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Texas Border Narratives as
Cultural Critique

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Abstract: "Texas Border Narratives As Cultural Critique"

The object of my essay is to trace, in detail, the development of a single American myth. "Myth," writes Richard Slotkin, "is a set of narrative formulas that acquire through specifiable historical action a significant ideological charge." The dominant themes of the "frontier myth" in South Texas, as we will see below in our discussion of Walter Prescott Webb, Americo Paredes, Tomas Rivera, and Rolando Hinojosa, are those that center on a conception of American history as a heroic-scale Texas Ranger-Chicano war, pitting race against race.

Texas Border Narratives as Cultural Critique

> "'Culture' is always relational, between subjects in relations of power.... Culture is contested, temporal, and emergent."
>
> —James Clifford

The object of this essay is to trace, in detail, the development of a single American myth, and to offer a critical interpretation of its meanings. Myth, Richard Slotkin writes, is "a set of narrative formulas that acquire through specifiable historical action a significant ideological charge."[1] The dominant themes of the "frontier myth" in south Texas, as we will see below in our discussion of Walter Prescott Webb, Américo Paredes, Tomás Rivera, and Rolando Hinojosa, are those that center on the conception of American history as a heroic-scale Texas Ranger-Chicano war, pitting race against race.

I.

Américo Paredes' *"With His Pistol in His Hand": A Border* Ballad and its Hero (1958), Tomás Rivera's y no se lo tragó la tierra (1971), Rolando Hinojosa's Klail City Death Trip Series (1973-1987), Inés Hernandez-Tovar's "Sara Estella Ramírez: 20th-century Texas-Mexican Poet" (1984), Jose Limon's "The Return of the Mexican Ballad" (1986), Renato Rosaldo's "Politics, Patriarch's and Laughter" (1986), this working paper series, and this essay—all these texts participate in the ongoing conversation of American culture. In The Philosophy of Literary Form, Kenneth Burke once described the conversation in the following manner:

> Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about.... You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress.[22]

Burke's wonderful allegory depicts the cultural conversation as a series of rhetorical exchanges, with people asserting, questioning, answering, defending, attacking, and sometimes changing their positions. It is an unending conversation. Burke's allegory also contains rhetorical battles and skirmishes, rhetorical allies and enemies, rhetorical war, and struggles for persuasive power. But so that we don't become too entangled, with pistols in hand, Burke supplies a nice twist in his discussion of the cultural conversation: he places the verbal contests in a genteel parlor setting.

Kenneth Burke's allegory of rhetorical politics will prove useful for framing our analysis of contemporary Texas Border narratives. Here, I want to examine the cultural conversation in and around Chicano narratives, paying particular attention to the political and ideological rhetoric of the text and the way its arguments relate both to the larger institutional quarrels of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s in south Texas, and to academic discussions of the American canon in the 1980s. My presentation locates Chicano Border narratives within the debates over white supremacy in Texas and the Southwest, when these texts were first published.

At the outset, let me emphasize that Literature's relationship to ideology, institutional practices, and cultural critique is quite complex. But as Steven Mailloux suggests in a recent study of Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn, a text "can be a topic in the cultural conversation, or it can be a participant who is motivated by and has effects on the conversation. As a participant, a literary text can take up the ideological rhetoric of its historical moment—the rhetoric of political speeches, newspaper editorials, book reviews, scholarly treatises, and so forth—and place it on a fictional stage. Readers thus become spectators at a rhetorical performance."[3] With Burke's and Mailloux's ideas of the cultural conversation and the rhetoric of the text as performed ideology in mind, we can turn to some of the staged arguments in contemporary Texas Border narratives. Specifically, I argue that there has been in south Texas between 1958 and 1987 a unique Texas Mexican intellectual and artistic response to the White Supremacist scholarship of the 1930s and 1940s by Walter Prescott Webb and his followers. Increasingly in the years after 1958, the "official" White Supremacist tradition of Walter Prescott Webb in Texas was progressively demystified and negated by Américo Paredes, Tomás Rivera, and Rolando Hiñojosa, among others.

II. Ideological Rhetoric in Texas

"[Mexicans are] vaguely considered as degenerate and degraded Spaniards; it is at least, equally correct to think of them as improved and Christianized Indians. In their tastes and social instincts, they approximate the African. The difference between them and the Negro is smaller, and is less felt, I believe, than that between the northern and southern European races."

—Frederick Law Olmsted, Journey Through Texas: Or a Saddle-Trip *to'* the Southwestern Frontier. 1857

"I thought I could shoot Mexicans as well as I could shoot Indians, or deer, or turkey; and so I rode away to war."

—Creed Taylor, reminiscing about his role in the struggle between Texas and Mexico

"Then the Rangers rode onto the field of San Jacinto where the Mexicans lay dead in piles. Smithwick said the buzzards and coyotes gathered to the feast, eating the horses but refusing the Mexicans because of their peppery skins."

—Walter Prescott Webb, The Texas Rangers (1935)

"Ask the Apache the why of his going,
Ask the Comanche, he's not knowing;
Question the Mexican thief and marauder
Why his respect for the great Texas border;

Question them all, these beaten-back strangers,
White-lipped they'll tremble and whisper, 'The Rangers!'
...
—Albert Edmund Trombly, "Texas Rangers"

"Then said Gregorio Cortez, With his pistol in his hand,
Ah, so many mounted Rangers/Just to take one Mexican."
—"El Corrido de Gregorio Cortez"

"[There were many] 'rocky times' in Texas between Texicans and Mexicans."
—J. Frank Dobie, A Vaquero of the Brush Country (1929)

Américo Paredes "With His Pistol in His Hand": A Border Ballad and Its Hero appeared in 1958 in the midst of a long, heated political quarrel over what U.S. historian, Walter Prescott Webb, among others, had to say about Mexicans in the United States. By the end of the 19th-century, the ideological rhetoric of white supremacy dominated southern and southwestern politics, and eventually became institutionalized in state discourses, laws, and narratives regulating relations by whites and non-whites, especially Blacks and Chicanos. As we know, Walter Prescott Webb was one of the leading spokespersons of the institutionalized racism of this period. As one of his close friends, N. Furman, said, Walter Prescott Webb "subconsciously... had the Alamo-Texas Ranger chauvinistic myth deeply engraved."[4] Throughout Webb's book, The Texas Rangers: A Frontier's Defense (1935), for example, he characterized Mexicans in the following manner: "Without disparagement, there is a cruel streak in the Mexican nature, or so the history would lead to believe. This cruelty may be a heritage from the Spanish of the Inquisition; it may, and doubtless should, be attributed partly to the Indian blood...."[5][5]

Although Walter Prescott Webb had proposed the integration of Blacks into the Texas State Historical Association, he, like other native White Supremacists in Texas, had a profound prejudice against Mexicans on both sides of the Border. Sentences as I quoted above in The Texas Rangers illustrates Webb's regional stereotyping of Mexicans. To understand the cultural conversation in Texas more fully, then, it is important to examine Webb's institutional study of the Texas Rangers.

When, in 1918, Walter Prescott Webb joined the History Department's Faculty at the University of Texas at Austin, he began doing scholarly research on the institution of the Rangers, which culminated in his M.A. thesis on the Texas Rangers. Years later, in 1935, he published his institutional history of the Rangers with an East Coast press (Houghton Mifflin Co.) in Cambridge, Massachussetts. Almost overnight, Webb's study on the Texas Rangers became, in the words of one writer, "acknowledged as the definitive study on this frontier law enforcement agency."[6]

With a Southern White Supremacist orientation, Webb traced the changing functions of the Texas Rangers, from the "heroic" roles they played in frontier and Border Communities in the 1830s, to their institutional reorganization in 1935, when a Texas Mexican State representative, J.T. Canales, from Brownsville, Texas led an investigation of the Texas Rangers' abuse of power as "peace officers."[7][7]

Although Webb's "objective" and "disinterested" institutional history of the Texas Rangers was filled, in the author's own words, "with deadening facts," The Texas Rangers soon became a popular academic best seller. Webb's description of the Rangers as "very quiet, deliberate gentle person[s]" [Webb: ix] became so popular in fact that Paramount Studios purchased the film rights for $11,000, a fee that undoubtedly made Professor Webb's depression days at the University of Texas at Austin easier to bear. Paramount Studios, it must be emphasized, made a Western out of Webb's study, even using Webb's original title. The Texas Rangers, the movie, 95 minutes in length, was directed by King Vidor—he also had produced such classics as Billy the Kid. Fred MacMurray, Jack Oakie, Lloyd Nolan, and Elena Martínez were the featured "stars." Not surprisingly, this movie was made in association with the state's centennial celebration. A mediocre sequel, The Texas Rangers Ride Again, was issued in 1941 with Jean Howard and Ellen Drew. The 1936 original was remade as Streets of Laredo in 1949, with William Rolden, Macdonald Carey, and William Bendix in starring roles. Unfortunately, the racial strife that existed between Mexicans and the Texas Rangers was characteristically absent in both Webb's and Hollywood's dashing and daring portrayal of the Texas Rangers. To understand the underside of Texas Ranger history in more detail, we need to examine the cultural work of Américo Paredes, Tomás Rivera, and Rolando Hinojosa as socially symbolic responses to Walter Prescott Webb.

Into this institutional and rhetorical context came the oppositional voice of Américo Paredes, a Texas Mexican, from south Texas, the son of a revolutionary father who "rode a raid or two with Catarino Garza."[8] By the 1930s, Américo Paredes was a superb singer of corridos, or ballads, and an accomplished composer and guitarist. He had even performed with Chelo Silva, the well-known Texas-Mexican vocalist. During World War II, Paredes became a political editor for the U.S. Army's Stars and Stripes, its institutional daily. After the war, he returned to Texas, and he entered The University of Texas at Austin--coincidentally, Walter Prescott Webb's home turf. According to José Limón, one of Paredes' students, "By taking course overloads and summer school, [Paredes] compressed two years of college work into one and took his B.A. in 1951 with highest honors.... Then, for Américo Paredes anyway, it was quite simply a matter of five years for a master's degree and a Ph.D. in English...."[9] in 1957, Paredes joined the English Department at The University of Texas at Austin, and by the end of that year, the University of Texas Press accepted his doctoral dissertation for publication. It would have been controversial enough if Paredes' "With His Pistol in His Hand" had been written by an Anglo American northerner, but a book taking on Walter Prescott Webb and the Texas Rangers, written in the South, by a Chicano, its polemical argument, its deconstruction of established authority and hierarchies, was almost unthinkable.

Paredes begins his narrative on Gregorio Cortez, a border vaquero of the early 1900s who resisted legal "Texas" justice, fought the Texas Rangers, and became a folk hero for the Texas Mexican community, by giving the reader a lengthy chapter on the Border culture and aesthetics of south Texas. In the words of Teresa McKenna, Paredes here "gives an encompassing view of an area which geographically, as well as politically and culturally, stands as figure and metaphor for the transition between nations and the complex of connections which continue to exist for all Mexicans whether border residents or not."[10] Moreover, for our purposes, Paredes begins in this chapter to give us, in thick detail, a critique of southern white supremacist ideology: he claims that "the English speaking Texan...disappoints us in a folkloric sense. He produces no balladry. His contribution to the literature of the border conflict is a set of attitudes and beliefs about the Mexican which form a legend of their own and are the complement to the corrido, the Border-Mexican ballad of border conflict."[11]

Paredes then goes on to analyze the "set of attitudes and beliefs about the Mexican which form a legend"—in other words, the ideology of Texan white supremacy which perpetuates the power of the ruling races by defining Mexicans as "cruel," "cowardly," "inferior," "passive," "mongrel," and "treacherous" (Paredes, 16). This ideological definition of the Mexican allows Texas Anglos thus to justify their abridgement of the Chicano's liberties. According to Paredes, however, this invidious, crude, and humiliating view of the Mexican is found not in folk tales of the people of Texas, but in nonfolk origins: "It is in print--in newspapers, magazines, and books" (Paredes, 16).

Into the highly charged and polarized argument about Mexicans, thus came Paredes' more explicit debate with Walter Prescott Webb. By choosing to analyze "El corrido de Gregorio Cortez," a border ballad of resistance, Paredes critiqued Webb's romanticized and ideological reading of the Texas Rangers. For to investigate the corrido's rhetoric, according to Paredes, is to unfold its complicated critique of white supremacy as ideological performance.

And by staging rhetorical exchanges and debates with Webb—in his story of Gregorio Cortez--Paredes maneuvered his audience to cooperate with him in his narrative performance. As we retrace the progression of some of Paredes' strategies, we will follow the reader of "With His Pistol in His Hand" through a series of reading events that encourages him or her to take a stance on the rhetorical attitudes invoked and ultimately on a society's ideological politics.

Paredes' debate with Webb begins in the following manner: "In more recent years," he writes, "it has often been the writer of history textbooks and the author of scholarly works who have lent their prestige to the legend [about Mexicans]" (Paredes, 17) . He then answers Webb's proposition about Mexicans in The Texas Rangers ("there is a cruel streak in the Mexican nature...") by noting, in an ironic mode, that: "One wonders what [Webb's] opinion might have been when he was in a less scholarly mood and not looking at the Mexican from the objective point of view of the historian" (Paredes, 17) . The irony, of course, is that what Paredes here denies playfully about Webb's "objective point of view" as historian, Webb affirmed in action and deeds.

Not suprisingly, then, the ideological drama of Paredes' "With His Pistol in His Hand" relies for much of its persuasive success on the author's irreverent sense of humor and irony. This tropic irony is perhaps the most visible part of Paredes' more general attack on social authority in Texas, an attack that Paredes carries out through a relentless questioning of rhetorical authorities that serve ideologically dubious ends. As he says about the voluminous books written about the Texas Rangers, Paredes' cultural critique is often humorous: "If all the books written about the Rangers were put on top of the other, the resulting pile would be almost as tall as some of the tales they contain" (Paredes, 23).

Again and again, Paredes' dramatized propositions against the Texas Rangers are on target. The historical and biographical information contained in the first part of "With His Pistol in His Hand" is, of course, meant as a tonic for those readers, like Paredes, for whom the objective historian's, Webb's, and also Hollywood's portrayal of the Texas Rangers had for so long been anything but "objective," neutral, or scholarly impartial: "The shoot-first and ask questions later method of the Rangers," Paredes writes, "has been romanticized into something dashing and daring, in technicolor, on a wide screen, and with Gary Cooper in the title role" (Paredes, 28).

After weaving several elements into his critique of Texan white supremacist ideology into his narrative—the history of Nuevo Santander, the aesthetics of the border, the corrido, and its folkways—Paredes then turns to the rhetorical analysis of "El corrido de Gregorio Cortez." Part II of "With His Pistol in His Hand" concentrates on the many versions of the corrido of border conflict, and on a close reading of the corrido proper. In the course of his dialectical reading of form and content of the corrido, Paredes established the following crucial points about the border ballad's ideological form and content: 1) the corrido is a multi-faceted discourse, with reflexive, narrative, and rhetorical-prepositional elements; 2) corridos as social texts tend to be historical and personal; and 3) corridos make assertions which derive from the collective outlook and experience of the

Mexican ballad community on the border. [129] Finally, of course, as a trained composer, guitarist, and singer, himself, Paredes saw the corrido as what it patently was: a unit of musical sound--a performance oriented genre sung mostly by men, but also, occasionally, by women.

But it must be emphasized: Paredes was no mere formalist. He interpreted the corrido as a literary form of resistance to the encroachment of Anglo Americans. As a socially symbolic act, Paredes argued, the corrido usually recounted the exploits of a hero who surpasses all odds to prevail against those in power. The hero counters white supremacy with dignity, grace, and courage. Specifically, in the example of "El corrido de Gregorio Cortez," Paredes analyzed how the hero, Cortez, who was falsely accused of horse stealing and murdering Sheriffs Morris and Glover, outran and outsmarted a wild, whirling posse of Texas Rangers over half the state of Texas. Briefly stated, Paredes, in overturning the passive view of the Texas Mexican, recounted how common Mexicans defended their border communities and families through confrontations with the Anglo American ruling class and their State oppressors—the Texas Rangers. As the corrido asserts of Gregorio Cortez (which I often heard as a young boy in Brownsville, Texas), Cortez was exemplary of those who defended his or her rights, "con la pistola en la mano"—"with his pistol in his hand." Paredes' "With His Pistol in His Hand": A Border Ballad and Its Hero thus was the first sophisticated Chicano narrative to begin to overturn established authority in Texas and the Southwest. Put more precisely, Paredes showed how the corrido itself broke down white supremacist hierarchies: the "gentle," brave men of Texas, the

Rangers, were, in fact, cowardly and foolish ("All the rangers of the county/Were flying, they rode so hard"..."But trying to catch Cortez/Was like following a star";)[13] a "macho" Major Sheriff screams out to Cortez "as if he was going to cry; " the inferior slave, Cortez turns out to be superior to his Anglo masters: "Then said Gregorio Cortez, With his pistol in his hand,/Ah, so many mounted Rangers/Just to take one Mexican." This overturning of hierarchies functions in the corrido. Paredes argued, to dismantle the opposition upon which much of the white supremacy of Webb, among others, was based.

It is not surprising, then, that Chicano literary historians and cultural critics often mention the momentus impact Américo Paredes' "*With His Pistol in His Hand*" had on Chicano literature. Renato Rosaldo, for example, writes, "Ahead of its time,["With His Pistol in His Hand"] embodied a sophisticated conception of culture where conflict, domination, and resistance, rather than coherence and consensus, were the central subjects of analysis".[14] Similarly, Ramón Saldívar, in his essay, "The Form of Texas-Mexican Fiction," asserts that, "With impeccable scholarship and imaginative subtlety, Dr. Paredes' study of the corridos, the border ballads, concerning Gregorio Cortez may be said to have invented the very possibility of a narrative community, a complete and legitimate Texas-Mexican persona. whose life of struggle and discord was worthy of being told."[15][15]

Finally, the Texas-Mexican writers, Tomás Rivera and Rolando Hinojosa, have acknowledged, in different places, the influence that Paredes' narrative of resistance had on their own emergent literary production.[16] In the remainder of this essay, I will examine briefly how Rivera's and Hiñojosa's rhetorical performances in their narratives were just as subversive of racist, white supremacist ideology as Paredes' more explicit attacks.

Tomás Rivera's Quinto Sol prize-winning novel, y no se lo tragó la tierra,—misread in its early years[17]—is one of the Southwest's richest dialectical novels. It is the story of the subjective and collective experiences of Texas Mexican migrant farmworkers. Rivera's novel delves deeply into the life of a young anonymous migrant worker by analyzing his growth and maturity within the cyclical frame of reference of a year. Tierra, however, not only studies the protagonist's rites of passage, but also, shows how his solitary, chaotic life fits together within a collective class pattern of solidarity among other migrant farmworkers. This class pattern, in turn, has its own Utopian patterns, because Rivera's performed ideology of the text is not a picture of an American social and economic world in an uncritical perspective, but a reality apprehended in terms of a larger American cultural and political conversation during the 1940s and 1950s in south Texas. The aesthetic quality of the work, moreover, is achieved by means of a dialectical folkloric and postmodernist conversation with the contemporary Latin American new narratives--specifically, the narrative strategies rendered in Mexican novelist and short story writer, Juan Rulfo's El llano en llamas.

Among existing dialectically-mediated fields of semiotic forces, the most significant in Rivera's tierra are a negation of a fixed, coherent, narrative sequence, and the structural breakdown of a conventional cause and effect sequence. Rivera's new narrative, like Rulfo's text, offers a disordered and fragmented story line, but succeeds in creating a view of the Chicano migrant world from the protagonist's consciousness.

Rivera's world is an extremely condensed rural world, and a profoundly accurate rendering of the migrant farmworker's stark social and economic conditions. The atmosphere of tierra is full of shocks, tragedies, and political and social repressions. Unfulfilled passions and desires, fear and chaos, stand out as tangible phenomena in Rivera's work of art.

The migrant farmworkers who live and die on the agricultural fields of south Texas, and on the long, lonely roads of Midwestern America are treated by Rivera as nameless individuals whose lives are full of suffering, misery, and anguish. Collectively, however, these migrant farmworkers, like their honorable and dignified ancestors celebrated in the corridos of the Southwest borderlands, struggle against injustice, hardship, and physical as well as psychological abuse. Beyond our anonymous protagonist's inner world of fragmentation often lurks an unspeakable world of violence and suffering: murder, child abuse, labor exploitation, guilt and grief. Nevertheless, the protagonist, like his fellow migrant farmworkers, lives on and struggles. Indeed, as I have argued elsewhere, a covert Utopian impulse, though it scarcely appears explicitly in the novel as a whole, plays implicitly an important role in Rivera's novel, for those farmworkers who must work and produce surplus value for others at the center of American culture necessarily grasp their own solidarity—initially, in the unarticulated form of rage, helplessness, victimization, and oppression by a common enemy—before the dominant or ruling class has any incentive to do so.[18] Tomás Rivera's contribution to the cultural conversation in American culture, I suggest, is about this dawning sense of solidarity of migrant farmworkers with other members of their race and class. Class consciousness, as such, in Rivera's tierra, is, therefore, Utopian, insofar as it expresses the unity of a collectivity; yet, it must be stressed that this rhetorical proposition in the text is an allegorical one.[19]

Because I have spent so much time on the local cultural conversations and conflicts dramatized in the narratives by Paredes and Rivera, I leave myself little space for commenting on the broader cultural conversations between Chicano Border narratives and the Latin American "new narrative". But with the space I have left, let me note that with Rolando Hiñojosa's Klail City Death Trip Series, Chicano Border narratives begin to speak an "international" language. From his wonderful Faulknerian blending of history and myth in Estampas Del Valle (1973), to his postmodernist detective novel, Partners in Crime (1985), Hinojosa's Klail City Death Trip Series, is itself, a mestizaje, a cross-breeding of North American and Latin American literary and cultural traditions. As I explained elsewhere, Klail City Death Trip Series is both integrated and disintegrated.[20] Each novel in the series about Belken County, Texas, Hinojosa's mythical county, participates in composing an integrative work while, at the same time, it works out its own individual detachment from it.

In the 15th and 16th century Hispanic historical tradition of Pérez de Guzmán and Hernando de Pulgar, in the Caribbean third world American tradition of José Martí's "Nuestra América," in the Texas-Mexican tradition of Paredes' "With His Pistol in His Hand",

and in the disintegrating Americas of William Faulkner and Gabriel García Márquez, Hiñojosa's Klail City Death Trip Series, through its own doctrine of the political unconscious, counters historical amnesia by restoring to the materiality of its signifiers that buried reality of south Texas history. Structurally, it can be argued that Hiñojosa's new narrative, like William Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom! and García Márquez's Cien años de soledad, is a multi-dimensional, meta-historical novel: it is first an ascent, insofar as the Texas Mexican community struggles, lives, and survives in a white supremacist, segregated society; and second, it is a descent from its Nuevo Santander past, insofar as the old and new guard Texas-Mexican Borderers grow more alienated and marginalized by an overpowering and reifying North American culture and economy. This profound reification is discernible in many sections of Klail City Death Trip Series, but is especially dramatized in Hinojosa's Claros Varones de Belken (1987), in a section entitled "Con el pie en el estribo," where Esteban Echevarría, one of the principal "native informants" of the novel confides the following to Rafa Buenrostro, one of the novel's principal narrators-historians: "Homes without porches, streets without lamplights, friends who have died away, and young people who no longer speak Spanish... .Hah! The Valley is no longer, no longer the Valley, folks .... The Anglos and their landed property, their banks, their legal contracts... .What's the use of reaching eighty-three if everything has gone up in smoke.... The Vilches? Dead. The Tueros? They're dead too! The Buenrostros are dying out and the founding families are shriveling up like the leaves of a diseased mesquite tree."[21] Echevarría's task here, and throughout the Klail City Death Trip Series is to restructure the problem of ideology, of the unconscious, of desire, and cultural production around the process of oral narrative. Like William Faulkner's and Gabriel García Márquez's characters, Hiñojosa's Echevarría indulges in an ideological nostalgia for an idyllic past "where that Río Grande was there to provide us with water, not as a fence to separate one from the other," and where Texas-Mexicans defended their homes, families, and communities, with pistol in hand, if necessary.

Briefly stated, Hinojosa's Klail City Death Trip Series is a sensitive and skillful literary metahistory of the Rio Grande Valley. As I see it, his new narratives, the nine novels about Klail City, Texas, and its environs in Belken County, are situated in a society whose traditional organization is being transformed locally by global changes in the world market. Only by situating Hinojosa's Klail City Death Trip Series in relation to the historical conflicts that erupted in the Texas-Mexican Border region, can we begin to grasp the social meanings of his avant-garde, formal innovations. (As a parenthetical note, allow me to emphasize that, unlike William Faulkner, who was a Victorian in his cavalier politics and a modernist in his aesthetics, Hinojosa is postmodernist in both his politics and form.)

Hinojosa's two hundred year history, the Klail City Death Trip Series, I believe, essentially provides the reader with two distinct worlds in his novel: one, a Mexican ranch society, and the other, a white supremacist, Anglo farm society. His new narrative thus dramatizes the triumph of farming over ranching in south Texas, and with that triumph the emergence of a striking segregation of the races. What is essential in my reading of race, writing, and difference in south Texas, then, is the view that the white supremacist farm society did not implant itself peacefully. Rather, as Paredes taught us in "With His Pistol in His Hand," and as Hinojosa dramatizes throughout in his Klail City Death Trip Series, it was a violent intervention. In its most dramatic form, Hiñojosa's Chicano Border novel shows us how the conflict between the old ranch society and new farm society expressed itself in the armed rebellion of Texas-Mexicans, and their thorough suppression by the Texas Rangers. This suppression is thematized boldly at the end of Hiñojosa's novel, Rites and Witnesses. I will quote Abel Manzano's oral reconstruction of events, in detail, because his oral discourse functions in the text to counter, in a direct manner, Walter Prescott Webb's representation of these events in The Texas Rangers:

> [Near] El Carmen Ranch...the Texas Rangers shot the three Naranjo brothers in 1915. In cold blood. At night. And in the back. I was the same age as Jesus Christ then, and I found them where they were left: on the Buenrostro property; the Buenrostros were blameless, and they had nothing to do with that. They were left there until I cut them down. With this. Look.
>
> It was the Rangers who took them from the deputies, and it was the Rangers who executed them. I have heard now and for the last twenty years, that Choche Markham had nothing to do with the shooting....
>
> ...I am saying it now, right now that Choche Markham was one of the seven Rangers who took the Galveston Ranch hands

> from the Relámpago jail; they were going to Ruffing, but they never got there; listen to this:
>
> En el camino a esa ciudad mentada
> En un domingo por la noche con nubarrón
> Estos rinches texanos de la chingada
> Mataron a más mexicanos del Galvestón.
>
> ...Yes I covered the bodies with the tarp from my roll and took them to Santa Rita Mission—near El Carmen, by the bend of the River, and they were buried there...[22] 99

As a direct refutation of Walter Prescott Webb's representation of events in The Texas Rangers, Hiñojosa's socially symbolic text, like Paredes' "With His Pistol in His Hand", engages the reader in an alternative reconstruction of Texas Border history. In other words, much of Hinojosa's Border narrative necessarily involves the rehistoricizing of the mythic subject, and a historical account of its making.

To end my discussion, I do not think it would be too farfetched to say that Chicano Border narratives, like Faulkner's modernist novels about Mississippi, and the (post)modernist Latin American new narratives (I'm here referring to García Márquez's Cien años de soledad, Carlos Fuentes' Terra Nostra, Alejo Carpentier's El siglo de las luces, Mario Vargas Llosa's La guerra del fin del mundo, and Isabel Allende's La casa de los espíritus) all appear to be obsessed with New World history and myth. What is characteristic of all these New World narratives is the following: 1) in these new narratives we are given history, and the mediating elements through which history is narrated; 2) there is usually in these texts the existence of an inner historian who reads the cultural conversation, records the oral text, interprets it, and writes the history; and 3) there is usually an unfinished history that the inner historian is trying to complete.[23] If I were to make a totalizing proposition about the new narrative in general, and Texas Border narratives in particular, it would echo Perry Andersen's thesis in his marxist book, In the Tracks of Historical Materialism (1984), that, "Theory [in these narratives] now is history, with a seriousness and severity it never was in the past; as history is equally theory, in all its exigency, in a way it typically evaded before."[24]

Notes

This essay was completed during my tenure as a Visiting Postdoctoral Fellow at the Stanford Center for Chicano Research, 1986-1987. I am grateful to José Limón, Teresa McKenna, and Renato Rosaldo for sharing their work on Américo Paredes with me.

1. Richard Slotkin, The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800-1890 (Middletown, CT., 1985): 31.
2. Kenneth Burke, The Philosophy of Literary Form (Baton Rouge, 1941): 110-11.
3. See Steven Mailloux's "Reading Huckleberry Finn: The Rhetoric of Performed Ideology," in New Essays on Adventures of Huckleberry Finn ed. by Louis J. Budd (New York, 1985): 108. All subsequent references will be paginated in the text.
4. See Necah S. Furman's "Walter Scott Webb: Pioneer of The Texas Literary Tradition," in The Texas Literary Tradition: Fiction, Folklore, History ed. by Don Graham et. al. (Austin, 1983): 35, n. 16.
5. Walter Prescott Webb, The Texas Rangers: A Frontier's Defense (Cambridge, 1935): 14.
6. Necah Furman, "Walter Prescott Webb: Pioneer of the Texas Literary Tradition": 33.
7. On January 31, 1919, Mr. Canales presented eighteen charges against the Texas Rangers, claiming that during the years 1915, 1916, 1917, and 1918 the Texas Rangers had committed, in Canales' own words, "outrageous acts." According to Canales' testimony, the

Texas Rangers "would arrest persons and after the persons were arrested they would be shot by the Rangers unceremoniously." See Webb's The Texas Rangers: 513-516.

8. See Américo Paredes' "*With His Pistol in His Hand": A Border* Ballad and Its Hero (Austin, 1958) : 136. According to Paredes, "Catarino Garza, native of the Brownsville-Matamoros area [at the mouth of the Rio Grande] led what was probably the first rebellion against Díaz...;" he "organized his force in Texas and crossed into Mexico from Zapata County," (Paredes, 136) . Also relevant here is José E. Limón's "Mexican Ballads, Chicano Epic: History, Social Dramas and Poetic Persuasion," Stanford Center for Chicano Research Working Paper No. 14: 1-35, (Stanford, 1986), Stanford University.

9. José Limón, "Américo Paredes: A Man From the Border," Revista Chicano-Riqueña: 4.

10. Teresa McKenna, "Immigrants In Our Own Land: A Chicano Literature Review," ADE Bulletin (forthcoming): 2-3.

11. Américo Paredes, "With His Pistol in His Hand": A Border Ballad and Its Hero (Austin, 1958): 15. All subsequent references will be paginated in the text.

12. For an incisive metacommentary on the corrido, see John Holmes McDowell's "The Corrido of Greater Mexico as Discourse, Music, and Event," in "And Other Neighborly Names": Social Process and Cultural Image in Texas Folklore, ed. by Richard Bauman and Roger D. Abrahams (Austin, 1981): 44-75.

13. For a complete transcription of "El Corrido de Gregorio Cortez," see Américo Paredes' A Texas-Mexican Cancionero: Folksongs of The Lower Border (Urbana: 1976): 64-67.

14. Renato Rosaldo, "Politics, Patriarchs, and Laughter," Stanford

Center for Chicano Research Working Paper No. 18: 6 (Stanford, 1986), Stanford university.

15. Ramón Saldívar, "The Form of Texas Mexican Fiction," The Texas Literary Tradition: Fiction, Folklore, History ed. by Don Graham et. al., (Austin, 1983) : 139.

16. See Tomás Rivera's and Rolando Hiñojosa's comments on Américo Paredes in Juan Bruce Novoa's Chicano Authors: Inquiry By Interview (Austin, 1980): 49-65 and 139-161.

17. See Juan Rodríguez's essay, "The Problematic in Tomás Rivera's ...And the Earth Did Not Part in Revista Chicano-Riqueña (Año 6): 42-50, for a summary of the most blatant misreadings of tierra.

18. See Karl Marx's Capital. Vol. I, in The Marx-Engels Reader, ed. by Robert Tucker 2nd ed. (New York: 1978): 344-88. Surplus value is the specific way exploitation takes place under capitalism, in which the working class produces surplus value beyond what it receives in wages. See also José David Saldívar's, "The Ideological and the Utopian in Tomás Rivera's y no se lo tragó *la tierra* and Ron Arias' *The Road to Tamazunchale* in *Cr$\overset{s}{\text{i}}$tica* Vol. 1/2 (Spring 1985): 100-114.

19. See Fredric Jameson's *The Political Unconscious: Narrative As* A Socially Symbolic Act (Ithaca, 1981): especially his chapter, "The Dialectic of Utopia and Ideology." Here Jameson argues that "all class consciousness ... all ideology in the strongest sense, including the most exclusive forms of ruling-class consciousness is in its very nature Utopian, (Jameson: 289). Such collectivities are allegorical insofar as they are "figures for the ultimate concrete collective life," (Jameson: 289).

20. José David Saldívar, "Klail City Death Trip Series: A Critical

Introduction," The Rolando Hinojosa Reader: Essays Historical and Critical ed. by José David Saldívar (Houston, 1985) : 44-63.

21. Rolando Hinojosa, Claros Varones de Belken (Tempe, Az., 1987): 207.

22. Rolando Hinojosa, Rites and Witnesses (Houston, 1982) : 109-111.

23. My reading of New World history and myth is indebted to Roberto González Echevarría's essay, "Cien años de soledad: The Novel as Myth and Archive," Modern Language Notes, 99/2 (March 1984): 358-80.

24. Perry Anderson, In the Tracks of Historical Materialism (London, 1983): 26.