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ETHNIC CONSCIOUSNESS IN CHICANO LITERATURE: THE VOICE OF "LA RAZA"

I

Although Chicano literature originates from the 16th century, as Marcos Farfán's now lost 1598 play established the literary tradition in New Mexico (Paredes 34), it had been assigned to one of the "forgotten chapters of American literature" ((Magyar... 751). This tragic historical and cultural oversight was due to a widespread belief dating the origin of American literature from the settlement of Jamestown in 1607, a lack of appreciation for oral culture: a touchstone of Mexican-American literary activity, and a wholesale dismissal of literary modes not invented in Europe (Leal and Barrón 12).

The formation of the Chicano social and cultural context dates back to the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which put an end to the disastrous Mexican-American War and substantially increased the size of the United States with the addition of the Texas Territory transferring approximately 80,000 Mexican citizens under American jurisdiction (Elliott 800).

Chicano literature and Chicano consciousness are artistic and ideological manifestations of Hispanic America's ethnic, political, and cultural regeneration in the late 1960's. "El Movimiento," a Hispanic offspring of the Civil Rights Movement, laid the foundations of the

Chicano Renaissance, a decade of flourishing literary activity by U.S. citizens of Mexican descent or Americans of Mexican origin whose description of their specific experiences is driven by a sense of ethnicity (Paredes 74).

II

The Mexican-American Past

Mexican-American history can be divided into five distinct periods offering a foundation for respective stages of literary development. Spanish colonial presence in the territory between Southeast Texas and California began in the middle of the 16th century and lasted until 1809. Following the failure of Panfilo de Narvaez's expedition to reach the Rio Grande, Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca led a few survivors across the American Southwest before reaching Mexico and arousing the interest of the Viceroy of New Spain in the potential wealth of the area. During this period the two cornerstones of Spanish colonial administration, the authority of the church and state were established. The continuous struggle between the two entities undermined colonial rule and led to the Pueblo Rebellion of New Mexico in 1680. In 1730 responding to an impending threat of French expansion, Spanish rule was established in the Texas Territory, and following France's defeat in the French and Indian War, Spain reassumed control of the Louisiana Territory. To thwart Russian advances in the Pacific Coast region Spain expanded into California in 1769.

In 1810 Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costillo sounded the call of revolt against Spanish rule leading to the collapse of New Spain in 1821. The so-called Mexican era saw a conflict with the United States as Americans driven by the idea of Manifest Destiny crossed the Mississippi and ensuing cultural, political, and ethnic differences resulted in the Mexican-American War of 1846—48.

Despite guarantees of protection for Mexican political and economic rights, cultural dislocation and political oppression characterized the period of "Anglo-American Conquest" lasting from 1849 till 1910 (Moquin 251). In a clash of opposing systems of property rights and law codes, the Anglo-Americans became victorious as Spanish land titles could not stand the test of the dominant legal system. In his account of the activity of the Land Commission, established by Congress in 1851, John S. Hittel of Hutchings' California Magazine argued that the defeat of Mexican land titles not only eliminated Mexican-American estates but laid the foundations for an economic, cultural, and demographic crisis as well (Moquin 263—71).

Responding to the desperate plight of Mexicans, Juan Nepomuceno Cortina rebelled against American rule in Texas and achieved a mythical status after several clashes with the Texas Rangers. His "Proclamation to the Mexican-Americans of South Texas" anticipated the ethnic pride movements of the 1960's, describing his race as a group of proud, gentle people filled with "inward sweetness and adorned with the most lovely disposition towards all that is good and useful in the line of progress" (Moquin 274—75). Cortina's reference to Mexicans "lifting their grand edifice among the ruins of the past" anticipates the Chicano Movement's later invocation of the myth of Aztlán.

The fourth period of Mexican-American history started in 1910 with the Mexican revolution and is personified by the image of the immigrant. Although northward immigration from Mexico started in the 1840's, Porfirio Diaz's corrupt and brutal regime functioned as the main push factor from 1910. Mexican immigrants comprised a large sector of the labor force of the Southwest working in three main areas, agriculture, mining and railroad construction. Whereas Mexican immigration is mostly associated with field workers escaping peonage, the establishment of the League of United Latin American Citizens in 1929 reflects such middle-class goals as the "acquisition of the English language" and the development of the "best, purest and most perfect type of a true and loyal citizen of the United States of America." At the

same time the desire for ethnic pride is also present in a declaration of "sincere and respectful" reverence for the signers' racial origins (Moquin 364—65).

The last period reflects the growth of self-awareness taking place between 1940 and 1970. The foundations of the Brown Power Movement were laid by increased immigration following the economics-motivated forced repatriations during the Depression and a political identification with the Third World, mostly Central and Latin America (Moquin 390—91).

One of the predecessors of the Chicano Movement is the *pachuco* phenomenon of the 1940's. Responding to political, cultural, and economic segregation, young Mexican-Americans formed gangs and adopted a specific apparel viewing themselves as contemporary legatees of the Aztec heritage. This primarily youth-driven movement culminated in the Zoot Suit Riots of 1943 during which Anglo soldiers on leave clashed with Mexican-American youths in the East Los Angeles area.

In 1951—1965 the bracero program, a government sponsored seasonal agricultural laborer importation scheme, was in effect. The Chicano Movement was given a final impetus in September 1965, when heretofore disunionized Mexican-American grape pickers in Delano, California went on strike under the leadership of César Chávez. Although the strike aimed to achieve better pay and more humane working conditions, giving rise to a new ethnic consciousness it went beyond economics.

The term "Chicano" supposedly originated from Northern Mexico where the citizens of Chihuahua added the first syllable of the name of their hometown to the designation "Mexicano." Although the name has been widely used since the 1930's by Mexicans referring to someone caught between the Anglo and the indigenous world, and was heard during the Zoot Suit Riots as well, it only gained political currency after the Delano grape strike (Moquin 499—500).

The Chicano Aesthetic, like its Black counterpart, is a reaction to the historical exclusion of Mexican-Americans from the United States'

public discourse. The "black legend," an Anglo-Saxon generated image symbolizing the cruelty of conquistadors toward Native Americans in the 16th century, resulted in the wholesale condemnation of the Spanish legacy:

> Spain has been tried and convicted in the forum of history. Her religion has been bigotry ... her statesmanship has been infamy: her diplomacy, hypocrisy: her wars have been massacres: her supremacy has been a blight and a curse, condemning continents to sterility, and their inhabitants to death. (Hunt 58)

The "black legend" not only projected a negative attitude to a nation, but also led to stereotypical descriptions of Hispanic/Latino males culminating in the infamous "greaser" image. Jeremiah Clemens' *Texas Romances* emphasize the greasy appearance of the American Southwest: "The people look greasy, their houses are greasy-everywhere grease and filth hold divided dominion" (Rocard 11). Willa Cather's "The Dance at Chevalier's" points to the greasiness of a Mexican's hand and O.Henry accused the Mexican as the "greaser of the nation" (Rocard 11). Charles Fletcher Lummis described New Mexico as the "anomaly of the Republic, a land of poco tiempo," (Moquin 316) employing such soon to be time-worn images as self-sacrificing hospitality, and romantic savagery: "Last of all, the Mexicans; in-bred and isolation-shrunken descendants of the Castilian world-finders; living almost as much against the house as in it; ignorant as slaves, and more courteous than kings; poor as Lazarus and more hospitable than Croesus" (Moquin 318).

The Development of Chicano Literature

Leal and Barrón's pre-Chicano literature period comprises both of Moquin's "Hispano-Indian synthesis" (1) and the literary activity of the "Mexican Southwest" (161). This period is dominated by historical descriptions of the Southwest, including Gaspar Perez de Villagra's

Historia de la Nueva Mexico and the accounts of Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca concerning his own exploits. The authors were mostly Spanish explorers but as Philip D. Ortego argued these works deal with distinctly American topics following a "unique metamorphosis, integrating alien elements which were to herald a distinct kind of New World literature" (Leal and Barrón 16).

The most frequent forms of literary expression were fast-paced narrative ballads or poems set to music, called corridos, religious plays and folktales (Leal and Barrón 16). Paredes asserts that the corrido was the principal literary genre for Mexican-Americans in the Southwest. The term originally means 'to run' in Spanish and the ballads have Spanish colonial roots. The corrido is the product of the Anglo-Mexican cultural conflict viewing the events of the Southwest from a distinctly Mexican-American vantage point (Lauter 828).

One of the oldest corridos, "Kiansis," describes a cattle drive from Texas to Kansas serving as a background to a rivalry between Anglo and Mexican cattlemen during which the latter proudly hold their own in a crisis. The ballad displays a clash of myths and in the end the vaquero defeats the cowboy. The poem promotes a human ideal who not only protects the herd but upholds the integrity of the Mexican-American cultural heritage. "Kiansis" actually reclaims the cowboy myth, one of the most cherished legends of Anglo culture, and proves J. Frank Dobie right, who asserted that the Anglo ranching industry was the straight descendant of Mexican cattle herding and raising practices with the vaquero functioning as the teacher of the cowboy (Moquin 377).

"Gregorio Cortez" tells of the protagonist's clash with the "rinches," or the Texas Rangers. Cortez, a Mexican-American rancher defending his brother, gets in conflict with the law after he shoots a sheriff and makes his way toward the Mexican border. In the poem the relatively peaceful rivalry between vaqueros and cowboys gives way to a deadly gunfight as Cortez, a lone Mexican, symbolizes ethnic pride and defiance of Anglo authority. Cortez is the opposite of the stereotypical docile Mexican as his very name and weapon instills fear

in the heart of Anglos and his individuality is reminiscent of the Western hero.

"Jacinto Trevino" continues to upset the traditional value structure of the Southwest as the protagonist remains the last person to defy the Texas Rangers, eluding their deadly grasp. "The Disobedient Son," commemorating a young man's death warranted by his overpowering male ego probes another side of the Mexican-American ideal: the respect of one's family and the notion of *compadrazgo*, the idea that the psychological proximity of a family should be projected onto the social sphere. As the son must pay with his life for threatening to kill his father, who is intervening to stop an impending duel, the sanctity of the family is upheld.

It is noteworthy that despite being predominantly a 19th-century mode of literary expression, the corrido survived to perpetuate more recent heroes of the Mexican-American community. "Remembering the President," mourning the death of John F. Kennedy, the first Catholic Chief Executive of the nation, not only reflects religious affinity but praises Kennedy for maintaining an emotional bond with the Latin American community. "The Ballad of César Chávez" celebrates the leader of the Delano grape strike, who continued the proud defiance of Cortez and Trevino with the power of non-violence, and his stand and personal conviction not only led to the success of the labor dispute contributing to the growth of *la Raza*, or the Mexican-American people, but as Robert F. Kennedy's participation at a Delano mass invoking the Virgin of Guadalupe indicated, mainstream American acceptance of Chicano culture and society as well.

The corrido as a product of Anglo-American cultural conflict concentrates on the Mexican-American hero. The paradigms can take the form of the vaquero engaged in an economic and cultural rivalry with the American cowboy, the rancher turned desperado achieving a moral victory over Anglo vigilantes, the politician whose decision-making process is motivated by an awareness of the needs of the greater community, and the labor organizer whose personal sacrifice and religious conviction earn a lasting victory for Hispanic Americans.

The vaquero holding his own during a cattle drive incident demonstrates that Mexican-American culture is equal to Anglo civilization, and the very foundation of the latter's most cherished myth is of Hispanic origin. Gregorio Cortez and Jacinto Trevino first appear to be reversals of the American frontier hero, but both sacrifice themselves for the notion of compadrazgo. "The Disobedient Son" demonstrates the superiority of the community and family over individual pride. Both JFK and César Chávez had to confront their immediate surroundings: geopolitics and labor relations respectively, to promote the cause of the Mexican and greater Latin American community. In all cases the protagonist's victory is the community's triumph as well, presenting an opposing paradigm to Anglo-American individualism.

One of the defining images of Chicano poetry is the notion of liminality, or the sense of being suspended, or caught between two cultures. Whereas the corrido born from the vortex of Anglo-Mexican cultural conflict anticipates this trope, it does not yet suffer from Padilla's "orphan complex:" a notion of alienation from the U.S. and a lack of spiritual link to Mexico (Pérez—Torres 65). The spiritual connection is present in the protagonists' sacrifices for the community and as Tomas Rivera asserts "the corrido ... is the primary vehicle through which a more spiritual totality is explained" (Leal and Barrón 17).

Whereas the corrido places Mexican-American culture in a dualist framework, it fails to form a bridge between Chicano and Anglo cultures. In the merger of the aesthetic and the socio-cultural an "antidote to the disease of cultural and spiritual conquest" is provided (Pérez—Torres 47). The corrido also functions as the forerunner of multiculturalism and postmodernism. Pérez—Torres distinguishes two types of multiculturalism: the neotraditional view is a backlash against modernism, and the resistant school emphasizes inequality concentrating upon how different cultures function (15). The corrido's protagonists continuously face the unequal social and economic

conditions of the Southwest and operate in the buffer zone between Anglo and Mexican culture.

These ballads with a staunch anti-Anglo message reveal a cultural rupture between Euro and Mexican-Americans brought on by opposing production and value systems. Besides the sense of liminality, a definite attempt is made to coopt or empower the marginalized Hispanic culture. Furthermore, anticipating the postmodern yet feminism-inspired slogan: "the personal is political," Cortez and Trevino's defiance of Anglo authority, or César Chávez's spiritual conviction, becomes a political statement. The corrido also deconstructs the traditional Anglo-Hispanic framework, reversing the order of privileging, undermining "previously unquestioned postulates of order" (Holman and Harmon 125).

The time of transition between 1849—1910, or the era during which the Chicano is forced into the role of a second-class citizen is the second period in the development of Chicano literature. Following the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the corrido remained a popular mode of literary expression, but besides the Anglo-American conflict, such heroes of the Wild West are commemorated as Billy the Kid (Leal and Barrón 19).

The American Southwest had three major cultural centers, New Mexico, Texas and California and out of the three New Mexico remained relatively impenetrable to the Anglo cultural invasion. As Paredes argues, a new culture, neither Mexican, nor Anglo, but a mixture of the two emerged, making it the forerunner of Chicano culture. "1848" also meant the transformation of "the homeland into borderland" as Mexicans remaining in territories ceded to the U.S. confronted the dual pressures of preserving their culture and accepting American mores. Mexican-American literature responded to the cultural, political, and economic deterritorialization by following the corrido tradition; perpetuating events of a cultural conflict, or by emphasizing elements of Spanish culture and using the Spanish language (Paredes 47—48).

The period between 1910—1943 sees the emergence of collective consciousness, demonstrated by the formation of the League of United Latin American Citizens in 1929. The corrido, as shown by a ballad's ethnic pride-driven commemoration of the 1936 coal-strike, remained a popular form of literary expression.(Leal and Barrón 21).

The last stage in the development of Chicano literature lasting from 1943 till the Chicano Renaissance of the late 1960's, early 1970's is characterized by confrontation. "1943" is the reference to the Zoot Suit Riots as a historical materialization of the *pachuco*, the individual who breaks the law as a form of social protest. The ethnic and cultural awakening marked by El Movimiento brought forth the notion of Chicano consciousness and one of its most potent manifestations, poetry.

The Chicano movement is the offspring of Chicano cultural nationalism, which similarly to black nationalism used the weapon of ethnic pride against cultural deterritorialization. Chicano cultural regeneration was fostered by a growing ethnic awareness in the 1960's, the Third World's increasing political importance in the 1950's, the rude awakening of Mexican-American soldiers to Anglo racism countered after their return from World War Two, the institutionalization of Mexican culture following the Mexican revolution, and certain episodes of Mexican history, such as the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and the independence struggle waged against Spain (Pérez—Torres 64).

The establishment of Chicano cultural identity was sparked by the Delano grape strike. In that event several elements of Hispanic civilization collaborated to provide a formidable ethnic and cultural force. The context of the events, agricultural labor, was not only a representative economic activity of Mexican-Americans, but the migrant worker was one of the keystone images of Hispanic American literature. The strikers marched under the statue of the Virgin of Guadalupe, a symbol produced by a combination of Euro-American and Pre-Cortesian images.

Furthermore the labor movement seemed to defy the stereotype of the "docile Mexican." Although the strikers led by Cesar Chávez demanded better wages and the improvement of their working conditions, the events at Delano led to a movement aimed at remedying centuries of historical wrongs. The Delano strike brought on El Movimiento where the former's "El Plan de Delano" demanding land and justice paved the way toward the emergence of Chicano consciousness.

The Chicano movement was a response to Mexican-American society's cultural, economic, and political crisis. Chicano consciousness was characterized by the notions of brotherhood, cultural empowerment, maintenance of historical values and sympathy with the oppressed (Anaya 301).

Aztlán

The notion of Aztlán was introduced in 1969 by the Chicano Youth Conference held in Denver. Alberto Alurista's "El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán" put forth a program demanding land, political equality and changes in higher education (Pérez—Torres 58). Aztlán functioned as a matrix where two lines of Chicano thought met, one concerning an attempt to change the hostile socio-political system, the other operated on the subjective level aiming to instill ethnic pride (Pérez—Torres 59).

Aztlán, the land of the Seven caves, is the primeval ground from which the ancient Mexicans moved southward in 820 A.D. (Pérez—Torres 57). Chicanos consider themselves the "true descendants of the Fifth Sun, el Quinto Sol." Out of the four groups to have emerged from Aztlán: Nahuas, Toltecs, Chichimecas and Aztecs, the latter inaugurated the epoch of the Fifth Sun. The arrival of *el Quinto Sol* was preceded by four eras, the age of Earth, Air, Fire, and Water. The Fifth Sun represents movement and progress born of man's sacrifice and reaffirms the existence of a "cosmic spirit," the alma Chicana (the Chicano soul). William H. Prescott's *History of the Conquest of Mexico* (1843) and Alvin M. Josephy Jr.'s *The Indian Heritage of America*

(1968) are the main North American texts testifying to the existence of Aztlán. Prescott compares the move of the Mexica to the Jewish exodus and Josephy admits that the Mexica leaving Aztlán "may even have been in the present-day United States Southwest" (Rendon 8—12). Rendon's *Chicano Manifesto*, comparing Aztlán in importance to Mesopotamia, identifies the territory as present-day California, Nevada, Arizona, and the Sonora area of Northern Mexico.

According to Anaya the Chicano movement's invocation of Aztlán supplied a symbol of national unity, established a collective ethnic identity, and provided a homeland. The Mexican-American community deprived of land by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo found a psychological and spiritual remedy for cultural deterritorialization enabling it to be "masters or senores of their own time" (Anaya 371—73).

"1848" pushed Chicanos into "King Arthur's Court," thus the imposition of an Anglo-Saxon archetype undermined the communal memory (Anaya 296). Contemporary Chicano experience reflected the Nietzschean prophecy of "man today stripped of myth, famished among all his pasts frantically digging for roots" (Leitch 116). The Aztlán myth emerged from the collective unconscious of the Mexican-American community. Through the naming process Chicanos placed themselves into an archetypal situation in which a loose group of people becomes a true community reflecting "the voice of all mankind" (Leitch 121). Since a myth is a communal response to a spiritual crisis (Anaya 377), the Chicano movement's solution for the ills of the Mexican-American community was the promotion of Chicano consciousness, the ideology of the New World Person. As Virágos asserts, myths function as barometers of a given culture. The Aztlán myth reflects the social circumstances of culturally dispossessed Chicanos, the collective self-image of a nation destined for ethnic grandeur (49).

Chicano Poetry

Chicano poetry, as an integral part of the "modern poetry of the Americas" has been nurtured by the genre's major innovators. Walt Whitman's propensity to argue for "democratic comprehensiveness" and his rejection of artistic conformity functioned as one of the most important influences on modern American poetry. Furthermore, Whitman's technical achievements, the lack of rhyme and the employment of the free and open verse provide necessary poetic tools for such movimiento poets as Ricárdo Sanchez and Abelardo Delgado. Emily Dickinson's inclusive view "allowing every experience, regardless of how routine or trivial, a place in poetry" left its mark upon Gary Soto and Inez Továr's work. Jose Martí (1853—1895), the Cuban revolutionary's political activism, democratic aesthetic, "simple and unadorned forms" made him one of the paragons of the Chicano movement. The Nicaraguan Rubén Darío (1867—1916) is the champion of modernismo, a literary revolt against European artistic values and argues that "change is the only basis of tradition" (Candelaria 22—24).

Poetry became the dominant form of expression for several reasons. It functioned as a modern form of the corrido, a vehicle of cultural resistance itself, it was a shorter, more cost-effective mode of communication, and with the oral readings it provided instant audience feedback. Furthermore its modes of expression matched contemporary literary demands for free verse as Charles Olson defined the poem as "a field of composition" designed for oral perfomance (Sánchez 18—19). Chicano poetry rests on the following cornerstones: the myth of Aztlán or the Mezo-American homeland, the expression of cultural dispossession, and the notion of interlingualism, or linguistic code switching (Pérez—Torres 6).

Cordelia Candelaria discerns four characteristics of movimiento poetry: traditional literary forms, a prevalence of the imperative mode, an impassioned style, and the domination of prosaic elements. The poets convey their message by contrasting cultural nationalism with universalism, justice with racism, communalism with capitalism, and

pre-Americanism with a Euro-Western worldview (Shirley and Shirley 15).

Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzalez's "Yo Soy Joaqúin" (1967) became the flagship poem of the Chicano movement. Gonzalez, founder of Crusade for Justice, a Denver-based organization, wrote this poem in 1967 to promote Chicano consciousness and political activity. According to the author his purpose was to demonstrate "the psychological wounds, cultural genocide, social castration, nobility, courage, determination and the fortitude to move on to make new history for an ancient people dancing on a modern stage" (Pérez—Torres 70).

The title character, symbolizes the Chicano caught up in the whirlwind of history. The poem is a call to arms for the Chicano movement. Joaqúin, integrated into American history due to his valiant conduct in U.S. wars, not only stands for the demonstration of ethnic pride, and of the maintenance of historic roots: "I am Cuahtemoc. Proud and noble leader of men," but attempts to fight the prevailing stereotypes of Mexican-Americans through the imposition of Aztec and Mayan heroes and demigods in place of the "docile, indolent Mexican." The poem is an apt manifestation of Chicano consciousness as Joaqúin becomes Anaya's New World Person, an individual emphasizing community needs, radiating ethnic pride, and demanding cultural empowerment. "Yo Soy Joaqúin" bears a resemblance to literary works produced during the Harlem Renaissance. Gonzalez's work corresponds with Langston Hughes' "Negro" as both poems start with a heartfelt demonstration of ethnic pride, followed by examples of the group's heroic and turbulent past with the African-American appearing as a slave, worker, and a victim of colonialism and the Mexican-American emerging as an agricultural laborer, a former tyrant, and slave.

Chicano Renaissance or El Movimiento poetry displays three main figures: the "migrant worker," the *pachuco,* and the *pinto.* The "migrant worker," a personal manifestation of liminality is present in Abelardo Delgado's "el immigrante." Being exposed to economic and political forces beyond his control, the migrant represents territorial

displacement. As the poet draws a parallel between the sparrows and Mexican migratory patterns two main elements of the migrant experience: territorial dispossession and powerlessness are emphasized (Pérez—Torres 105). Ricardo Sánchez's "migrant lament" presents the "migrant" in a more aggressive light fighting two enemies: the oppressive gringo and the clergy tolerating poverty. In his view the seasonal agricultural laborer becomes an agent in the construction of a new world. Tino Villanueva's "Que hay otra voz" poems provide a detailed description of the migrant laborer's day and present the character as an integral part of nature (Shirley and Shirley 23).

Following Anaya's description of Chicano consciousness, the migrant as a literary figure displays several elements of the New World Person. The shared difficulties, "the sweat day-long dripping into open space/sun blocks the sky" create a sense of brotherhood, and a sympathy for the oppressed. Furthermore, the work in the fields develops an appreciation for nature. The migrant becomes alienated, plagued by an "orphan complex," not being quite home in either culture. However, as an economic actor and a contributor to the sustenance of mainstream America he exuberates ethnic pride, dignity and humanity. The "migrant" is the symbol of economic dislocation and cultural deterritorialization as he works on a land previously owned by his forebears, and sells his labor to support a foreign civilization.

The *pinto*, or the prisoner is the second principal type of Chicano literature. The Mexican-American as a prisoner reflects the violence of Chicano existence. Following the footsteps of Gregorio Cortez and Jacinto Trevino, confrontations and border violence are decribed, but in this clash between Anglo and Mexican the latter loses. As Pérez—Torres points out while "the migrant" symbolizes the struggle to enter America, drawn by the images of the promised land: the Mexican-American Dream, the pinto experience describes the nightmare, a feeling of being ensnared by America (115).

Ricardo Sánchez speaks loudest of the pinto experience highlighting the feeling of alienation and dehumanization. In "Soledad"

he combines the tenets of Chicano consciousness with the emotional toll of prison life:

soledad,
you lied!
no solitude or serenity here,
just
tormented souls...no,
not souls

The *pinto* as a temporary loser in the cultural conflict is also a rebel emphasizing *carnalismo* (brotherhood), an appreciation of family ties and the desire for freedom (Shirley and Shirley 21). The pinto reflects the notion of Chicano consciousness as it represents Chicano culture entrapped by "mainstream" America. The pinto also symbolizes a multi-level rejection of society at large, as the prisoner is estranged psychologically, personally, and sociologically. The commission of a crime, often under the label of social banditry, indicates a protest against economic deterritorialization. Psychologically it is a form of an individual revolt, and a sacrifice of his body or life assigns him the role of the rebel.

Just as the Chicano is suspended between two cultures, the prisoner represents both psychological and physical liminality functioning between freedom and captivity, social rejection and acceptance. The pinto experience also acts as a catalyst towards education demonstrated by Jimmy Santiago Baca, who turned to learning to deal with the dehumanizing cruelty of prison life to achieve "a birthing, a way out through poetry."

Thus in a way the pinto experience is centripetal, as individuals heretofore on the periphery are prompted by conditions of captivity to acquire an education enabling them to create literary products, leading to a participation in a multicultural literary world. The pinto is a multicultural hero functioning at the faultline between the colonizer and the colonized.

While the literary image of the "migrant" emphasizes his humanity, and integration into nature, the prisoner is separated from nature desperately struggling to preserve his human dignity. The "migrant" symbolizes economic deterritorialization, the pinto stands for social alienation, and the *pachuco* functions as a cultural rebel.

The figure of the *pachuco* sporting a specific hairstyle, clad in distinctive oversized suits and flamboyant hats, reflects cultural separation. The very name, a *calo* designation of El Paso, anticipates a special jargon not accessible to Anglo-Americans. The debate over the origin of the term anticipates the role of Chicano culture as a bridge between numerous cultures. "Pachuco" can be interpreted as a Nahuatl (Aztec) expression for the residence of a chief, and a Spanish term indicating something being overripe (Pérez—Torres 288). The first version emphasizes the movement's historical links, a sort of invocation of "mythic memory," and being overripe could refer to the patterns of cultural dispossession and economic segregation prompting the outbreak of the movement.

The physical appearance is a rebellion against mainstream America's organized social order, the criminal activity, as the pachuco is the loosely defined equivalent of Anglo-American juvenile delinquents, represents the rejection of the mores of the dominant society. However, of greatest importance is his cultural stance as "the pachuco movement was one of the few truly separatist movements in American history" (Pérez—Torres 124).

While the "migrant" emerges from south of the border, and the pinto derives his existence from the violence of the border, the pachuco is the product of the barrio, a manifestation of cultural, economic, and physical ghettoization within the border. The *pachuco* rebels against cultural dispossession by fashioning a style of apparel, a language, and a search for linkage with Mexican-American history. He is the forerunner of Chicano consciousness as he "does not want to become a Mexican again, at the same time he doesn't want to blend into the life of North America either. His whole being is sheer negative impulse, a tangle of contradictions, an enigma" (Shirley and Shirley 86).

Jose Montoya's "El Louie" describes the pachuco experience through a eulogy written upon the death of one *vato loco*, a young rebel who, despite his proud, defiant attitude and declared cultural independence dies in wretched solitude. Louie desires to become a moral example for his community, but as his attempts at assimilation into Anglo-America are frustrated, he turns to a self-destructive life-style.

By the late 1980's the meaning of Aztlán has been shifted from the original declaration of cultural independence and Alurista's reclamation of a homeland to images of a transitory world. Jimmmy Santiago Baca's "Black Mesa Poems" present Aztlán not as a return home but as a "nomadic passage" (Pérez—Torres 84), and Lorna Dee Cervantes' "Poem for a Young Man..." (1981) demonstrates a new interpretation of liminality:

> I try. I go to my land, my tower of words and
> bolt the door, but the typewriter doesn't fade out
> the sounds of blasting and muffled outrage.
> My own days bring me slaps on the face.
> Every day I am deluged with reminders
> that this is not
> my land
> and this is my land (Lauter 3102).

The Evolution of the Chicano Novel

Josephina Niggli's *Mexican Village* (1948), born of the tradition of Mexican literary romanticism, with its protagonist completing a nostalgic journey to discover the therapeutic effects of the Mexican-American past is the forerunner of the Chicano novel and the first work written by a Mexican-American to reach the Anglo reading public (Elliott 804). While the 1947 publication of Mario Suarez's short stories in the Arizona Quarterly titled "Senor Garza" and "Kid Zopilote" indicate the appearance of the first Chicano writer, José Antonio

Villareal's *Pocho* (1959) marks the emergence of the first Chicano novel. The protagonist, Richard Rubio's statement: "I do not want to be somebody. I am," not only functions as a reaffirmation of cultural and personal independence but reflects the power of language to constitute a "state of suggestive integrity" (Saldivar 18). *Pocho* is the quintessential Chicano novel and its influence is felt at several stages of Chicano fiction. Tomás Rivera's *y no se lo trago la tierra* (1971) commemorates a year in a life of a migrant worker family seen from the eye of an unnamed young boy. The book, besides its portrayal of physical and spiritual exploitation, testifies to la Raza's indomitable will to survive (Saldivar 20). Rudolfo Anaya's *Bless Me Ultima* (1972) is another milestone in the evolution of the Chicano novel validating Mexican-American culture beyond the Southwest. Its protagonist, Antonio Marez is caught between the pressures of different parental expectations, as his mother wants him to become a priest and his father urges him to maintain the vaquero tradition of his family. Antonio's dilemma is solved by the appearance of Ultima, a folk healer who shows him the way to become a writer, thus a preserver of both traditions (Lauter 2583). The novel is rich in Mexican-American folk imagery introducing such elements as *la llorona,* the vailing woman of the rivers, and promotes the image of Antonio as Odysseus caught between the Scylla and Charybdis of the cloth and the lariat (Rogers 200). Oscar Zeta Acosta's *The Revolt of the Cockroach People* (1973) deconstructs the American legal system as "an arbitrary weaving of semantic threads created to hide the empty forms of notions such as 'justice' and 'natural rights" (Saldivar 23). Ron Arias' *The Road to Tamazunchale* (1975) is an example of the combination of North American literature with Latin American themes, as the protagonist Fausto is taken from East Los Angeles to Peru on a quest to reach his mythical destination. His description of Tamazunchale reminds the reader of Aztlán: "It is our home. Once we're there, we're free, we can be everything and everyone."

The Beginnings of Chicano Theatre

The formation of Luis Valdez' El Teatro Campesino (1965) marks the beginning of the Chicano drama as a promoter of ethnic awareness and political action. In Valdez's view theatre serves as the arm of "revolutionary nationalism" and is a means of popular education (Shirley and Shirley 68). El Teatro Campesino performed short sketches, called *actos* dealing with such issues pertinent to the migrant worker community as discrimination and unfair labor conditions in the form of the morality play. The establishment of El Centro Campesino Cultural in 1967 shifted the Mexican-American theatre's attention from local issues and presented the Chicano as a global historical actor taking part in the oppressed's struggle toward social and economic improvement (Shirley and Shirley 73—74). The Vietnam War actos in 1971 concentrated on Chicano participation in that Southeast Asian conflict. Also, in the 1970's, the *mito*, a new form of expression emerges invoking the legend of Aztlán (Elliott 1114). Valdez's full-length play "El Corrido" describing the ordeals of migrant workers substitutes traditional stage narration with a singer of *canciones de los pobres* (songs of the poor; Leal and Barrón 11). "Zoot Suit" dedicated to Mexican-Americans suffering a miscarriage of justice in "The Sleepy Lagoon Case" exposes the prejudicial treatment Chicanos received in the Anglo legal system following the infamous Zoot Suit Riots of 1943 (Pérez—Torres 109). "No Saco Nada de la Escuela" (I Don't Get Anything out of School" (1969) highlights Chicano alienation in the Anglo educational system (Elliott 1114).

Chicano Aesthetics

Chicano aesthetics, driven by the twin impulses of cultural regeneration and ethnic pride, following the Aztecs' prescription for achieving "true Toltec" status opposite to "carrion artists," emphasizes the importance of personal experiences (Rothenberg 12). The Mexican-American artist not only has to function as the voice of the barrio, but

must make the Chicano aware of his social surroundings along with his valuable historic heritage. Whereas Amiri Baraka viewed the black aesthetics as a cultural agent in the destruction of the Anglo social and political order, Chicano aesthetics' revolutionary natonalism aims at the spiritual sphere. Aztlán does not promote anti-Anglo violence, but affirms cultural and historic roots. Contrary to the centrifugal dynamics of black aesthetics, its Chicano counterpart displays centripetal tendencies. Instead of "teaching white men their deaths and cracking their faces open to the mad cries of the poor" (Baker 90), Chicano aesthetics struggles to create the New World Person, a global, historic actor taking part in the oppressed's struggle for social and economic improvement.

Villareal's "Clemente Chacon" reinforces this centripetality: "I am a Mexican and I am an American and there is no reason in the world why I can't be both" (Shirley and Shirley 101). On the other hand Max Martinez echoes the views of Baraka and is close to cultural disengagement in his description of the Chicano as a "bronze skinned avenger" (Shirley and Shirley 154). Similarly, Oscar Zeta Acosta's notion of the Chicano as a "brown buffalo" firmly embedded in an Aztec-Mexican cultural context rejects Judeo-Christianity referring to Jesus as "strung-up man," and searches for ethnic identity demanding a name and language for his race (Shirley and Shirley 169).

Martinez views Chicano culture in a dyad with the colonizer Anglo civilization. The "bronze skin" is not only a reference to the Brown Power Movement but an invocation of the heroic Aztec past. The "avenger" is a Hispanic superhero who as an equivalent to his numerous Anglo counterparts demonstrates the viability of Chicano culture. Acosta's "brown buffalo" carries a double meaning as well, as besides an obvious reference to the physical appearance of Mexican-Americans, the notion of the buffalo, the basic source of sustenance for Native Americans virtually made extinct, establishes a link with the Amerindian world.

Whereas contrary to its African-American counterpart Chicano aesthetics follows the guidelines of the discipline more closely, its

search for artistic beauty is foregrounded in political and cultural activism. The notion of therapeutic self-justification is present in Anaya's invocation of Aztlán as a remedy for a cultural, economic, and social crisis. Furthermore a "versus pattern" can also be discerned in the movement's placement of Chicano artistic production against Anglo literary criticism and raising the issue whether Anglo views can be relevant concerning Chicano literature. In 1976 Lomelí and Urioste argued that "the uniqueness of Chicano reality is such that non-Chicanos rarely capture it like it is" (Shirley and Shirley 174).

Consequently, writers looking at the Chicano experience from the outside were categorized under the label "literatura chicanesca" (Shirley and Shirley 174). While Black Aesthetics operates in the conative mode hoping that it would will a better, more just world into existence through artistic activity, Chicano aesthetics has been more realistic being aware of the fact that the "invocation of a mythic memory" would not do away with social and cultural deterritorialization.

The traditional view of Chicano literature, or any minority literature, however, has to be revised. Whereas one would assign labels of centrifugality or centripetality at face value, a closer examination of American culture would reveal that these terms are context specific. Chicano literature displays both centrifugality and centripetality. If one identifies the Anglo world as core America, then Martinez's "bronze skinned avenger," or Acosta's "brown buffalo" suggest centrifugality, shifting Mexican-American consciousness further from the center. However, as Virágos argues a sound and healthy democratic society displays a primary core surrounded by several secondary cores (Diagnosing... 29). Consequently, Martinez and Acosta's views are centrifugal only in relation to the primary core, and centripetal vis a vis the secondary core, Hispanic America. Similarly the notion of Aztlán, a declaration of cultural independence, and Rendon's reclamation of territory appear to be in a centrifugal relationship with Anglo-America, and perform a centripetal function within the Chicano community.

III

Chicano literature is a multicultural, postmodern cultural product. Its description of the Mexican-American experience at the rupture of Anglo and Mexican civilization places it in the category of resistant multiculturalism. It also describes a process during which the homeland becomes the borderland, entrapping the Chicano in a dilemma of opposing cultural demands assigning him the role of the "intercultural interpreter" (Pérez—Torres 141).

In Reedway Dasenbrock's view literature has to meet two conditions in order to be qualified multicultural: an ability to perpetuate the experiences of multicultural societies along with being able "to inscribe the readers from other cultures inside their own textual dynamics" (Pérez—Torres 145). Chicano society is clearly multicultural demonstrated by its history and its function as a bridge spanning over several civilizations. Dasenbrock's second criterion prescribes an educational function to literature and Mexican-American literature's emphasis on ethnic pride through the revelation of the elements of a heroic, "usable past" adequately serves this purpose. Furthermore, Chicano literature meets Homi Bhabha's requirements of a multicultural mode of literary production being a movement between two or more cultural practices "without negating the positions and contradictions of power in those practices" (Pérez—Torres 57). As it was demonstrated neither its predecessor, the corrido, nor "El Movimiento" poetry itself aimed to eliminate cultural barriers between Anglos and Mexican-Americans, rather they strove for the illustration of the inequalities embedded in the status quo.

Chicano poetry, displaying three main characteristics: the use of a "strange and minor" language reflecting cultural deterritorialization, an overtly social and political function, and the promotion of collective consciousness, also corresponds with Deleuze and Guattari's thesis concerning minor literatures (Pérez—Torres 216). The employment of *calo* or *pocho* and a frequent switching of linguistic codes, the migrant, prisoner, and rebel as agents of cultural empowerment along with the

establishment of a new paradigm, the New World Person, provide added reinforcement.

Chicano literature aims to break out of the oppressive boundaries set by Anglo literature, fighting the harmful effects of cultural and political deterritorialization, putting forth the image of a New World Person thus promoting a minority consciousness. However, it not only describes the experience of a community aiming for cultural empowerment amidst contradicting impulses, but through an emphasis on spiritual awareness and insistence on democratic principles (Anaya 382) it offers a worthwile goal to follow for all mankind.

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