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THREE CRITICAL TEXTS  
OF  
THE CHICANO GENERATION OF THE EIGHTIES

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by

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## INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade or so, a generation of Chicano and Chicana literary scholars has emerged and begun to teach and publish in the field of Chicano literature.<sup>1</sup> Some of these "young" critics have developed the cultural methodology introduced by the writers and critics of the seventies, while others have adapted contemporary critical theories and methods and applied them to Chicano and Chicana literary expression. The decade of the eighties was a contradictory period of uneven development in the field. It was a time of slow and painful maturation in some areas of Chicano criticism and of rapid expansion in others. Crucial issues of gender and class added depth and complexity to those of culture, race and nation that were already a part of Chicano critical discourse. It was a decade in which the future course of Chicano literary studies was to be decided and a new generation of critics struggled to develop mature interpretations that would ensure viability.

This paper attempts, by means of an analysis of selected texts, to articulate some of the issues that confronted Chicano literary criticism during the decade of the 1980's. It evaluates and compares the perspectives of three critical texts authored by Chicano critics of what I will call the "second generation" or the "generation of the eighties". These include Manuel Hernández's analysis of three Chicano narratives in his doctoral thesis, "El

barrio, el anti-barrio y el exterior: la textualización semiótica del 'colonialismo interno' en la narrativa chicana" (1984); Ramón Saldivar's *Chicano Narrative: The Dialectics of Difference* (1990) and Guillermo Hernández's *Chicano Satire: A Study in Literary Culture* (1991).

These two recent books and the Spanish language dissertation, which Manuel Hernández is reportedly preparing for publication, have been the object of years of theoretical reflection and synthesis on the part of their respective authors. The subtitle of Saldivar's book echoes the title of one of his early articles, "A Dialectic of Difference: Towards a Theory of the Chicano Novel" which developed into the text that we have before us. During the eighties, sections of Saldivar's book appeared as articles in various scholarly and specialized publications.<sup>2</sup>

We may also refer to an early article by Guillermo Hernández entitled "On the Theoretical Bases of Chicano Literature" (1980), in which the author, without dealing specifically with satiric genres, demonstrates a critical approach and social concerns that contrast strikingly with the views expressed in his recent book. In that article, Hernández argues that

[...] regardless of genre, chronology, regional setting, or linguistic characteristics, Chicano texts will depict a socio-cultural conflict with Anglo-American values."  
(G. Hernández 1980, 15)

Hernández's *Chicano Satire* reveals that in the intervening decade the site of conflict has shifted from an intercultural Anglo-Chicano confrontation to an intracultural dispute between two camps-- the Chicanos that supposedly have remained loyal to their

cultural roots in the Barrio and "los vendidos", those Chicanos that are perceived as having somehow sold out or become agents of Anglo-American values.

In the case of Manuel Hernández, we have been unable to obtain a copy of a revised text and have based this study on his Ph.D. dissertation, submitted in 1984.

We will attempt an analysis and comparison of the three texts based on their representations of figures and problems within Chicano narrative, including specifically, "the barrio", "the exterior", "gender" and "assimilation". We will not impose a uniform critical methodology on the three texts, but will instead offer a particular reading of each of the them that attempts to uncover their salient ideological perspectives and thereby trace the relative appearance or non-appearance of the recurrent figures and problems within the three texts.

The availability of book-length studies of Chicano literature by individual critics of the second generation allows us to make comparative evaluations of these texts, their contributions to the field and the problems that they intentionally or unintentionally bring to the reader's attention. Their publication by prestigious university presses signals the arrival of a generation of Chicano critics after more than a decade of professional development while, at the same time, pointing the way towards the further development of the field in the decade of the nineties.

During the Chicano Movement of the 1970's, the first generation of critics entered the field of Chicano literature from

a variety of disciplines. Luis Leal, for instance, wrote from a background in Mexican literature; Américo Paredes from his work in the folklore of the Texas borderlands and Joseph Sommers from his background in Mexican and Latin American literature (Leal 1985, Paredes 1958, Sommers 1977). Others, such as Octavio Romano, were trained in the social sciences (Romano 1969). These scholars contributed critical tools with which to begin the analysis of Chicano literature. They also served notice that after decades of neglect and suppression by the dominant Anglo literary institutions, a growing body of new and existing literary work was emerging from obscurity. These critics reminded us of the centuries-old Hispanic and Mexican literary legacy in the Southwestern United States, and also of the popular folk culture of Mexicans and Chicanos that has enriched the literature. They noted Chicano literature's critique of U.S. cultural and political hegemony and also its important artistic and linguistic innovations. All of this groundwork substantiated the importance of Chicano literature for scholars in the U.S. and abroad. The work of the first generation of Chicano critics and the polemics of the period involved these efforts to describe the cultural perspective of Chicano literature and to situate it within a social and historical context.

As this work was proceeding, the second generation of critics emerged in the late seventies and early eighties. Compared to their predecessors, this group of scholars confronted a quite substantial body of existing critical and creative texts (Leal et al 1982).

Chicana critics like Rosaura Sánchez, Marta Sánchez and Angie Chabram<sup>3</sup> worked with literary texts by both male and female authors, as did some of the male critics. The work of Maria Herrera-Sobek has provided an important sociological and folkloric perspective as well as leadership in a variety of editorial projects (Herrera-Sobek 1984) . Undoubtedly, a major contribution of Chicana writers was their critique of the earlier critical perspectives that had neglected the possibility of multiple approaches, among them the feminist, the lesbian and the historical materialist. These critics were part of a vital surge of literary activity and critical feminist discourse by Chicanas that rivaled the production of Chicano writers during much of the decade.

#### CHICANO METACRITICAL STUDIES

We believe that metacritical analyses of the kind we are attempting will offer insight into the present and future role of Chicanos and Chicanas as teachers, critics and students within U.S. academic institutions. They will help to establish a space for Chicano literature and criticism within the general field of literary studies and may provide answers to technical and cultural issues ranging from the importance of the canon to the effects of Chicana feminist critiques on Chicano cultural mores. I approach these issues by studying the texts of a group of Chicano critics which, while not fully representative, are nevertheless illustrative of current tendencies and problems.

A review of the critical literature helps us to understand Chicano literature and criticism as discourses partially within and partially against the contemporary critical grain. The function assigned to these discourses (by whom?) has been to enunciate, under very difficult political circumstances, distinct positions that reveal and censure the historical contradictions and systematic forms of oppression that underlie and sustain literary discourses and institutions in the U.S. The results have themselves often been controversial and contradictory. For example, we find differing ideological positions among Chicano critics and writers with respect to the questions of assimilation and cultural identity because minority group intellectuals are compromised by a political system that is inconceivable apart from its practices of exclusion based on race, economic class and sexual orientation. Chicano and Chicana literary scholars are expected to somehow maintain both their academic viability and their cultural identity while navigating the institutional straits and rapids, sometimes with and other times against the currents of academic theory and practice.

#### SOCIAL CONTEXT

Chicanos, while continuing to occupy a subordinate, largely working class status within U.S. society during the eighties, nevertheless demonstrated a capacity to adjust to the conservative political agenda of the decade as they responded with signs of increasing social diversity and class differentiation. As with

other U.S. racial and ethnic minorities such as African Americans, Asians and Hispanics, there is evidently a trend among Chicanos toward a greater level of acculturation into middle class and professional status than was the case during the early part of this century ( Montejano 1989, 298-307; Wilson 1980). Thanks in large measure to the activism of the sixties and seventies, the Black Civil Rights Movement and the implementation of affirmative action policies, Chicano professionals have developed an increasingly literate, well-informed, bilingual and multicultural community.

Nevertheless, during the eighties, conservative governmental policies stemmed the flow of social benefits to the most needy. The result has been that many Chicano communities have been unable to find solutions to the myriad social problems that are the result of historical patterns of cultural, political and economic subordination and/or exclusion. The recent tragic events in Los Angeles clearly demonstrate the intolerable plight which many disenfranchised communities confront.

The dominant society and some sectors of the Chicano community are said to be finding solutions to the longstanding problems of political under-representation, poverty, subordination of women, segregation and inadequate access to quality education, health and other social services. Yet these limited, largely class-based social gains in no way threaten the ideological or material power of dominant society, and we shall see that they have moved some Chicano critics such as Guillermo Hernández and Manuel Hernández, who remain loyal to the Chicano culturalist perspective, to

denounce the relative increase in Chicano affluence and influence. These critics also attack the perceived concomitant tendency of "successful" Chicano professionals to abandon the barrio (which the critics see as the locus of group loyalty to Chicano origins in poverty and struggle) in order to assimilate into the dominant Anglo culture.

This fear of assimilation is understandable less as a desire for racial purity, which would be absurd in a mestizo people, than as a response to two historical factors: 1) a reaction to the assimilationist Mexican-American ideology of the 1950's<sup>4</sup> and 2) the Chicano Movement's response, during the 1960's and 1970's, to the empty promises of social justice and the failure to resolve the problems of race and class subordination. During the 1960's and 1970's, earlier versions of a culturalist, anti-assimilationist ideology were prevalent in the criticism and creative production of Chicano writers like Luis Valdez and José Montoya in California and Américo Paredes in Texas. However, during the same period, John Rechy, in whose early novels there is practically no Chicano identification, was nevertheless recognized as a Chicano writer by critics of the first generation (Castañeda Shular et al. 98-105). As we shall see, the debate over assimilation continued throughout the eighties and into the nineties. Octavio Romano, a Chicano critic of the Movement period, called attention to José Antonio Villarreal's novel, *Pocho* (1959) as the precursor of a Chicano literary renaissance (Romano 1969). This same novel, however, has been condemned as assimilationist by critics of the eighties like

Manuel Hernández (M.Hernández 18). On the other hand, Ramón Saldívar considers that Pocho is "the beginning of the Chicano novel" and that it "succeeds as a novel, and more significantly as a paradigmatic Chicano narrative [...] " (Saldívar 1990; 60, 72). Further contradictions become apparent in Manuel Hernández's text when he states that

[...] el sujeto narrador chicano participa en postular una nueva América. Su nueva identidad American se caracteriza a partir de los setenta por una sociedad pluralista. En ésta se reconoce la autodeterminación cultural no sólo de los angloamericanos, sino también de las minorías raciales y de la mujer" (p. viii).

Such a position is undermined by the text's own sociological contextualization which defines the Barrio or Chicano community as an "internal colony" that is located within the United States and is subject to Anglo-American hegemony. Hard-line cultural nationalists like Guillermo Hernández and Manuel Hernández continue to criticize assimilationist tendencies. However, the issue has been superseded in the work of many of their Chicano and Chicana colleagues by gender-specific considerations and the viability of theoretical subjects.

#### NATIONALISM AND LITERATURE

A valorization of the cultural myth of "lo nuestro", in opposition to a hostile and externally oppressive "other" has been crucial to the historical emergence of national literatures in Latin America. Theorists from Sarmiento to Martí, from Henríquez

Ureña to Carpentier have addressed the issues of literary dependence on foreign models. And Angel Rama has demonstrated that behind the politics of nationalist representation were the politics of internal exclusion (Rama 1984).

During the 1960's and 1970's Cultural Nationalism was a conscious response of Chicanos to their colonized status within the jurisdiction of the U.S. state. Chicano Cultural Nationalism paralleled the Black Power and Black Civil Rights movements of the period and was a characteristic feature of the first flowering of a Chicano Movement in politics and letters (Muñoz 1989, 49-51). The demand for economic and civil rights, the strategy of non-violent demonstration that was adopted by both Martin Luther King Jr. and César Chávez, the celebration of Chicano power, the study of Chicano arts, language and cultural origins and even the militant demands for national self determination for minorities was crucial to the awakening of what, for most of America, had been an unconscious, suppressed identity. The U.S. Southwest was re-imagined by Chicanos as the mythical Aztlán, homeland of the ancient Aztec nation and patrimony of the modern Chicano.

While some Chicanos continue to look back with pride on that still-recent and glorious cultural and political uprising, others, including many Chicanas, point out its limitations<sup>5</sup>.

Undoubtedly, there are crucial issues at stake. There are challenges and choices that Chicanos must confront as significant participants in the policies of an American Hemisphere linked as it is to an interdependent global community. The work of Ramón

Saldívar indicates that some Chicanos are taking seriously the journalistic slogan that all news is local news. They are recognizing that the policies set by a host of international bodies such as the U.N., OPEC or the Sierra Club can have a very direct effect on Chicano communities in the Southwest and throughout the U.S.. Ramón Saldívar writes that

In the process of [•••] defining Chicano narrative, I hope to offer also a way of understanding a truly American literature, one that includes the voices of Mexican American men and women as significant figures in the socioeconomic and cultural history of the Americas. (Saldívar 1990, 9)

Ramón Saldívar here addresses the importance of a historical context, and in so doing refers, implicitly, to the geopolitical concerns of the future and to the role of younger generations of Chicanos and Chicanas in shaping that future.

In his book, *Chicano Narrative*, Saldívar includes a chapter on Chicana authors: "The Dialectics of Subjectivity: Gender and Difference in Isabella Ríos, Sandra Cisneros and Cherríe Moraga". Other critics, including Manuel Hernández and Guillermo Hernández, have resisted a direct confrontation with the issues of gender in their texts. Manuel Hernández limits his thesis to narrative texts by three Chicano novelists: José Antonio Villarreal, Tomás Rivera and Miguel Méndez. Guillermo Hernández studies satiric discourse in the *Actos* of playwright Luis Valdez, the poetry of José Montoya and the novels of Rolando Hinojosa. We thus see a somewhat limited focus as these critics attempt to stake out and defend a narrow discursive space as prescribed by academic practice.

In these two critics (Manuel Hernández and Guillermo Hernández) there is an intense focus on the Chicano "cultural nation" whereas Ramón Saldívar seems to place the emphasis on Chicano literature within a broader national and international context. Guillermo Hernández establishes "evaluative frameworks to be applied in the analysis of Chicano conduct" (G. Hernández 1991, x). Very evident in the texts of both Manuel Hernández and Guillermo Hernández is a denunciation of the enemy within, a condemnation of "bad" Chicanos that glosses over the traditional concern of Chicano literature with a common enemy identified as racist Anglo-American society.

A dread of assimilation and of "vendidos" who betray "the well-being of Chicanos" (G.Hernández 114) *is* voiced via value judgments with respect to "good" and "bad" Chicanos. For instance, between the "good" campesinos on the one hand and the "bad" scabs and contratistas on the other as they appear in the early Actos of Luis Valdez. Interestingly, artists like Valdez have recognized that the scene, the drama and the social circumstances have changed (Kanellos 1983; Yarbrow-Bejarano 1979). We shall see that Guillermo Hernández's study of Chicano satire serves as an opportunity to make intolerant ideological distinctions among and between Chicanos, thus lending solace to the entrenched, privileged interests that are the most deserving targets of Chicano criticism and satire.

We may wonder whether Chicano cultural difference, after struggling for more than one hundred and fifty years against the

oppression, terrorism and genocide of Anglo-American hegemony (De León 1983, 80-102) and after experiencing the renaissance of the sixties and seventies, could become a victim of its own success and find its selves in danger of succumbing to the forces of assimilation and the tendency to "venderse" to the seductions of mainstream "success". Marxist as well as culturalist critics have voiced this concern. No doubt Chicanos have maintained their differences with Anglo society because that society has effectively excluded them, but the culturalist ideology has argued that another reason has been that Chicano mestizo values and traditions are superior in many ways to the inhumanity of Anglo America (Chabram 1986, 110). In spite of the changing social status of Chicanos, that fundamentally critical culturalist perspective has persisted into the nineties, compelling us to explore the concern with the perceived erosion of what Ramón Saldivar has termed Chicano "historical differential unity" (Saldivar 1990, 12).

#### CRITICAL COMPARISONS

In this section we will highlight certain differences and similarities among the three texts under study and offer preliminary appraisals which we will later support in the sections devoted to each of the three texts.

i. Manuel Hernández earned his Ph.D from Stanford Universtiy. His doctoral thesis, "El barrio, el anti-barrio y el exterior: la

textualización semiótica del 'colonialismo interno' en la narrativa chicana", submitted in 1984, is by far the earliest of the texts that we are presently considering and we intend to view it within that context. It would be unfair and irresponsible to disregard the fact that the much more recent texts of Guillermo Hernández and Ramón Saldivar represent the mature positions of their authors, which Manuel Hernández has yet to formulate and publish.

ii. We consider Manuel Hernández, Guillermo Hernández and Ramón Saldivar as belonging to the Chicano critical generation of the 1980's, in dialogical relation to Chicana critics and writers of the same generation. In the present essay, the work of Chicana critics is admittedly marginalized, given that even in the best of circumstances, such is still the space generally allotted to that work by Chicano critics, myself included. A further problem is the exclusion or the masking of issues of gender and sexuality in some critical texts, which raises suspicions of a possible surreptitious strategy to place Chicana discourse within the camp of named or unnamed traitors and enemies. This paper attempts to recover, or perhaps reinsert Chicana discourse as an external meaning and value which may appear to be absent from the texts of some Chicano critics.

iii. Although it is almost impossible to study Chicano literature without encountering bilingual texts that combine both English and Spanish, Ramón Saldivar seems to prefer material that is available

in English. On the other hand, Manuel Hernández, whose dissertation is written in Spanish, has a clear preference for texts written in Spanish. He praises *...y no se lo tragó la tierra* by Tomás Rivera and *Peregrinos de Aztlán* by Miguel Méndez, both of which are in Spanish, while attacking the perceived assimilationist discourse of *Pocho* by José Antonio Villarreal, which is in English, with only scattered words and phrases in Spanish. In contrast, the texts that Guillermo Hernández studies combine both languages and the characteristic Chicano switching between languages becomes an important part of their aesthetic effect.

iv. A comparative reading of the three texts will demonstrate that Manuel Hernández's dissertation presents a sometimes-contradictory, anti-assimilationist position, while Guillermo Hernández resorts to a prescriptive critique of the same "ills". Stylistically, Manuel Hernández's text maintains a strident intensity throughout its 370 manuscript pages, while that of Guillermo Hernández adopts a more subdued, though no less determined polemical attitude within its compact 114-page format. Ramón Saldívar's book, with the exception of one or two occasions in which it becomes combative, offers a more refined, academic discourse that attempts to wade through a sea of theoretical currents. Differences and similarities among the texts cannot be understood as a function of chronology, however, for we find striking similarities between that of Manuel Hernández (1984) and Guillermo Hernández's study of Chicano satire (1991). These are probably due to the adherence of both texts to the

cultural and sociological paradigms of the 1970's, as well as to certain biographical similarities, such as the fact that both critics are of Mexican origin and both produced their texts in California.

v. A feature of contemporary criticism is its interdisciplinary methodology, its intertextual appropriation of social and political theories. This practice has helped to contextualize literary discourse within the social and historical circumstances that determine its production. Cultural nationalism is an example of one such theory which many Chicano authors and critics have applied to the study of literary art. Another is the "internal colony" model which Chicano historians and sociologists have used to describe the Barrio. Manuel Hernández endorses the internal colony model in his analysis of Chicano "narrativa de autorepresentación". However, Hernández's appropriation of the model is perhaps anachronistic, coming as it does after the model had been abandoned by its author, Tomás Almaguer (M. Hernández 5, 24n).

We don't pretend that critical lapses and improvisations are unique to Chicano or minority critical discourses. The anachronisms, idealisms and contradictions displayed by Chicano critics are determined by the errors and abuses within ideological discourse and literary institutions in general, that is, by the circumstances of their production.

The interesting question appears to be whether, and to what degree, discourses of resistance are capable of fighting fire with

fire; in other words, whether they are capable of turning the Anglo hegemony's own ideological instruments and tactics against it. Marxist dialecticians generally condemn this practice, offering instead instruments of their own design. And while at one level the differences between Chicano Marxists, cultural nationalists and formalists become referential disputes over labels and priorities within a common struggle, at another level these differences seem to have produced a type of paternalistic discourse that claims to defend Chicanos from themselves, that pretends to defend Chicanos by attacking them. The other danger is that posed by theoretical abstraction when we allow it to function as a subtle instrument capable of eradicating cultural specificity.

vi. The formal differences in approach and technique between the two most recent texts, those of Ramón Saldívar and Guillermo Hernández, may conceal the common aims of critics who are members of the same generation, the same sex and who participate in a common specialized network. Ramón Saldívar, despite the style and formal sophistication of his argument does not reject the cultural idealism of an earlier paradigm. His praise for the role of Américo Paredes in tracing the genealogy of Chicano narrative merely indicates that his first loyalty is not to the Chicano Movement of the sixties and seventies as it unfolds in California, but rather to the venerable tradition of the tejano border ballad and its heritage of resistance (Paredes 1958).

Undoubtedly, all three texts depend on some version of Chicano cultural critique. In Chicano Narrative it is recombined with the cultural theories of the Frankfurt School and with a historical and dialectical interpretation. In the texts of Guillermo Hernández and Manuel Hernández it is linked to sociological theories, ethical interpretations and moralistic precepts. All three texts also rely on some form of Marxist critique, as developed in the work of figures such as Fredric Jameson, Raymond Williams, Joseph Sommers, Rosaura Sánchez, Antonio Gramsci, Theodor Adorno and the Frankfurt School and others. Judging from their texts, however, Manuel Hernández and Guillermo Hernández are clearly Chicanos first and Marxists second and perhaps reveal more machismo than Marxism by excluding Chicana writers. We shall see that Ramón Saldívar claims to offer a more "open" approach. He borrows Adorno's concept of a "negative dialectic" and attempts to reconcile it with what he calls the "differential structure of Chicano identity" (Saldívar 1990, 12-13), which consists of specific historical and cultural experiences, mestizo racial characteristics and various feminine components.

Manuel Hernández adapts Fierre Macherey's concept of the *phénomène idéologique* complex to what he calls the Chicano "narrativa de autorepresentación". Guillermo Hernández's focus on the issue of group loyalty and on an "analysis of Chicano conduct", is aimed at condemning and forestalling a perceived theoretical erosion of the Chicano idealism of the sixties and seventies. His argument is aided by the work of a wide array of Chicano and non-

Chicano Marxist theorists.<sup>6</sup> While Ramón Saldívar allows an opening for the Chicana subject, the inward focus of Guillermo Hernández's analysis of Chicano satire locates the feminine in the "exterior", thus reserving the available discursive space for the main task at hand which is the production of value judgements about "the sources and agents that threaten the well-being of Chicanos" (114).

Among those enemy agents we will find more than one "pocha", a term that, according to Guillermo Hernández

is applied when vilifying individuals considered traitors to their own people and culture, ridiculing their adoption of Anglo-American traits (19).

Guillermo Hernández's prescriptive methodology is aimed at consolidating and defining Chicano identity and at establishing an "in-group versus out-group frame of reference" (11), subject to norms of loyalty and conduct. While in his 1980 article Guillermo Hernández states that "[...] careful consideration must be given to the characteristics that identify Chicano texts [...]" (16, my emphasis), in his new book the critic is more concerned with scrutinizing Chicanos/as themselves.

Both Manuel Hernández and Guillermo Hernández understand Chicano identity as a value that must be defended discursively from disloyal elements. For both critics the barrio is the sacred myth of Chicano identity (M. Hernández 203, G. Hernández 60). Manuel Hernández sees the narrative representation of oppression in Vietnam, Korea and even Mexico as necessarily "exterior" to Chicanos' own struggles against exploitation and colonization (120-128, 271-276).

GUILLERMO HERNÁNDEZ

I will begin the analysis of the three main texts with the most recent, Guillermo Hernández's *Chicano Satire*, understood, like the others, within the context of the Chicano generation of the eighties and in relation to general critical discourses of the period.

In writing *Chicano Satire*, Guillermo Hernández carries out a careful selection of texts that will permit both an analysis of satirical genres and a prescriptive attack on assimilationist cultural tendencies. The critic builds his project on the work of Luis Valdez and Rolando Hinojosa, two writers who have demonstrated an ability to reach international audiences. His position is, however, most strongly supported by an analysis of the work of a lesser-known author, the poet José Montoya, whose work offers a rich source of satirical and polemical discourses and which therefore constitutes the heart of the book.

Montoya has published only scattered poems and one slim volume entitled *El sol y los de abajo*, but his best-known poetic work, which dates back to the late sixties and early seventies, will soon be available in a forthcoming collection. Guillermo Hernández defends Montoya's work, claiming that it has not received the critical attention it deserves:

Although his merit rests on a few published poems, he is regarded as a prominent Chicano writer [...] The body of Montoya's work [...] either remains unpublished or is available only in editions of limited circulation" (53).

Montoya is also a veteran of the Movement years, having participated in the 1965 march from Delano to Sacramento with Cesar Chavez and his United Farmworkers organization.

The study of satirical themes in Montoya's songs and poems permits Guillermo Hernández to focus on the issue of assimilation and the problem of Chicanos who "sell out". For example, he cites a song lyric from "Lulac Cadillac" which appears in the recording "Casindio: Chicano Music All Day" by El Trio Casindio and the Royal Chicano Air Force. The critic comments on the

opportunism of [a] Chicano middle-class administrator [who] upon his return to the community . . . adopts a different wardrobe and has a new woman companion ... (58)

This figure becomes a "deviant Chicano" who is a victim of a "loss of culture" (58-59). In the title of another poem (np), Montoya chides: "The Movement Has Gone for Its Ph.D. over at the University". Guillermo Hernández chimes in saying that "Montoya ridicules those Chicanos who as student radicals criticized the institutions they have now come to serve," and castigates them for "their present indifference toward their Chicano communities..." (59). Although Montoya's points may be well taken, a problem arises when this sort of verbal attack on "deviant Chicanos" becomes the main thrust of Guillermo Hernández's critical text. The tirade goes on with denunciations of the "middle class values" of "opportunists whose true commitment has been to their own material gain" and with an "implicit condemnation of their intellectual irresponsibility" (59). Thus, the critic immediately assumes a judgemental role,

heaping abuse on a disloyal and errant people.

The critic summarizes a poem called "Los They Are Us" by saying that "the poet decries the existence of Chicanos who hold positions of authority but lack any concern for the betterment of their communities" (59-60 my emphasis). Now the critic has become a preacher, moralizing about the need for Chicanos to be their brothers' keepers. The prescriptive discourse does not allow for a differences of opinion or will and much of the text thus appears to be a subterfuge, a moralistic tract disguised as an analysis of satiric genres.

For Guillermo Hernández as for Manuel Hernández, the barrio is sacred and unwritten "community values" are deemed competent to judge "the figure of the deviant" (60). Montoya's poetry serves the anti-assimilationist program of the critic because "In Montoya's poetry those figures that adhere to the norms of mainstream American society are the oppressive agents of a devalued world" (75). Thus, the critic uses his first major book to attack the historic oppressor only indirectly, by reviling his Chicano agent.

The same scenario in a similar morality play unfolds in the chapter on Luis Valdez, where the farm labor contratista is the "parasitic and opportunistic middleman", the scab plays the villainous vendido and even the "Patroncito", the Anglo owner, must take on Mexican characteristics (including a diminutive appellation) in order to be attacked (33-35).

In the chapter on Rolando Hinojosa, the spectre of "community standards" and "normative values" are again raised before the

deviant Chicano. According to Guillermo Hernández

The Bakhtinian notion of the disintegrated personality, whose alienation produces an individual existing solely for himself, appears in Belken County as a satiric figure who is estranged from his community. (96, my emphasis)

This description brings to mind the archetypal pocho, Richard Rubio, the *raza* existentialist who becomes a target of Manuel Hernández's critique. It is worthwhile to note the contrasting interpretations of the novel *Pocho* and the term "pocho" that we find in the three critics. Like Saldivar, Guillermo Hernández sees value and importance in Villarreal's novel. In the introductory essay of *Chicano Satire* Guillermo Hernández writes that

For Villarreal the word "pocho" is an in-group term used to describe the Chicano experience and is devoid of negative connotations, and in this sense his usage anticipates the role the term "Chicano" would acquire in the 1960s. Because this work initiated a reassessment of Chicano historical reality that culminated during the 1960s and 1970s, scholars in Chicano studies rescued Villarreal's Pocho from oblivion and held it as a forerunner of the modern Chicano novel. (20)

Thus, whereas "pocho" has a positive signification and can "simply acknowledge cultural differences, without pronounced animosity" (18), Guillermo Hernández reserves the pejorative and "satiric" denotation of the epithet "pocho" for the feminine gendered, "pocha" which "is applied when vilifying individuals considered traitors to their own people and culture, ridiculing their adoption of Anglo-American traits" (19). And the critic supplies the corresponding positive and negative examples drawn from popular literature. In these passages the "pocha" is a "payasa" and "pura

raza renegada" who is "accused of not being economically responsible" and "her feminine beauty is [deemed] inherently false" (19-20). As the text offers such misogynic representations, we cannot help but suspect that masculine gendered terms such as "Chicano" and "hispano", when applied to "deviants", "vendidos" and other agents of Anglo-American values, conceal negative representations of Chicanas and hispanas, as well as of their male counterparts. This critical discourse, seems to exclude Chicana subjectivity, nevertheless contains, from the outset, its own hidden, almost subliminal gendered premises.<sup>7</sup>

According to Gullermo Hernández, the dangerous figures and real villains in Hinojosa's Klail City Death Trip Series are "Those Chicanos who joined the Anglos in this conflict [and] are depicted as traitors" (p. 98). Among these are Becky and Ira Escobar, "who are alienated from their cultural heritage and community roots and act as agents of community outsiders..." (109). The hero, meanwhile, is Rafa Buenrostro whose "conduct demonstrates positive normative values: he is consistently judicious, compassionate, loyal, courageous. Furthermore, he demonstrates cultural loyalty toward his community and is personally concerned for the well-being of other Chicanos" (102, my emphasis). This princely Chicano figure is rather more "respectable" than Valdez's "rascuache" characters or than Montoya's pachucos. Nevertheless, they all share the virtue of the "various loyalties that have helped shape Chicano history" (101). For Guillermo Hernández, in-group solidarity and the identification of traitors and deviants is

valued above the struggle against the common "exterior" enemy who is a menace to the entire group.

RAMÓN SALDIVAR

Ramón Saldívar's Chicano Narrative demonstrates certain formal differences with respect to the other critical texts that we are studying. Whereas Guillermo Hernández and Manuel Hernández each analyze the work of three authors, Saldívar studies a total of twelve, or twice as many as the other two combined. Ramón Saldívar studies three of the four novels that occupy the other two critics: *Pocho*, by José Antonio Villarreal, *...Y no se lo tragó la tierra*, by Tomás Rivera and *Klail City Death Trip*, by Rolando Hinojosa Smith. Like Manuel Hernández, Saldívar analyzes narrative texts, but in addition to the various autobiographical or semi-autobiographical novels, he also studies outright autobiographies by Ernesto Galarza, Richard Rodríguez and Cherríe Moraga, as well as the narrative poetry of Rolando Hinojosa's *Korean Love Songs*. Furthermore, he includes a genealogical chapter entitled "The Folk Base of Chicano Narrative: Américo Paredes' With His Pistol in His Hand and the Corrido Tradition".

In his study of Chicano satire, Guillermo Hernández focuses on three Chicano genres: the novel, poetry and theatre. But Saldívar's project is a much more ambitious and inclusive one in terms of the number of works, the ideological perspectives of these works, and the gender of the authors, as Ramón Saldívar is the only one of the

three critics who analyzes narrative texts by Chicanas.

Unlike the other two critics, Saldivar advocates a Chicano literary history which is to be understood in an "American context" (7) . This position addresses the on-going debate about the place of minority literatures within the institutionalized disciplines and departments of the U.S. academy and whether Chicano Studies is to be a part of an English Department, a Program of Latin American Literature, a more or less autonomous Program of Chicano Studies or, some combination thereof. Whatever the structural approach might be, however, one cannot fail to take into account the critical role of Chicano Studies with respect to a pre-existing academic structure. Chicanos, their literature and their academic program seem to provoke political strife and consternation within a university system that accepted the new disciplines under duress a generation ago. Failing to define a comfortable niche for Chicano programs, academia will try to mitigate their irksome presence and specificity by subsuming them under the rubric of Hispanic Studies or the catch-all, Cultural Studies. According to Ramón Saldivar, Chicano identity is situated

on that precarious Utopian margin between [the Mexican and the American], perhaps as the very sign of marginality institutionalized in geopolitical terms by the border between the sovereign states of Mexico and the United States. (174-175)

Saldivar's dialectical opposition is no doubt grounded in the historical experience of Chicano border communities in South Texas. He argues that although "the entire action of Korean Love Songs is

set in Japan and Korea, it can be shown that Hinojosa's poem, like the corridos that form its generic model, is about South Texas..." (136). I would suggest that in the context of the nineties, this bilateral opposition that reduces the unknown to the known is inadequate. An example is the cultural reality of California, which requires a critical understanding of Chicanos' geographical and historical positioning at the crossroads of a multiplicity of world cultures, including the Anglo American, the Native American, the European, the Latin American, the African and the Asian. Of course, this poses an awesome cultural challenge, given the complex variations lying within every one of these cultural identities and given also that the ideology of purity finds it practically impossible to contemplate a positive characterization of the mestizo, the mulato, or any such mixture of bloods, colors and genes. This complex reality makes it all the more important that 1) the field of Chicano Studies resist the institutional pressures that would erase Chicano cultural specificity within a new multicultural melting pot, and 2) we deflate theoretical speculation that tends towards the same end.

Saldivar's "dialectic of difference" attempts to resolve the contradictions inherent in a negative dialectic that is supposedly "without coalescence or synthesis" (174). The aim, according to the critic, is to go beyond Cultural Nationalism, towards a new history of Chicano literature from which "might emerge a truly 'new literary history' and 'new criticism' of American culture in the form of ...theories of Chicano narrative... in their American

context" (7). Saldívar claims that Chicano narrative must function within the larger society in order to "produce creative structures of knowledge to allow its readers to see, to feel, and to understand their social reality." (7) However, his critical practice is restrained within a dialectical straightjacket and may be less than effective against the multiple challenges of contemporary social reality.

Saldívar's critical method formulates an opposition between two poles: 1) "frameworks for analysis" that reveal "dialectical structures that form the base of human experience," and 2) the "opting for open over closed forms, for conflict over resolution and synthesis" (7). However, he warns the reader that

"We must remember... that a true dialectic necessarily involves us in negation. In a relationship between opposed terms, one annuls the other and lifts it up into a higher sphere of existence" (8).

Hence, Saldívar's analytical structures and his dialectical methods are designed to contain the momentary opening to difference. This is revealed in the formal structure of his text, which contains the knowledge of Chicano narrative. The book's eight chapters are subordinated into a binary structure of two sections, each containing four chapters in which the content and theme of any given chapter are opposed to the content and theme of the numerically corresponding chapter in the other section. Thus, the first chapter presents a historical discussion of "American Resistance Literature" and the fifth chapter deals with the "Representation of History" in two Chicano texts of resistance literature. Chapters 2 and 6 deal with texts by tejano authors dear

to the critic's heart: Américo Paredes and the Corrido tradition in chapter two, and the supposed heir to that tradition, Rolando Hinojosa, in chapter 6. In Chapters 3 and 7 we have polemical discussions involving Chicano authenticity and identity within the context of the origins of the Chicano novel and Chicano autobiography, respectively. Finally, in Chapters 4 and 8 we find the opposition of male and female literary utopias: the "Utopian Dialectics in Tomás Rivera and Oscar Zeta Acosta" and the feminine/lesbian counter-Utopias of Isabella Ríos, Sandra Cisneros and Cherríe Moraga. The whole presents a neat symmetrical pattern, framed by an Introduction and a Conclusion and captioned by a Table of Contents. But it is a design in which the dialectic reigns over a Chicano/a "difference" that is imprisoned and enclosed, that becomes the annulled term. No doubt in Saldivar's Chicano Narrative *The Dialectics of Difference*, the form of the text speaks more eloquently than does its rhetoric of difference. While acknowledging the fact that, historically, there have always been winners and loser, Chicanos must refuse to once again be historically subsumed and annulled.

MANUEL HERNÁNDEZ

Manuel Hernández's dissertation presents problems that also appear to some degree in the other two published texts. We will give examples of an extreme prescriptive criticism that is present in a somewhat less intense form throughout Guillermo Hernández's

Chicano Satire and is central to Ramón Saldívar's chapter on Chicano autobiography.

Specifically, in the case of Manuel Hernández's dissertation, there seems to be an oversupply of critical tools at the author's disposal and he appears unsure as to which is the most appropriate to his task and purpose. Of course, the same dilemma confronts many critics nowadays, including Ramón Saldívar in *Chicano Narrative*. For his part, Manuel Hernández improvises a dialectical materialist approach, a sociological approach and a nominal semiological analysis, all of which become confused with Chicano idealism and Cultural Nationalism. In other words, Manuel Hernández presents a mestizaje or smorgasbord of theoretical notions of the seventies and eighties (Manuel Hernández 39-42).

The ideological project is certainly a major part of Manuel Hernández's work and is one aspect of the dissertation that has aged considerably, given the current rapid turnover in literary theories. Even more serious than this are the text's inconsistencies on one hand and, on the other, its strident and categorical insistence on particular points that, for Manuel Hernández, become articles of faith to be repeated time and again throughout the text. These weaknesses would undoubtedly be edited out of a final version.

Manuel Hernández declares, after an analysis of three texts, only two of which fulfill his criteria for Chicano narrative, that

Por medio de su sujeto narrador, la narrativa Chicana tiende a la unidad ...Cualquier nuevo texto narrativo mexicanoestadounidense necesita medirse con la narrativa

chicana para comparar su aporte a la asimilación o al desarrollo de una nueva sociedad estadounidense pluralista, donde las minorías raciales tienen derecho a la autodeterminación literaria... Sólo si continúan los futuros narradores en este camino se podrá reapropiar el mexicanoestadounidense de su imagen literaria, haciendo una realidad la sociedad pluralista deseada y necesaria. En este momento es suficiente negar que sea un subgénero literario de cualquier literatura nacional —la angloamericana o la mexicana— pues, tiene su propia historia sociocultural, que sólo se entiende en relación a su dialéctica con la narrativa del mundo. Cualquier otra interpretación es reductiva (369).

We may compare this critical prescription to the following passage from Chicano Narrative in which Ramón Saldívar discusses autobiographical texts by Richard Rodriguez and Ernesto Galarza:

Locating subjectivity outside sociohistorical reality, Rodriguez cannot conceive of a form of subjectivity that would draw upon existing social practice, the life of the collective folk (of la raza), for an alternative critical society. When read against Galarza's life story, however, Rodriguez's undialectical opposition between self and society demands dialectical integration. (169-170 my emphasis).

These passages encapsulate some of the major shortcomings of Chicano critical practice as formulated in the eighties: (1) reading continues to have priority over writing and enforces a normalization not only of writing but of the very behaviour of the subject within his or her social environment, (2) both critics fail to question the referential validity of literary representations, (3) a spurned or flouted dialectic becomes a menace to the non-conformist, (4) neither the Stanford semiologist nor the Yale structuralist is above an appeal to Chicano cultural idealism, and (5) contemporary writers will be severely measured against the standards of the canon.

Perhaps because of its heterogenous, baroque quality, Manuel Hernández's text reflects the various critical currents that intersect and vye for power during the decade of the eighties. Manuel Hernández's work offers an interesting chronological and ideological comparison with the other two books in the sense that it points in the direction of these critical texts that will appear in the nineties and, in fact, anticipates them. Because his is not a polished and well-finished discourse Manuel Hernández admits that

El presente estado de la tesis necesita más desarrollo para realizar en forma completa nuestro objetivo original, lo cual se llevará a cabo en el futuro. Además de un capítulo sobre el impacto de la narrativa de la mujer chicana en el proyecto ideológico, pensamos sumar otros tres estudios interpretativos sobre: *Memories of the Alhambra*, *The Road to Tamazunchale* y *Generaciones y semblanzas*" (368).

These plans, outlined by Manuel Hernández in 1984, indicate the thinking of Chicano critics at that time with respect to the configuration of an "ideal" critical text on Chicano narrative. Such a text would include Chicana authors. Critics like Ramón Saldivar and Guillermo Hernández were undoubtedly working on similar projects in 1984. Their recent publication is a sign of achievement as well as an indication of the work that remains to be done.

\* \* \*

We have found that a variety of currents develop within Chicano literary criticism in the late seventies and throughout the

eighties. A culturalist perspective inherited from the sixties and seventies was reinforced by Marxist analysis, which in the eighties is set against the variegated background of diverse critical perspectives that demand a heterogenous, eclectic approach to critical discourse. These concerns are present in the Chicano critics that we have studied. In the work of Ramón Saldívar they combine to form a well-structured analysis couched in terms of Chicano cultural idealism. In Manuel Hernández and Guillermo Hernández the polyphony of the eighties produces a prescriptive agenda in defense of the barrio and its traditions. All three texts, to a greater or lesser degree, demonstrate a willingness to discourage writing by Chicanos that does not represent Chicano subjectivity in accordance with prescriptive notions of "authentic Chicano discourse".

These critics of the eighties refused to recognize creative writing on Chicano themes by non-Chicanos [which the generation of the seventies had provisionally embraced under the rubric of *literatura chicanesca* (Márquez, 1982)]. By contrast, Chicana feminists have maintained an active dialogue with other women of color in the production of theoretical alternatives to dominant male and white feminist discourses.

Our present task has been to study selected texts by three Chicano critics of the eighties. The appearance of a prescriptive program in their work was undoubtedly related to several factors: 1) the decline of the militant Chicano Movement around the mid-seventies, 2) the emergence of a the new critics themselves around

the end of the decade, 3) the powerful emergence of Chicana literary authority, and 4) the appearance of "renegade" Chicanos, most notably Richard Rodríguez, who, with his highly controversial autobiography, *Hunger for Memory* (1982), his politically charged articles attacking affirmative action and bilingual education, and his appearances on important Anglo media, functioned as a direct provocation.<sup>8</sup>

This combination of factors appeared as an overwhelming challenge to some of the young Chicano critics, although not to Chicano culture or identity per se. Chicanas ensured that a major focus of contention involved gender differences and their contributions set an example of vitality and daring which few Chicanos were able to match. We have seen that, for the most part, Chicanos were unwilling or unable to respond to the provocations of Chicana feminists and lesbians, preferring instead to invent straw men that they called Pocho or Richard Rodríguez or "los vendidos". They managed to kindle no more than a low-grade polemic in the field, avoiding, for the most part, the critical analysis of recent texts as well as leadership in a renewed attack on Anglo hegemony. Strident anti-assimilationist rhetoric by Manuel Hernández and Guillermo Hernández was not directed against the liberal, reformist strategies of the entrenched dominant culture but, instead, sought to imposed further restrictions on the possible misconduct or disloyalty of Chicano readers and writers.

It should be noted that the anti-assimilationist position does not originate in the 1970's or 1980's. It is a venerable cultural

trait of Chicanos and Mexicans that is evident in our daily lives, our folklore, as well as in our literature. It appears as the ironic, self-mocking attitude of a mestizo race towards its own origins. Anti-assimilationist attitudes may also be found among dominant cultural groups that refuse to assimilate certain groups that are too "different". Historically, the theories of difference that begin with Nietzsche have been appropriated by racist and anti-semitic political partisans in just this way.

Thus, assimilation and anti-assimilation are not merely studied as anthropological or sociological traits, they become critical categories. If we examine the Mexican tradition, we immediately see that both currents--the assimilationist and the anti-assimilationist-- are a part of the Mexican heritage. Malinchismo and anti-malinchismo appear together; both are tied to the exercise of power, to exploitation and to the crimes of Indian and Spanish elites. In this tradition there is no purity nor innocence--there are only the crimes and the "mestizaje" that were despised for centuries. In the early part of this century José Vasconcelos and other Latin American writers began to reinterpret this mestizo heritage and to revise racist theories on behalf of an American "raza cósmica" (Vasconcelos 1967).

Chicana writers, especially the poet and critic Norma Alarcón, have reinterpreted the Malinche figure.<sup>9</sup> That archetypal mother of mestizaje symbolizes the vital, bodily critique that endures and challenges patriarchal cultures that threaten to expel her: to banish her beyond the community into the exterior, or else to sell

her into the slavery of the ghetto or the barrio where she is buried and forgotten.

The role of contemporary criticism involves the interpretation and documentation of these issues and processes as they appear in art and society. As we study them within the Chicana/o cultural legacy, we find that they are invested with enormous political currency. We agree with Ramón Saldivar where he suggests that the transformation of the literary concepts and practices of a nation, of an empire, implies the transformation of our lives.

## NOTES

1. See Calderón and Saldívar, *Criticism in the Borderlands*. Various members of this generation are anthologized in this collection, including three members of the Saldívar family, Rosaura Sánchez, Angie Chabram, Norma Alarcón and the anthropologist, Renato Rosaldo. The collection brings together papers that were delivered at the "Chicano Literary Criticism in a Social Context" Conference, held at Stanford University in May of 1987. This collection appears almost a decade after the pioneering *A Decade of Chicano Literature* (1970-1979) which emerged from a gathering of Chicano critics and scholars at U.C. Santa Barbara. The editors of the recent collection dedicate the book: "For all who came before us". This "all" is surely inclusive of the critics of the seventies who are represented by an essay written by Luis Leal. Another link between the two generations and their respective anthologies are the bibliographic contributions of Stanford curator, Roberto Trujillo.

2. Among them, "Korean Love Songs: a border ballad and its heroes" in *Revista Chicano-Riqueña* Vol. 12. no. 3-4 1984: 143-157 and "Ideologies of the Self: Chicano Autobiography" in *Diacritics* Fall of 1985: 25-34.

3. For recent work in Chicana critical discourse see: Sonia Saldívar-Hull "Feminism on the Border: From Gender Politics to Geopolitics", in Calderón and Saldívar, eds. 1991: 203-220; Gloria Anzaldúa *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1987; Angie Chabram and Rosalinda Fregoso, eds. *Chicana/o Cultural Representations: Reframing Critical Discourses*, A Special Issue of *Cultural Studies* 4, no. 4 (1990). For a discussion of Marxist analysis of Chicano literature see Rosaura Sánchez "La crítica marxista: propuesta para la crítica literaria chicana", in *Revista Chicano Riqueña* Vol.8, no.3 1980: 93-96.

4. See Richard García, 1991 esp. p. 310-314. García argues that the failure of the assimilationist Mexican-American mentality gave rise to the Chicano Movement during the 1960's.

5. See Chabram, 1986. The author contends that "The ideal of national culture described initially was also fraught with problems. Not only did it retain the chauvinism of many of the prevalent notions of national culture by identifying Chicano "national" culture in terms of a particular racial-ethnic grouping, but it also maintained the idealism of these modes by virtue of its tendency to divorce culture from its place in the dominant social process, and from its participation in the existing social, political and economic social formation." p. 115

6. In Chicano Satire Guillermo Hernández cites Fredric Jameson and Raymond Williams (116n), Rosaura Sánchez (117n) and Antonio Gramsci's analysis of the concept of hegemony (117n).

7. In "Las características cómicas del pocho y del pachuco" G. Hernández cites Chicano and Mexican satirical fragments that represent the negative characterization of the "pocho" in terms of a female figure. The article cites examples from popular literature in which pochos appear as "meretrices de ínfima calidad" and where "... se alude al interés puramente económico que guía a las "margaritas" en sus relaciones con los norteamericanos,". According to Hernández, "La pocha heredará este estigma y en sus intenciones será frecuente aludir a su materialismo y falta de sinceridad" (173). The author interprets this simply as "supervivencia de una antigua corriente antifeminista" (181n). In a statement that fittingly describes the ideological project of Chicano Satire, Hernández admits that "Más tarde, en plena madurez, el pocho y la pocha se convertirán en ejemplos negativos y denigrantes de la cultura mexicana y a su calidad cómica se aunará la hostilidad de considerárseles desleales."

8. See "A minority scholar speaks out," in *American Education*, Vol.18, no.9 November, 1982: 2-5; "Unilingual, not unilateral," in *Latina*, noviembre de 1985: 7; "Mexico's Children," in *American Scholar*, Vol. 55, no. 2 Spring of 1986: 161-177.

9. See "Chicana's feminist literature: a re-vision through Malintzinl or Malintzin: putting flesh back on the object," in *This Bridge Called My Back; Writings by Radical Women of Color*. Eds. Cherrie Moraga y Gloria Anzaldúa. New York: Kitchen Table/ Women of Color Press. 1983: 182-190. Alarcón reveals the accusations "treason "a la" Malinche" that are leveled at Chicanas that embrace feminism" (188). She proposes another vision of La Malinche as a "visionary and founder of a people" (187). By the same author see also "Traddutura, Traditora: A Paradigmatic Figure of Chicana Feminism" in The Construction of Gender and Modes of Social Division. Eds. Donna Przybylowicz et al. Special issue of *Cultural Critique*, no.13 Fall of 1989: 57-87.

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