The introduction to this issue of "English in Texas," by Philip D. Ortego, discusses briefly the need of young Chicanos for a literary identity. In the first article of the issue, Ortego expands the discussion, focusing especially on the background of Mexican-American literature, the history of Mexican Americans in the southwest, and a definition of Mexican-American literature. The second article contains both a bibliography (Chicano short stories, drama, poetry, nonfiction, and novels) and a discussion of the bibliographic items. A section of book reviews and a select, annotated bibliography of Mexican-American poetry for the secondary school literature program--by Albert D. Trevino--conclude the issue. (JM)
Focus: Chicano Literature

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Chicanos and the Pursuit of a Literary Identity:

An Introduction of Sorts...

Philip D. Ortego y Gasca

One day recently a teacher-friend of mine dropped me a line asking me for some assistance apropos Chicoano literature. The more I thought about her query the more I realized the kind of problem Anglo teachers are facing today in trying to satisfy the urgent literary needs of young Chicanos everywhere. There is no doubt that a literary identity is becoming as important to Chicanos as has been their pursuit of a historical identity (as well as an ethnic identity). And in her plea to me my teacher-friend was responding to her realization about the Chicanos' need for this literary identity. Her letter follows.

If it isn't too much trouble, could you give me a list of Chicoano authors in English translation, both past and present, who are good writers and who don't necessarily deal with revolutionary matters? I need this help for my Chicoano students. Some shorter works than those you gave me for my own use would be helpful as would things available in the library if at all possible.

My Chicoano students are well up on revolution but not literature (naturally there is no absolute distinction) and of course they prefer to read their own, they tell me, even if it isn't as good (I quote). Symposium doesn't mean much to them, but I told them I'd read whatever they wanted me to read when they write on it if they'd go ahead and read "my" awful English-Greek-French-Russian-Japanese-Hebrew text. As they tell me, the trouble is they themselves don't know the good from the bad in Mexican lit. (They've never been taught this), and Lord knows I don't. They know something of Cervantes, however, for one young man told me that Cervantes was to them as Shakespeare was to me, and who don't know St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa of Avila, Goya, Hector Villalobos, Father Serra, etc.) I can give them some direction in this way—not being totally ignorant—but what, for example, are the Mexican classics? And what are the best things by Mexican Americans?

Living must be difficult sometimes for these young people who have such an intense sense of who they are and such pride in it, even though they don't have any of the material goods of the world. They crave respect and recognition, and one can observe a kind of fiery dignity in their eyes and bearing—a whole troop of young Zapatos. As "Shanty Irish" and "poor white" myself, as people of the earth, people who have worked with their hands and had to struggle for what they achieved, I understand them better than the grandee or hidalgo would, despite "race." There-
fore, I hope they don't see me in the role of the oppressive Anglo, but that is probably inevitable: it distresses me that they should.

After pondering my teacher-friend’s query, I sent the following reply.

Thank you for asking me about Chicano writers. Though it’s important at the outset to differentiate between Chicano writers and Mexican writers. They aren't the same. Chicano writers are exclusively Mexican Americans, that is, Americans in the United States of Mexican descent, usually from first generation on. Of these, few have been writers, that is, in the mainstream of any kind of American literary activity or movement, until recently. But this is not to say that Mexican Americans have not been writers, for the history of our people is replete with writers and literary activity. However, as I said, Mexican American writers have not been part of the American literary mainstream. And you can well understand why, I'm sure.

First of all, the mass of Mexicans who have come to the United States since 1910 have been the most poor of Mexico, unlike those refugees from Cuba since 1961. Consequently, it has taken the Mexican Americans two generations to produce literary minded individuals (or at least make a perceptible thrust). Chief of these is the Quinto Sol group of our Berkeley (though many of them hail from various parts of the country, like New York and Chicago, for instance). The work of this group is represented in the literary quarterly, El Grito: A Journal of Contemporary Mexican American Thought, by and for Chicanos to express alternatives for their own problems. Two volumes (12 issues) have thus far been produced, and number 1 of volume four has just come out. A selection of pieces which have appeared in El Grito appears in The Forgotten Pages of American Literature, an anthology by Houghlon-Mifflin. But Quinto Sol has recently published an anthology of Mexican American literature entitled El Espejo—The Mirror. There are of course other literary materials, like George Sanchez' Forgotten People, which is a classic among Mexican American literary endeavors, though it is primarily a sociocultural work. In fiction, however, there are the works by Jose Antonio Villareal: Pochito; John Rechy: City of Night; Floyd Salas: Tatoo the Wicked Cross; Richard Vasquez: Chicano; and Raymond Barrio: The Plum Picker. There are also such works as America's Purge, with His Pistol in His Hand: A Border Ballet and Its Hero; Fabiola Baca's We Fed Them Cactus; Arthus L. Campa's Treasure of the Sangre de Cristos: Tales and Tradition of the Spanish Southwest; et al.

Whatever choices one makes, though, the queer, the curious, and the quaint (anthropological pursuits) must be avoided, for nothing will turn off a Chicano more quickly than to be subjected to an examination of the spurious (and questionable) cultural tradition he's supposed to have. For this reason Oscar Lewis is anathema to us, as are all the other social scientists who pretend to expertise about us by parading our quaint customs, queer manners, and curious behavior to the world in the guise of scholarly investigations. Instead the Chicano is turning toward understanding himself in terms of his historical-intellectual-literary presence. For this reason, the Spanish and Mexican periods of the American southwest become important to him. Mexico is consequently important to the Chicano as one of the taproots of the past, but he will be the first to point out that he's first of all an American of Mexican descent (Mexican American) and not a Mexican (nor a misplaced Puerto Rican or Cuban as Oscar Lewis would have us believe).

The Mexican taproot strikes two veins: the hispanic and the native. That's why Cervantes becomes so important to them. But more important, still, are the works produced by the pre-Columbian peoples of Mexico. Leon Portilla (University of Oklahoma) has done several volumes on this. Then there are the writings of the Spaniards and Mexicans in the Southwestern United States. The most representative pieces of these are found in Hodge and Lewis' Spanish Explorers in the Southern United States and in Bolton's Spanish Exploration in the Southwest. The Chronicles of the Southwest (all originally in Spanish, though a mass of them have now been translated) represent then the Spanish colonial period of American literature; the neglected aspect of American literature, as I call it. The literature of the U.S. (American—though the term applies to the entire hemisphere) begins in 1776. Anything prior to that on the Atlantic frontier is the British period of American literature, for the British consider all activities up to that point as part of their history too. So, too, anything prior to 1776 in the South and Southwest of the United States is the Spanish period of American literature, though it was written in Spanish. And it is for this reason that we've failed to properly acknowledge this lacuna in American literature. After all, anything not in English can't be American. Wow!

The most significant Mexican writing doesn't begin until this century with perhaps The Underdogs, by Mariano Azuela, followed by Guzman's The Eagle and the Serpent, and then the writings of Vasconcelos, particularly his essays on La Raza (an important concept for the Chicano). There are also the works by Juan Rolo, Carlos Fuentes, and Octavio Paz (see the Labyrinth of Solitude especially).

Well, amigo, this is but a sketch of things from which you may be able to draw on for your fiery and revolutionary Chicanos. I'm happy at being a great and significant (I hope) conclusion about the evolution of identity. Unfortunately, in the process I've also come to see the thoroughly racist character of the United States, and that saddens me indeed. At any rate I hope that my poor and feeble attempts to graft back onto the American literary body the hispanic limbs of American literature may in some way help to lessen that racism. I'm somehow convinced that it will, just as black literature is helping the black to help the white overcome his fears and prejudices.

I doubt that your Chicano students regard you as the oppressive Anglo, as you put it, for you've got corazón (the equivalent of soul), and that makes communication (and even progress, surprisingly) possible. There is one final comment I feel com-
The decade of the 60s saw the "renaissance" of the Mexican American, and the decades of the 70s and 80s promise to be ones in which this renaissance will exert an ever-growing awareness in Mexican Americans not only in terms of creative efforts in drama, fiction, and poetry but in terms of seeking a more substantial literary identity in the ever-widening mainstream of American literature. Consequently, the rationale for this essay is to provide some guideposts in the quest for this literary identity.

To be sure, this essay is not intended by any means as a comprehensive examination of Mexican American literature and its sources but, rather, as an attempt to explore the groundwork for the case that Mexican American literature has been a very much neglected aspect of American literature. In the process, perhaps, this essay may provide information and knowledge about the literary heritage and traditions of Mexican Americans, a literary heritage and tradition as viable as that of Anglo Americans.

I hope, therefore, that in the process this essay will not only help to define the heretofore amorphous body of Mexican American literature, but that it will also help us to understand the fullness of what American literature should have been: that is, a literary fabric not exclusively woven on the Atlantic frontier by the descendants of New England Puritans and Southern Cavaliers, but one woven in the American Southwest as well—and with marvelous hispanic threads which reach back not only to the literary heritage of the European continent but also the very heart of the Graeco-Roman world.

Like the British roots in the new American soil, the hispanic literary roots have yielded an equally vigorous and dynamic body of literature which unfortunately for us has been studied historically as part of a foreign enterprise rather than as part and parcel of our American heritage. To be sure, though, the hispanic literary tradition has exerted varying influences on American literature, the causes of which Stanley T. Williams suggests stem from the following:

Within the borders of our nation live persons who speak Spanish. Some of them are immigrants or the descendents of immigrants from Spain, but another avenue of influence is plain if we remember that more than a million and a half of these Spanish-speaking men and women are in the Southwest, including California. On Statistics of this sort it is idle to linger. The facts indicate that the Spanish influences cross and recross each other and that they are primarily three: the direct influence from the Peninsula; the direct influence from Mexico and other countries in this hemisphere; and the indirect influence of these latter regions through the Spanish settlements in our borderlands and the Southwest.

It is in terms of the latter influence, which Williams identifies as "indirect," that the hispanic works dealing with the Southern and Southwestern parts of the United States have in fact become the neglected aspect of American literature. For the implication here is that such works are not properly within the traditional Anglo American definition of American literature, and have consequently been neglected save as special studies in the Southwest. This neglect has produced unfortunate literary consequences for Mexican Americans, for they have come to see themselves and their Mexican kinsmen portrayed in our national literature in terms of racial cliches and distorted caricatures, contrary to the study prepared for the Colorado Civil Rights Commission. Apropos to this topic, I wrote in a piece for Trans-action:

Like other minority groups Mexican-Americans were, and continue to be, inaccurately and superficially represented in literature, movies, TV and other mass media. This has sometimes been due to prejudice, but also to those "well-meaning romanticists" as Ralph Guzman, assistant director of the Mexican American Study Project at UCLA, calls them, who have seriously distorted the image of the Mexican American for the sake of their art. Mexican Americans (which includes Mexicans) have been characterized at both ends of a spectrum of human behavior (seldom in the middle): as untrustworthy, vigilant, ruthless, tequila-drinking, philandering machos or else as courteous, devout and fatalistic peasants who are to be treated more as pets than people. More often than not Mexicans have been cast as either bandits or lovable rogues; as hot-blooded, sexually animated creatures or passive, humble servants. The prejudices and generalizations are to be deplored, and Mexican Americans today are beginning to rise up against the perpetuation of such racial cliches.

But this essay is not intended as a castigation of those American writers who have written erroneously about Mexicans and Mexican Americans; it will, rather, be an attempt to examine the backgrounds and sources of Mexican American literature in terms of the literary-historical roots which nourished the second largest ethnic minority in the United States. For as Seymour L. Gross has written apropos of the Negro in American literature, "Our understanding of any significant movement in human affairs can hardly be said even to approach completeness until the evidence from literature is in."  

In truth, in order to fully comprehend the ethnic phenomenon of Mexican Americans, since World War II must be seen in the more personal context of their literature. What we have seen instead has been the myriad educational, sociopolitical and socioeconomic accounts by Anglo investigators and researchers who can be seriously charged with pursuing, at times only the phenomenological chimeras which have come to be represented by the queer, the curious, and the quaint. For, like the Negro, the Mexican American too has been depicted in American literature more as a stereotype than as a human being. For example, in 1935 John Steinbeck published Tortilla Flat which immediately became a best seller. Reviewing the novel in the Saturday Review, William Rose Benet wrote:

The extraordinay humors of these childlike natives are presented with a masterly touch. These silly bravos are always about to do something nice for each other, their hearts are soft and easily touched; and yet almost absent-mindedly they live with atrocious disregard for scruple. To have presented them and made their story sometimes hysterically funny is no slight achievement.

The words "childlike natives" and "silly bravos" and "atrocious disregard for scruple" strike a note of emphatic disapprobation on the part of Mexican Americans, or "Paisanos" as Steinbeck called them, for they know full well the patent falsity of such words. Mexican Americans have never been "childlike natives" though Anglo Americans may have regarded them as such. And the expression "silly bravos" is gratuitous paternalism which only the colonial mind could utter. But the inherent racist character of American society is exemplified in identifying the Paisanos as devoid of scruples, the inference being that Americans have scruples; therefore, since Paisanos have an "atrocious disregard for scruple" they are not Americans. And true enough, only until recently the Paisano, the Chicano, the Mexican American, has been considered as a stranger in his own land, though Steinbeck pointed out in his preface to Tortilla Flat that the Paisano's ancestors "have lived in California for a hundred or two years." Nevertheless, only the Mexican American has come to know the great social and ethnic damage perpetuated by the mythic representation of the Paisanos of Tortilla Flat and by reviewers who unwittingly acknowledge the fidelity of that representation. Few Mexican Americans of Monterey today see themselves in Tortilla Flat, any more than their predecessors saw themselves in it thirty-seven years ago.

Mexican Americans, approximately twelve million of them, have a rich literary heritage which they should be proud of, but the fact of the matter is that few of them have been aware of its existence as an organic body. Nowhere in the American educational preparatory system have they been taught about it. For a people whose origins antedate the establishment of Jamestown by well over a century (and more, considering their Indian ancestry), this bespeaks a shameful and tragic negligence. And the shame and tragedy are compounded when Mexican-American youngsters learn about their Puritan forebears at the expense of their Hispanic forebears about whom they have as much right—if not more—to be proud of.

Herefore, Mexican Americans have been a marginal people in a sort of no-man's-land, who, like Hamlet crawling between Heaven and Earth, have been caught between the polarizing forces of their cultural-linguistic Hispanic heritage, and their political-linguistic American context. They have become frustrated and alienated by the struggle between the system which seeks to refashion them in its own image and the knowledge of who and what they really are. As a consequence this cultural conflict has debilitated the Mexican American both spiritually and physically. For as Francisco Rios writes, Mexican-American youngsters "read of the cruelty of the Spaniards toward the Indians, or the Spaniard's greed for gold, of the infamous Spanish, always Spanish, Inquisition, of Mexican bandits, and of the massacre at the Alamo." They seldom if ever learn that alongside the famous men at the Alamo there were other men, unknown and unsung heroes of American history, killed in the same battle and fighting on the Texas side: men like Juan Abamillo, Juan Badillo, Carlos Espalier, Gregorio Esparza, Andres Nava, and others.

Hopefully, this essay will help bridge this no-man's land and show that Mexican Americans have indeed contributed to American letters in a substantial measure. We cannot undo what has been to the Mexican and Mexican American in American literature; but we can take steps in a new direction.

Language, Culture, and Race

The unerring observation of most historians who study Mexico's history is that the face of Mexico is an Indian face. Indeed, traveling the length and width of modern Mexico one is most impressed by the influences of Mexican culture, by the primitive pyramids of Teotihuacan, with the legend of Ixtlahuquitl. Though the Spanish influence is everywhere visible in Mexico, it is the Indian character of the people which is the more obvious. And although the crown and church of Spain almost
succeeded in totally Europeanizing "Montezuma's children" they were unable to convert the Indian masses physiognomically into their own image. Unfortunately, the physical appearance—the obviously identifiable characteristics—were to keep Montezuma's children in low socioeconomic strata down to the time of the Mexican Revolution of 1810. But only in our time has the pride of Indian blood rather than Spanish blood become a source of national Mexican pride. And, indeed, over two-fifths of the Mexican population can still be classified as "pure-blooded" Indians, while well over half have some Indian blood in them. Yet, despite the fact that the Indian type resisted absorption, the language of the conquerors dominated.

In Mexico the Spanish-speaking Indian types have achieved a relatively high degree of equal opportunity. But this is in a country where the Indian type is by far the most dominant and in which he has almost no linguistic disadvantage. However, the ten million or so of Montezuma's children who have settled within the boundaries of the United States—though mostly in the Southwest—are still struggling to overcome not only the linguistic disadvantage of speaking a foreign language but the disadvantage of visibility—looking like a Mexican.

Only until recently have the Mexican Americans received any kind of significant attention in this country. This is not withstanding the fact that Mexican Americans constitute the second largest minority group in the United States, and that outside of the speakers of English they constitute the single largest linguistic group in America. Most Mexican Americans live in the five-state area of Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, Arizona, and California, with the largest single concentration in Los Angeles. But there are Mexican Americans throughout most of the United States, from Washington to Florida, and from California to Maine. Almost two million Mexican Americans are to be found in the Ohio Valley crescent from Madison, Wisconsin, to Erie, Pennsylvania.

In the greater sense of the word, Mexican Americans have always been "Americans." more so than Anglo Americans. For Mexican Americans are not "transplanted" Americans; they were here before the Puritans, before the Dutch, before the Irish and the Italians, before the Poles, before the Hungarians. They were, as Carey McWilliams put it, very much a part of the landscape when the Anglo Americans arrived. Yet despite this and their size in numbers Mexican Americans have been the most shamefully neglected minority in the United States. In the Southwest where approximately 7 million of them live, they subsist on levels of survival exceedingly below national norms. But the reason for this, many Mexican Americans argue, is that they are victims of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, a treaty which identified those who came with the conquered lands of the Southwest. Carey McWilliams makes an interesting point of this by suggesting that Mexican Americans are not essentially immigrants or foreigners to the Southwest; coming "north from Mexico," they are of the Americas.

Nevertheless, Mexican Americans have been struggling within the predominantly Anglo American culture of the United States for over 124 years, since the signing of the treaty of peace at Guadalupe Hidalgo on February 2, 1848, terminating the hostilities of the Mexican-American War. Though that treaty guaranteed the "rights of Mexicans established in Territories ceded to the United States," the fact of the matter is as Julian Nava points out that:

after 1848 and the victory of U.S. forces over Mexico, conditions in the Southwest were not favorable to the Mexican American. To many, he represented both a former enemy and a dangerous element that had to be contained. So that while some Spanish-surnamed people established relatively adequate relations with the Anglo Americans in areas like New Mexico and Iowa, Colorado, except for a small number (where assimilation and intermarriage occurred), most Mexican Americans occupied a place on a lower rung of society.

As a consequence Mexican Americans have been excluded from the accounts of American development despite the fact that in the Southwest the Hispanic heritage is older than the British heritage of the Atlantic frontier. Up until the Mexican American War the language and culture of the Southwest was Indo-Hispanic as the Civil Rights Commission reiterated:

As early as 1538, the Spanish had set up a printing press in Mexico City. By 1554, they had established a university in Mexico City. By 1690, the Spanish had left a series of missions along the California coast, established Santa Fe, and ranged as far north as Kansas.

Mexican Americans and the Hispanic Southwest

In 1967, Enrique Hank Lopez wrote a poignant and nostalgic piece about his ambivalence as a Mexican American, feeling neither at home in the United States nor in Bachimba, his ancestral home in the Mexican state of Chihuahua. Though not all Mexican Americans are struggling with this kind of conflict, Lopez' piece does point up the fact that indeed there have been some Mexican Americans who have been alienated from American society and who, seeking some identification with the paternal homeland, find themselves unable to go home again. But of course not all Mexican Americans have had ancestors who came from what is now the Republic of Mexico. Many of them came with the conquered lands of the Southwest. Carey McWilliams makes an interesting point of this by suggesting that Mexican Americans are not essentially immigrants or foreigners to the Southwest; coming "north from Mexico," they are of the Americas.
This is not counting the activities of the Spanish in Georgia, Florida and the Mississippi Valley.¹⁴

There is little doubt, indeed, that the contributions to American life and literature by Mexican Americans and their forebears has yet to be fully comprehended and measured.¹⁵ For Mexico has unquestionably produced "a cultural storm front," as Cecil Robinson calls it,¹⁶ which has persistently extended upward and outward across what is now the Mexican-American border.

The most illuminating work thus far on the nature of this influence, specifically upon American history, has been the work of the eminent historian Herbert Eugene Bolton and adherents to his "Spanish Borderlands" thesis.¹⁷ Essentially, Bolton saw the American Southwest first as the northern borderlands of the Republic of Mexico. As borderlands, he contended that their integral character in the structure of the Spanish colonial government in Mexico, and later of the independent Republic of Mexico, was basically defensive in nature. That is, their purpose was not necessarily to advance the frontiers of Spanish and Mexican civilizations but, rather, to protect the fringes of their civilizations from uninvited foreign incursions. The character of the borderlands society and institutions was thus shaped to a great extent by this philosophy. And in the wake of westward expansion Americans unknowingly, perhaps, regarded the Southwest as a "wild" frontier. Frederick Jackson Turner called it "the meeting point between savagery and civilization."¹⁸ But Turner's "frontier thesis" did not take into account the fact that in the Southwest the struggle was not between savagery and civilization, but between civilization and civilization, Anglo-American versus Indo Hispanic.

From the beginning, the American westward movement may be characterized by cultural conflict. For certainly the expansion of the United States after 1806 to the South and the Southwest was characterized specifically by cultural conflict with Spain, engendered in no small part by political antipathies carried over from the British colonial period and partly from the effects of the "Black Legend" inspired by Bartolome de las Casas' Brevisima Relacion de la destruccion de las Indias published in 1552. In his account of the treatment of the Indians by Spaniards. Las Casas related in great detail the most brutal aspects of the Spanish colonizers. The British were subsequently quick to exploit this alleged fact of the Spanish character for their own purposes,¹⁹ chief of which was to get in on a piece of the American action.

A glance at Spanish maps of the time shows the extent of the cultural conflict between Anglo American interests and the Indo Hispanic interests. One readily notes that more than four-fifths of what is now the continental U.S. was at one time part and parcel of the Spanish empire in the New World.²⁰

Of course part of the rationale underlying the protracted acquisition of Spanish and Mexican lands by Anglo Americans was that the lands were "uninhabited." This is a matter of perspective, of course. But the rationale points to the abysmal lack of understanding about Indo Hispanic life and institutions on the part of Anglo Americans eager to move westward. Hispanic colonization involved little beyond the establishment of the presidio and the mission around which colonial frontier life centered.²¹ By contradistinction, British colonial life centered about the establishment of "towns."

Be that as it may, over the last seventy years historical interest in the Hispanic Southwest has grown to the point that such history has come to be recognized as an integral part of American history.²² Knowledge of Spanish and Mexican activity in the United States has helped to round out the "true" picture of the historical growth of the United States as a multi-ethnic country. As a consequence, most history curricula of American colleges and universities now include at least one course in "The Spanish Borderlands," thanks to the pioneering work of professor Bolton. And it is as professor Octavio Gil Munilla of the University of Sevilla wrote in his work on the Participacion de Espana en la Genesis Historica de los Estados Unidos:

The thirteen colonies represent only a minimal territorial portion within the present spatial boundaries of the United States in the constitution of a nationality of the United States. Peoples and territories which have had nothing whatever to do with the people and regions of the thirteen colonies have played a very important role.²³

A Neglected Aspect of American Literature

But just as the history of the United States impinges on the history of Spain and Mexico in the United States so too does American literature impinge on Spanish and Mexican literature of the American South and Southwest. Unfortunately such recognition has been lacking in the bulk of American literary histories and American literary texts. For example, one contemporary literary historian begins his History of American Literature with the following comments:

Although the exploration of North America was shared by the Spanish, the Dutch, the Swedes, the French, and the English, and although each of these nationalities produced its portion of exploration literature, it was the English group that prevailed and cast the culture of most of this continent in a form that it largely retains to the present day.²⁴

This is the typical and characteristic opening of all such works, though one would expect that in 1970 when the work was published a modicum of enlightenment would have filtered through to American literary historians. Fortunately such enlightenment has touched a few American literary scholars here and there. One such is Professor Thomas M. Pearce who, in a provocative article entitled "American Traditions and Our Histories of Literature," wrote:

English in Texas
The point which Professor Pearce was taking exception to had to do with the placement of "Non-English Writing" at the end of Volume Four of The Cambridge History of American Literature based upon the assumption that such literature, though ostensibly written in the United States, was nevertheless foreign in English. The term "Non-English Writing" is, of course, obviously ambiguous. But this linguistic chauvinism (lexocentrism) has been the principal reason for the exclusion of the Spanish literature of the United States from the corpus of American literature, just as it was excluded even from the "Non-English Writing" of Volume Four of The Cambridge History of American Literature.

Professor Pearce was among the vanguard of American literary scholars to assert that "language does not seem to be a logical bar to recognition of non-English material as literature of the United States."22 And indeed the Spanish literature of exploration dealing with the Southern and Southwestern portions of the United States—the chronicles of American exploration—have been consequently excluded as part of our national literary heritage though they treat of the same themes of exploration as their British counterparts. We can no longer be content in the parochial cultural and linguistic context of contemporary America to accept unquestioningly the kinds of pat openings used by American literary historians suggesting that American literature begins properly with the arrival of British colonists in America. For the fact of the matter is that American literature actually begins with the formation of the United States as a political entity. Thus, the literary period from the founding of the first permanent English settlement at Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607 to the formation of the American Union, properly speaking, presents the British period of American literature. So, too, the literary period from the first permanent Spanish settlement at Saint Augustine, Florida, in 1565, to the dates of acquisition of those Spanish and Mexican lands by the United States should in fact represent the Hispanic period of American literature. More appropriately, the British and Hispanic periods could be tagged under the rubric of Colonial American Literature. The Mexican Period of the Southwest could simply be labeled the "Mexican Period."

But whatever the reasons for deliberately or inadvertently neglecting the Hispanic aspect of American literature, the fact remains that not only have Mexican Americans been deprived of their literary birthright but all other Americans have also in the process been deprived of knowledge about an important part of a literary heritage that is as much theirs as Mexican Americans.

Towards a Definition of Mexican American Literature

The point of the preceding has been simply to show that a literature does not evolve in a vacuum. Unlike Jupiter who sprang full-grown from the head of Minerva, American literature did not spring full-grown upon the formation of the American Union.23 It grew as the natural consequence of its British literary roots. In like manner, the roots of Mexican American literature are firmly planted in the Hispanic literary tradition and heritage. For the sake of literary focus, however, the parameters of what may properly be defined as Mexican American literature include any literary output in or about the Hispanic Southwest by Mexican Americans since its acquisition by the United States as a consequence of the Mexican American War; the parameters are meant to include also any writing in any part of the United States by Mexican Americans.24 We may, also, to stretch the point as most American literary historians do when defining the beginnings of American literature, consider the literature of Spanish Colonial America and of the Mexican National period as part of Mexican American literature, the beginnings, so to speak.25 For just as the Atlantic frontier had its writers prior to 1776 so too the Hispanic Southwest had its writers prior to 1848.

New World Roots

But there is one important consideration to be accounted for: the taproots of Mexican American literature are not only planted in the Hispanic literary tradition, which reaches back to the Spanish Peninsula and to the heart of the Graeco-Roman world, but they are planted also in the literary soil of the new world. Though the attempt by the "Spanish Americans" to suppress the Indian heritage of Mexicans and Mexican Americans was constant, the Indianist Movement, as it was called, finally emerged to the forefront with the Mexican Revolution of 1910. Yet almost a century earlier, after the Mexican Revolution for Independence (1810-1821), the first "President" of Mexico, Guadalupe Victoria, was in fact the product of both the Indian and Spanish peoples of Mexico.

We should bear in mind, as Willis Barnstone reminds us in his Introduction to Ignacio Bernal's work on Mexico Before Cortez, that "the Mexican [American] has a profound sense of cultural continuity extending back into his country's prehistory... if he is from an old Mexican family, the blood of the Indian probably flows in his veins."26 It is also important to remember that the Spaniards did not bring "civilization" with them. When Cortez passed
between the high volcanoes of Popocatepetl and Ixta-
tzihuatl on his ascent into the valley of Tenochtitlán
(Mexico), he was riding into the land of a people who
had already achieved a high state of civilization, its
grandeur no less diminished when compared to the
Civilization of the European invaders. Bernal Díaz del
Castillo captured the wonder of the new world when
he wrote in his chronicle:

We saw so many cities and towns built on the water,
and other cities on the surrounding land, and that straight and
level causeway which entered the city, we were amazed and
said that it was like the enchanted places recounted in
Amadís de Gaula, because of the great towers and
buildings which grew out of the water, all made of stone and
mortar, and some of our soldiery even asked whether what
they saw was not a dream, and do not wonder that I write in
this way, for there is so much to ponder over in all things
that I do not know how to describe them. We saw things
never heard or dreamed about before.33

Indeed, the new world ancestors of Mexican
Americans were not only a highly cultured and highly
urban people but they were a literate people as well.
For as Stan Steiner points out: "No people in the
New World have an older written history than the
Mexican Indians."34 And indeed the Olmec writing
system, for example, dates back to at least 600 B.C.
Unfortunately, much of the pre-Columbian literature
of Mexico was destroyed by the fiery antipathy of
clerics who incinerated what Indian writing they
could get hold of because it represented a pagan
tradition spiritually opposed to their own.35 Bishop
Landa of Yucatán has been quoted as saying at that
time: "We found a large number of books of these
characters [codical writing], and as they contained
nothing but superstition and lies of the devil, we
burned them all, which the Indians regretted to an
amazing degree and which caused them great
anguish."36

Perhaps the literature of the vanquished is always
the first victim of any conflict, especially cultural con-
flicts. Nevertheless, some of the new world literature
was preserved and rendered into western writing.
Fortunately, the Popol Vuh, the Mayan bible, was
one of those works which survived and which has
been translated into Spanish and English.37 Some of
the works of King Nexahuacoyotl (d. 1472) of Tex-
coco, the poet-king or the David of the Aztecs,
survived and have been also translated into Spanish
and English. After the conquest, Fernando de Alva
Ixtlilxochitl, wrote of the exploits of his ancestor Ixtli-
xochitl, Prince of Texcoco, during the conquest,
translating the Aztec writing into Spanish.38 Today,
the quality of pre-hispanic literature may be sur-
veyed in a number of works including The Broken
Spears: The Aztec Account of the Conquest of Mex-
ico (Beacon Press, 1962) by Miguel Leon-Portilla, or
in his other work on Aztec Thought and Culture
(University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), or Pre-
Columbian Literatures of Mexico (University of
Oklahoma Press, 1969). Other works on New World
literature include Daniel G. Brinton, Ancient Nahua
Poetry (Philadelphia, 1880); John H. Cormyn, Aztec
Literature in XXVII Congres International des
Americanistes (Mexico, 1939); Angel Mgie Garibay-
K. Historia de la Literature Nahualt (Mexico, 1953);
Antonio Panufiel (ed.), Colección de Documentes
para la Historia de-Mexico, 6 vols. (Mexico, 1897-
1903).39

The pre-Columbian literature of Mexico consisted
entirely of codices; that is, a long, screen-like, folded
parchment with "writing" on both sides. These
codices dealt with a variety of information. The Mex-
icans had books on agriculture, law, medicine,
poetry, sports, songs, magic, etc. For example, the
Tonalamatl was the sacred almanac which recorded the
Tonalpohualli, the count of the year. The Scribes
were called Tlacuilos, and they recorded on codices
the most minute events of Mexican life. While the
Spanish language was essentially phonetic in
nature they were rendered on codices in hieroglyphics.
Though relatively little pre-hispanic Indian literature survived the Spanish holocaust,40
"there is always the possibility that some ancient
codex lies forgotten in a trunk in some attic in
Europe, or is jealously kept secret in some town in
Mexico, or is hidden under dusty files in a library,
and will eventually add to our store of information,"41
Peterson adds hopefully.

European Background
and the Spanish Colonial Heritage

If we accept the premise of linguistic relativity, that
the language one speaks helps to create the point of
view, then certainly Spanish-speaking Mexican
American writers have been influenced in their point
of view by the same language which influenced their
Spanish forebears in New Spain and in Old Spain.
Certainly, Spanish literature of the New World was in
the same tradition as Spanish literature of the Old
World.42 For as M. Romero-Navarro suggests:

"The people, the language, the mutual traditions should in fact make American literature (i.e., Mexican literature) a
branch of peninsular literature (Spanish literature)- Since
American civilization is the offspring of the Spanish, when
the latter shone in all its splendor, its influence on the intel-
lectual life of Hispano-American should have been clearly
noted."43

True enough, the cuentos from the Book of
Sendebar and Calila y Dimna, literature of the
Moorish heritage in Spain (but so internalized that
they have become an integral part of the origins of
Spanish literature in the same way that the writing of
Seneca and Auselius have become an integral part of
the Roman origins of Spanish literature) influ-
enced the New World Spaniards no less than they had
influenced their Old World counterparts. In like
fashion The Canterbury Tales and The Faerie
Queene exerted their literary influence on the New
World Britshers. Mexican Americans can reflect
with pride on the hispanic literary tradition which in-
cluded such world famous works as El Poema del
mio Cid, La Celestina, El Libro de Buen Amor,
Lazarillo de Tormes, Don Quijote, -and many
others.44 In 1542, Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca
published the Relacion of his fantastic wanderings
from Florida to Mexico. What might well be considered the first American epic, written by Gaspar de Villagra in 1592 memorializing the _Tragedy of Acorna_ in New Mexico was written in a style directly imitating the Vergilian epic. And in 1598 religious plays like *Los Moros y los Cristianos, Los Pastores*, and *Los Tres Magos* were acted in New Mexico. It stands to reason that if American writers like Cotton Mather, Washington Irving, and others were influenced by the Hispanic literary traditions, as Stanley T. Williams indicates, that certainly Mexican and Mexican American writers performed that influence too.

The first European language of any consequence spoken and widely used in the geographical area of what is now called the United States was Spanish. Ahd, indeed, as the historian Charles Gibson commented in the preface to his study of _Spain in America_, "in space, time and complexity," Spain in America "is a more substantial subject than England in America." In fact, the lands which are now part of the United States, either, as integral states of the nation or as possessions (like Puerto Rico and Guam) which were (and some which are still "tenaciously") "hispanic" lands, comprise roughly a land mass over five times the size of the original 13 British colonies. To be sure, the British colonies engendered the political concept of a "United States of America," but to suggest as has been the case historically—that the "roots" of American literature spring solely from the British American tradition and culture of the period from 1607 to 1776 is to suggest, say, that the roots of the contemporary Jewish American surge in American literature are likewise to be found there. The absurdity of such a suggestion needs no elaboration. For Jewish American literature has its roots in the rich literary and cultural tradition of Continental Europe which was transplanted in American soil during the great periods of European immigration between 1870 and 1924. The literary consequence is that the "Jewish ethic" has emerged as an equally motivating literary force in contemporary American literature just as the "Puritan ethic" was the motivating literary force for colonial British Americans and their literary progenitors. So, too, since World War II specifically the "Black ethic" has emerged as a powerful literary force in American literature. There is likewise a "hispanic ethic" motivating Mexican American literature as a consequence of the great Mexican immigration to the United States between 1900 and 1940. I daresay that the proportion of Americans who are heirs of the Puritan ethic or of the early British American heritage is small by comparison to the number of Americans with "other" ethnic heritages. Even in the 13 British American colonies the population was a mixed bag ranging from Germans in Pennsylvania to Dutch in New York and English in Massachusetts to Irish in Georgia, though admittedly this is a fairly limited range.

In terms of literary output, Spain in America is indeed a substantial subject. The question is not whether it was more substantial than England in America, but the extent to which it was substantial. Offhand there is considerable similarity between the kinds of literary activity in British America and Hispanic America, except that perhaps the Spaniards in America were more given to the documentation of activities, due in part certainly to the bureaucratized nature of the Spanish royal authority. Letters and their attendant protocol were indispensable to the march of Spanish empire in America, though at times that march was ground to a halt between communications from the Old World to the New. The numerous *entradas* into the Southwest were carefully authenticated by the escribanos accompanying the conquistadores. In short, the literature of Spain in the Southwest consisted mostly of diaries, travel accounts, and relaciones. But the literature of Spain in America ran the full range. During the Spanish Colonial period, Mexico produced such writers as Juan Ruiz de Alarcon, the noted dramatist of Spain's Golden Age; Sor Juan Inez de la Cruz, sometimes called the Mexican Keats; Carlos de Siguenza y Gongora; and many others.

The Mexican Heritage

The period from the Mexican Revolution for independence to the Mexican American War is slightly less than 30 years depending on whether one uses the date 1810 or 1821 to calculate from and the date one chooses to end on. Nevertheless, these were truly difficult years for the fledgling Republic of Mexico which all of a sudden found itself heir to the Spanish holdings to the "north," holdings which now include the present states of California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and parts of Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado, Wyoming, and small contested areas. In effect, Mexico lost almost half of its territory as a consequence of the Mexican American War. She was fortunate not to have lost more land, for there was great public outcry to annex the whole of Mexico.

The Mexican national period in the Southwest is characterized principally by turmoil. Almost from the beginning the northern state of Texas (joined to Coahuila—for administrative purposes), led by its Anglo American settlers, started agitating for separation. A recent report concludes that "the very immigration of Americans into Texas which the Mexicans encouraged was their undoing." Most of the literature of this period consists of memorials, reports, and correspondence pertaining to various struggles in the Mexican Southwest. Though here and there literary bent gave rise to such

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Manuscripts Needed...

See page 24 for details.

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The Revolution for Mexican independence, begun on the 16th of September, 1810, was not really terminated by the Treaty of Córdoba in 1821, negotiated by General Iturbide, who was chosen to head the independent Mexico, and O’Donnu, the last Spanish Viceroy to Mexico. Iturbide proved in-temperate, profligate and ambitious. As a Spanish American he had helped put down the revolt of Hidalgo and Morelos, but in self-interest he turned toward national “independence” coupled to a “constitutional” monarchy.

Mexican independence turned out to be simply independence for the Spanish Americans, not for the Mexican people, the Indians and other castes of Father Hidalgo’s army and later of Father Morelo’s. The “Spaniards” of New Spain, gachupines as the word was sounding, were non-existent, Ernest Gruen has pointed out.

It was against this background that the northern territory of Mexico appeared as a coveted prize for American expansionists. For the Mexicans, like the Mexican Americans after them, were faced with the apparently insoluble burden of pulling themselves up by their bootstraps. But Mexican Americans ‘have hardly faced the burden that their peculiar position as a minority in the Southwest has imposed on them,” say Galarza, Gallegos, and Samora, three distinguished contemporary Mexican Americans commenting on the insoluble burden of Mexican Americans.


Notes
11 Article VIII, Treaty of Peace, Between the United States and Mexico, New Mexico Statutes, 1953; Annotated Volume One, reprinted by Tate Gallery (Truchas, New Mexico, 1969).
12 Julian Nava, Mexican Americans: A Brief Look at Their History (New York, 1970), p. 27. McWilliams indicates that “the ease and swiftness of the victory over Mexico and the conquest of California had bred in the Americans a measureless contempt for all things Mexican.” [North From Mexico (New York, 1958), p. 128.]
14 See, for example, John Tate Lanning, The Spanish Missions of Georgia (University of North Carolina Press, 1935); Bartolome Barrientos, Pedro Menendez da Aviles, Founder of Florida (University of Florida Press, 1965); Abraham P. Nasatir, Spanish War Vessels of the Mississipp (Yale University Press, 1968); Vicente Rodriguez Casado, Primeros Anos de Dominacion espanola en la Luisiana (Madrid, 1942).
16 Robinson goes on to say: “Mexico’s influence upon American literature has been unlike any other foreign influence.” [With the Ears of Strangers: The Mexican in American Literature (Tucson, 1963), 57, p. viii]. And Stanley T. Williams reminds us that Cotton Mather used his “Spaniards” to compose La Fe del Christiano [sic] in 1699 with hopes of propelling Mexico. Thus, Williams suggests Mather “prepared the way” for “Spanish influence on the literature of the United States” [Op. cit., pp. 3-20].
the Materials for the History of the United States in the Principal Archives of Mexico (Washington, 1913).


19 See Julian Jideria, La Leyenda Negra (Barcelona, 1943).


21 E. G. Bourne concedes that "more than half of the present territory of the United States has at one time or another been under Spanish Dominion [Spain in America: 1450-1580 (New York, 1904), p. xix].

22 According to Charles Gibson, "the distinctive type of Spanish frontier community was the pueblo or garrison. The line of protective northern fortification eventually extended across the entire continent, from Florida to California" [Spain in America (New York, 1966), p. 191]. See also Herbert Eugene Bolton, 'The Mission as a Frontier Institution in the Spanish American Colonies,' American Historical Review, XXVII (October, 1917), 42-61.


24 Octavio Gil Munilla, Participacion de Espana en la Genesia Historica de los Estados Unidos (Madrid, 1963), p. 5 [Translation mine.] "Las tres colonias tienen en orden territorial, dentro del presente ambito espacial de los Estados Unidos, en la constitucion de la nacionalidad estadounidense han jugado un papel importantisimo territorios y gentes que nada tienen que ver con los pobladones y con las regiones de las tres colonias."

25 Martiros; Dip, History of American Literature: From the Beginning to 1910, (New York, 1970), 3. In a survey of over 100 "distinguished" survey texts and almost as many histories of American literature I found only the most passing reference to Spain in the United States and certainly no mention of any Mexican-American writer whatever. The exceptions are some of the current ethnic collections, of course, such as Forgotten Pages of American Literature, edited by Gerald W. Haslem (New York, 1970) and Speaking for Ourselves, edited by Lilian Faderman and Barbara Bradshaw (New York, 1986).

26 Thomas M. Pearce, 'American Traditions and Our Histories of Literature,' American Literature, XIV, No. 3 (November, 1942), 279.


28 Op Cit, p. 280.


30 Though in the Literary History of the United States, edited by Robert E. Siler, et al. (New York, 1948), p. 303, only seven lines are devoted to 'Mexican and Latin American literary productivity' in the United States, three authors are cited, two are Anglos and one is a Mexican. No Mexican Americans are listed.

31 However, many people have been reluctant to do so; for example, in a book dedicated to the dictator Porfirio Diaz, Marie Robinson Wright indicates treulently, "One can hardly ascribe to Mexico, the body of Spanish writers who chronicled the Conquest [Mexico: A History of its Progress and Development in One Hundred Years (Philadelphia, 1911), p. 290]."

32 I hesitate to use the word mestizo because the term, coined by the Spaniards to identify the offspring of unions between Spanish men and Indian women, represents the racist character of the Spanish colonization of the New World despite the fact that unlike the British colonists, Spaniards were encouraged by church and state to cohabit with native women. There are no figures reliable as to the actual number of Spaniards (peninsular and New World) in Mexico (New Spain) during the 300 years of Spanish colonial rule. Their number was never very large in the 'New World' and only a few thousand ever resided at any time in the borderlands [McWilliams, Brothers Under the Skin, p. 116]. John Tebbel and Ramon E. Ruiz advance the fact that only about 0.3 percent of the Spanish-speaking Americans are of "Spanish" extraction [South by Southwest (Garden City, 1968), p. 4]. There were no New Spanish women, so that by the time of Mexican independence more than three-fourths of the Mexican population was considered in a caste other than, white, the bulk of them mestizos and indians. The term mestizo is the equivalent of half-bred, a pejorative word we are discarding when speaking of the issue between a white man and an American Indian woman. The word mestizo is also a fairly common word which is an equally pejorative word which we try not to use any longer when speaking of the issue of unions between white men and black women. We do not, for example, pejorate the issue of unions between Scotsmen and Irish women, nor the issue of unions between Englishmen and French women, nor vice versa."


36 Historians like Lewis H. Morgan, F. B. Baudelier, and William H. Prescott have tended to minimize these descriptions, arguing "that Colles, himself steeped in imperial phallogamy and concep-
tions, used familiar descriptive terms in reporting to his emperor a new life of which he had inadequate understanding. His normal tendency would be to over-exaggerate what he saw, in order to enhance the fame of his own prowess in the hope of material reward" [Herbert Ingram Priestley, The Mexican Nation: A History (New York, 1924), p. 213].

37 If most accounts of American literature have completely overlooked the Hispanic heritage of the United States, then conversely most accounts of [North] American history have attempted to minimize or ridicule the history of Spain in America.


39 According to Paul Horgan, "the essential terms of the Spanish Invasion and the Mexican resistance" were based on religious opposition [Conquistadors in North American History (New York, 1963), p. 47].


41 For some excellent selections see Julio Sesto, Historia del Pensamiento Mexican: Desde las Siete Preguntas de Aztlan hasta Nuestros Dias (Mexico, 1942), pp. 127-143.


44 See, for example, Philip Dark, Mixtec Ethnohistory: A Method of Analysis of the Codical Art (Oxford University Press, 1958).

45 Most of what we know about the Pre-Columbian New World was due to the literary efforts of such men as Bernardino de Sahagun (1500-1590) and Tonoibio de Benavente (known as Motolinia, d. 1588). Also through the works of writers like Garcia de la Vega (El Inca) who was the cousin of the Castil-
ián poet of the same name and whose mother was an Inca princess.

46 Op Cit, p. 241.

47 Undoubtedly, the best comprehensive study of this influence is found in A Cultural History of Spanish America by Mariano Picón-Salas, translated by Irving A. Leonard (University of California Press, 1968).

48 M. Romero-Navarro, America Española (New York, 1919), p. 87 [Translation mine.] "La raza, el idioma, las tradiciones comunes, habian de hacer de la literatura americana una rama de la poesía universal. Siendo la civilización americana hija de la española, cuando nacía esta con todo su esplendor, había de quedar claramente marcado su influjo en la vida intelectual de la America hispana."

49 New World and only a few thousand ever resided at any time in the borderlands [McWilliams, Brothers Under the Skin, p. 116].
Chicano Literature: A Bibliographical Essay

Donald F. Castro

Recommended Courses and Texts

Introduction to Chicano Literature


Chicano Short Story and Drama


Chicano Poetry


Chicano Non-Fiction


Introduction to Chicano Literature

The two anthologies selected for the introductory course in Chicano literature are Philip Ortego's *We Are Chicano*, and Dorothy Harth and Lewis Baldwin's *Voices of Aztlan*. Both anthologies are basically arranged generically with short but good introductions. The selections within each section are excellent and the two books complement each other in that only three poems are duplicated. Ortego is especially to be complimented for his inclusion of a good share of chicana writers. Anthologies which you might want to examine but which I do not recommend over the above two are: Cardenas de Dwyer's *Chicano Voices*, Valdez and Steiner's *Aztlan*, Castaneda Shular, Ybara-Frausto, and Sommer's *Literatura Chicana*, Salinas, Luis Omar. *Crazy Gypsy*. Fresno, California: Orígenes Publications, 1970.


Chicano Novel


Faderman's *From the Barrio*, and Paredes' and Paredes' *Mexican-American Author.* Chicano Voices comes a close third, but three anthologies in one class might become a bit unwieldy. *Aztlan* and *Literatura Chicana* are basically arranged thematically with introductions and other editorial apparatuses that are at times more confusing than helpful. *From the Barrio* and *Mexican-American Authors* are rather skimpy and are perhaps more suited to being used in high school than on the college level.

To augment the two recommended anthologies I have chosen "Corky" Gonzales' long poem *I am Joaquin* and Villarreal's novel *Pocho.* Yo Soy Joaquin/*I am Joaquin* is perhaps the most famous work in Chicano literature today. As a matter of fact, *El Teatro Campesino*—the almost equally famous theatre group—produced a film entitled *I am Joaquin,* and it itself is of such quality that I believe it should be in the holdings of every university and college library in the country which has an audio-visual department. Villarreal's *Pocho* was originally published in 1959. It is considered by most to be the first Chicano novel and as such it is almost a prototype in whole or in part of many of the other Chicano novels to follow. It is not claimed that Gonzales' *I am Joaquin* is the best Chicano poem, nor that Villarreal's *Pocho* is the best Chicano novel—only that both are major representative works, omissions of which would be serious oversights.

Five articles on Chicano literature in general which you might want to use in preparation and which you might want to put on Reserve in your library are: Gerald Hausman's "Por La Causa," *American Literature,* Francisco Jiménez's "Chicano Literature: Sources and Themes," Tomas Rivera's "Into the Labyrinth: The Chicano in Literature," Phillip D. Ortego's "The Chicano Renaissance," and Marcela Trujillo's "Chicano Writers and Poets." Rivera's essay was originally published in a small collection by the Department of English and Journalism at Pan American University. The collection *New Voices in Literature: The Mexican-American* stemmed from three presentations on the subject of Chicano literature given at Pan American University in October 1971. There are two Ph.D. dissertations on Chicano literature which are fairly comprehensive: Philip D. Ortego's *Backgrounds of Mexican American Literature* and Alba Irene Moessler's *La Literatura Mejicanoamericana del Suroeste de los Estados.* Two other works I would recommend but which might be difficult to obtain are Philip Ortego and David Conde's *The Chicano Literary World* 1974 and Donald Castro's *Chicano Literature.* Ortego and Conde's work is the published proceedings from *The First National Symposium on Chicano Literature and Critical Theory* held at New Mexico Highlands University in November 1974. Castro's work is actually a teaching module commissioned by the Teacher Center Program at The University of Texas at El Paso. It was one of several modules commissioned during the 1973-74 Socio-Cultural Training Sequence collected under the title of "The Aesthetic Dimension." "

**Chicano Short Story and Drama**

Because of the limited number of texts available, studies in the Chicano short story and Chicano drama are combined here to form a single course. Ludwig and Santibanez's anthology *The Chicanos: Mexican-American Voices* only contains six short stories, but it is still recommended because it contains two essays on Chicano theatre as well. Romano and Rios' anthology *El Espejo* is recommended primarily for its selection of short fiction, although it also contains Estela Portillo's play "The Day of the Swallows" as well as two other short dramatic pieces. Ulibarri's collection *La Fragua Sin Fuego* contains five short stories, all written in New Mexican Spanish with accompanying English translations. The other two recommended texts are rather unique: at present, Rivera's *... y no se lo trago la hierba* is the only published collection of Chicano short stories, and Valdez's *Actos* is the only collection of Chicano drama in print. Nephtali DeLeon's *5 Plays* is no longer available. And Roberto Garza's *Contemporary Chicano Theater: An Anthology* which promises to be excellent is still forthcoming.

There are, relatively speaking, few anthologized short stories and even fewer plays. Other than the plays referred to above, there are only approximately a half dozen more plays found in one anthology or another. All of these plays are very short and since there is usually only one play per anthology, the cost of any one of these texts cannot be justified. Perhaps the best way to augment the plays already found in the recommended texts is to place on Reserve the issues of *El Grito.* From 1968-1970, for example, there were at least a half dozen plays published in one periodical. *La Luz* doesn't usually include plays in its literary section, but Roberto Garza's "On with the Movement" can be found in the May 1973 issue. In the August issue of that same year, the cover story of *La Luz* was on "Teatros De La Gente." It was written by Jorge A. Herta who earlier had published "Chicano Teatro: A Background" in the Fall 1971 issue of *Aztlan.* These two essays by Herta coupled with the two earlier mentioned essays in *The Chicanos: Mexican-American Voices* (one by Luis Valdez and the other by James Santibanez) just about sum up the available criticism on Chicano drama. At present, there are no articles specifically on the Chicano short story.

**Chicano Poetry**

Chicano poetry is the most interesting of all the genres. Not only is it the most prolific, but it is the most varied as well. Alurista, Delgado, Elizondo, Gonzales, Salinas, Sanchez, and Villanueva are all Chicano poets and yet each of their poetry while similar is so distinctive. Alurista's poems in *Porciento* are perhaps the best examples of Philip Ortego's "binary phenomena." Delgado's poems in *Chicano* are simple, honest, and above all else, full of love. *It's Cold* is Delgado's newest collection and one of the most recent in all of Chicano poetry. In my opinion, "Abelardo" is the most underrated poet writing today. While occasionally he falters, his best
far outweighs the best of many. Elizondo's poems in Perros y Antiperros are written in Spanish accompanied with English translations. They're often ironic, and at times, blatantly sarcastic. Gonzales' I am Joaquin is subtitled “An Epic Poem;” but I would argue that it is perhaps one of the longest lyrics ever written. It is a poem full of paradoxes, including the paradox of its own nature. Salinas' poems in Crazy Gypsy vary in quality, but when Salinas is being humorous or light-hearted as in “All Sudden, As a Bus” and “Conversation on a Bus” he presents himself as a Chicanpo poet who still recognizes that poetry can still be simply for fun. Sanchez's poems and poetic essays in Canto y Grity perhaps more than others remind the reader that poems are made up of words, words and sounds. Sanchez at times invents words; at other times, he deliberately misspells or misuses words—words, the stuff of which he uses “to sing and shout his liberation” and the liberation of all Chicanos. Villanueva's poems in Hay Otra Voz present to us a persona of immense sensitivity. On the whole, Villanueva's poems speak in a whisper without much of the franticness found elsewhere.

The above seven collections should do for a semester's work. But if an anthology is still desired, I would recommend either El Espejo or Walter Lowenfels' From the Belly of the Shark. The advantage to El Espejo would be that the students could also use it in another course such as that on the Chocene short story and Chicano drama. The advantage to Lowenfels' anthology would be that it is a multiethnic collection of poems, and the student could compare Chicano poetry with that of other groups such as the Eskimos, Hawaiians, Indians, and Puerto Ricans. In Lowenfels' there is also a short but good introduction to Chicano poetry by Ricardo Sanchez. There isn't much written specifically on Chicano poetry. Sanchez has a longer essay entitled “Chicano Poetry: A Social Enigma,” but I would imagine it is now hard to obtain since it is found in a 1971 collection entitled Obras which was published in a limited edition of only 100 copies. Philip Ortego's essay “Chicano Poetry: Roots and Writers” is stil the best on the subject. While it was originally published in the same small collection, New Voices in Literature, earlier mentioned in regards to Rivera's general article, it can now be found in the Spring 1972 issue of Southwestern American Literature.

Chicano Non-Fiction

The Chicano non-fiction course consists mainly of autobiographies and essays. The two anthologies chosen are Ludwig and Santibanez's The Chicanos: Mexican-American Voices and Romanos Voices: Readings from EL GRITO. Ludwig and Santibanez's anthology was also selected for the Chicone short story and Chicano drama course, thus, perhaps students will be able to use the text twice and take full advantage of its relative low cost. Actually the text with over twenty essays is more suited to this course than it is to the short story and drama course; and if for some reason it could only be used in one of the two, it should be the non-fiction course. Romanos Voices contains more than sixteen essays, and only one is a duplication. An anthology not recommended but which you might want to examine yourself is Edward Simpson's Pain & Promise: The Chicone Today. I did not recommend it just as I did not earlier recommend his collection of short stories, The Chicone; From Caricature to Self-Portrait, because both texts containing both Chicano and Anglo writers could easily be misconstrued, and perpetuate the fallacious thinking on the part of some that Chicano literature is “literature by about Chicanos.” Tortilla Flat is not a part of the corpus of Chicano literature, and the sooner the entire issue of which Steinbeck is only a part is put to rest, the better.

The six extended autobiographies are Andrew Garcia's Tough Trip Through Paradise 1879-1879, Ernesto Galazar's Barrio Boy, Eugene Nelson's compilation of Pablo Cruz and The American Dream, Anthony Quinn's The Original Sin, Oscar Zeta Acosta's The Autobiography of a Brown Buffalo, and its sequel The Revolt of the Cockroach People. Obviously Garcia's work is pre-World War II, but is such an interesting and unique work that I have made it my one exception. Garcia did not die until 1943, and he probably worked with his manuscript up until his death. The fact that it was not published until 1967 also encourages me to include it. Acosta's... Brown Buffalo and ... the Cockroach People will definitely contrast with Galazar's Barrio Boy, Nelson's Pablo Cruz, ... and Quinn's The Original Sin, but all five works are still Chicano autobiographies. Perhaps they, perhaps even the six of them—including Garcia's—will help remind us all that the abstraction “the Chicano experience” only truly exists as experiences of individual Chicanos.

Criticism of Chicano non-fiction is almost nonexistent. John Womack's article “The Chicanos” found in The New York Review briefly discusses several books and is perhaps worth examining although on the whole I would have to agree with de la Garza's sentiments expressed in a letter to the editor in a subsequent issue, “After having finished it [Womack's article], I find myself no longer outraged; instead I am disappointed.” Other than Womack's, there are no other full-fledged articles except for Eugene Fraire-Ardava's “A Study of Ironic Tone and Meaning: Octavio Romano's Good-Bye Revolution—Hello Slum.” And as the title indicates, the article focuses on one essay: an essay, sorry to say, which is not included in either recommended reader.

Chicano Novel

Of all the genres, the Chicone novel is the most sophisticated. From the Joycean “epiphanies” found in Villareal, to Rivera's "collection novel" technique, to Anaya's mystical treatment of curanderismo, the novel has offered the student of Chicano literature the most challenging of works—and the most rewarding. While the quality varies from Anaya's Bless Me, Ultima which I consider to be one of the best American novels written since World War II to Villasenor's Macho! which borders on the ex-
exploitative, it can still be said that the Chicano novel is the apotheosis of the Chicano Renaissance.

Because of the sophistication—simply because of the amounts of reading—I don't recommend the seminar on the Chicano novel to any level lower than upper division. While indeed most of the novels can be taught independently in various courses on a lower level, and some even in high school, all of the novels taken together present a formidable task requiring among other things, certain amounts of maturity and literary finesse. Also, unlike the other courses described, the course on the Chicano novel demands that it be organized chronologically. Chronology is important in the study of the novel because the Chicano novel, even in its short life, has already revealed certain lines of development. The odyssey in Chicano, for example, is much more meaningful when it is seen in the light of earlier odysseys found in The Plum Plum Pickers and Pocho—both even by those found in This Day's Death and City of Night.

Villarreal's Pocho was first published in 1969. It was Villarreal's first novel. And as is true of many first novels, it is a bildungsroman, which is very autobiographical. Villarreal himself considers Pocho very similar to Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. Villarreal's long-awaited second novel, The Fifth Horseman (1974) is a novel of the Mexican revolution akin to Azuela's Los de abajo although much extended.

John Rechy's City of Night (1963) is a masterpiece. And while the novel's chicanism is somewhat shrouded by its deep concern for the homosexual and "forgotten" world he inhabits, the winds of El Paso are undeniably there—pervasive and significant. Rechy's third novel This Day's Death (1969) is perhaps more readily identifiable as a Chicano novel but it too is ostensibly a novel primarily concerned with the homosexual in American society. Both books are quite explicit and require a mature audience who can overcome the urge to snicker or to condemn when compassion is what is solicited.

Barrio's The Plum Plum Pickers was also published in 1969. It is perhaps the most experimental of the novels recommended. Barrio is as much an artist as he is a writer, and often times he attempts to visually as well as emotionally arrest our attention. At times, he succeeds; at other times, he doesn't. Vasquez's Chicano (1970) also varies in quality, but for a different reason. Vasquez attempts to do too much. Narrating the history of four generations, Vasquez fails at times to develop sufficiently individual characters and individual events.

Rivera's "... y no se lo trago la tierra"... and the earth did not part (1971) can be considered both as a collection of short stories and as a "collection novel." The novelistic unity of And the Earth Did Not Part is not simplistic. It is very subtle and complex requiring a good deal of study. Rivera's work won the First Annual Premio Quinto Sol literary award for 1970. Anaya's Bless Me, Ultima won the award in 1971. It, like Pocho, is a first novel and a bildungsroman; but unlike Pocho, it has an aura of mysticism about it which cannot be labeled. It is certainly one of the best products of the Chicano Renaissance, if not the best.

Villasenor's Macho! was published in 1973. It is of questionable worth, but I include it since it does present the reader with the unavoidable question of the role of evaluation in criticism of Chicano literature. Other novels by Chicanos which you might want to examine are: Rechy's Numbers (1967), The Vampires (1971), and The Fourth Angel (1973). Floyd Salas' Tattoo the Wicked, Cross (1967) which, sorry to say, is out of print, and Miguel Mendez's Peregrinos De Aztlan (1974) which is the only Chicano novel written entirely in Spanish.

Recent novels by non-Chicanos about Chicanos are: Frank Bonham's Vive Chicano (1970), William Cox's Chicano Cruz (1972), Eugene Nelson's The Bracero (1972), and C. W. Smith's Thin Men of Haddam (1973). Vive Chicano and Chicano Cruz I do not recommend on any level. The Bracero and Thin Men of Haddam recommend with reservations. The Bracero is not actually about Chicanos; but as the title indicates, it's about braceros. The ending to Nelson's novel of one of the most moving I have ever read. The righteous anger—and indignation—aroused throughout the novel is at times almost unbearable. The Bracero is not a Chicano novel, but it is definitely related and could be profitably taught in a course on the Chicano novel. Thin Men of Haddam is not a bad novel and could very well be used in this course, but at times it helps to perpetuate the very literary stereotypes Steinbeck helped create earlier and which Chicano literature, on the whole, wants to eliminate once and for all. To condemn Smith's novel outright, though, would be unfair for Vasquez and Villasenor commit many of the same errors. I insist that with Smith as I trust it was for the latter two, it is not so much a matter of outlook as it is with faulty characterization.

Outside several reviews, there are basically three articles specifically on the Chicano novel: Teresa McKenna's "Three Novels: An Analysis," Donald F. Castro's "The Chicano Novel: An Ethno-Generic Study," and Philip D. Ortega's "The Chicano Novel: Chicano and The Plum Plum Pickers." None of the three discuss the more recent novels such as Anaya's and Villasenor's, and an updated view is definitely needed. There is a Ph.D. dissertation written on the Chicano novel, but it, too, is quickly becoming outdated. Because of Bless Me, Ultima's integral concern with curanderismo, I would recommend Ari Kiev's Curanderismo: Mexican-American Folk Psychiatry. While it is not intended as a substitute for personal encounters, or the handed-down accounts of encounters of one's parents, grandparents, and others, it is intended as an augmentation to the initiated, and as an introduction to the uninitiated.

Chicano literature is indeed an exciting new field. I am confident that in time the Chicano Renaissance will match or exceed both the Harlem Renaissance and the Southern Renaissance as an important social and artistic movement in twentieth-century
American literature. Although Chicano literature today is still very young as a literary movement, the number of quality works worthy not only of reading but of study is constantly growing. Soon that number will demand that such courses as recommended here be taught not just at universities and colleges where there are Chicano Studies programs or departments, but anywhere there are English departments.

Notes

1 The original study for this essay was funded by the Chicano Studies Program at Washington State University in the Spring of 1974. I am grateful to Professor Pedro Rodriguez, the then director of the program, and to Professor Salvador Ramirez, the present director, for their encouragement.


7 For more information on the film I am JavaScript may write to: Centro Campesino Cultural, Box 2902, Fresno, California 93701.


11 Tomas Rivera, "Into the Labyrinth: The Chicano in Literature," Southwestern American Literature, II (Fall 1972), 90-97


13 The other two essays found in New Voices in Literature are Philip D. Ortego’s "Chicano Poetry: Roots and Writers," (pp. 1-17) which I will discuss later, and Jose R. Reyna’s "Approaches to Chicano Folklore" (pp. 26-33).


30 Ortego in his article on Chicano poetry defines ‘binary phenomena’ as 'a mixture of the two languages [English and Spanish]... in which the linguistic symbols of two languages are mixed in utterances using either language’s syntactic structure (pp. 11-12).


46 Teresa McKenna, Three Novels: An Analysis," Aztlán, 1 (Fall 1970), 47-55.


(Edward Simmen and Professor Salvador Ramirez, the present director, at the University of Southern California, 1972.)
This section of reviews is a regular feature of English In Texas. It is limited to the review of books by Texas authors and to books which are about Texas. Emphasis will be given to books which may be useful to schools, teachers, and students, but items of more general interest will also be considered. The section can best serve its purpose through the help of Council members and others in the profession. The reviews gather information about new Texas, and attempts correspondence with persons who will evaluate the reviews.

Material for the teacher in a Spanish-English bilingual classroom (or for a teacher in a deprived cultural situation where there is no Mexican enrichment) has been frequent in this column; a survey of books noted during the past three years indicates that I have given greater emphasis to this area than the volume of publication warrants. My excuse is a result partly of where I teach and of a growing consciousness in Texas that the Spanish based culture must not be ignored.

Materials for a multi-cultural approach are not the same as those used to teach English or Spanish as a second language. Textbook publishers see profit in nationwide sales; few Texas textbooks are inherently of any of Texas's many cultures. Occasional stories about ranch or barrio are included in the "Stories of Other Lands" category, and Texas kids cannot find their roots in the stories by which they learn to read.

An axiom in the teaching of reading and writing is that children learn easiest when they read and write about things which they already know. This principle is contradicted by an aim of education— to broaden the provincial backgrounds of most children and most communities. Urban snobs sometimes think the opportunities of cities actually affect the children in those cities; barrio migrant children often have travelled as far (and seen as little) as puppets from the silk-stocking ed areas. Teachers and school systems need to beware of confusing language skills with human awareness.

Los de Sin Voz Speak

Chicano Voices, edited by Carlota Cardenas de Dwyer (New York: Houghton Mifflin 1976) achieves its goal of offering "a variety of writers, genres, and views" as well as presenting the major themes of Chicano Literature. The anthology, with its accompanying instructor's guide, also fulfills the need of Chicano and multi-ethnic literature courses for a textbook of contemporary Chicano literature.

Thematically organized works by writers from different regions and those practicing various genres provide a sample of contemporary authors. Fiction, non-fiction, poetry, drama, and autobiography by Chicanos such as Tomas Rivera, John Richy, Rolando Hinojosa-S. Cesar Chavez, Marta Cotera, Philip D. Ortego, Alurista, Tino Villanueva, and Luis Valdes are arranged into five units which represent the many Hispanic groups. Despite the limitations of this format, Chicano Voices succeeds in presenting a variety of Chicano voices. It is a valuable addition to the literature of Chicano Americans.

The image of the "Frito Bandito" and of hat-tipped Jose under a cactus has vanished, but other Mexican-American stereotypes still threaten. Most available stories are of quaint families or switch-blade-toting JD's. Textbooks written for Mexican-Americans, and by Mexican Americans are so scarce as to be non-existent. A stop-gap resource is a book giving the teacher at least language and culture patterns from both the Anglo and Spanish-speaking areas. (My own book Por Ninas From Two Cultures, written with Alfredo Superviel e, tries to do this in the area of folk material. It has been reprinted by A&I with some of its worst mistakes corrected and is available from the author for $1.25 + 25¢ postage.)

Crying to be written is a series of Texas readers using the resources abundantly outlined in a volume of the Texas Folklore Society. [The Folklore of Texas, ed. Francis E. Abernethy of Stephen F. Austin University, is available from the Engino Press, Austin, or the editor.] I can dream of Texas school learning to read with stories about the many Texas peoples. If there were such books, students could develop a sense of belonging as they increased their literacy.

I have not seen the contents of this issue of English In Texas but I expect that the valiant efforts of the editor cannot hide the fact that Mexican-Americans are essentially inarticulate in print. Material is more sought for than found; anthologies which exist only for older students, repeat what is found in other collections. It is with real pleasure that I present a review, written by a former student of mine, of the newest of these collections.
selections by women writers, the anthology presents a wide scope of genres, views, and concerns providing a useful introduction to contemporary Chicano literature for class use.

The anthology's organization and structure make it flexible and adaptable to individual class needs. The instructor's guide provides an extensive annotated bibliography in addition to a list of other resources, such as films, for supplementing the selections. Depending on the emphasis of a class, the complementary materials can compensate for areas not covered or stressed in the anthologized selections, such as historical background; long fiction, and poetry and fiction by women. The instructor's guide includes topics for composition, discussion, and research for each selection as well as a summary, background material, and pronunciation guide for names and titles. It, along with the anthology which has footnote translations of Spanish words, can be used in the classroom by both bilingual and mono-lingual English speaking instructors and students.

As a whole, the anthology renders a verbal statement by a variety of contemporary Chicano writers expressing their views through different genres and provides a suitable introduction to Chicano literature. (Norma-Cantu, Graduate Fellow in English, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.)

A Bluebonnet by Any Other Nationality... The Folklore of Texan Cultures, ed. by Francis B. Abernethy, Bicentennial volume by the Texas Folklife Society. Encino Press (Austin), 1975. $12.50.

Contributions of the Texas Folklife Society to the literature about Texas are without peer; no book on the history, society, art, literature, or people of Texas can be written without at least one TFS publication in its bibliography. This volume is no exception; such is the nature of its contents that every high school and college library in the state needs at least one volume; no public library can be complete without it, and individuals who own a copy are the envy of their friends.

The Folklore of Texan Cultures was collected in close cooperation with the Institute of Texan Cultures whose materials were reviewed last summer; it follows the pattern established at the Institute, and the Texas Folklife Festival is frequently represented among the pictures. The introductory essay by R. Henderson Shuffler, Director of the Institute, written before his death, sets forth the thesis of the book—unity within the multiplicity of the origins of Texans. Indians and Mexicans are represented by a number of articles; the French, Negroes, Germans and Polish by several, and a single article on each of the rest is a kind of summary treatment of the folkways and history of other national and ethnic groups in Texas.

About a third of the articles are original folk material; among those I liked best were two accounts of the myths and legends of early Indian tribes, by Thomas A./Green, Jr., and Howard N. Martin, "Charro Jiro Atamado" by Arnulfo Castillo translated by Inez Cardozo-Freeman is the story of two brothers who with trepidation visit the Jiro, the ghost of a bloody bandit to secure part of his [its] treasure, "Scratches on the Bedpost: Vestiges of the Lechuza" by Ann Carpenter tells a Mexican version, of the werewolf—old women who convert into owls; and "Country Black" by Lorcee P. Williams. Some of the other articles are on equally valuable subjects but are written less carefully.

Other essays are scholarly treatments of folklore-related subjects. Without any surprise, one observes Ernestine Sowell's always superb relation of the 1850 French settlement in the Dallas area—"La Reunion." I admired James W. Byrd in his discussion of "Folk Anecdotae Survives in Black Fiction" and Patrick B. Mullen's "Magic and Ritual Among Italian Fishermen on the Gulf Coast."

More general treatments cover other cultural vari-...
Mexican American Poetry for the Secondary School Literature Program

Albert D. Treviño

A recent list of NCTE aids for teaching minority literature emphasizes the concern for multiethnic literature by stating "When You Teach American Literature, Make Sure You Teach All of It." In the last few years the literature of American minorities has been recognized as an essential and integral part of the secondary school literature program. This article provides an annotated bibliography of some select Mexican American poetry which is suitable for use in an ethnically integrated high school classroom.

The poetry listed in the bibliography below is chosen on the basis of three criteria. First, poems are chosen which correspond to the reading interest and maturity level of secondary students. Secondly, literary works chosen are either in English or contain only a minimal degree of standard Spanish or a regional Spanish dialect. Thirdly, works are chosen which pose no major problems of censorship in terms of the use of "offensive" words which may be tabooed by the schools. Thus, this bibliography is not truly representative of the total output of contemporary Mexican American poetry. More than half of the poems in this bibliography, however, deal with some aspect of the Mexican American experience or make some statement about a situation which is of particular concern to Mexican Americans.

A Select Annotated Bibliography of Mexican American Poetry

Single Works


Lyric poem in which the narrator uses an intimate incident within a barbershop to reflect on and lament the acculturation of his and his children's generation and the irony of their situation.


In a nostalgic and meditative mood the narrator reminisces about his deceased grandmother and the significant part she played in his early childhood. The poem is divided into several short stanzas capturing different memories. The work contains some good descriptions.


Brief narrative description of a bracero's day in the cotton fields.


Free verse poem in dramatic mode bitterly denouncing the insensitivity and hostility within schools and society and the ways in which they destroy the pride of Mexican American children.


Lyric poem with good visual impressions. A young boy's game of war becomes tragically real.


Two-stanza lyric poem with visual impressions. The narrator expresses his despair over his physical (and resulting spiritual) incarceration.


Two-stanza free verse metaphorical description of grapefields.


A rather abstruse symbolic poem depicting the creative process.


Brief free verse lyric poem symbolically expressing the culmination of an extended period of sadness.


Lyric poem with good visual impressions about an elderly Mexican American woman and what she represents in terms of her culture.


Epic poem written in parallel fashion entirely in Spanish and entirely in English. The poem depicts the history of the Mexican American struggle and calls for ethnic solidarity, cultural revitalization, and political unity.

Gutiérrez, José Angel, "22 Miles," El Grito: A Journal...
of Contemporary Mexican-American Thought, I, 3 (Spring 1968), 40-42.

Free verse, bitter in tone, in the form of a dramatic monologue in which the narrator looks back on his life as a long, sad tale full of fear, hostility, shame, and discrimination. He laments the fact that he is now homeless and doesn't accept his 'place' in society.

Honda, Javier, "Nag's Head Camp Hatteras," in Desert Gold: an Anthology of Texas Western College Verse, ed. Joan Phelan, nm and Rafael Jesús González (Carson, TX: Texas Western College Press, 1964). (Reprinted in We Are Chicanos: An Anthology of Mexican-American Literature.)

Free verse lyric poem in which the author evokes visual impressions to symbolize the idea of the timelessness of the universe.

Limón, Jane, "Incongruently," in Days of March, I (March 1965). (Reprinted in We Are Chicanos: An Anthology of Mexican-American Literature.)

Short free verse lyric poem giving examples of life's incongruities.


Ten-stanza lyric poem with definite rhyme scheme, fluctuating meter, and occasional use of "hip" language. Author describes the personal involvement of those pretentious people who felt riches were for others and class only to go around bumping right into you.


Two-stanza lyric poem with definite rhyme scheme in which the narrator exposes the problem of having to question one's identity.


Effective bilingual (Mexican and English) poems with good use of visual impressions, alliteration, and assonance. Young man nostalgically reminisces about his mother when as a little boy he and his family were migrant workers.


Free verse lyric poem about love and death and the fear of losing or destroying the beauty of the thing one loves.


Four-stanza, rhyming lyric poem emphasizing the ironic tone one aspect of the educational irrelevance of the curriculum for Mexican-American students.


Lyric poem, alliterative in places, contrasting the romance and vitality of the Spring of love with the gloom and weariness of love's Winter.


The frailty and ease of movement of the human mind is compared metaphorically to a paper pinwheel.


Lyric poem describing various facets of a Sunday morning in a Chicano barrio and its cruel ironies. The work has some good visual impressions.


Lyric poem about the guitarreros and the way in which they would sing. The poem laments that the old days are now gone. There is a good use of metaphor and visual impressions.


Five-stanza, free verse poem with sporadic rhyme expressing narrator's desire to protect herself from pain and insecurity by avoiding any personal involvement.


Brief lyric poem depicting the sordid aspects of the big city. Contains good visual impressions and uses figurative language.

Brief lyric poem about the magic within a child’s eyes.


Lengthy free verse poem with some good visual impressions. The author reminisces from his jail cell about his childhood East Austin barrio and his adventures and experiences there as a youth. One of the best of the contemporary Chicano poems.


Brief narrative poem about Spanish pioneers who crossed the Rio Grande River and settled in the Southwest a long time before the coming of the Anglo-American pioneers.


Lyric poem with some good metaphor in which the poet remembers his grandfather whom he loved and respected.


Lyric poem metaphorically expressing narrator’s lost love.

Anthologies

At the time this select bibliography was compiled, there were no Mexican-American poetry anthologies. The following three general Mexican-American literature anthologies, however, contain numerous poems which are suitable for the high school level.


Contains seventeen poems by different poets, on different themes, universal ones as well as those related to the Mexican American experience.


The best of the three anthologies, containing thirty-four poems, nearly all of which would be suitable for the high school classroom. Several of the works mentioned in this bibliography are included in the anthology.


Contains thirty-six poems, the large majority of which could be used in the high school.

(Alfred G. Treviño teaches at Texas A & I University at Kingsville.)

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