantes en ocasión de los censos no siempre se encuentran en sus lugares de origen. Es decir, que nos hallamos ante frecuentes formas de sobrestimación y subestimación. Ante este difícil panorama, la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores de México y el Departamento de Estado estadounidense instituyeron un grupo de trabajo compuesto por veinte académicos, diez por cada uno de los dos países, que entre 1995 y 1997 elaboró un estudio binacional sobre el tema, cuyas conclusiones fueron que a pesar de la ligera disminución de los flujos de retorno en los dos sucesivos quinquenios 1988-1992 y 1993-1997, registraron en este último periodo una mayor salida de emigrantes permanentes y por lo tanto una pérdida anual promedio de mexicanos de 225.243 personas equivalente a una tasa anual elevada de emigración internacional de 2,5 por mil habitantes. (García Guzmán 2002, 239)

Las migraciones internacionales de la segunda mitad del siglo XX representan un fenómeno global, con un aumento del número de los países de expulsión y de atracción, es decir, un flujo desde los países densamente poblados en fase incipiente de industrialización hacia Europa y hacia las áreas que, desde siempre, fueron el destino de los emigrantes: Canadá, Estados Unidos, Australia, Nueva Zelanda. Un fenómeno que tiene que ver con la globalización de los mercados del trabajo y de la producción. Las migraciones de mano de obra escasamente calificada, después de la segunda guerra mundial, se presentan bajo forma de ciclos que se originan en los países de expulsión a raíz de crisis económicas, por la presencia de persistentes condiciones de guerra o bien de carestías y sequías recurrentes. El fenómeno migratorio mexicano hacia Estados Unidos, en cambio, presenta algunas peculiaridades porque empezó a finales del siglo XIX y se ha desarrollado de manera constante hasta hoy, es decir, que se carac-

teriza por una dimensión histórica; por otro lado, ha representado un fenómeno migratorio consistente pues ha tenido lugar entre países con una frontera común configurando así un flujo unidireccional pues el destino de los emigrantes mexicanos está representado por ese “único país” y, como ha señalado Oscar J. Martínez, se ha creado una fuerte “asymmetrical interdependence” en la zona fronteriza (Martínez 1994, 9).

Sin entrar en los detalles de las varias fases migratorias, será suficiente recordar que en 1964 terminó la etapa de acuerdos bilaterales entre México y Estados Unidos para regular el flujo de “braceros” que había empezado durante la segunda guerra mundial. La inmigración de mexicanos, desde 1965, fue permitida en base al sistema de cuotas de visas anuales como para otros países, con algunas medidas complementarias como la legalización parcial de trabajadores, mayor control de las fronteras, con el consiguiente aspecto de los “devueltos” o “regresados” por falta de documentos en regla o por otros motivos. Cabe recordar que en México los años sesenta fueron de crecimiento económico con un fuerte impulso a la industrialización en algunos sectores claves. En 1965, además, fue adoptado el “programa de industrialización fronteriza” para las actividades de ensamble; surgieron establecimientos de subcontratación internacional al interior del territorio mexicano o maquiladoras, hasta sesenta millas de la frontera, con las relativas facilidades fiscales para las empresas americanas. Una de las finalidades era favorecer la ocupación en México y frenar las eventuales migraciones hacia el norte. Este programa, sin embargo, no representó — como han subrayado los economistas mexicanos — una ventaja para las regiones fronterizas en términos de industrialización efectiva, pues se fundaba sólo en el trabajo que generaba esa actividad por los bajos salarios. Los años que median entre 1964 y 1986 fueron los de la masiva presencia de indocumentados mexicanos en Estados Unidos o de migración clandestina: en 1964 los inmigrantes legales habían sido alrededor de cuarenta mil y en 1986 habían aumentando algo más del doble; en ese mismo periodo la inmigración ilegal, según las estimaciones, habría pasado de menos de cien mil a casi cuatro millones de personas.

Precisamente en 1986, la administración americana, ante esas dimensiones de inmigración ilegal y pensando que se había perdido el control de la frontera con México, se planteó el problema como una prioridad de seguridad nacional y fue aprobada la ley Immigration Reform and Control Act que preveía algunas normas; ante todo, daba nuevos recursos financieros para reforzar la patrulla fronteriza y establecía sanciones para quien empleaba trabajadores sin documentos; por otro lado, tras la presión de las asociaciones en defensa de los derechos civiles fue adoptada una amnistía para aquellos inmigrantes “sin documentos” que llevaban algún tiempo residiendo en territorio americano, es decir, a quienes podían demostrar que habían trabajado cinco años en Estados Unidos, mientras se permitió la legalización de trabajadores agrícolas mexicanos, sobre todo en Texas y California, a petición de las asociaciones de agricultores (Durand, Massey, and Parrado 1999). Estas medidas cambiaron el panorama; de hecho, se

pasó del modelo tradicional de migración temporánea de hombres para el trabajo agrícola — es decir, de ida y vuelta — a otro de migración permanente, legal, sin retorno, con una prevalencia de núcleos familiares, con el consiguiente aumento de la presencia de mujeres, cuyo origen no era sólo rural, sino también de procedencia urbana y destinada a prevalecer con el pasar de los años. Esas normas de sanatoria permitieron que, entre 1987 y 1989, adquirieran un estado legal 2,3 millones indocumentados; en 1992 dos terceras partes de los inmigrantes tenían documentos de residencia, pero — ante la escasa propensión a naturalizarse — quedaban como residentes legales con derechos limitados respecto a los ciudadanos americanos (en cifras redondas habrían sido 3,3 millones en 1990); sin embargo, una vez dado el primer paso, aumentaron las solicitudes de naturalización. Esta tendencia a naturalizarse incrementó porque, la nueva ley inmigratoria de 1996, limitaba la entrada de familiares de los residentes legales y reducía también el periodo de residencia para quienes habían obtenido la visa; al mismo tiempo, la ley sobre el seguro social puso límites para los residentes que se jubilaban. Para evitar esas limitaciones los inmigrantes solicitaron la naturalización para defender sus derechos civiles y sociales. Por otro lado, ante estas tendencias, el Senado mexicano, temiendo perder población, aprobó una reforma constitucional que permitía conservar la ciudadanía para los mexicanos naturalizados, es decir, adquirirían la doble ciudadanía.

Las regiones de origen de la inmigración mexicana dibujan un panorama bien conocido, que se puede resumir por grandes líneas: en primer lugar, la principal región de origen está representada por los estados de Occidente (Jalisco, Michoacán, Guanajuato, Zacatecas, Durango) que, a lo largo del siglo XX, ha representado la mitad de los emigrantes, es decir, que en esas regiones la migración constituye una experiencia antigua, continua y masiva, con redes sociales amplias y una cultura migratoria madura y con un elevado nivel de legalización. En segundo lugar la “región fronteriza” porque, tras el desarrollo postbélico, se transformó en un polo de atracción de la migración interna y, por otro lado, las ciudades fronterizas (una población de 6 millones en 2000) recibían los emigrantes de retorno, los “devueltos” y las personas en tránsito. En tercer lugar, la región central que tiene como eje a la Ciudad de México, punto de atracción permanente de la migración interna y de los indígenas y campesinos de las áreas rurales circunstantes, pues el Distrito Federal y su zona metropolitana constituyen la parte más industrializada del país; a raíz de la crisis deudora de 1982 y de la consiguiente crisis económica se determinó un fuerte desempleo y de ahí salieron los indocumentados. En fin, las regiones del sureste (Veracruz, Chiapas), cuyo aporte migratorio es más reciente.

Las regiones de destino en Estados Unidos han sido muy amplias, ya sea las tradicionales que las nuevas; ante todo, el Southwest, mientras en la década de 1920 adquirieron importancia la región de los grandes lagos por la exigencia de fuerza de trabajo en las fundiciones, empaquetadoras de carne, plantaciones de betabel y establecimientos azucareros y, también,

la región de las grandes planicies con el importante punto ferrocarrilero de Topeka, donde los mexicanos trabajaban en la manutención de las líneas y en la construcción de carreteras; en fin, los inmigrantes mexicanos se han dirigido en tiempos más recientes a las regiones de la costa atlántica desde Florida al Connecticut, donde se dedican a los trabajos agrícolas temporáneos y han encontrado ocupación en los establecimientos de embalaje y en los servicios.

La presencia de mexicanos en la agricultura de Estados Unidos ha dependido de algunos factores que otros grupos migratorios no podían satisfacer pues el trabajo temporáneo permite, dada la cercanía geográfica, la ida y vuelta; los trabajadores legales, que encuentran ocupación durante unos seis meses, pueden obtener para el resto del tiempo el subsidio de desempleo o regresar a México, para volver al año siguiente; esta posibilidad para los ilegales representa un riesgo y representa el anillo débil de la cadena. Ahora bien, con el proceso de mecanización en muchas operaciones agrícolas se ha ido reduciendo la exigencia de trabajadores agrícolas, aunque queda la exigencia de una mano de obra mínima estimada en unos dos millones de trabajadores. Los cambios sociales han determinado que los únicos mexicanos dispuestos a trabajar en la agricultura estadounidense sean los indígenas de Oaxaca, Puebla y Guerrero.

Estas observaciones plantean nuevos problemas para la sociedad americana en muchos terrenos, desde las formas de integración, al respeto de los derechos civiles y a la participación política de una comunidad tan amplia con plenos derechos políticos y que ha presentado hasta 1990, como ha señalado Juan Gómez-Quiñones, una escasa inscripción en las listas electorales y porcentajes elevados de abstencionismo.

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CONTRIBUTORS

ABRAHAM ACOSTA is Assistant Professor of Latin American Cultural Studies in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at the University of Arizona. His research interests include questions of subjectivity, subalternity, and biopolitics in Latin American critical and cultural practice. His work has been published in such journals as *Dispositio/n*, *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies*, and *Social Text* (forthcoming). His current book project is an examination of theories and narratives of resistance and the politics of speech in contemporary Latin American cultural discourse.

HANS BAK is Professor of American Literature at Radboud University Nijmegen, the Netherlands. He is the author of *Malcolm Cowley: The Formative Years* (1993) and is preparing an edition of Cowley's letters for Harvard UP. Editor of a.o. *First Nations of North America: Politics and Representation* (2005). Research interests include contemporary American and Canadian literature (Native American/First Nations literatures); instruments of culture (periodicals, publishers and "middlemen" of letters); the reception of North American literature and culture in Europe.

LOUISE BARNETT is a member of the American Studies Department at Rutgers University and most recently the author of *Atrocity and American Military Justice in Southeast Asia* (2010).

MICHELE BOTTALICO is Professor of American Literature at the University of Salerno. Twice a Fulbright Research Scholar, he is the author of many articles and two monographic studies on American literature and culture, and the editor of numerous collections of essays. In the field of Chicano studies, he has published *Milestones. I classici della creatività chicana* (2008) and co-edited *Borderline Identities in Chicano Culture* (2006). He has translated and/or edited a number of Chicano novels.

YOLANDA BROYLES-GONZÁLEZ is an elder of the Barrio Libre Yaqui ceremonial community in Tucson. She has blazed trails for women, both academically and in the women's rights arena. Under her leadership in 1994 the very first proposal for the Chicano/a Studies doctorate degree



in the nation was created. In 1998 President Clinton honored her at the White House for legally challenging the unequal payment of women of color within the University of California system. Her publications include *El Teatro Campesino: Theater in the Chicano Movement* (1995), *Lydia Mendoza's Life in Music* (2001), *Re-emerging Native Women of the Americas* (2001); and *Earth Wisdom. A California Chumash Woman* (2011).

MARTHA L. CANFIELD, Professor of Spanish American Literature at the University of Florence, has worked on such important authors as García Márquez, Vallejo, Borges, Cortázar. She has edited in Italian the poetic works of Mario Benedetti, Carmen Boullosa, Ernesto Cardenal, Jorge Eielson, Álvaro Mutis, Juana Rosa Pita, an anthology of short stories (*Donne allo specchio. Racconti ispanoamericani fra Ottocento e Novecento*, 1997) and one of poetry (*Poesia spagnola e ispanoamericana*, for the series *Poesia Straniera* of «La Biblioteca di Repubblica», 2004). The first volume of her history of Spanish American literature (*Prehispánica y colonial*) was published in 2009.

DANIEL COOPER ALARCÓN is an Associate Professor of English at the University of Arizona in Tucson, AZ. He is the author of *The Aztec Palimpsest: Mexico in the Modern Imagination* (1997), and his scholarship and literary criticism have appeared in the journals *Aztlán*, *American Literature*, *MELUS*, *Southwestern American Literature*, and *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture*.

ERMINIO CORTI es Investigador de Literatura Hispanoamericana en la Universidad de Bergamo. Entre sus publicaciones: *Da Aztlán all'Amerindia. Multiculturalismo e difesa dell'identità chicana nella poesia di Alurista* (1999), *Da Faulkner a Onetti: uno studio comparativo dei cronotopi letterari fra Yoknapatawpha e Santa María* (2004), *Borges, Onetti, García Márquez. Tres ensayos de literatura hispanoamericana* (2004). Es miembro de la redacción de la revista *Ácoma*.

FRANCESCO FAVA, Investigador en la Universidad IULM (Milán) y traductor literario, especializado en poesía hispanoamericana y española del siglo XX, narrativa contemporánea y teoría de la traducción. Ha traducido a Octavio Paz, José Gorostiza, Pedro Salinas, Luis Cernuda. Entre sus trabajos críticos, *Amor y sombras. Una lettura de La voz a ti debida di Pedro Salinas* (2009).

CELESTINO FERNÁNDEZ is University Distinguished Outreach Professor of Sociology at the University of Arizona where he also has served in several administrative positions, including as Vice President for Academic Outreach and International Affairs. Prof. Fernández specializes in Mexican immigration and popular culture. In addition to his 45 publications, he has composed over 50 *corridos* (Mexican ballads), including several on immigration. He received his MA and PhD from Stanford University.

JESSIE K. FINCH is a PhD Candidate in Sociology at the University of Arizona. She specializes in immigration and race as well as culture, specifically popular culture and media. She has published on undocumented immigrants and Latino culture. She has her MA in Sociology from the University of Arizona (2011) and her BA in Sociology and Music from the University of Tulsa (2007). Jessie is also the recipient of the National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship.

CARLOS GALLEGO is currently an Associate Professor of English at St. Olaf College. He previously taught at the University of Arizona, and his work has appeared in academic journals such as *Biography*, *Aztlán*, *Cultural Critique* and *Western Humanities Review*. He is the author of *Chicana/o Subjectivity and the Politics of Identity: Between Recognition and Revolution*, 2011. He is currently working on a book examining popular representations of psychopathology in American culture.

MARÍA CECILIA GRAÑA (PhD Harvard University) enseña Literatura Hispanoamericana en la Universidad de Verona. En el 2006 organizó en Verona el “Séptimo foro internacional de estudios sobre las culturas literarias del sudoeste americano” en colaboración con las universidades de Arizona y Firenze. Se ha ocupado, en diversos artículos, capítulos de libros y en una monografía, del tema de la ciudad en la literatura hispanoamericana. Se ha interesado además por el género fantástico. En los últimos años su investigación se ha centrado en la formas poéticas medias y largas: sobre el poema extenso ha coordinado una sección de la revista *Cuadernos Americanos* (XXV, 138, oct.-dic. 2011) y dos volúmenes (*La suma que es el todo y que no cesa. El poema largo en la modernidad hispanoamericana*, 2006 y *Il poemetto / poema estenso / long poem / langes gedicht / poema longo / poème long. Un esempio novecentesco di ricerca poetica*, 2007).

FRANCESCO GURRIERI is Professor of Architecture Restoration at the University of Florence. He is one of the most active participants in the national and international debate on the conservation of cultural heritage. Formerly Dean of the Faculty of Architecture in Florence, and of the UIA (International University of Art), he is currently the Director of the Class of Architecture at the Academy of the Arts of Drawing. His background in science and humanities, together with his past experience in the administration of Italian cultural heritage, makes him a leading authority in the discipline of restoration. He has written extensively on the history and criticism of architecture.

EMANUELA JOSSA, Investigadora de Literatura Hispanoamericana en la Universidad de Calabria, se ha dedicado al estudio de la literatura del aera centroamericana, en relación con las culturas indígenas y con el contexto político. De ahí sus trabajos acerca de M.A. Asturias, H. Ak'abal, R. Rey Rosa; acaba de publicar una antología de poemas de Roque Dalton (*Il cielo per cappello*, 2011). Investiga la narrativa hispanoamericana del ámbito del género fantástico y

de lo real maravilloso, publicando ensayos sobre García Márquez, Julio Cortázar, Silvina Ocampo, Leopoldo Lugones. En prensa su última monografía: *Raccontare gli animali. Percorsi nella narrativa ispanoamericana*.

GETA LESEUR is a Distinguished Professor specializing in African, Caribbean, and African-American literature. She holds a doctorate in English and African-American Studies from Indiana University – Bloomington and is the author of two books, *Ten Is the Age of Darkness: The Black Bildungsroman* (1995) and *Not All Okies Are White: the Lives of Black Cotton Pickers in Arizona*, which was selected as one of the best books on the Southwest for 2000. She also has many articles in referred journals. She received an Excellence in Education Award, the William Kemper Award and Fellowship for Teaching Excellence, and a Fulbright Senior Scholar Award to Spain in 2000. Her current research focuses on “Motherhood in the African Diaspora” and America’s Black Indians.

FRANCESCO MARRONI is Professor of English at the Gabriele d’Annunzio University of Chieti-Pescara. He is editor in chief of the following academic journals: *Merope, Rivista di Studi Vittoriani*, and *Traduttologia*. He is also director of CUSVE (Centre for Victorian and Edwardian Studies – Pescara, Italy), Vice President of the Gaskell Society (UK) and Trustee of the Dickens Society (USA). His publications include monographs and articles mainly on Victorian literature. His most recent books are: *Miti e mondi vittoriani* (2004) e *Spettri senza nome: modelli epistemici e narrativa vittoriana* (2007), *Victorian Disharmonies* (2010). He is editor of the Victorian and Edwardian Studies Series for Peter Lang Verlag (Bern, Berlin and New York).

MARIO MATERASSI taught Literature of the United States at the University of Florence, “La Sapienza” in Rome, and Bronx Community College of the City University of New York. Co-founder of the Center for the Study of the Southwest and its first director, he is editorial advisor of *Journal of the Southwest. Go Southwest, Old Man: note di un viaggio letterario, e non* (2009) is his most recent volume.

ANNAMARIA PINAZZI taught American Literature at the University of Florence. She has published extensively on contemporary theater, focusing on Native American drama, presently her main research interest. In this field, she has translated and edited several plays, collected in Hanay Geiogamah, *Teatro*, (1994) and in the anthology *Indiani sulla scena. Teatro dei nativi americani* (2008).

MANUEL PLANA, Profesor de Historia de América Latina de la Facultad de Letras y Filosofía de la Universidad de Florencia, se ha dedicado al estudio de México durante los siglos XIX y XX. Entre los principales trabajos recientes cabe señalar: *Messico: dall’Indipendenza a oggi*, (2003) y *Venustiano Carranza (1911-1914). El ascenso del dirigente político y el proceso revolucionario en Coahuila* (2011).

GAETANO PRAMPOLINI has taught Literature of the United States at the University of Florence since 1974. His writings range from the Colonial to the contemporary period, with essays on J. Smith, W. Irving, J. Fenimore Cooper, J.R. Lowell, W.D. Howells, E. Wharton, E. Hemingway, J. Cheever, R. Lowell, P. Taylor, R. Hugo, F. O'Connor, N.S. Momaday and C. Wright, among others. Beside Native American literature, his current scholarly interests include literary translation and hermeneutics, the image of Italy in literatures in English, and the shorter forms of fiction.

ROBERTO SERRAI holds a PhD in American Studies. He has been working since 1992 as a freelance translator for several Italian publishing houses. He has also been conducting research at home and abroad, while working as an Adjunct Professor in American Literature and English Translation for the University of Siena and the University of Cassino.

CHARLES TATUM is Professor of Spanish at the University of Arizona. He has published several books including *Chicano Literature* (1982), *Chicano Popular Culture* (2001), *Chicano and Chicana Literature: Otra voz del pueblo* (2006), and *Lowriders in Chicano Culture: From Low to Slow to Show* (2011). He co-authored with Harold E. Hinds, Jr, *Not Just for Children: The Mexican Comic Book in the Late 1960s and 1970s* (1992). Tatum and Hinds are co-founding editors of the journal, *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture*. Tatum serves on the advisory board of the Recovering the US Hispanic Literary Heritage Project. He is currently serving as editor for a 3-volume *Encyclopedia of Latino Culture* (forthcoming).

JUDY NOLTE TEMPLE is a Professor of Gender and Women's Studies and of English at the University of Arizona. She is the author of two monographs: *'A Secret to be Buried': The Diary and Life of Emily Hawley Gillespie* (1989) and *Baby Doe Tabor: The Madwoman in the Cabin* (2009). Her current research involves a fifty-year-long diary of an Irish immigrant who moved to the arid Southwest. Temple is a Past-President of the Western Literature Association.

AN VAN HECKE (Lessius /KU Leuven) obtuvo la Maestría en Estudios Latinoamericanos en la UNAM (México) y el doctorado en literatura en la Universidad de Amberes, con una tesis sobre el autor guatemalteco Augusto Monterroso. Ha publicado artículos sobre literatura mexicana, guatemalteca y chicana. Su investigación se centra en relaciones interculturales, identidad nacional, intertextualidad, bilingüismo y (auto)traducción.

JOHN WARNOCK is a Professor of Rhetoric and Writing in the Department of English at the University of Arizona and a native of the American Southwest.

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