

dreams of returning to his homeland. In addition, Juan holds very traditional notions about the family and about being a man. As such, Juan is determined to rule over his family, even if by force. In many ways, then, Juan Rubio represents the conservative, patriarchal nature of Mexican culture (though Villarreal's depiction is based only upon a rural image).

As the novel progresses Richard finds himself attempting to reconcile his life in between two cultures, two sets of values, and two languages. His father represents one extreme in values and practices, which include machismo and community, while the local eccentric, Joe Pete, represents the other extreme, including isolation, individuality, and idiosyncrasy. Richard Rubio attempts to reconcile these two modes of being into a synthesis, or *MESTIZAJE* (Cantú 424). Richard's apparent assimilation leads him to think of himself as a *pocho*, one who has forgotten his cultural identity and his ties to Mexico. Richard seems to embrace his assimilated status, a position that runs against the ideology of the later Chicano movement.

While no one seems to doubt that *Pocho* was the first Chicano novel, and no one seems to doubt that it holds an important place in the history of Chicano letters, it nevertheless holds a very controversial position. Among the criticisms of the novel is that Villarreal shapes the narrative and the characters by using calques (loan translations), which leaves much of the dialogue sounding stilted and awkward (Myers). At the same time Villarreal's use of CODE SWITCHING in the novel became a technique well accepted and utilized by many Latino authors in their work.

Pocho is most often analyzed as social commentary, but with controversy because Villarreal is not readily read as a Chicano writer (Sedore, 240 Solace). On the one hand, much of the consciousness of the Chicano movement was predicated on the notion of solidarity and community. *Pocho* develops an argument against community and toward individuality. In so doing it conforms to a particular notion of assimilation. Although

Richard Rubio will be forever shaped by his Mexican heritage, he must leave his family and community in attempt to find himself. This search for self will be replayed in many Mexican-American texts, especially the autobiographical essays of RICHARD RODRIGUEZ. Rodriguez notes the loss that comes with assimilation into the English-speaking mainstream culture.

Bibliography

- Cantú, Roberto. "Villarreal, José Antonio." In *Chicano Literature: A Reference Guide*, edited by Julio A. Martínez and Francisco A. Lomelí, 420–432. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1985.
- Carl, Shirley. "Pocho: Bildungsroman of a Chicano." *Revista Chicano-Riqueña* 7 (1979): 63–65.
- Crane, Virginia M. "José Antonio Villarreal." In *American Ethnic Writers*, edited by David Peck, 470–472. Pasadena, Calif.: Salem, 2000.
- King, Rosemary A. *Border Confluences: Borderland Narratives from the Mexican War to the Present*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2004.
- Luedtke, Luther. "Pocho and the American Dream." *Minority Voices* 1, no. 2 (1977): 1–16.
- Myers, Inma Minoves. "Language and Style in *Pocho*." *Bilingual Review/ Revista Bilingüe* 16, nos. 2–3 (May–December 1991): 180–187.
- Sedore, Timothy S. "Everything I Wrote Was Truth': An Interview with José Antonio Villarreal." *Northwest Review* 39, no. 1 (2001): 77–89.
- . "Solace in Solitude: An American Adamic Alienation and José Antonio Villarreal's *Pocho*." *LIT* 11 (2001): 239–259.
- Villarreal, José Antonio. *Pocho*. 1959. Reprint, New York: Doubleday, 1970.

Ritch Calvin

Puerto Rican literature

Spanish colonization of Puerto Rico accounts for the fact that much of Puerto Rican literature is written in Spanish. At the same time Puerto Rican literature has been deeply influenced by the massive migration that took place from the island to the U.S. mainland during the 20th century. The

island is a commonwealth, which means that it is neither a state nor a nation. Not surprisingly, the development of a "national" identity in Puerto Rico involves contradictions that are reflected in its literature. Puerto Rican literature is split between two shores: literature written by island authors, and the more recent Puerto Rican literature written in the United States. Puerto Rican literature of the mainland (especially New York) is typically published by the children of the different migratory waves of the 20th century. Puerto Rican literature on the island has been characterized by the attempt to solve the contradiction of being a Latin American island and a U.S. commonwealth. Islanders have almost all the rights of U.S. citizens (except the right to vote in national elections), but Puerto Rico is not a state. As a former Spanish colony, Puerto Rico is culturally different from the U.S. mainland.

Under the Spanish colonial power, Puerto Rican literature did not emerge as such until the second half of the 19th century. In 1849 Manuel Alonso (1822–1889) published a distinct portrait of country folk in his collection of verses *El jíbaro*. Also at this time, when the island sought autonomy from Spain and European domination, the island became the beloved *patria* (country) in the nationalist poetry of José Gautier Benítez (1851–80). The year 1898 is significant Puerto Rican history and letters because it marks the arrival of U.S. troops and influences after the Spanish-American War. MANUEL ZENO GANDÍA lamented the "decline" of an island people under U.S. imperial power in his landmark 1890s quartet *Crónicas de un mundo enfermo* (Chronicles of a sick world).

Anti-assimilationist figures reaffirmed a distinct Puerto Rican heritage, culture, and language, among them José de Diego (1866–1918), Luis Llorens Torres (1878–1944), and the modernist Luis Palés Matos (1898–1959). Matos, in particular, celebrated the ethnic diversity of the island with his Afro-Caribbean poetry. These writers explore issues of cultural identity and the impact of migration on the people who leave the island for the mainland (usually New York) as well as the families who stay behind. The transformation of

the island includes industrialization, the decline of a sugar-based economy, assimilation policies, migration to the mainland, and creation of the *estado libre asociado* (commonwealth). This transformation from rural and traditional ways to life as an American commonwealth became the subject of works by writers belonging to the 1940s generation.

The 1940s generation includes authors such as RENÉ MARQUÉS, JOSÉ LUIS GONZÁLEZ, and Pedro Juan Soto (author of *SPIKS*). The literary inheritors of this generation continued to write about changes in Puerto Rico from the 1960s to the present. Using new literary techniques, this new wave of authors often departed from the realist tradition of their predecessors and began to experiment in the same way that Latin American authors developed MAGICAL REALISM as a form of expression. Contemporary writers such as Rosario Ferré, ANA LYDIA VEGA, and MAGALI GARCÍA RAMIS in some ways demonstrate a compromising attitude about assimilation to U.S. values and ways of being. On one hand, these authors want to preserve what it means to be Puerto Rican (speaking Spanish, being part of Latin America, and celebrating a traditional, predominantly Catholic culture). On the other hand, they realize that speaking English and entering the American mainstream is a part of daily life.

With World War II we can draw a distinction between the literature that is written and published in Puerto Rico and the literature produced on the mainland. Two branches of the same tree have developed simultaneously and render visible the complex identities held by Puerto Ricans. Puerto Rican literature on the mainland can be traced back to such memoirs as PIRI THOMAS's *DOWN THESE MEAN STREETS* (1967). Thomas paved the way in many respects for Bernardo Vega's *Memoirs of Bernardo Vega* (1984), Jesús Colón's *Puerto Rican Sketches and Other Stories* (1982) and NICHOLASA MOHR's *In My Own Words: Growing Up Inside the Sanctuary of My Imagination* (1995). These works represent the experience of adapting to a new urban space and moving between English-speaking and Spanish-speaking communities.

These memoirs as well as autobiographical novels written in the 1980s and 1990s constitute a consolidated literature written by and about Puerto Ricans in the United States. Along with Nuyorican poetry these narratives convey a deep concern for the socioeconomic situation of Puerto Ricans, whether black, white, or mulatto, and about their multiethnic, urban communities.

At the same time that the memoir developed in the 1970s and 1980s, we see the emergence of Puerto Rican poetry and drama in the New York area. Connected to the NUYORICAN POETS CAFE and to the political movement of the African-American Young Lords, Puerto Rican mainland poets produced a socially aware literature. Established figures of this literary movement are TATO LAVIERA and MIGUEL ALGARÍN; NANCY MERCADO is among its emerging poets. Nuyorican poetry is especially remarkable for its originality as a new street poetry based on the spoken word and with strong ties to jazz and salsa music (as with the work of Laviera). It is a poetry that is created and read for the community (usually presented at the Nuyorican Poets Cafe). Nuyorican poetry seeks to express Puerto Rican experiences in the barrios, with particular attention to poverty, survival, and interethnic relationships. Nuyorican poets use street slang, rhythms from jazz and salsa music, and a combination of Spanish and English, which become vehicles for poetic expression. The authorial use of CODE SWITCHING and SPANGLISH give a kind of unity to a fragmented Puerto Rican identity.

One of the best-known Puerto Rican poets is VICTOR HERNÁNDEZ CRUZ. His poetry offers a striking contrast between Puerto Rican and American cultural forms. Each poem is characterized by rich symbolism, word play, and code switching between Spanish and English. His experimentation with words, images, and sounds from both cultures can be described as "tropicalization," also the title of his 1976 poetry collection. Tropicalization is a process by which different elements of Latin American culture penetrate the representation of U.S. urban life; it is a literary response to the mainstream by Latinos living in the United States.

The urban experience of Puerto Ricans is also represented in Puerto Rican theater. MIGUEL PINERO stands out as one of the best-known Puerto Rican playwrights. His work *SHORT EYES*, winner of the New York Drama Critics Award for Best American Play in 1974, is a dramatic representation of Puerto Rican survival in a U.S. prison. Other Puerto Rican playwrights in the Northeast area include Federico Fraguado, Cándido Tirado, Richard Irizarry, Ivette M. Ramírez, Alberto Sandoval, and Carmen Rivera. Puerto Rican theater in the 1980s and 1990s is especially concerned with the daily experience of racism, making a living, and the underworld. More contemporary plays explore the challenges of Puerto Ricans living among other ethnic groups.

During the last decades a growing number of Puerto Rican writers have composed narratives about growing up Puerto Rican in the barrios and about the development of a northeastern Puerto Rican identity. Some of these writers are ESMERALDA SANTIAGO (*WHEN I WAS PUERTO RICAN*, 1993), ED VEGA (*Mendoza's Dreams*, 1987), JUDITH ORTIZ COFER (*The LINE OF THE SUN*, 1989) and Abraham Rodriguez, Jr. (*Tales of the South Bronx: The Boy Without a Flag*, 1992). With the mixing of Latino communities we also find authors who are half Puerto Rican, including Ernesto Quiñonez (*BODEGA DREAMS*, 2000), John Leguizamo (*Freak*, 1997), and Erika Lopez (*FLAMING IGUANAS*, 1997).

For most Puerto Rican authors the island figures as an important element of their past and in the need to find a new "home" in the United States. Puerto Rican identity is for these writers something complex; they have to redefine their vision all the time because of the interaction of many ethnic groups on American soil. Recurrent themes in their work are ethnic stereotyping, isolation, and lack of respect and understanding by mainstream society.

Bibliography

- Antush, John V., ed. *Nuestro New York: An Anthology of Puerto Rican Plays*. New York: Mentor, 1994.
- Babín, María Teresa, ed. *Borinquen: An Anthology of Puerto Rican Literature*. New York: Vintage, 1974.

- Hernández, Carmen Dolores. *Puerto Rican Voices in English: Interviews with Writers*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1997.
- Manrique Cabrera, Francisco. *Historia de la literatura puertorriqueña*. Río Piedras, P.R.: Editorial Cultural, 1969.
- Sánchez González, Lisa. *Boricua Literature: A Literary History of the Puerto Rican Diaspora*. New York: New York University Press, 2001.
- Santiago, Roberto, ed. *Boricuas: Influential Puerto Rican Writings, an Anthology*. New York: Ballantine, 1995.
- Turner, Faythe, ed. *Puerto Rican Writers at Home in the USA*. Seattle, Wash.: Open Hand Publishing, 1991.

Antonia Domínguez Miguela

"Puerto Rican Obituary" Pedro Pietri
(1973)

Pedro Pietri was born in 1944 in Puerto Rico and was one of the founders of the NUYORICAN POETS CAFE. In 1973 he debuted on the literary scene with a memorable poem entitled "Puerto Rican Obituary." A satiric commentary about Puerto Ricans living in New York, the poem consists of troubling scenarios about men and women pursuing the American Dream, chasing fortune, facing discrimination, and dying a predictable death. The poem describes Puerto Ricans as people who "never spoke back / when they were insulted" (4–5). Their hard work is never rewarded; instead, "They worked / They worked / They worked / And they died / They died broke / They died owing" (14–19). Pietri develops this theme in his snapshot of five Puerto Ricans—Juan, Miguel, Milagros, Olga, and Manuel. The five Puerto Ricans living in New York assimilate, but their interactions with mainstream society are still marked by broken English and broken dreams.

Drawn to the city and its promises of wealth, "where mice live like millionaires" (60), Pietri's Puerto Ricans are "waiting for the garden of Eden" (33). Storekeepers, bosses, tax collectors, and bill assessors blight their hopes; each day passes with more failure and disappointment. The title of the poem centers on a community's dying spirit, a

people trudging along without the awareness of where they come from. Each individual is "born dead and dies dead."

As compensation for their frustrations, these lost souls seek comfort in lottery tickets and fortune-telling. The healer-seer figure, "sister lopez," can talk to the spirits of loved ones who have passed away; she provides a critical connection between the world of the living and that of the dead. Petitioners seek from their deceased loved ones the magic number that will win the lottery. Pietri refuses, however, to romanticize such communion between the living and the dead. He brings the reader back to the deaths—both literal and metaphorical—of Juan, Miguel, Milagros, Olga, and Manuel. They are dying, and their people are dying. The reason is that the people in the poem have lost sight of their roots, their origins, their communities, and they "will not return from the dead / until they stop neglecting / the art of their dialogue" (210–212). In place of Spanish Pietri's Puerto Ricans undertake "broken english lessons / to impress the mister goldsteins" (213–214). The pluralized name, "mister goldsteins," creates a type of the Jewish businessman who, with the speaker's reluctant recognition, keeps Puerto Ricans employed.

Coping with pressures from work and yielding cultural turf in the city to other ethnic groups, the Puerto Ricans in Pietri's poem begin to grow jealous of one another. Milagros hates Olga because she earns more money for the same job. Manuel resents Miguel, Milagros, Juan, and Olga because their broken English is better than his. Though bound by their heritage, Puerto Ricans are, like any group, prone to internal divisions over status symbols such as television sets, cars, and homes in white neighborhoods. As a conclusion to a list of grievances against American society, the speaker envisions a different world. He laments: "if only they / had turned off the television / and tuned into their own imagination" (274–276). Pietri's solution partakes in a broader literary conversation about the importance of creating one's own identity, shaped by a community's values and beliefs. His work corresponds with many arguments of Latino and Latin American authors; for example,