

U.S. LATINOS: THEIR CULTURE AND LITERATURE

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I. LATINO LITERATURE IN THE CULTURAL PROCESS

In the past several years, with the remarkable growth and diversification of the U.S. Latino population, we have witnessed the emergence of a literature expressing Latino traditions, conflicts, and transformations. Contrary to common understanding, literature by Hispanics or Latinos, mainly in Spanish, but sometimes in English as well, has existed in what is now the U.S. since the sixteenth century; and a distinctly ethnic Latino literature has been evolving for well over a hundred years. With the emergence of U.S. Chicano and Puerto Rican social movements in the 1960s, a number of young Chicano and Nuyorican writers also surfaced and synthesized the bases for new literatures which were consciously and specifically ethnic in character and function.

Characterized by nostalgia for a fading past, by a critique of racial oppression and negative acculturation experiences in the fields, in the city neighborhoods, the schools, factories and homes, by bilingualisms, schizophrenic goal conflicts and sex role confusions, by cultural tensions, affirmations and anger, and by calls for reform, rebellion, revolution or other forms of opposition, the emergent Latino literatures of the 1960s attempted to serve as laboratories for the expression and then reconstruction of transformed Latin American and U.S. Southwest HispanoIndian peoples into "MexicanAmericans" or "Chicanos," into "Nuyoricans" or other Ricans, and ultimately, into the problematic and questionable but aggregate we know today as "Hispanics" or "Latinos." Of course, few people knew of the literatures emerging among the chicanos and boricuas. Professional writers and critics (nonLatinos almost all) were slow to recognize and come to respect even their greatest early achievements. It was common for budding Latino writers in different parts of the U.S. to be unaware of the existence of other Latino writers; and even when burgeoning Chicano and Puerto Rican literary movements had emerged in relation to growing Latino national consciousness and action, few Latinos living in the U.S. were aware of the literatures. But what could one expect when millions of Latinos only had limited functional literacy in Spanish or English and when most Latinos were consigned to bluecollar or nocollar jobs, if they found work at all? It took the first relatively largescale wave of Latino students in U.S. universities, in the context of the overall civil rights movement and the emergence of an antiestablishment, anti-Vietnam War counter culture, to produce both the writers and readers of these new literatures.

Where were the Latino writers in the sixties? Some were in colleges and universities, studying and sometimes even teaching. But others were in the countryside, doing stoop labor. And still more were in the cities, in their enclaves and barrios, in all the real and meta-phorical jails and refuges provided for those marginalized by harsh and inhospitable urban circumstances. Of course some of them who could free themselves and grow actually found a way through the maze of bi-lingualisms and biculturalisms to express themselves, and indeed forge a new written language; and some of these writers even found their way into the few magazines and journals that would publish their work or into the new publications they or friends created which served as outlets they otherwise had great difficulty finding in the U.S., in their own region or in the cities and towns where they congregated.

While starting as a "marginal, subcultural enterprise" whose pro-motion and study was restricted to small publications and small ethnic studies programs, U.S. Latino literature has recently received increasing attention in relation to the efforts to redefine and articulate the U.S. and Latin American literary canons, to deal with demands for multicultural curriculum and to explore the possibilities of cultural and symbolic, if not more direct, transformative opposition to the social systems in which we live. The study of these literatures and their prehistories is important in itself; it is also important in understanding the U.S. and its literary culture, as well as relations to Latin America. What is more, the literatures may help in understanding the future of a significant sector of the U.S. workforce, as well as of the so-called "underclass," if conditions and prospects don't improve rapidly as we move toward the twentyfirst century. While questions persist about the relation between Latino literature and the Latino social processes and cultural transformations they are supposed to represent, nevertheless it may be said with some confidence that by projecting imaginatively and by not always respecting existing literary categories or fashions (to say nothing of respecting the

normative grids applied in most social science re-search), at least some Latino literary works may come closer to ex-pressing the deeper levels of Latino processes and transformations, Latino patterns of accommodation and resistance, than do most concep-tually driven historical and sociological approaches. This may give special social value not only to the works, but also to the growing cor-pus of Latino cultural and literary theory and criticism which provides means for understanding the creative works.

This essay attempts to contribute to the understanding of U.S. Latino literature by exploring some dimensions of Latino culture-in- transformation, and then some historical and theoretical aspects of Latino literary production, as a means of introducing the extended bibliography which follows.

II. LATINOS AND THEIR CULTURE

A. Identity.

Who are the Latinos, the Hispanos? How did they get here, what are their customs and beliefs? In what ways are they so similar and yet different from non-latinos and also from each other? Are there really any Latinos or Hispanos in the U.S., or are there only Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, etc., lumped together for bureaucratic or political reasons but really very different.

And why "Latinos" "hispanos," "ibero-americanos," "hispanics," "Hispanic, Hispano, Latin or Ibero Americans?" Why can't they get together and agree on one name, one identity? Aren't they just being complicated to give us problems? And why do they claim to be dif-ferent from Irish, Italian, Jewish or Afro-Americans? Why don't they learn English?

Of course, most Latinos do learn English, and many of the ques-tions asked and answers usually given are based on misconceptions. Most in fact do learn English, but there are so many recent arrivals that it seems not to be the case. The answers aren't easy in part because the questions may be misguided. And this problem has roots in the diver-sity and complexity of the Latino world. Many come from urban situ-ations in the big cities. Others identify with temporal migrations and with life in small Texas towns. Some have had a history in what is today considered U.S. territory, for several generations; others arrived in the 1920s, the 40s, or a few weeks ago, from a poor region of Mexico, from a revolutionary struggle in Central America, from arid or tropical climates, from Afro- or Indian-Latin American areas or cultures, etc. Some in fact are more black, more Indian, more white than others, and there is no necessary connection between color or physical traits and cultural characteristics. Above all, to speak of los hispanos in the U.S. is to speak about key sectors of the work force, sectors that participated in industrial development and now participate with difficulty in the post industrial process.

Latinos have so well served as a lowpaid work force in the rail-roads, the fields, restaurants and the wartime frontlines. Of course many Latinos work with their hands, and there are more and more who are professionals or business people; so we may ask if we are dealing with a people or various peoples with certain things in common that

relate them to each other, but with such clear differences that we wonder, again, if we should really be able to lump them together under one rubric.

Finally, Latinos may turn the issue around and ask, who are the Americans? When Latinos say, hey, I'm American, they may mean, look, I was born here or I have papers. But they can also be reminding us of the fact that every one in the new world is indeed American--that the word American doesn't only designate the people of (or "made in") the U.S.A.--and that in fact those who are often called "Americans" (and who have unwittingly or not appropriated the name of the entire continent) are also the only people in the Americas without a name that is totally and uncontestedly theirs. Then we come to the effort to find a name for all the Latin Americans living in the U.S.--those of the U.S. of Spanish language, culture or name. Again, who are they?

B. Some Definitions

I use the word latino rather loosely, to refer to people of Ibero-American birth or family origin who have been born in or who have, willingly or otherwise, come to see the U.S. as their home. Latinos manifest U.S. transformations of identities formerly achieved through a syncretic process in Latin America (including the U.S. southwest) itself. There is a traditionalist and generally conservative vision that defines Latinos strictly in function of their traditional language and cultural patterns; another anti-traditionalist and anti-culturalist vision, fostered by Werner Sollors and his followers, sees Latinos as products of the U.S. milieu. The option here is for a definition rooted in the work of Raymond Williams, which involves dialectical transformations of past cultural residues and future possibilities--which Juan Flores and George Yúdice conceptualize in terms of "crossovers" in postmodern, multicultural contexts (see Part IV of this essay). According to this view the achieved cultural mestizaje of Latin Americans and especially a workingclass dimension of this identity, which corresponds to the vast majority of those who come and settle in the U.S., undergoes a series of experiences and transformations leading to a range of shared behaviors and attitudes which in turn become the pool of characteristics from which given Latino groups and individuals constitute particular selections and combinations.

In recent years, we have come to employ the term hispanic, and in fact it is now the word that is used most frequently in legal documents and the press. But while many "hispanos" accept the word and reject other alternatives, including the one advanced here, there are still many "hispanos" who reject that name and, in fact, prefer the term "latino." Why? Most importantly, because they feel that the words hispano, hispanic, Spanish, etc., have to do with the Anglo effort to patronize Latinos--to say, "Oh, you are really a white European... Oh you are not like the others. That is, that you are hispanic, but not 'spic.'" In sum, Hispanic has come to prominence as a kind of left-hand compliment, by standing for "Spanishness"--that is, white, Europeanness, even if a kind of exotic brand. The word "hispanic" comes to suggest, then, the intent to erase (like a courtesy) the indigenous and African roots of Latin American identity. Given this hegemonic effort (in which many Latinos cooperate unconsciously and consciously), we have the contrary struggle for the name Latino.

Paradoxically the term has come to connote the product of Latin-Indian and/or Latin-Black mestizaje. It has also come to evoke that other negativity, U.S.-based Latin American working class. I suppose in some Anglo minds, it conjures up machismo,

black hair, gold crosses on chains, beaded curtains, tropical music, etc. But however pejorative or affirmative in connotation, the word "Latino" suggests a broad and aged otherness to Anglo American modernized norms--but an otherness constituted as almost an absence within the Western episteme. It suggests ethnic pride and cultural affirmation, not the hiding of black and brown blood that is implicit in the "Hispanic" label. Thus the term expresses paradox, complexity and defiance. It has come to stand for an affirmation of a struggle against racism, sexism and classism. It is to fight for the survival of the very language which was initially that of the colonizers and which now stands in resistance to the new powers-that-be. It is to affirm the workingclass base of the great majority of "Hispanics" in the U.S. It is to refuse cooperating with the racism, sexism and classism within Latinos themselves. It is to affirm Latin identity in contradistinction to an identity integrated with the dominant powers and their will to name and control.

Of course there is an ancient logic in the term, that has to do with the Roman Empire, Romance languages, the religion and even the law of Rome. But to use the term "Latino" today is to affirm paradoxically the cultures and peoples dominated by Mediterranean civilization in its career throughout the New World. Paradoxically the term has come to connote the product of Latin-Indian and/or Latin-Black cultural mix. But the word "Latino" suggests a broad and aged otherness to Anglo American modernized norms--yet an otherness within our hemispheric frame, an otherness that is part of a more general New World cultural sphere. It suggests ethnic pride and cultural affirmation, in Afro- and Amerindian cultural traditions in combination with a dominant Medi-terranean, Iberian-based core.

Regularly the situation of Latinos may best be understood in terms of their problems in confronting an individualist and capitalist civilization with a culture based on communal and precapitalist forms. Here the stress falls on cultural aspects that have to do with attitudes and customs based on the importance of kinship as central to group organization and behavior. Of course the ensemble of Latino values must be viewed not only as a synthesis of "the Hispanic," but also of the indigenous and also of the African. However, even with the specifically Hispanic dimension, the emphasis must fall on Spanish diversity, on North African roots and the role of semitic culture (Arab and Jewish) in the formation of the attitudes that have to do with concepts of tribe, of race, of honor, of kinship, of sex roles, of land, of property, of life, death and in general identity seen as community and family-based.

A complex aspect of Latino unity has been the retention of characteristics drawn from the cultural past that have been defined as "pre-capitalist," "early capitalist," "pre-industrial," "Catholic," "agra-rian," "Spanish," "dependent," etc. It has been argued that these characteristics render Latinos as relatively "dysfunctional," "under-privileged" or "underdeveloped" within the rationalized productive system governing U.S. society; but they may well prove to be a source of strength against the more corrosive effects of material and technological advance. In fact, a more humane future for all people may well depend in part on the conservation of such "residual" characteristics among the Latinos and the "Latinization" of non-Latinos. However symptomatic of liberation, such matters as the rising rate of Latino divorce, ruptures of the extended family, the pressures for higher degrees of individuation, independent female participation, etc., imply cultural and psychological difficulties for large numbers.

In this sense part of the problematic Latinos face in trying to survive and live creative lives within the U.S. system has to do with the "interface" of Latino values and orientations with Anglo-Saxon/capitalist civilization. Without doubt, many Latinos suffer because they carry with them values and attitudes that still express an older communitarian, agrarian and semi-feudal logic. And while there are many Latino computer experts, we understand that the mass of Latino workers have forms of life that more readily fit with pre- and not post-industrial patterns. And we also know that these forms of life (including forms of courtesy and Catholicism) fit perfectly well in the capitalist world, but as forms of an "underclass" in what we call the "dual labor market."

We know that the basic cultural norms don't have to do with Protestant or individual identity, but with social, communitarian and family forms of being. We know that honor and loyalty to one's compadre are forms that are out of fashion and that don't thrive in a world where cash and "rational self interest" rule. But we also know that in our world, there is a considerable attraction to Latino values, and the hope that certain dimensions survive and thrive--something that is not pure "rational" interest, not sun-worship, "land fetishism," or irrational blood loyalty, but something which goes beyond a mechanical order of clocks, gears and the logic of productive efficiency. So there are many who have an interest in Latino norms who are not Latinos. But we should not see this purely as a product of anti-modern nostalgia. There are many Latinos who feel that the effort to preserve Latino culture contributes to the maintenance of Latinos in situations of marginalization and poverty. And of course there are those who want the best of both worlds; they want to combine "the best of the Anglo with the best of the Latino." But there are still others who argue convincingly that the great majority of Latinos who lose their culture come to suffer from a process of uprooting that leaves them with the worst possibilities for surviving in the modern world. Above all, some of us persist in seeing that the survival of Latino traditions involves the survival of elements that can serve in forging a more fruitful future for Latinos and for every one.

In this sense, Latino culture is seen by some to stand as an alternative to our dominant cultural norms. But others see Latino identity acting as a positive category within our overall culture, providing some of the sources for the future.

C. Some Questions About the Future of Latinos

Latino culture requires differentiation from other U.S. minority or ethnic cultures, and from strictly immigrant complexes, first because of the long-standing Indian, Mexican and Puerto Rican presence within territory directly taken by the U.S.; second, because of the fact of a common border between the U.S. and Mexico; third, because of the special legal status of Puerto Ricans and Cubans; and finally, because of the long-term and continuous two-way migratory pattern between the U.S. and Mexico, the U.S. and Puerto Rico. While immigration is a crucial matter, however, the main source of Latino population growth is still from the continued expansion of the existing U.S. Latino population pool.

Inevitably when we contemplate the growing Latino population, we immediately face questions of diversity and apparent disunity which prevent our overestimating the statistical growth: the U.S. Latino population does not automatically form a bloc; and even among many sectors with similar objective interests, it is extremely difficult to construct an effective unity. It is also hard to anticipate all the possible implications of

the growth of the Latino population for the future. In spite of the new immigration policies, we can be sure that the flow will continue, because its causes will continue to be acute. The new efforts at free trade, even if successful for some, may not stem but may in fact intensify the reasons for immigration.

The obvious point to make is about problems Latinos may face in the future. First, there is the question of racism and cultural hostility, patterns of prejudice and discrimination, struggles with other minority groups--and all the rest. This is especially important when we realize that Latinos will potentially constitute a significant proportion of the workers employed or not in the country, and therefore that what happens to Latinos will be important for the future of the U.S. and for every one.

On first sight, the prospects can appear negative enough. Indeed, without some dramatic transformations and radical changes in state and corporate policies, current trends would lead to a situation in which a vast and growing population of unskilled, poorly educated workers functionally illiterate in Spanish and English, would be inserted in a society based on advanced technology and capital-intensive labor; we would have a population needing housing, social services, education and jobs in a nation whose own logic of development may well leave it ill-prepared to deal with its deepest problems. Indeed, since the median age of this population mass would be significantly lower than the U.S. majority, the nation would face an extenuation of an already existing polarization between an older, mainly white population (though with some strategic Latino intermediaries) which increasingly monopolizes wealth, resources and power, and a younger, mainly non-white population numerically dominated by Latinos, who will be waging an ever more difficult struggle to maintain and win access to institutions and resources in which the majority has lessening interest and commitment.

In this context, Latinos will have great socio-economic and political difficulties, but the cultural and psychological problem may be greater, as pressures affect family patterns and values, on sex roles, on all relations and identifications.

The question of a world of gangs and drugs, of the informal economy, of continuing and extending anomie, of dropouts and welfare dependency, of growing parental absenteeism, growing and deepening racial and gender conflicts, and the like have prevented Latino groups and others from uniting in the most meaningful ways. Now the world rolls on to the beat of postmodern, post-industrial logic and those who can't go with the flow and who can't get with the new world order are doomed to live on the margins, unable to adjust or react creatively to new transformations, and only able to hold on to the most questionable aspects of the older culture--precisely those which may best conform to, and then lend themselves to becoming transformed, by the logic of the informal economy and underclass patterns. The results may well be the "marginalization" of many, at the same time that some Latinos will rise to high positions of prestige and respect.

III. U.S. LATINO LITERATURE: HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

A. Latino Populations and Three Phases of Migration Literature

Popular impressions aside, the core base of U.S. Mexican population derives not from the northward migration of people from south of the border, but from the southward and

westward migration of the border itself. To this day, in spite of great waves of immigration, the bulk of Mexican descent population growth is from birth as opposed to immigration patterns. However, in addition to the Mexican population made part of the U.S. by wars of conquest, Mexican and then Mexican tejanos migration became a major aspect of the U.S. Mexican population base, beginning early in the twentieth century, during the Mexican Revolution, in relation to the demand for labor on the railroads, in the fields, and of course in the steel mills, canning, food processing and meatpacking plants of the midwest. Through ups and downs, periods of mass deportations and expanding immigration, that population base continued to grow, and to be joined after World War II by a major Puerto Rican exodus and then by Cubans, significant numbers from the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Colombia, Chile and elsewhere.

To be sure, many Puerto Ricans, Cubans and others came to the east coast, and especially to New York, in the late nineteenth century. But the Puerto Rican exodus intensified after the U.S. took the island in 1898 and especially after the developmentalist projects culminating in "Operation Bootstrap" pushed many people off the land and sent them first to San Juan, and then New York and other U.S. points in a search for work and survival. Of course the major waves of Cuban migration came immediately after the Revolution of 1959 and the exodus from the port of Mariel in 1980. Finally, since in recent years, growing numbers of Guatemalans, Salvadorans and Nicaraguans fleeing the political and economic crises in their respective countries have added to a core Mexican Puerto Rican Cuban population base which continues to expand because of high birth rates and homebase economic hardships throughout the decade.

Although heterogeneous, the Mexican and Puerto Rican migrations were primarily working class, and the groups brought with them those elements of their national and Latin American culture, oral tradition and literature available to their social class and situations. For a distinct U.S. Latino culture and literature to emerge for each group in each locale, there had to be a sufficient experience of U.S. life, culture and language, to pressure Latin American cultural norms, and there had to be a sufficient degree of critical consciousness, generated through hardship, but articulated through institutional or extrainstitutional/counter-cultural formations to make writing as a vehicle of cultural definition both necessary and possible. Obviously that literary expression required an adequate pooling of resources for at least minimal cultural reproduction and distribution from self-publishing to small chapbook and literary journal production. To the degree that each emergent work of literature tended to stand in relation to broader cultural, literary and sociopsychological patterns, that work tended to follow certain general lines of "mainstream" or minority literary development dominant nationally, but also marked by certain characteristics specific to its place and group of generation. This meant that each expression by each member of a national group was at least in part filtered through a particular, sometimes regional, sometimes even a more local sense of Latino identity.

Clearly the resources available would affect literary production, as would the specific characteristics of Latino populations in given areas. But, leaving aside the Latin American literature written by professionals who have come to the U.S. as part of the brain drain, U.S. Latino literature may be divided into two major categories, (1) a literature based on and extending from long ingrained indigenous U.S. southwest homebase traditions, and (2) a literature based on the experience of those many primarily working class people who have migrated from Mexico, Puerto Rico, and other

parts of Latin America to the U.S. during the course of the twentieth century. To be sure many of the people of the first group have virtually become part of the second by a dislocation process which has uprooted them from their Southwest homes and sent them to work and sometimes to settle in other parts of the country, so that their original cultural and literary base, rooted in 18th and 19th century traditions, has been influenced, affected and at least partially merged with the newer immigrant populations, which they have in turn also influenced. And to the degree that much of the U.S. Latino population has been one in transformation, we may consider that population's literary expression as being loosely divided into three phases, through which various population strands, generations and individuals have passed through at given historical moments.

The first phase is a romantic literature attempting to replicate the homebase literary culture (whether in the Southwest or Latin America) with variations in subjects, emphases and expressive modes deriving from the particularities of the writer's origins and experience, especially as the forces of "cultural shock" and transformation begin taking their toll. This usually means a nostalgic, nationalistic poetry of loss and exile, romantic, rhetorical and declamatory in style with conventional rhythms, rhyming patterns and poetic techniques. Mexican and border-area corridos, Puerto Rican *plenas* and other musical forms influence this literary expression, as do folklore, sayings, proverbs, etc.

The second phase is a literature of migration or immigration, marked by hopes, but also by problems, presenting everyday life confusions, conflicts, etc., frequently exploring racism and ethnic or national identity, an affirmation of roots, appeals to justice and envisioned social solutions. This literature emerges in all genres (in song, poetry, fiction and drama), but it tends to favor poetry at first and then begin to veer toward the development of more extended dramatic or narrative forms, modelled on, but varying from the early primary ones probably because of the complex and ever shifting experiences the forms attempt to encapsulate and articulate. At first this literature is only somewhat mediated by existing literary norms. It is performative, social, didactic, hortatory; it is often bitter, militant, defiant. Still close to oral roots, it may play far better than it reads. It is meant to be read and heard, by targeted groups in specific settings. In poetry, this is a literature often without rhyme, jagged in rhythm, imitating and extending from first older and then emergent musical forms, with some influences based on forms stemming from Afro-American, Native American or other minority cultures. It is populist in orientation; but overtly or surreptitiously, in tone, gendercentering and ideology, its populism, democratic spirit and resistive counter-culturalism or other-ness emerge within a patriarchal frame.

The third phase is a literature of settlement, also looking back on the homebase and immigration, but from a more settled-in framework, with an existing Latino tradition behind it, now reaching out to other minority and mainstream (U.S. mainly but also Latin American, African, etc.) to expand horizons and move either to panLatin American, "panthird world" or U.S. mainstream identifications. Here the culture itself becomes selfcritical and decentered from earlier male discourse; feminist and postnationalist issues become crucial, as do a wide range of alternative cultural models and directions. Expression is frequently more individual, subjective, inward; style replaces a generalized rhetorical. In one sense this literature may be an expression of assimilation or acculturation that may or may not represent the broader group aggregate

(but rather a sector thereof); however, it may also be a literature which draws on, even as it critically distances itself from, earlier norms and suppositions.

These literatures are far from exclusive. Tendencies exist along a continuum. For example, in the Midwest, Latino literature develops late when overall U.S. Latino consciousness and literature is moving along the continuum from the second to the third phase. Even as new versions of older modes reappear in relation to recent immigration and development patterns, contemporary midwest Latino literature tends to telescope the second and third phases to produce a literature which may still have roots in the rural land, or a barrio or colonia surrogate, but which tends to project beyond national to broader Latino and universal concerns. And the multilayered and diverse urban environments of our literary centers make it possible for a single writer to go through all three phases in a matter of a few years.

What follows is a brief overview of the main developments and characteristics of Chicano, Puerto Rican and other Latino literatures in the U.S.

B. The Development of Chicano Literature

Mexican literature has existed in the territory which is now the U.S. as long as there have been Mexicansthat is, from the time of the Spa-nish settlements in what is now the Southwest. Indeed, what we today call Chicano literature is really, first a Southwest variant of Mexican literature and then an emergent immigrant literature written by the successive waves of twentieth century immigrants and especially their second and third generation offspring. Of course, new immigrants have continued to arrive, almost completely ignorant of the history and cultural production of those who arrived in U.S. territory before them (immigrants of the 1980s have little knowledge about or at least initial interest in the Chicano movement of the 1960s, to say nothing of the cultural and literary production that movement spurred). But tendencies toward what we today consider Chicano, as opposed to Mexican, litera-ture, begin to emerge in the Southwest even in the nineteenth century and on into our own time.

A few nineteenth century writers, as well as some of the early writers of corridos and theatrical skits, and then, a few figures like Daniel Venegas in our own century, are among the first to move from an initial Mexican base (in U.S. Southwest or specifically national Mexican terms) to a new Chicano literature which begins to dwell on the U.S. experience, the clash of old and new cultural trends, the pressures on language and identification, the problems of cultural loss, prejudice, discrimination, poverty and urban blight.

Clearly a Chicano ethnic folk literature developed in the Southwest and continues to find varied modern expression in a Rudolfo Anaya or Sabine Ulibarrí. There is of course a literature of regional life and family sagas, as in Hinojosa's Klail City Death Trip, Nash Candelaria's cycle of novels or Victor Villaseñor's recent Rain of Gold. But there is a more urbanbased strand, the precursors of which are writers like Venegas, which portrays the problems of modern "barrio life" and the effort to defend identity through the concern with "roots" and the ela-boration of a mythic source of identitystructure such as that which developed during the heydays of the Chicano movement with the con-cept of Aztlán. Poets such as José Montoya, J.L. Navarro, Raúl Sa-linas, Abelardo Delgado and Ricardo Sánchez were among the first to portray the

modern barrio in a rhetorical poetry of revelation and protest; while novelists as José Villarreal, Richard Vásquez and Alejandro Morales presented portraits of Chicano urban life. With poet Alurista and playwright Luis Valdez of El Teatro Campesino, Chicano literature became centered on Aztlán as the lost promised land which must be recaptured and maintained at least in spirit if Chicanos were to survive the pressures of what many of them saw as a soulless and racist technocratic order which threatened to devour them.

From efforts to reclaim land grants to the symbolic positing of a preColombian mystical realm, Chicano writers developed the concept of Aztlán as a precapitalist, land and spiritcentered basis for Chicano culture, literature and political activity. Even as Chicano literature developed throughout the 1960s and 1970s and on into the 1980s, even as new Chicano writers showed new levels of sophistication, left older modes of protest and incorporated new Latin American and U.S. models as the bases for their developing work, the Aztlán myth or one of its variations as a "sacred space" would still tend to characterize Chicano literature and serve as its paradigm, only to be eroded by the more secular, rationalist and feminist trends that would emerge increasingly in the 1980s as a literature of settlement and acculturation began to displace the older cultural model for many writers.

No more provocative formulation of the pre or anticapital-ist/antimodern, landcenteredness of Chicano literature, and no better means to understand different Chicano works and trends against national norms and currents has been suggested, than the post-structuralist paradigm elaborated in relation to Chicano poetic discourse by critic Juan BruceNovoa in the 1970s and given most complete articulation, variation and elaboration (from paradigm to anti-paradigm) in his *Retro-Space* (1990).

For BruceNovoa, the surface concerns of Chicano literature point to a "deep structure" based on the loss of a world, or "axis mundi" and an effort to recuperate the lost world through some kind of creative recreation of space. This paradigm is played out in function of the polarities of life and death. Its deeper, anthropological roots may be found in a tribal sense of communal, sacred space. One is only alive in relation to a community which occupies and defines that space. Exiled, one enters the land of death, a world of chaos in which the "center will not hold," the spiritual disorder which is the modern experience, or the world of time as opposed to spatial values, chronometric/labor time as opposed to sun/space time: the world not of maize, but of money and machines.

As BruceNovoa argues, Chicano literature is the space of symbolic action between the forces of "life and death" in relation to the disappearance, survival and transformation of the Mexican axis mundi. Each progressive historical transformation of the axis mundi implies what BruceNovoa describes as the "erasure" (or conservation even in negation) of what is formally canceled. It is the Conquest which marks a major rupture in the violation of the axis mundi. The Independence and future Mexican struggles represent efforts by varying groups to "erase the erasure" and retake the Mexican space.

The threat of group obliteration intensifies in the modern world of displacement from the countryside, of migration, migrant labor and cross border immigration. Mexico is canceled by migration and displacement. A whole value world and cosmology is lost. The people try to reconstruct the sacred in their new space, the colonia, barrio or street,

only to find this space and the people attacked from without and threatened by disintegration from within, with only certain possibilities for survival and reconsecration, to be found in those who, while valuing change, take on older roles of incanting the wise and magic words and enacting the proper rituals. The new turf becomes the new Chicano axis mundi to be held and defended, as the U.S. experience cuts the people off from Mexico and as Mexico cuts them off from the U.S. window onto the world. But the barrio is a fallen Mexican world, one in which there seem to be few creative avenues, in which what is left of cultural roots may hem one in and hold one down, more than provide modes of liberation. Indeed, defense of the sacred turf may lose all significant cultural reference as it synchronizes with or rather becomes reduced to generalized "underclass" or even gang orientations. The question then becomes how to find creative resolution, how to protect oneself from the identity chaos of the external world, but how on the other hand not to be trapped by what from that internalized external world's point of view is the prison of a traditional culture which no longer holds even the illusions of rewards and possibilities that it formerly offered.

The artist is seen as a kind of shaman, recreating the communal space or its surrogates and winning a war against invading forces of chaos. Of course one frequently must take on the enemy's tactics and weapons; one cannot strictly bring back the old. You cannot restore old Mexico or bring back Aztlán, but you can win creative space ritual-istically, artistically, through creative reconstruction and projection. The space of the printed page becomes the communal writer's space of victory.

Clearly, this kind of cosmology has ties to the evocations of structural transformations specified in the writings of Octavio Paz; as a sophisticated reformulation of the Aztlán construct and theme so central to Chicano cultural and literary mythology, this orientation has been subjected to intense critique as constituting an overly normative definition of Chicano literature. Interestingly, Bruce-Novoa himself has been intensely involved in the critical and deconstructive process.

Sixties Chicano literary editors and critics castigated or ignored Chicano writers to the degree that they did not write an ethnic, Chicano literature in terms similar to those we have established here. Thus writers like Tomás Rivera and, even more so, Rudolfo Anaya, were set up as models, and seemingly nonethnic writers like John Rechy were relegated to a closet they did not wish to inhabit. In a classic instance, it is alleged that pioneering Chicano editor Herminio Ríos even excluded at least one story from Rivera's novel, ...y no se lo tragó la tierra, on the grounds that the story gave too negative an image of Chicanos. The major contemporary Latino editor, Nicolás Kanellos has attacked the ethnic immigrant narrative as an exhausted paradigm and, it is said, guided young writers to tone down its presence through the selection process for the collections of their work; and Bruce-Novoa has become an absolute champion of canon reform. But this reform has prompted continual theoretical interventions, such as the major one we find in Ramón Saldívar's recent *Chicano Narrative: The Dialectics of Difference* (1990), and in a variety of other, and especially feminist, critics and writers.

More overtly political than Bruce-Novoa, Saldívar uses an inter-disciplinary, critical methodology involving the Derrida's deconstructionism and Fredric Jameson's conceptualization of a "political unconsciousness" to portray Chicano literature as a part of, yet resistant to the mainstream of, U.S. literature, and to characterize it as structuring oppositional differences with respect to both hegemonic Anglo-American

literary, cultural and ideological norms and the evolving socio-economic and political processes to which they are related. By this account, deconstructionism operates to undermine the binary op-positions which seemingly structure discourse in the production of differential textual meaning. This procedure opens textual structuration to interpretations based on Jameson's conceptualization of relations between Marxist concerns such as production, class and transformative action and Freudian views of such phenomena as tied to neurosis-producing repression and sublimated expression. Basing his analysis on dialectical, socially rooted difference, Saldívar sees Chicano narrative as involving deconstructions of imposed Anglo identities for the production of literary meaning. Interpretation of literary texts means understanding the relationship of their symbolic patterns to their generic conventions and the broader social and political forces which writers internalize and express through processes such as those Freud identified in his treatment of the unconscious.

Whereas Chicano narrative may have seemed less overtly oppositional than other literary modes, Saldívar underlines its varieties of difference as they articulate themselves in relation to existent generic norms and variations which mediate between given literary works and the social world they would seem to represent. Thus, Chicano border reactions to Anglo American racism initially found expression in the border corrido, which solidified in the second half of the nineteenth century and then experienced successive transformations and pressures until it gave way to other expressive forms under the weight of historical change. Modern urban Chicano poetry is one mode developing out of and varying the corrido frame. But the varying novelistic forms which emerge at the time of the Chicano movement constitute the primary mode of Chicano expression in the period extending from the 1960s to present.

Most of the major Chicano narratives of the 1960s and 1970s, no matter how varying in formal experimentation, were in fact male Bildungsroman, so that the emergence of women writers and feminist narratives in the 1980s meant a constitution of works that were multiply differential and resistant, in that they went counter not only to the hegemonic culture but also to the Chicano patriarchal patterns and even the white feminism which sought to oppose the hegemonic culture.

Recent radical feminist ideologues like Norma Alarcón, Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherríe Moraga have articulated a new chicana oppositional stance by rewriting Chicano male-centered macro-mythologies in terms of feminist ones which question all fixity of gender/race/class identities and norms; meanwhile feminist fiction writers have sought to explore the micro-world of everyday life patternings to find the multiple modes of possible resistances within the seams of lived experience and creative projection.

Now, under the impact of deconstructionism, feminism, post-marxism and other postmodernist modes of thought, much contemporary Chicano writing male and female seeks to break through beyond earlier narrow ethnic concerns to ones which require new modes of understanding and analysis to grasp how the writing maintains or transcends earlier patterns and identifications. The new writing is inevitably more urban, more closely woven with other Latino and nonLatino cultural strains, more distanced from a pretechnological, precapitalist world of blood bonds and sacrifices, sacramental, ritualistic and ceremonial relations with the earth and other humans; it is also distanced from the world of confrontational violence with Rangers, cops or rival gangs.

In line with the educational circumstance achieved by at least a sector of Chicanos in U.S. life, writers like Gary Soto, Alberto Ríos and several others are increasingly characterized by their withdrawal from Chicano ethnic literature and from the culturalist paradigm early identified with it. As for the feminist Chicana writers, Helena María Viramontes, Denise Chávez, as well as Ana Castillo and Sandra Cisneros, seem to drift both from Bruce-Novoa's spatial identification or Saldívar's construction of machistic border and barrio defiance; they struggle ambivalently with the older paradigms as well as the repression and the inscribed role of women which they find as central to them and to at least certain dimensions of the Chicano movement they have been seen to represent. Still others, like Cecile Piñeda, Shiela Ortiz Taylor and Laurence Gonzales (cf. his 444 [Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1977]) seem fully turned toward the mainstream without struggling with the older paradigms or being particularly centered on them.

Nevertheless, in one way or another, many contemporary Chicano writers, and especially male ones, directly or indirectly, consciously or not, project the early paradigmatic Chicano vision into contemporary settings and circumstances; and it may well be that contemporary feminist work, as well as other "new wave"-tending Chicano literature can still be shown to partake, however critically, of a landcentered structural view as a necessarily regressive, pre-capitalist oppositional mode, now refashioned to project a more progressive, late capitalist resistant pattern. If this is the case, then we would still be able to establish the core ties of Chicano writers to a vision which is very specifically rooted in a syncretic "imaginary" where Mexican and U.S. polarities find their resolution. We would still be able to speak of a specifically "ethnic" literature, rather than a general literature written by writers who just happen to be Chicano.

This orientation may continue to have importance if we believe that even the enforcement of the new immigration laws cannot resist the pressure created by circumstances in Mexico, and that, even as we have new generations of sophisticated Chicanos able to read and absorb the sophisticated writings of new writers, we will continue to have large, new Chicano social sectors who must find or create a literature expressive of and suited to their own situation and experience.

C. Puerto Rican Literature in the U.S.

Without question, the most famous writer of Puerto Rican descent in the United States was the doctorpoet, William Carlos Williams, who, Puerto Rican on his mother's side, apparently disassociated himself from the cultural traditions of the island, even after his visits there and his translations of poetry by Luis Palés Matos. Only today are critics taking seriously his Puerto Rican and Latin roots as a means of understanding his similarities and differences with other New World writers. The lack of recognition of Williams' own "Puerto Rican" identity may be taken as a sign for the broader series of questions having to do with the recognition of Continental Puerto Rican writing as part of U.S. and U.S. Latino literature and also as part of Puerto Rican literature. What follows mainly has to do with the first question, but the second one is also important to consider.

Some years ago, in his introduction to an anthology of U.S. Puerto Rican poetry, Efraín Barradas went to great lengths to point out the lack of continuity and community between Nuyorican and Island writers. One of the most difficult tasks in explaining U.S.

Puerto Rican writing is to distinguish between island-oriented literature (even when it is written in New York and/or is about the U.S. diaspora), which is a branch of Caribbean or Latin American literature, and Continental U.S. Puerto Rican writing which, no matter where written, at least tends to be a U.S. ethnic literature. In attempting to make a bridge between is-land and Continental expression, we cannot overlook the differences, which have been felt so keenly by those on both sides of the divide.

Because of his genuine concern with unity, Barradas refuses to evade the differences and their bases in fact. Above all, he notes the tendency of "Nuyorican" writers toward heretical demythifications and/or mythmaking constructs with respect to Puerto Rican culture and national identity. Obviously the reasons for these constructs lie in the root causes for the immigration of Puerto Ricans to New York: the is-land's colonial status and the economic upheaval caused by efforts of modernization, and of course the very negative and demoralizing circumstances most Puerto Ricans have encountered in the U.S. So we have a mythifying of the island and a search for alternative role models and identifications; and we have, above all, the assertion of an injured, denied and hence defiant sense of national and cultural pride.

At times, continental Puerto Ricans have resisted dealing with themselves as a U.S. minority, because to do so would imply a negation of a focus on their island's colonial status. Even as unemployment, poor housing, drug and welfare dependency, gang and school dropout rates, etc., became increasingly endemic in the Puerto Rican community, such problems could only be seen as legitimate to the degree that they were subsumed in function of the situation of Puerto Ricans as a colonized people. And the entire immigration process, seen from the island intelligentsia's struggle to preserve a fragile, jeopardized national identity, could only be construed as loss. This sense of loss, felt in the very bones by those having their base in a U.S. enclave, and unable to recapture fully their island roots, has led to sometimes desperate alternatives from a full-blown romanticism with respect to the island, to a rejection of the island and a search for other worlds. Indeed, perhaps for their smaller numerical size as a population (or as a tiny writer/artist subculture), and perhaps also for the fragility and difficulty to specify character of their sense of nationhood, U.S.-based Puerto Rican writers, more than their Mexicano counterparts, tended to decenter or go beyond national identification to Latino and third world/minority identifications even to the degree that they affirmed their nationhood. So, the first Puerto Rican writers in the U.S. learned to project their visions of island independence in terms of union with Cuba and the broader Caribbean world. And, in this century, it is no accident that in Chicago, where the Puerto Rican population exists in the context of a much larger Mexican presence, the major contribution to the developing national scene was *Revista ChicanoRiqueña*, fathered by U.S. Rican Nicolás Kanellos.

While recent Chicano writers have attacked, abandoned or trans-formed the Aztlán construct as the armature for their poetic explorations, the problem for Puerto Rican writers has been the elaboration of a series of partial, fragmented mythologies in the face of a lack of an abiding and binding urmyth that could give depth and unity to the epi-phenomenal thematics of their work. So the occasional and topical feel and at least appearance of much U.S. Puerto Rican writing, and also the tentative and melancholy nature of the writers' heresies and mythologies; so the apparently more limited volume and elaboration of Puerto Rican literature compared to the Chicano counterpart. This is the viewpoint articulated rather arrogantly in Bruce-Novoa's *Retro-Space*. But if there is

some truth in this contrast, stemming as it does from the lost past of Caribbean cultures (as opposed to the at least partial continuities involved in Mexican history), and from a lack of longterm residence or rootedness (through workforce or proprietorial relatednessthrough a standing as permanent workers, business people or homeowners) in a land which they have felt theirs by some deep and sacred pact (the case of at least some people living in the Southwest, and part of the mythic structuration of much Chicano literature), never-theless, this very situation helps to define the profundity behind the sometimes superficial appearances.

We have in fact just designated "the space of U.S. Puerto Rican literature" as one primarily for the exploration and forging of a new sense of identity and nation in the face of loss and disorientation, multiethnicity and multiLatino identifications, in the face of the loss of myths which is increasingly the postmodern condition for Chicanos just as for others in contemporary life. The space of this literature separates even as it relates it to Puerto Rican island writing; the space is where the Puerto Rican colony or barrio is related to the city and its majority and minority populations, to the island, the Caribbean, Africa and the world. Gender will also emerge as a concern. In this context, the main contribution of much recent Puerto Rican writing is the insistence we have pointed to on a broad Latin and even internationalist focus even in the midst of developments emphasizing U.S. Puerto Rican nationalist, broadly minority and feminist trends. And in this context too, the question emerges (in a way it hardly ever does for Puerto Rican island writers) about what may have been gained by Puerto Ricans in spite of the obvious negative dimensions of the diaspora.

To be sure, as our reference to William Carlos Williams assures, Puerto Rican literature in the continental U.S. does not begin with the Puerto Rican diaspora of economic refugees to New York. In a recent article, Juan Flores divides Puerto Rican literature to the U.S. into three phases, preceded by a kind of "prephase".

The "prephase," extending from the last century consists of exiles from the independence struggle against Spain (major intellectuals like Hostos, Betances, etc., but also "a solid base of artisans and laborers"), who spent varied lengths of time in New York, forming Puerto Rican and Antillean independence support groups and writing mainly about their Caribbean struggles, but also (in the case of Hostos's diaries or the poetry of Francisco Gonzalo ["Pachín"] Marín) reflecting critically on the New York experience of arriving Puerto Rican nationals.

The first phase, extending from 1917 to 1945, is mainly of auto-biographical and journalistic works expressing the efforts of first generation immigrants, many of them with the feelings and attitudes of foreign nationals and subject people (and here their difference from other immigrants), to adjust to U.S. life. This period is most fully and richly represented by *The Memoirs of Bernardo Vega* and Jesus Colón's *A Puerto Rican in New York and Other Sketches*. But, as Flores notes, it is also represented by fragments from a vast, stillaccessible stream of oral history, and a still more accessible volume of popular music (boleros, plenas, etc.,) in which Rafael Hernández and other popular song writers expressed a wide range of feelings about the experience of Puerto Ricans coming to the city.

After the initial development of agrobusiness, industrialization efforts under Operation Bootstrap were responsible for the massive movement of poor, country Puerto Ricans

off their land and into a migratory process that brought them to U.S. cities. The period of this migration, from 1945-65, constitutes the second phase of developing U.S. Puerto Rican literature. As immigrants, the Puerto Ricans of this period arrived too late to the feast of U.S. industrial expansion. Whereas many Mexicans, lacking legal status and having to take whatever job became available, gradually integrated themselves into the U.S. work-force (albeit in marginal roles), all too many Puerto Ricans, lacking minimal skills and suffering from cultural and racial discrimination as well, failed to find permanent niches in a declining industrial base; and, as U.S. citizens, they found their modes of survival in low-paying, temporary jobs, and (the subject of Oscar Lewis's notorious study of the "culture of poverty," *La Vida*), the famous U.S. systems of welfare and the "informal economy."

The circumstances of emergent lumpenization and what many saw as a loss of Puerto Rican/Latin American values and the attendant defense of the very system which was undoing them led to the emergence of two predominant literary modes. First, there was a very powerful, negative "view from the island" a perspective focusing on the problems of workingclass Puerto Rican immigrants shared by writers whether living in San Juan or New York and represented most famously by Pedro Juan Soto, René Marqués, Enrique Laguerre, José Luis González and Emilio Díaz Varcárcel (this kind of writing continues into our own times with writers such as Iris Zavala, Iván Silén and Victor Fragoso).

Second, there was a "view from within the community" by a group of exile writers with long residence in New York (Clemente Soto Velez and Julia de Burgos among them), writing mainly a literature of exile with hardly any bilingualisms and only limited reference (e.g., in Pedro Carrasquillo's *jíbaro décimas*) to the immigration experience with only Guillermo Cotto-Thorner's novel, *Trópico en Manhattan*, and various works by Jaime Carrero turning toward the depth exploration of the immigration experience and the linguistic and cultural "neorkismos," which were to become common in the next stage of Puerto Rican literature.

This third, or Nuyorican stage of U.S. Puerto Rican literature "arose with no direct reference to or evident knowledge of the writings of the early period.... But nevertheless in prose at least [it] effectively draws together the firsthand testimonial stance of the 'pioneer' stage and the fictional, imaginative approach of the writers of the 1950s or 1960s" (Flores, p. 43). Clearly, this definition applies to such narratives of male becoming by Piri Thomas, Lefty Barreto, Nicky Cruz, Humberto Cintrón, Edwin Torres and Edward Rivera, as well as much of the work of the best known Nuyorican woman writer, Nicholasa Mohr whose most famous narratives are, as Arnaldo CruzMalavé points out, "narratives of formation," or *bildungsromane* exploring the fate of outsiders caught often between one or more sets of conflictive polarities: Puerto Rico/New York, city/suburb, Latin culture/anglo culture, semifeudal patriarchy/capitalist feminism, etc.

According to CruzMalavé, Puerto Rican writers have been most prolific in poetry, where, more than in other genres they have mapped out the polarities specified by Barradas between mythification and heretical demythification, which "constitute a dialectic that may be said to have its origins in the New York Puerto Rican awakening of the late 1960s" in the work of the Puerto Rican members of the Last Poets and in a group known as the Young Lords (CruzMalavé: 48). Early Nuyorican poetry draws on

militant AfroAmerican and beat influences, as well as William Carlos Williams. It speaks for a community, more than an individual, and seeks to strip away false consciousness about the "American Dream" and Nuyorican colonial status in a third world ghetto; it seeks to promote action in the direction of nationbuilding.

Gradually Nuyorican writing becomes freer of prior models and develops its own voice, in the works of such writers as Pedro Pietri, Victor Hernández Cruz, Miguel Piñero, Miguel Algarín, Angel Figue-roa, Tato Laviera and Martín Espada. Still tending to portray the New York ghetto world against a mythified view of a interracial utopia identified with a liberated Puerto Rico, these poets begin to break down the mythified strand and move in a richer, more complex frame of polarities and contradictions, which they portray not only in poetry but in plays as well. Indeed, for Miguel Algarín, by the midseventies, Nuyorican poetry had already developed three modes which he saw also as an overlapping continuum of phases in Nuyorican writing. First there was "outlaw poetry," involving expressions of hostility, rage and violence; second, there was "evolutionary poetry," entailing a growing con-sciousness of the external determinations of outlaw moods and acts, as well as a movement toward transcendence; finally there was "dusmic poetry," tracing the transformation of aggression into spiritual strength, wholeness and freedom.

Even in Algarín's last phase, which parallels our view of the third stage of U.S. Latino literature in general, U.S. Puerto Rican literature does not leave specific national and ethnic considerations behind. So, in recent years, with Hernández Cruz's stylistic and thematic experi-ments and with the gender explorations of Sandra María Esteves, Luz María Umpierre, Judith Ortiz Cofer and others, we see new modes and new cultural horizons only hinted at fifteen years ago, but in no way signalling an end to Spanish, and collective orientations, in no way signifying accommodation or assimilation. Piñero is gone, but others have arrived. Ed Vega and others may parody the earlier immigrant narratives and may search for new narrative paradigms; but this, far from signalling an end, just points to the fact that, in Tato Laviera's wonderful phrase, the *carreta* has been making a u-turn. So, in con-cluding his essay, Flores notes that, like Chicano and other "'minority' or noncanonical literatures of the United States," Continental Puerto Rican literature since its Nuyorican phase has been, while intensely national in orientation, also "a literature of recovery and collective affirmation, ... of 'mingling and sharing,' of interaction and exchange with neighboring, complementary cultures." However, while paying ho-mage to AfroAmerican literature as influence and Chicano literature as crossfertilizing parallel and presence, Flores adds that, most distinc-tively among these minority literatures, "Puerto Rican writing today is a literature of straddling, a literature operative within and between two national literatures and marginal in both. In this respect" he concludes, "Nuyorican writing may well come to serve as a model or paradigm for emerging literatures by other Caribbean groups in the United States, such as Dominicans, Haitians and Jamaicans" (Flores: 44).

Noting the broader perspective, CruzMalavé (50) argues that "Because of the diversity of the Puerto Rican experience, encompassing both the Third and First Worlds, underdevelopment and advanced capitalism, oral and written traditions," Puerto Rican writing has not just been a matter of survival stories and poems "in the fringes" of U.S. society, but "the space where ... the strategies for changethe many at-tempts to find a space of resistance and freedom outside (and inside) [First and Third World]

modernization and [First World, late capitalist] consumerism are taken to their ultimate consequences."

As we project to future phases of U.S. Puerto Rican literature, we should simply note that from the perspective of Chicago and the Mid-west, the designation by Flores and Cruz Malavé (but not Barradas) of the third phase of Puerto Rican literature in the U.S. as "Nuyorican" is misleading, since it leaves out a significant area and all the other centers where the new literature developed. Future studies must include these other communities in and around New York, but the midwest as well wherever Puerto Ricans have gone and will be going. In further efforts, and above all in developing a more sophisticated critique of the remarkably slow and limited emergence of a Puerto Rican woman's and specifically feminist literature, however, the perspectives specified above, will continue to serve as significant guideposts.

D. Cuban and Other U.S. Latino Literatures

As noted earlier in this brief study, the coming of Cubans, Dominicans, Central American and other Latin Americans to the U.S. has led to the emergence of new works, mainly in Spanish, expressive of their experience. To be sure, transplanted Cuban or Argentine novelists are not in any sense writing U.S. Latino literature, whether their characters twist and turn through Havana, Buenos Aires, Montevideo or New York. Only those writers representing groups with several years of U.S. residence and having had some working class as well as some barrio experience (including discrimination) are likely to write something which approaches community literary expression such as we find in U.S. Chicano and Puerto Rican literatures. An Argentine lawyer may write fiction in the mode of Borges or Cortázar; his or her daughter or son may outdo John Updike or Ann Tyler. But in either case, even if we find some residues, inflections, or specific "ethnic markings," the result will not necessarily be U.S. Latino literature.

Of all the groups mentioned, the Cubans certainly have had long enough residence and population density to produce a distinct ethnic literature in this country. And indeed the first steps in the development of U.S. Cuban writing tend to parallel the Puerto Rican model, in spite of initial historical and cultural differences. There is a pre-1898 phase, most famously represented by José Martí, that is virtually identical with that described by Juan Flores and summarized above. And, in spite of the differing immigration statuses allotted to inhabitants from the two islands in the wake of 1898, there was a similar development of U.S. Cuban writing throughout the first half of this century.

For the most part, Cuban immigration was never large or very permanent; and while tobacco workers migrated, many entering Cubans were from higher layers in Cuban society. Also, many politicized middle sector Cubans continued to come from the 1930s through the 1950s fleeing the regimes of Machado and Batista, some returning as new governments came to power. Still, small enclaves developed in New York and Miami, and their sociocultural (not to say literary) history still requires study, if only because it will reveal the kinds of communities which opened the doors to the massive Cuban migration that arrived after Castro's coming to power.

Not surprisingly, what has tended to separate most Cubans and their literature in the U.S. from their Mexican and Puerto Rican cousins has been their predominantly middle

class background (we refer here mainly to Cubans arriving before the Mariel exodus of 1980) and of course the political circumstances surrounding their departure from Cuba and their installation in Miami and other communities.

As Naomi Lindstrom has noted, U.S.-based Cubans have "apparently made few attempts to create a minority subculture literature such as that of Nuyoricans." Indeed, "typical of Cuban American production are the numerous works produced by anti-Castro Cubans" that are usually "right wing and conservative Catholic," and that "feature expressions of outrage ... , depictions of the sufferings of upper ... or middleclass families. [Here] the important elements are the continuity the authors see between Cuban culture as such and the culture they themselves represent in the act of writing.... Several bibliographic summaries group these writers not with other U.S. Hispanics, but with anti-Castro writers living ... elsewhere. Spanish is their literary language, and they seldom attempt to represent the effects of continual ... contact with ... English-speaking culture."

This tendentious Cuban exile literature has its right and also left wing parallels in other Latin American groups based in the U.S. and across the globe. In fact, a current of exile literature developed during the 1960s among some of the children of the post-Castro exile identifying themselves as the grupo *Areíto* and seeking "dialogue" with Cubans on the island. Mainly writing in Spanish, but sometimes in English, leading group members like Lourdes Casal, Eliana Rivero and others created their works out of pained nostalgia and a desire for reconciliation, rebelling against their parents' politics but also against their pro-U.S. elitism and their unwillingness to see themselves in relation to other Latinos except when it was convenient. In the *Areíto* group, then, were seeds of a very different orientation not only toward Cuba but toward the U.S. experiences that were to grow even after Casal's early death, in Rivero's continuing and expanding immersion in U.S. feminist writing as critic and poet. This U.S. orientation came to be shared by many other Cuban writers regardless of their stance vis-à-vis Cuban Communism. That is, increasingly albeit gradually, the sons and daughters of middle class Cuban families in the U.S. have begun to write a literature rooted in U.S. experience. And most of them have surpassed their U.S. Cuban forerunners in this regard.

Even among the tendentious exile writers there were some who did not fully ignore the U.S. experience as such. Some of the stories by Lino Calvo Novás, while haunted by the trauma of the Revolution, show a keen eye for aspects of life in Miami and New York. Octavio Armand, Isel Rivero, José Sánchez Boudy and Matías Montes Huidobro are four key writers who managed to write prose and poetry capturing major "ethnic" and "Latino" aspects of the U.S. Cuban situation. Armand in particular is important for his poetry, but also for his journal, *Escandalar*, a conduit for U.S. Cuban writing on displacement, loss, confusion and reidentification. Perhaps the most important traditional writer in this respect is Celedonio González, whose key works, *Los cuatro embajadores* (1973) and *El espesor del pellejo de un gato ya cadáver* (1978) deal with cultural shock and even the exploitation of Cuban workers.

To be sure, during the 1960s, talented off-Broadway playwright María Irene Fornes had launched herself into the mainstream with little direct reflection of her Latin or Cuban roots--matters which only appear in her work during the 1980s. Then, a few years ago, another writer, Oscar Hijuelos, significantly a son of parents who immigrated to the

U.S. in the 1940s, wrote a major example of Latino autobiographical fiction in his *Our House in the Last World*. But this book and many other Latino-tending Cuban works were examples of American Dream Romance too inadequate in oppositional force and perspective to constitute U.S. Latino expression as we have come to characterize it here. Hijuelos's more recent work, *The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love*, is a more complexly ambivalent anti-romance, as our white Cuban musicians enter the door into U.S. acculturation only to lose their lives in machistic assertion, nostalgia and spiritual paralysis. In this work, Hijuelos bears ambivalent witness to a breakthrough toward a critical and oppositional ethnic literature accomplished only slowly in the last two decades and expressed in varying degrees also by only a few writers such as Iván Acosta, Dolores Prida, Roberto Fernández and Elías Miguel Muñoz.

The oldest of the group, Acosta is a gifted playwright whose fine play (and then film) *El Super* is able to capture multiple nuances of the immigration experience, and its effect on family life, friendship, CubanPuerto Rican relations and sanity. Another playwright, Prida has now written a sufficient number of plays to establish herself as a talented comic writer able to grasp sex role conflicts and other critical dimensions of Cuban and more broadly U.S. Latino experience. Par-taking of the wonderful Cuban talent for exaggerated extravagance, Fernández already has a considerable body of work focusing on absurdities in Miami's Cuban enclave. Significantly, his most recent novel, *Raining Backwards*, is his first written in English. Muñoz's novel *Crazy Love*, reveals his ability to portray several of major aspects of immigration and settlement. His more recent writing reveals him grappling with Chicano themes and their relation to his own Cuban roots in a more generalized Latino experience he is intent on exploring.

While these last Cuban writers and many others seem too assimilationist and conformist, they nevertheless point to an at least partial Cuban entry into U.S. Latino ethnic literature as it expands and develops. In this expansion process, a new Dominican current is clearly emerging in the East; and a few other maturing sons and daughters of parents from varying places in Latin America for example, Central American writers, following the lead of Nicaraguans Roberto Vargas and Pancho Aguilar in the 1970s; and South American writers like Chilean Marjorie Agosín and Greek-Argentine Beatriz Badikian, who have written works which show at least some influence of core U.S. Latino ethnic experience, perhaps interspersed with mainstream U.S. and Latin American nuances.

Finally, there are those nonLatinos whose life experience and capacity of creative projection have enabled them to create valuable examples of what has been dubbed Chicanesque literature including the outrage-creating book by "Danny Santiago" and the much-praised work by John Nichols and Jim Sagel. Such developments are not surprising, as some middle class Latin American children have become subject to the cultural and linguistic confusions, and even the racism, that so many Chicanos and Puerto Ricans face; and as others become "latinized" by their contact with the growing U.S. Latin world.

Even as conditions improve for many U.S. Latinos, others will continue to suffer. The proximity with Mexico, U.S. relations with Puerto Rico and Cuba (even if they change), the economic and political situations which impel immigration these and other factors guarantee, in the face of amnesty laws and new immigration crack-downs and busts, a continuing human stream into the U.S. and its joining with an even greater population

of Latinos being born here already. We can be sure that this vast and varied human pool will be the source and subject of a vast and varied ethnic literary pool in the years to come.

IV. POSTMODERN PERSPECTIVES AND FINAL THOUGHTS

How might we summarize the situation of Latinos as they may see and feel it, what are some final synoptic thoughts we should put forward here to frame our consideration of Latino literary matters? First, of course that there are no Latinos, that the word is a construct bringing together diverse people who while they clearly share certain bases, are often quite distinct and only identify with each other in opposition to the non-Latinos and that usually for very specific, contingent and often political, epiphenomenal and ephemeral concerns. This said, what core problems might we articulate that point toward the future--and then, what again about Latino literature as the expression of a non-existent group?

A. Some Key Perspectives

In the coming years, U.S. Latinos will be passing through a conflictive and painful process of transformation, marked by constant, contradictory efforts to hold on to their existing cultural patterns and identifications while modifying and transforming them in an effort to maintain relative balance with changes in society at large.

In this period of transition, many Latinos will seek to assimilate fully into capitalist or "Anglo" society, but vast numbers will hardly make the effort. For each person who wants to do so, there will be many others so alienated by a society pervaded by class and racial inequities, that they will not want to integrate themselves--or at least, they are going to experience a conflict between their conscious desire and their subconscious resistance. And even many Latino workers who may want to, will be unable to integrate themselves adequately into the U.S. mainstream, because their marginalized role as cheap labor source will be all too convenient for certain powerful and avid groups in this country.

Thus many Latinos will continue to seek their solace from the wear and tear of social domination and discrimination in what they can salvage of their cultural relations and values.

But Latin American cultural complexes will not be able to remain the same in a changing world; and if U.S. society continues to evolve along its current road, Latino culture may prove less and less able to meet its old needs, of providing all that the governments of domination have not provided. In this circumstance, we can expect to see the possible extenuation of the worst things that are already happening to many people: increased unemployment, increased poverty, increased crime and drug abuse; increased enmity between newly arrived and less recently arrived sectors; increasing hostility among Latinos from different countries; the breakdown of families and whole communities; struggles among Catholics and new Protestant groupings; the survival and aggressive (at times chauvinistic) assertion of only the most negative, superficial and regressive dimensions of culture.

In fact, unless Latinos can develop the most positive dimensions of their cultural legacy in ways that integrate progressive political orientations that are able to win over certain communitarian divisions based sometimes on certain aspects of the culture itself (e.g., nationalism, regionalism, racism, compadre relations, machismo, caciquismo, etc), unless Latinos can form viable alliances and fight effectively for common values and goals, large numbers will be sunk in the backwaters of U.S. life, in a society that will move toward a greater division of rich and poor, haves and have-nots.

A progressive study of U.S. Latino culture involves examining pre-valent and potential modes of Latino identification in function of their possible articulation and activation in forging group unity, alliances among diverse Latino groups, other oppressed minorities and class sectors. Identification with popular struggles in Latin America and elsewhere has been a dimension of what is at issue here. The ultimate end is to find bases for generating a viable and organizable political response to conditions of exploitation and exclusion.

While aspects of U.S. development and U.S. Latino culture and history generate growing Latino diversification and disunity (including class, political and now an increasing religious differentiation, etc.); and while certain cultural dimensions (e.g, the orientation toward space, time and death, the way of measuring and evaluating the individual and the communal, the orientation to family and the definition that is given to the family in its extended form, etc.) vitiate efforts to forge broader social unity among Latinos, as well as between them and certain non-Latino groups, there are, nevertheless, other factors, resulting principally from the effects of subjugation, that suggest greater future Latino unity and greater ability to forge at least tactical alliances.

In a progressive study of Latino or any culture, looking for practical alliances, potential openings and points of resistance, etc., distinctions must be made between a group or sub-group's ideology of culture and culture itself--also between the specific cultural products (in art, music, literature, etc.) and Redfield's "little traditions" (or de Certeau's "little tactics" of survival)--i.e., questions of language usage, popular attitudes and opinions, social interaction, etc. We must distinguish between what people say they believe and do and how they actually behave. Thus cultural analysis must relate intellectual and artistic production to more mass concerns and actualities within the groups studied. There must be some determination of the relation between what people say and do, what their leaders and writers say about the people's culture and what their culture itself is.

The matter at hand is one of social, cultural and individual possibilities in a world of limited resources. This question should be confronted at national and international levels as well as in each place where there are concentrations of Latinos. In this regard, the relation of Latino culture and literature to postmodernist currents becomes essential.

B Postmodern Multicultural Crossovers

Clearly there is a problem in applying a concept that is conceived in relation to the cultural state of the hegemonic groups of advanced capitalist consumer societies to the cultural and artistic life of sub-ordinated, marginal and subaltern minority groups. Clearly there is also a correspondence between cultural phenomena identified as post-modernist and the present sensibility and strategies of multinational capitalism which

gives some credence to the idea that postmodernism may be a new form of cultural imperialism. But it may also be that Latino culture and literature, as systems within postmodernism, may offer alternative possibilities that can potentially affect and even transform the overall field of relations. This, perspective, suggested by many recent Latino critics, is one that is explored at global and micro levels by Juan Flores and George Yúdice, "Living Borders/Buscando América: Languages of Latino Self Formation," which appears in the former's *Divided Borders* (APP, 1992).

Flores and Yúdice see U.S. Latino culture and literature as significant contributors to the effort to construct a new hegemony with its own cultural practices and discourses. As such, Latino culture and literature constitute more than just peripheral or "minority" modes of symbolic resistance to, but within, a hegemonic system which in effect cancels any genuine potential for agency; given the limits of current oppositional possibilities, Latino practices confront hegemonic norms by creating an alternative if not necessarily adversarial ethos.

The perspective of Flores and Yúdice is best exemplified by the Latino struggle with mainstream culture over language, and the extension of that struggle to other signifying systems. In this regard, they draw on Gloria Anzaldúa's border vision as expressing not just some postmodern indeterminacy, but a new ethos in the making—one which generalizes feminist critique to a series of practices in which "America" is seen as a cultural map with endless living borders. Here our critics invoke their concept of "crossover culture," as symbolic praxis, corresponding at the linguistic level to Bruce-Novoa's view of Latino discourse as a new, "interlingual" construction. Crossover culture does not mean that Latinos seek to "make it" in the general culture; rather it is a vehicle for Latinos to create new, hybrid signifying forms that involve linkages and relations in a variety of often unexplored directions. For example, salsa involves a crossover combination of many musical forms, expresses multiculturalism and crossing borders, moments of alliance, convergence and clash among distinct social groups and sectors. Salsa means creating one's roots from heterogeneous elements rather than going back to some place of origin. The search is not for some original axis mundi or fixed essence, but distinct sets of identity possibilities from within the givens of an expanding multicultural universe.

Indeed, a constructivist, transformative view of cultural identity and the overall multicultural context of U.S. life is the central motif in Flores and Yúdice, for multiculturalism implies connectedness with others without any necessary submission to hegemony past or present. Multiculturalism and multi-centrism are not equivalent to some relativist fiction of cultural pluralism. It is in fact their view of identity affirmation derived from postmodernist discourse which separates Flores and Yúdice from Bruce-Novoa's early cultural paradigm and challenges his critique of Puerto Rican culture and literature, pointing to a broader, achieved U.S. Latino identity, forged out of the varying subject positions which divergent Latino groups and sub-groups have experienced in the U.S. Cultural richness is not defined by past myths but the generation of new possibilities, and new, if sometimes chaotic, energies. Latino identity with all its previous characteristics and contours, crosses over in postmodern culture as posing some combination of the most retrograde and progressive possibilities for future patterns of resistance and creativity, posing some of the most dynamic points of convergence and alliance with other, non-Latino groups in a broader field of new op-

positions internal to and at least possibly transformative of the entire social system of which they are a part.

C. Literature, the Midwest and Future Developments

With respect to U.S. Latino literature itself, we have to think in complex relations, in continuities and discontinuities, in approaches to and distances from concrete social processes, in the relation between the writer and the group that the writer may be assumed to represent, between a work's hypothetical public or community and the real consumers of the writer's product. Thus, in spite of the Latino population growth and the appearance of many writers and texts, and in spite of the valuable efforts of enterprises like Arte Público Press and Bilingual Review Press to produce and promote Latino literature, it is still true that there are few Latino readers of this literature, except those university students assigned to read a few key works as part of their educational experience.

Ignored or not, subsidized or not, this literature is in the course of developing and deepening; and its writers have been able to express many ideological and material tendencies at work in their communities. While clearly most Latino writers are not much distanced in class background or culture from the community about which they write, it is also partially because the writers are not fully typical of Latinos as a whole that they have been able to serve as their community's "organic intellectuals." Thus, more so than other members of their communities, they have been able to probe in the world of creation and imagination certain possible directions of Latino life; they have been able to express but also anticipate certain problems and solutions; they have created valuable modelic constructs which have contributed by positive and negative example to the forging of a potentially better U.S. Latino future. Given the danger of Latino subordination in the U.S. and the importance this issue has for Latinos and the nation as a whole, the question of social and literary relations also becomes one of what broader cultural and political horizon the new literature and culture project toward in the U.S. and the relation that horizon may have with Latin America and the world as a whole. We have already pointed this issue through our look at Flores's *Divided Borders*. Before fully exploring all the great questions, however, future studies of Latino society and literature must take some time to consider regional developments as well. In this rethinking, the Latino reality must be decentered from the Southwest and New York to embrace a broader conceptualization which includes the midwest.

Indeed midwest Latinos and midwest Latino literature have been greatly neglected. In the literary sphere, although Tomás Rivera wrote of midwest migration in perhaps the greatest novel of Chicano literature, and although such key Chicano writers as Ana Castillo, Sandra Cisneros and Carlos Morton were raised in Chicago, and finally although there are innumerable writers who come from many other Midwest centers, the overall Midwest Latino literary corpus and its role in anticipating a Latino as opposed to a strictly Chicano or Puerto Rican emergence has been largely underplayed in the national aggregate.

In the process of rectifying the southwest/eastern seaboard centering and midwestern exclusion in U.S. Latino literature, and also in taking into account the newer Latino migrations and cultural mixes, initial premises and paradigms become subject to reconsideration. Thus a focus on the midwest and the new Latino immigrations

affecting the over-all character of the U.S. Latino population demands a questioning of the literature and mythological constructs involved in the Chicano movement and earlier expressions of U.S. Puerto Rican literature. In this context, most of the symbolic ideological systems emerging out of the struggles of the 60s, are called into question, as being virtually unknown and (here, perhaps the real point) relatively irrelevant to the new population even if we conclude that questions of space and time, patterns of acculturation and assimilation, etc., may well remain central to U.S. Latino life and its conceptualization. On the other hand, the recent new wave of U.S. Latino literary production, spurred on by NEA grants to individuals and such entities as Arte Público Press, is so mediated by U.S. literary norms, that the relation of U.S. literary and intellectual production (and the producers) to the newer and future waves of Latino population becomes increasingly problematic.

Writers may very well express the "potential or latent consciousness" of larger social groups; they may constitute themselves as the "organic intellectuals" of subaltern sectors. However they must be ever viewed critically in this guise, and literary production must ever be viewed in relation not only to literary traditions (in the U.S. and in Latin America), but in relation to the everyday life patterns of the larger social mass. Latino writers may draw on their roots to take off, but where do they end up? Will they really be Latino writers in more than name if the older oral traditions and performative/mythic dimensions of their writing fade away?

The vast numbers of immigrants and the initial writers to emerge among them have never read or even heard of Octavio Paz, Carlos Fuentes, José Luis González, etc. (to say nothing of a Borges or a García Márquez); but their culture has been somewhat impacted by these figures or at least by some of the same forces which impacted them. With respect to U.S. Latino literature, we may also note that while most of the more sophisticated contemporary writers are aware of and draw upon the Latin American literary system (an early example was Ron Arias's *Road to Tamazunchale*; more recent ones are the novels of Ana Castillo), others respond more fully to dominant and minority U.S. literary constructs (Richard Wright, earlier forms of Chicano and Native American, but also Jewish, Italian and Irish American literature, etc.). Thus the question remains as to whether, in their growing immersion in a broad literary tradition and in their transcultural crossovers, they are coming to better portray U.S. Latino experience, or if they are beginning to drift from it and coming to express that process of individuation within U.S. culture which has become characteristic of many ethnic minority literatures on the road to dissolution. To choose another, related question: in what ways does the recent feminism of Latino literature anticipate the Latino future or a growing alienation between the writer intelligentsia and a broader, possibly very conservative social mass?

These are matters which only future developments can clarify. But the prediction here is that multiple forms of Latino writing will continue to exist and develop so long as Latinos continue to arrive and constitute distinct groupings; and the further prediction is that this process of U.S. Latino growth, with all its implications for U.S. and world history, will not cease for many years to come.

Here, the final of many points I wish to stress--the fact that many Latinos have recently been proclaiming success for Latinos as a group, speaking about Latino success in this area or that, pointing to the growing list of Latino celebrities. I personally have seen

much progress among Latinos. I have known many who have risen to positions of power and respect; I have known many who now have more confidence in the future. And there are many more successful ones than before. We have the enormous growth of a sector of intellectuals, we have a great number of capable people in many sectors of society. Nevertheless, the problems for the great Latino mass continue to be great and even worse than ever. It is not necessary to repeat all the problems, their causes and possible solutions. But we must emphasize problems and not forget them or negate their reality and see the welfare of the successful ones in relation to the situation of the many Latinos whose present and whose future prospects are still not pleasant to contemplate.

On the other hand, to project a less pessimistic note, we should remember that the consciousness of negative possibilities provokes many to seek a more positive future. And aspects of that future may be found in positive cultural dimensions that, often expressed, affirmed and re-dedicated in literature, have survived the acculturation process and may play a key role in the survival of Latinos and all of us. To say this in another way, what is at stake is the struggle to maintain what is human, human for Latinos, human for all who have paid the price of modernization and who seek their place in the famous new world order. Latinos will have much yet to contribute in the ongoing struggle for a richer human world.