

Portland Public Schools Geocultural Baseline Essay Series

**An Overview of Hispanic Literature
with Special Emphasis on the
Literature of Hispanics in the United States**

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**with Companion Essays
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THE SPANISH AND SPANISH-AMERICAN LITERARY BACKGROUND

Hispanics who live in this country are the bearers and practitioners of an illustrious literary tradition that has contributed greatly to world literature and to the making of this nation. During the expansion of the Spanish Empire in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Spanish language became one of the world's most widely spoken tongues, and today it can be read in the original text by people in Europe, the Americas, Africa, Asia, and islands of the Pacific.

Despite the fact that the countries of Spanish America are still considered to be impoverished post-colonial states struggling to provide food and jobs for their mixed-race peoples, they are producing some of the most highly regarded and influential literature in the world. The same is true of Hispanic communities in the United States.

Spain

The culture of Spain resulted from a confluence of Roman, Visigothic, Celtic, Arab, Jewish, and early Iberian peoples. By 1492, when Christian kingdoms united to expel the occupying Arabs and colonize the New World, the country had already produced one of Western Europe's most dynamic and influential literatures.

Spanish writers virtually created the modern novel, first producing a picaresque literature that is exemplified by the anonymous work *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554). This work created the concept of the impoverished individual in society making his own way in spite of numerous social barriers and prejudices. Spain's picaresque traditions preceded such English-language masterpieces as Fielding's *Moll Flanders* and *Tom Jones* and Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*. The first modern novel—Miguel de Cervantes' *Las Aventuras de Don Quijote* (Part I, 1605; Part II, 1615)—brought together all of the major Western prose traditions—the chivalric novel, the pastoral novel, the novel as defined by Boccaccio, the picaresque novel. Yet Cervantes created a new concept, structure, and esthetic to reflect the immensely complex social realities (reality and illusion, fact and fiction, idealism and realism) of the modern world. His two "round" or complex characters who approached the social world from their separate vantage points—idealism and hope (Don Quijote) and realism and pragmatism (Sancho

Panza)—evolved throughout the course of the narrative. It is said that next to the Bible, *Don Quijote* is the most translated book in the world and has sold more copies than any other book in history.

During the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Spain and England were the only countries to develop a national stage. While Shakespeare was writing, directing, and managing his works, Spain produced his counterpart in Lope de Vega (1562-1635) and a number of secondary masters, such as Pedro Calderón de la Barca (1600-1681) and Tirso de Molina (1584-1648). All have left their indelible mark on the dramatic literature of the world.

The whole concept of the "well-made play" and its commercial value owes a great deal to Lope de Vega, who even wrote and published guidelines on playwriting. Indeed, the theaters of the world would be impoverished without the characters and plots that were first presented on Spanish stages. Mozart would not have had a *Don Giovanni* nor Shaw a *Man and Superman* without Tirso's version of Don Juan in *El burlador de Sevilla* (1630). Bizet would never have had his *Carmen* without Tirso's play *Los cigarrales de Toledo*. The list of influences and contributions goes on and on. Many of these characters, plots, concepts, and spiritual and cultural underpinnings come from Spanish folklore—songs, legends, and tales of the common folk. Don Juan, Carmen, numerous *pícaros*, the heroic Cid all populated Spanish popular culture before being documented in elite or high culture. In this folklore was found a dynamic tension between the strength and pride of common folk and the pride of titled classes. The same tension was played out on Lope de Vega's stage, in *Don Quijote*, and in poetry that became classical and deeply rooted at the same time in the popular art and oral tradition. This was the tradition Spaniards brought to the New World, along with a rich religious literature and drama that could be used to evangelize the indigenous peoples they found there. As the Spaniards explored and charted new lands and documented new peoples and civilizations in the Americas, they discovered marvelous new flora, fauna, topography, cultures, languages, and religions. To understand, chronicle, and explain to other Europeans what they were experiencing, The Spaniards drew from their literary and dramatic repertoire.

The first chronicles, epic poems, novels, and plays written in a European language about the Americas were written in Spanish and published in Spain. Among them were the highly literary correspondence and chronicles of Christopher Columbus and Hernán

Cortés; epic poems by soldiers exploring and colonizing Florida and New Mexico (*La Florida*, 1597, by Alonso Gregorio de Escobedo, and *La historia de la conquista de la Nueva México*, 1598, by Gaspar Pérez de Villagrà); and *Relación* (1557, *The Account*), a marvelous adventure story of Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's shipwreck, captivity by Indians, and conversion into a hallowed medicine man among the Indian nations that reaches from today's Florida to New Mexico. Their works should be listed on any syllabus of American literature. It was these soldiers and later Spanish and *mestizo* colonists and missionaries who first introduced a written tradition in a European language—a literature, a printing press, and the first newspapers in such territories as Florida, Louisiana, Texas, New Mexico, and California. They also introduced a complete storehouse of oral lore that is still with us in these regions today and is still enriching oral and written literature in North America above the Rio Grande River.

Spanish America

Like Spain, the Americas reflect a blending of cultures. Spanish culture confronted and melded with the diverse cultures of the indigenous peoples and of enslaved Africans to create myriad regional and national "types." In art and literature we find various national archetypes that represent the national soul, customs, and racial makeup: the mulatto of Cuba, the gaucho of Argentina, the *jíbaro* of Puerto Rico, the revolutionary and his more romanticized relative, the charro, or cowboy (or, some scholars claim, the *pelado* or shirtless one) of México. What they all have in common is miscegenation, racial and/or cultural blending—something anathema to the European, especially Anglo mentality.

The noted folklorist Américo Paredes and other scholars argue for the centrality of La Llorona, the crying woman, as a national archetype for México, because she emerges in folklore out of the violent clash of European and Meso-American cultures to explain the origin and rise of the *mestizo*. Initially a blending of the European Medea legend and the Aztec goddess Matlacihuatl, a woman who ensnares men in her net at night, the legend has come to incorporate the underlying idea of the rape of American Indian culture by the Spanish culture, as embodied by Hernán Cortés' taking of the Indian princess Doña Marina (also known derogatorily as La Malinche, the betrayer of her people) as his concubine and having fathered illegitimate children by her and ultimately abandoning her. The original legend of La Llorona has thus merged with the folk version of an important chapter in history, La Malinche becoming the crying woman forever searching

for her lost children. In fact, further intellectualizing this popular version of the national identity, Nobel-prize-winner Octavio Paz, in his *El laberinto de la soledad*, argues that Mexicans are children of Malinche, the children of a violated mother. All of these archetypes and types are prevalent in the songs, ballads, and tales of México and the Americas and comprise a rich oral literature worthy of study.

The countries of Latin America have accepted their history and their present cultural reality, their New World experience and identity. But the official culture of the United States has yet to accept that it, too, is a product of cultural blending, that it too is typical of the New World experience, that it can no longer construct its identity solely as an extension of Europe. The institutions of this country must finally meet their responsibility to incorporate the true and authentic history and literature of all peoples on this soil, beginning with the American Indians and followed thereafter by Hispanics, Anglo-Europeans, Africans, Asians, and others. However, after the Anglo-Europeans, the group exerting the greatest influence on this nation's development and national culture is Hispanics. I use the term *Hispanics* to mean people of Spanish-American descent in the United States—the *mestizo*, the product of cultural blending.

The dynamic concept of cultural fusion in the New World gave rise to a distinctive literature in the Spanish-speaking Americas. In the nineteenth century, the individual literatures of individual countries took on national identities, becoming celebrations of the regional character and national ethos. During the romantic period, Argentina and Uruguay developed a gaucho literature, best exemplified by the epic poem *Martín Fierro* (Part I, 1872, Part II, 1879), by José Hernández (1834-1836) and based on actual folk songs and customs. In Perú, Ricardo Palma (1883-1919) documented and celebrated local color, customs, and small-town life in his ten volumes of *Tradiciones peruanas* (Peruvian traditions), written over an eighteen-year period. In Puerto Rico during the same period, the *jíbaro* or *mestizo* highlander with his skeptical views of modern citified life, appeared in the narrative poetry of Manuel Alonso's *El jíbaro* .

In the twentieth century there were also important indigenist and creole (*criollismo*) movements that reinforced nationalism in most of the countries of Spanish America. It is, in fact, through *criollismo* that five master prose writers developed after 1920: Colombia's José Eustacio Rivera (1889-1928), Argentina's Benito Lynch (1880-1951) and Ricardo Güiraldes (1886-1927), Uruguay's Horacio Quiroga (1878-1937) and Venezuela's Rómulo Gallegos (1884-1965). Essentially realists with modern novelistic

techniques, these writers explored the relationship of their protagonists to the physical and social landscapes of their countries: the jungle in Rivera's *La vorágine* (1924), the pampas in Gúiraldes' *Don Segundo Sombra* and Lynch's *El inglés de los güesos*, the Venezuelan *llanos* of Gallego's *Doña Bárbara*, or the wilderness and jungles of Quiroga's short stories.

As in the nineteenth century, there is a subtext to many of these works that compares civilization and barbarie, urban and rural life, contrasting and conflicting ways of understanding man and nature. As Spanish-American writers further explored the contradictions of the continent and its varied and conflicting worlds—European versus Amerindian and African; Christianity versus syncretic religions, spiritualism, animal dualism, etc.; the past and the present co-existing side by side—they produced a new style, a new sensibility called "magic realism." That style emerged in the post-war period and greatly influenced world letters.

At the same time that *criollismo* was emerging in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, poets developed an intense awareness of poetic form and language that in Spanish America is called *modernismo*. Highly cosmopolitan in its sources, *modernismo* re-approached European culture and even influenced writers in Spain—the first time that this reverse influence was noted in literary history. Modernism, seen by many critics as somewhat escapist—a refuge in an "ivory tower"—eventually led to other intense formalistic and esthetic experimentation, such as vanguardism and other *isms*. Nevertheless, Spanish-American poets eventually returned to the complex social, political, and cultural reality of Latin America and in so doing produced a number of poets and prose writers who captured international attention. Some of the most important and widely influential poets developing from modernism and into a more socially and politically engaged literature were Nicaraguan Rubén Darío (1867-1916), Peruvian César Vallejo (1892-1938), Puerto Rican Luis Palés Matos (1899-1959), Cuban Nicolás Guillén (1902-1992), and Chileans Gabriela Mistral (1889-1957) and Pablo Neruda (1904-1973), both Nobel Prize winners.

Rubén Darío

Even from his first book, *Azul* (1888), Rubén Darío is credited with freeing poetry in the Spanish language from its romantic heritage and introducing modernism. Whereas in his early poetry Darío concentrated on perfecting the beautiful thought and the purest, most resonant language and form, in his later work he became an ardent advocate for a

cohesive Spanish-American identity in the face of United States imperialism.

César Vallejo and Pablo Neruda

César Vallejo, a true vanguard of the period between the world wars, was successful in expanding modernist language and symbols to reflect his own *mestizo* world-view. Both Vallejo and Pablo Neruda became ardent opponents of fascism in Spain and dictatorships in the Americas. Neruda (Nobel Prize, 1971), while first appearing as a true modernist with probably the most influential books of erotic poetry in the Spanish language, *Veinte poemas de amor y una canción desesperada* (1924), soon became the leading voice in poetry in the entire Hispanic world. He maintained that leadership for decades and through various stages of esthetic and political development as an expressionist writer, a minimalist, a socialist, and communist. His work is usually divided into four periods, corresponding to books that announced particular styles and themes: *Crepusculario* (1923) somewhat traditionalist; the above mentioned *Veinte poemas* of poetic voice; *Residencia en la tierra* (1945) surrealist; *Canto general* (1950) political. The only other voice that rivaled his at times was that of fellow Nobel winner, Spain's Juan Ramón Jiménez. Jiménez was more politically involved than was his poetry and actually lived in exile from Franco's Spain—in Puerto Rico, where he was able to participate in the development of Spanish-American poetry.

Luis Palés Matos, Nicolás Guillén, and Gabriela Mistral

Luis Palés Matos and Nicolás Guillén, while both initiates of modernism, nevertheless began to explore the ethnic landscape of their home islands of Puerto Rico and Cuba by creating poetry that drew heavily from African, Afro-Caribbean, and mulatto language, music, folklore, and mythology. In so doing, they sensitized high culture in the Americas to the contributions Afro-Americans had made to national and regional character and art.

The first Nobel Prize for literature to a Spanish-American author (1954) went to Chile's Gabriela Mistral, a teacher whose poetic intensity and precise language converted her into an international literary figure. A woman of broad-ranging intelligence who drew together diverse sources of history, legend, and mythology, Mistral dealt with the great themes of life and death, love, maternity, and sterility in women with a profound sense

of humanity and humility. Her best-known books of poetry are *Desolación* (1922), *Ternura* (1924), and *Tala* (1938).

Octavio Paz

While the first Nobel Prize for Literature to a Latin American went to a poet, so has the most recent (1992), to México's Octavio Paz (1914-). Paz's career has spanned many years, many movements and styles. He is important not only as a poet but as an essayist, editor, and commentator on national culture and international currents in art and literature. For many years he has been the editor/publisher of Latin America's most respected cultural magazine, *Vuelta*, which has a distinct internationalist tendency and refuses to be caught up in fads and isms, whether esthetic or political. Paz's most famous books of poetry are *Raíz del hombre*, *Libertad bajo palabra*, *Salamandra*, *El mono gramático*, and *Vuelta*. As noted above, his most famous book-length essay is *El laberinto de la soledad*, which has been translated to many languages as one of the most enduring meditations on Mexican national character.

Nueva Narrativa

But the real flowering of Spanish-American letters takes place in the contemporary novel as practiced by writers after World War II in what United States critics have called a "boom," but which Latin Americans refer to as the *nueva narrativa*, or new novel. Its distinguished exponents arise from virtually all of the countries in South and Central America and also in the Caribbean, where the relatively reduced geography of the island of Cuba has contributed such giants to the world of letters as Alejo Carpentier, José Lezama Lima and Gabriel Cabrera Infante. All contribute to the new sensibility that Carpentier named "lo real maravilloso" and what the rest of the world soon came to know as "magic realism." On an axis that goes from Buenos Aires to México City, many of the writers achieving international fame cultivate a very cosmopolitan and experimental literature, such as that of Argentina's Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986) and Julio Cortázar (1914-1984), while others have once again plumbed their national histories and syncretic cultures. The new style they have forged introduces the supernatural as part of the everyday reality of the narrative. Writers include México's Juan Rulfo (1918-1986) and Carlos Fuentes (1928-) and two Nobel

Prize-winners: Guatemala's Miguel Angel Asturias (1899-1974) and Colombia's Gabriel García Márquez (1928-).

The works of Rulfo and Fuentes may be considered extensions of the novel of the Mexican Revolution, a genre that corresponds to the Americanist tendency to understand the national psyche. But the works of Asturias and García Márquez go beyond the borders of their own countries in their construction of the magical reality of Latin America, while pioneering new novelistic techniques and structures to *capture* this new and illusive reality.

Miguel Angel Asturias

Miguel Angel Asturias (who received the Nobel Prize in 1967) was trained as an anthropologist in Paris, an education that afforded him the research instruments and sensibility to appreciate and capture particularly well the contemporary world-view of the Indians of Guatemala and the Americas. In fact, his first book was a collection of legends from the ancient Mayans and the Spanish colonial past: *Leyendas de Guatemala* (1930). However, his first novel catapulted him into the international elite of Latin American novelists as a protest writer and an extremely adept craftsman of experimental fiction. That book was *El Señor Presidente* (1946), a novel that denounces the dictatorships of the Americas, but most pointedly that of Guatemala's Estrada Cabrera. *El Señor Presidente's* poetic narrative utilizes numerous devices to involve the reader in a magical and fluid world that includes realistic conversations in colloquial speech, baroque descriptions of places and people, intrusion of the author himself in the narration, a break from traditional syntax, a mix of characters from real life with legendary and historical ones, and many other devices. Probably his most enduring legacy, however, is his contrast of the Indian campesino's worldview, based on his relationship to the cultivation of corn, with the worldview of the more Europeanized criollo, who only sees corn as a source of commercial gain. In *Hombres de maíz* (1949) and *Mulata de tal* (1949), he has been able to recreate the magical world of pre-Colombian literature and thought that is still alive today in much of Latin America. For Asturias, everyday reality seems to co-exist with another, deeper and more challenging reality that must be discovered by the novelist. Asturias' later works include a trilogy on the theme of the exploitation of the Central American countries by the fruit companies of the United States: *Viento fuerte* (1950), *El papa verde* (1954), and *Weekend en*

Guatemala (1956).

Gabriel García Márquez

Probably the largest figure looming in Spanish-American literature today and Western literature in general is Colombian novelist Gabriel García Márquez, who received the Nobel Prize in 1982. García Márquez's initiation into the world of writing was as a journalist who worked both in Colombia and abroad. Gradually he began to write and publish short stories, many of which were later included in his collection *La hojarasca* (1955). But he earned his international reputation as a novelist and the greatest exponent of Latin American magic realism. His numerous novels have uniformly received high praise from critics around the world. His masterpiece—the contemporary masterpiece of Latin American literature—is *Cien años de soledad* (1970), which narrates the history of a mythical town, Macondo, but really alludes to the history of Colombia. The novel is a cyclical work that chronicles a place of insufferable heat in which people are divided by political polarization and civil wars and plagued by social and personal vices, all of which is played out sensually in collective memory and gossip. In the pages of the novel unexpected and outrageous events occur. A plague causes the townsfolk to lose their memory, a band of gypsies introduces the first inventions, a rain storm lasts a year, rains contain flowers and birds. The novel is not one of mere protest but a legitimate literary masterpiece in which fantasy and history combine—a truly original artistic work. García Márquez has continued the history of his mythological Macondo in other short stories and novels, but his more important works include *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* (1981), which critics consider one of the most perfectly crafted modern novels, and *Amor en los tiempos del cólera* (1985), in which the author manipulates the plot (and the reader) masterfully to offer alternative and unexpected endings. García Márquez also continued the tradition of protest and social criticism in his works that satirize Latin American strongmen—in *El coronel no tiene quien le escriba* (1961) and *El general en su laberinto*.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF HISPANIC LITERATURE OF THE UNITED STATES UP TO WORLD WAR II

Hispanic literature of the United States is the literature written by Americans of Hispanic descent. It includes the Spanish-language literature of what became the U.S. Southwest

before this territory was incorporated through war and annexation. Thus it incorporates a broad geographic and historical space and even includes the writings of early explorers of the North American continent as well as Spanish-speaking immigrants and exiles who made the United States their home. It is a literature that reflects the diverse ethnic and national origins of Hispanics in the United States. Thus it includes writers of South and Central American, Caribbean, and Spanish descent, as well as writers of Afro-Hispanic and Indo-Hispanic works. Finally, Hispanic literature of the United States is a literature that reflects the linguistic diversity of the people and has been written and published in both Spanish and English.

The Colonial Period

The roots of Hispanic literature were planted north of the Rio Grande quite some time before the landing of the Mayflower at Plymouth Rock. In 1598 Juan de Oñate's colonizing expedition from central México into what is today New Mexico is marked as the beginning of a written and oral literary tradition in a European language, Spanish. The written tradition is represented by the landmark epic poem *La Conquista de la Nueva México* (The Conquest of the New México), by one of the soldiers on the expedition, Gaspar Pérez de Villagra. The oral Spanish literary tradition was introduced with the improvised dramas, songs, ballads, and poetic recitations of the soldiers, colonists, and missionaries, some of which have survived in today's New Mexico and Southwest. A missionary and colonial literature of historical chronicles, diaries, letters, and oral accounts also developed in the Southwest until the Mexican-American War of 1846-48. The Northeast of what is today the United States, on the other hand, can point to its earliest written and oral expression in Spanish with the founding of the colony of Sephardic Jews in New Amsterdam (now New York) in 1654.

Both the Northeast and Southwest can boast an unbroken literary tradition in Spanish that predates the American Revolutionary War. Unfortunately, much of this early literature has been lost or has not been collected and studied. (The same can be said of the literature of all periods except contemporary Hispanic literature.)

The Nineteenth Century

Mexican-American Literature

Following the Mexican-American War and up to 1910, the foundation was laid for a true Mexican-American literature—a U.S. Hispanic literature—as the resident population of the Southwest adapted to the new U.S. political and social framework. It is the period when many Spanish-language newspapers began publishing throughout the Southwest and when they and the creative literature they contained became an alternative to Anglo-American information and cultural output. During this period the important commercial centers of San Francisco and Los Angeles supported numerous newspapers that, besides fulfilling their commercial and informational functions, published short stories, poetry, essays, and even serialized novels, such as *Las aventuras de Joaquín Murieta* (The Adventures of Joaquín Murieta), a novel of the legendary California social bandit, published in 1881 by the Santa Barbara newspaper *La gaceta*. Among the more important newspapers in California, during the last four decades of the century were Los Angeles's *El clamor público* (The Public Clamor), *La estrella de Los Angeles* (The Los Angeles Star) issued in the 1850s, *La crónica* (The Chronicle) from the 1870s to the 1890s, and San Francisco's *La voz del Nuevo Mundo* (The Voice of the New World), *La sociedad* (Society), *La cronista* (The Chronicles), and *La República* (The Republic). In New Mexico, *El clarín mexicano* (The Mexican Clarion) and *El fronterizo* (The Frontier in the 1870s), *El nuevomexicano* (The New Mexican from the 1850s to the turn of the century), and *El defensor del pueblo* (The People's Defender in the 1890s) were important. Among the contributions of Texas during this period were San Antonio's *El bejareño* (The Bejar County during the 1850s), El Paso's *Las dos Américas* (The Two Americas in the 1890s), and *El clarín del norte* (The Northern Clarion in the 1900s). These were but a few of the literally hundreds of newspapers that provided for the cultural enrichment and entertainment of the Mexican-American communities while they imparted information, helped to solidify the community, and defended the rights of Mexican-Americans in the face of the growing influence of Anglo-American culture.

During the latter part of the nineteenth century, various literary authors were published in book form. In southern California, Pilar Ruiz de Burton, through her English-language novels like *The Squatter and the Don* (1881, reprinted 1993), attacked the passage of wealth and power from the hands of Californians into those of the Anglo newcomers. Also in 1881, New Mexican Manuel M. Salazar published a novel of romantic adventure, *La historia de un caminante, o Gervacio y Aurora* (The History of a Traveler on Foot, or

Gervacio and Aurora), which creates a colorful picture of the pastoral life in New Mexico at the time. Another New Mexican, Eusebio Chacón (1869-1948), published two short novels in 1892 that are celebrated today: *El hijo de la tempestad* (Child of the Storm) and *Tras la tormenta la calma* (The Calm after the Storm). Miguel Angel Otero (1859-1944) also issued a three-volume autobiography, *My Life on the Frontier* (1935), in English. In it he covers his life from age five until just after his term as governor of New Mexico ended in 1906.

At this time, poetry was primarily lyric, amorous, and pastoral and appeared regularly in the newspapers, with very few authors ever collecting their works in books. Among the most frequently appearing poets were Texan E. Montalván in *El bejareño*, Felipe Maximiliano Chacón and Julio Flores in New Mexico papers and Dantés in Santa Barbara's *La gaceta* (The Gazette). One of the most interesting poets of the turn of the century was Sara Estela Ramírez, who published her poems and some speeches in Laredo's *La crónica* (The Chronicle) and *El demócrata* (The Democrat), and in her own literary periodicals, *La corregidora* (The Corrector) and *Aurora* (Aurora), between the years 1904 and 1910. In her life and her literary works, Ramírez was an activist for the Mexican liberal party in its movement to overthrow dictator Porfirio Díaz and for workers' and women's rights. Much work needs to be done in collecting and analyzing Ramírez's works and the thousands upon thousands of other poems that were published throughout the Southwest during this century.

The late nineteenth century was also the period when the Mexican *corrido*, a folk ballad related to the romance that Spanish colonists and missionaries introduced, came to maturity and proliferated throughout the Southwest. In particular the border ballad, which chronicles the adventures of social bandits, like Joaquín Murieta, Aniceto Pizaña, and even Billy the Kid, became a popular anvil where a Mexican-American identity was hammered out. The *corrido* increased its popularity in the twentieth century and became a living historical and poetic document that records the history of the great Mexican immigrations and labor struggles between the two world wars.

The Scene in New York

During the nineteenth century, the New York area sustained various Hispanic literary activities and cultural institutions. Again the newspapers came to play a key role in

providing a forum for literary creation for a community that at the time was made up principally of Spaniards and Cubans. Such newspapers as *El mensajero semanal* (The Weekly Messenger) and the weekly *El mercurio de Nueva York* (The New York Mercury), both publishing during the late 1820s and 1830s, printed news of the homeland, political commentary, poetry, short stories, essays, and even excerpts of plays. Two other early newspapers were *La crónica* (The Chronicle) and *La voz de América* (The Voice of America), appearing in the 1850s and 1860s, respectively. Among the poets publishing at this time were Miguel Teurbe Tolón (1820-58), who was born in the United States, was educated in Cuba, and became a conspirator for Cuban independence from Spain. One of the few books of poetry in Spanish—*Poesías de un mexicano* (Poems by a Mexican) by Anastacio Ochoa y Acuña—was published in 1828.

But it was not until the late nineteenth century that newspaper, magazine, and book publishing really began to expand because of increased immigration and the political and cultural activity related to the Cuban, Puerto Rican, and Dominican independence movements and the Spanish-American War.

In this regard, the most noteworthy institution was the Cuban newspaper *La patria*, in whose pages can be found essays by the leading Cuban and Puerto Rican patriots. Furthermore, numerous essays, letters, diaries, poems, short stories, and literary creations by some of Puerto Rico's most important literary and patriotic figures were written in New York while their authors worked for the revolution. Among these authors were Eugenio María de Hostos, Ramón Emeterio Betances, Lola Rodríguez de Tió, and Sotero Figueroa. Active in both literature and political organizing were the revolutionary leaders Francisco González "Pachín" Marín, a Puerto Rican, and José Martí, Cuban. "Pachín" Marín, a typesetter by trade and an important figure in Puerto Rican poetry for his break with romanticism, has left us an important essay, "Nueva York por dentro; una faz de su vida bohemia" (New York on the Inside; One Side of Its Bohemian Life), in which he sketches New York from the perspective of a disillusioned immigrant. This is perhaps the earliest document in Spanish that takes this point of view and might be considered the beginning of Hispanic immigrant literature.

José Martí was an international literary figure in his own right, and his writings are studied today in Latin American literature classes throughout the world. He has left us a legacy of many essays and other writings that relate directly to his life in New York and elsewhere in the United States.

Many of the Spanish-language literary books published in New York were also related to the Cuban independence struggle, books like Luis García Pérez's *El grito de Yara* (1879, The Shout at Yara) and Desiderio Fajardo Ortiz's *La fuga de Evangelina* (1898, The Escape of Evangelina). The latter story concerns Cuban heroine Evangelina Cossío's escape from incarceration by the Spaniards, her trip to freedom, and the organizing effort in New York.

Also of importance as the most widely circulated weekly was *Las novedades* (1893-1918, The News), whose theater, music, and literary critic was the famed Dominican writer Pedro Henríquez Ureña. An early Puerto Rican contribution was *La gaceta ilustrada* (The Illustrated Gazette), edited in the 1890s by writer Francisco Amy.

The Early Twentieth Century in the Southwest

The turn of the century brought record immigration from México to the Southwest and Midwest because of the Mexican Revolution of 1910. During the period from 1910 until World War II, immigrant workers and upper-class and educated professionals from México interacted with the Mexican-origin residents of the Southwest, who had been somewhat cut off from the evolution of Mexican culture inside México.

Newspaper and Book Publishing

During this period Hispanic newspaper and book publishing flourished throughout the Southwest. Both San Antonio and Los Angeles supported Spanish-language daily newspapers that served diverse readerships made up of regional groups from the Southwest, immigrant laborers, and political refugees from the revolution. The educated political refugees played a key role in publishing and, from their upper social class point of view, created an ideology of a Mexican community in exile, or "México de afuera" (México on the outside).

In the offices of San Antonio's *La prensa* (The Press), Los Angeles's *La opinión* (The Opinion), and *El heraldo de México* (The Mexican Herald), some of the most talented writers from Spain, México, and the rest of Latin America earned their living as reporters, columnists, and critics. They included Miguel Arce, Esteban Escalante,

Gabriel Navarro, Teodoro Torres, and Daniel Venegas. These and many others authored hundreds of essays, novels, and poems, many of which were published in book form and marketed by the newspapers themselves via mail and in their own bookstores. Besides the publishing houses related to these large dailies, there were many other smaller companies, such as Laredo Publishing Company, Los Angeles's Spanish American Printing, and San Diego's Imprenta Bolaños Cacho Hnos.

The largest and most productive publishers resided in San Antonio. Leading the list was the publishing house founded by Ignacio Lozano of *La prensa* and Los Angeles's *La opinión*. His Casa Editorial Lozano was by far the biggest publishing establishment ever owned by a Hispanic in the United States. Among the San Antonio publishers were the Viola Novelty Company, probably a subsidiary of P. Viola, publisher of the satiric newspapers *El vacilón* (The Joker) and *El fandango* (The Fandango), active from 1916 until at least 1927; the Whitt Company; and the Librería Española, which still exists today as a bookstore.

Novels of the Mexican Revolution

Many of the novels produced by these houses were part of the genre known as "novels of the Mexican Revolution." These works were set within the context of the revolution and often commented on historical events and personalities. In the United States, the refugees who wrote them were very conservative and quite often attacked the revolution and Mexican politicians, which they saw as the reason for their exile. Included among these were Miguel Bolaños Cacho's *Sembradores de viento* (1928, Sewers of the Wind), Brígido Caro's *Plutarco Elías Calles: dictador volchevique de México* (1924, Plutarco Elías Calles: Bolshevik Dictator of México), and Lázaro Gutiérrez de Lara's *Los bribones rebeldes* (1932, The Rebel Rogues). The authors of this very popular genre included Miguel Arce, Conrado Espinosa, Alfredo González, Esteban Maqueo Castellanos, Manuel Mateos, Ramón Puente, and Teodoro Torres. But the most famous is Mariano Azuela, author of the masterpiece that is one of the foundations of modern Mexican literature, *Los de abajo* (The Underdogs), which was first published in 1915 in a serialized version in El Paso's newspaper *El paso del norte* (The Northern Pass) and was issued later by the same newspaper in book form.

Forerunners of the Chicano Novel

Although most of the novels published during the early part of this century gravitated toward the political and counter-revolutionary, there were others of a more sentimental nature and even some titles that can be considered forerunners of the Chicano novel of the 1960s in their identification with the working-class Mexicans of the Southwest, their use of popular dialects, and their political stance vis-à-vis U.S. government and society. The prime example of this new sensibility is newspaperman Daniel Venegas's *Las aventuras de Don Chipote o Cuando los pericos mamen* (1928, *The Adventures of Don Chipote or When Parakeets May Suckle Their Young*). His novel is a humorous picaresque account of a Mexican immigrant who travels through the Southwest working here and there at menial tasks; running into one misadventure after the other; and suffering at the hands of rogues, the authorities, and his bosses while searching for the mythic streets of gold that the United States is supposed to offer immigrants. *Don Chipote* is a novel of immigration, a picaresque novel, and a novel of protest all wrapped into one.

A New Genre—The Chronicle

One of the most important literary genres developed in early twentieth-century newspapers was *la crónica*, or the chronicle, a short satirical column full of local color, current topics, and observations of social habits. The chronicle owed its origins to Addison and Steele in England and José Mariano de Lara in Spain, but was cultivated extensively throughout México and Latin America. However, in the Southwest it came to serve new purposes. From Los Angeles to San Antonio, Mexican moralists satirized the customs and behavior of a colony whose very existence was seen as threatened by the dominant Anglo-Saxon culture. It was the *cronista's* job to enforce the ideology of "México de afuera," and battle the influence of Anglo-American culture and the erosion of the Spanish language caused by speaking English. The cronistas, using such pseudonyms as El Malcriado (The Spoiled Brat—Daniel Venegas), Kaskabel (Rattler—Benjamín Padilla), Az.T.K. (Aztec), and Chicote (The Whip), literally whipped and stung the community into conformity, commenting on or poking fun at the common folks' mixing of Spanish and English and Mexican women's adaptations of American dress and liberalized customs (cutting hair short, raising their hemlines, and smoking).

Behind the ideology of the crónica writers and newspaper owners was the goal of returning to the homeland: as soon as the hostilities of the revolution ended, the immigrants were supposed to return to México with their culture intact. Quite often the targets of their humorous attacks were stereotyped country bumpkins, like Don Chipote, who were having a hard time getting around in the modern American city. Writers also poked fun at the Mexican immigrants who came to the United States and

became so impressed with the wealth, modern technology, efficiency, and informality of American culture that they considered everything American superior and everything Mexican inferior. In some of his chronicles, Jorge Ulica satirized women who made much to-do about throwing American-style surprise parties, celebrating Thanksgiving, and taking advantage of the greater independence and power at the expense of men's *machismo*.

To create these tales, the cronistas quite often drew from popular jokes, anecdotes, and oral tradition. Two of the most popular, who saw their columns syndicated throughout the Southwest, were the aforementioned Benjamín Padilla, an expatriate newspaperman from Guadalajara, and Julio Arce, also a political refugee from Guadalajara who used the pseudonym of Jorge Ulica for his "Crónicas Diabólicas" (Diabolical Chronicles). So popular was this type of satire that entire weekly newspapers, usually no more than eight pages in length, were dedicated to it. Daniel Venegas's weekly *El Malcriado* (The Brat) and P. Viola's *El vacilón* (The Joker) are prime examples.

The Depression Years

Much of this literary activity in the Mexican-American Southwest came to an abrupt halt with the Great Depression and the repatriation, forced and voluntary, of a large segment of that society back to México. Some writers during the Depression, like Américo Paredes, began to write in both Spanish and English and to express a very pronounced and politicized Mexican-American sensibility. His novel in English, *George Washington Gómez*, was written from 1936 to 1940 (but not published until 1990), and during the 1930s and 40s he was a frequent contributor of poetry in Spanish, English, and bilingual formats to Texas newspapers, including *La prensa*. In 1937, at the age of twenty-two, he published a collection of poems, *Cantos de adolescencia* (Songs of Adolescence), but it was not until 1991 that his collected poems were issued, under the title *Between Two Worlds*. This collection comprises works selected from his writings from the late 1930s to the 1950s.

Another very important literary figure who arose during the Depression and began to publish poetry and tales based on New Mexican folklore was Fray Angélico Chávez. A Franciscan monk, Chávez wrote books of poems to Christ and the Virgin Mary:

Clothed with the Sun (1939), *New Mexico Triptych* (1940), *Eleven Lady Lyrics and Other Poems* (1945), *The Single Rose* (1948), and *Selected Poems with an Apologia* (1969).

From the 1930s to the 1950s a number of shortstory writers succeeded in publishing their works in mainstream English-language magazines. Most of these, like Josefina Escajeda and Jovita González in Texas, based their works on folktales, oral tradition, and the picturesque customs of Mexicans in the Southwest. Robert Hernán Torres, who published some of his stories in *Esquire* magazine, focused his works on the cruelty and senselessness of the revolution in México. Another prose writer in English who experienced relative success was Josephina Niggli. She wrote many of her novels and short stories about life in México after the revolution.

Despite the significance of Fray Angélico Chávez, Américo Paredes, Josephine Niggli, and the others mentioned above, it was not until the 1960s that a significant resurgence of Mexican-American literary activity occurred. By the end of that decade the literature was dubbed Chicano.

New York from 1900 to the Depression

Before turning our attention to the 1960s in the Southwest, however, the Northeast demands attention. In New York, the period from the turn of the century to the Depression was one of increased immigration and interaction of various Hispanic groups. It was a period of considerable Puerto Rican migration, facilitated by the Jones Act, which declared Puerto Ricans to be citizens of the United States, and it was a time of immigration for Spanish workers and refugees from the Spanish Civil War.

Artistic and literary creation in the Hispanic community quite often supported the Puerto Rican nationalist movement (the movement to make Puerto Rico independent of the United States and give it its own identity) and the movement to re-establish the Spanish Republic.

At the turn of the century, Cuban and Spanish writers and newspapers still dominated the scene. The first decade of the century witnessed the founding of *La prensa* (The Press), whose heritage continues today in *El Diario-La prensa* (The Daily-The Press),

born of a merger in 1963. Also publishing during the decade were *Sangre latina* (Latin Blood), out of Columbia University, *Revista Pan-Americana* (Pan American Review), and *La paz y el trabajo* (Peace and Work), a monthly review of commerce, literature, science, and the arts. Even places as far away as Buffalo began to support their own publications, such as *La hacienda* (The State), founded in 1906.

The Expansion of Spanish-Language Literary Publishing

In New York Spanish-language literary publishing did not begin to expand until the late teens and early twenties. By far the most interesting volume that has come down to us from the teens is an early example of the immigrant novel. Somewhat similar in theme to *Don Chipote*, Venezuelan author Alirio Díaz Guerra's *Lucas Guevara* (1917) is the story of a young man who comes to the city seeking his fortune but is ultimately disillusioned. While *Lucas Guevara* was probably self-published at the New York Printing Company, there were Spanish-language publishing houses functioning during the teens in New York. One of the most important and long-lived houses, Spanish American Publishing Company, began issuing titles at this time and continued well into the 1950s. It, too, was an early publisher of books on the theme of Hispanics in New York—books like Puerto Rican playwright Javier Lara's *En la metrópoli del dólar* (In the Metropolis of the Dollar), circa 1919. *Las novedades* newspaper also published books, including Pedro Henríquez Ureña's *El nacimiento de Dionisos* (1916, The Birth of Dionysus).

Although during the 1920s the Spanish American Publishing Company, Carlos López Press, The Phos Press, and others were issuing occasional literary titles, it was not until the late twenties and early thirties that activity intensified. To begin with, various specialized newspapers began to appear. Probably as an outgrowth of the very active theatrical movement that was taking place in Manhattan and Brooklyn, *Gráfico* (Graphic) began publishing in 1927 as a theater and entertainment weekly newspaper under the editorship of the prolific writer Alberto O'Farrill, who was also a playwright and a leading comic actor in Cuban blackface farces (*teatro bufo cubano*). As was the custom in the Southwest, *Gráfico* and the other newspapers and magazines also published numerous poems, short stories, literary essays, and crónicas by the leading Hispanic writers of the city. Among the most notable cronistas were those unknown

writers using the pseudonyms of Maquiavelo (Machiavelli) and Samurai: O'Farrill himself was an important contributor to the tradition, signing his columns as Ofa. As their counterparts did in the Southwest, these cronistas labored in their writings to solidify the Hispanic community, which in New York was even more diverse, coming from many ethnic and national backgrounds. These writers, too, were protecting the purity of Hispanic culture from the dangers of assimilation, as they voiced the political and social concerns of the community and corrected and satirized current habits. While in the Southwest the cronistas promoted a "México de afuera," in New York they often attempted to create a "Trópico en Manhattan" (A Tropical [or Caribbean] Culture in Manhattan).

In New York, though, there were no massive repatriations and deportations disrupting the cultural life in the Hispanic community during the Depression. In fact, New York continued to receive large waves of Hispanics through World War II: refugees from the Spanish Civil War, workers for the service and manufacturing industries flown in from Puerto Rico during World War II in the largest airborne migration in history, Hispanics from the Southwest. Newspapers were founded that reflected this renewed interest in Spanish, Puerto Rican, and working-class culture: *Vida obrera* (1930, Worker's Life), *Alma boricua* (1934-35, Puerto Rican Soul), *España Libre* (1943, Free Spain), and *Cultura proletaria* (1943, Proletariat Culture). In their pages new creative writers addressed these themes, creating an important body of testimonial literature that reflects the life of the immigrant. This literature frequently took the form of autobiographical sketches, anecdotes, and stories—quite often in a homey, straightforward language that was replete with pathos and artistic sensibility.

Despite the many sources available in print, a large part of Puerto Rican, Cuban, Dominican, and Spanish literature in New York is an oral folk literature, completely consistent with and emerging from the working-class nature of the migrants and immigrants. For the Caribbean peoples an immense repository of lyric and narrative poetry is to be found in their songs, such as *décimas*, *plenas*, and *sones*, and in the popular recorded music of such lyrical geniuses as Rafael Hernández, Pedro Flores, and Ramito. Their compositions began appearing on recordings in the 1930s and continue to influence Puerto Rican culture on the island and in New York today. (Of course, the compositions of Hernández and Flores have also influenced Hispanic

popular music around the world.)

The Growth of Puerto Rican Literature

As the Puerto Rican community grew in the late 1920s and into World War II, Puerto Rican literature began to gain a larger profile in New York, but within a decidedly political context. If published books are a measure, it also seems that the literature with the most impact for the Puerto Rican community was drama. During the 1920s and 30s, poet Gonzalo O'Neill (1867-1942), a businessman, was at the hub of Puerto Rican and Hispanic cultural life, not only as a writer but as a cultural entrepreneur who invested his money in the theater and protected and supported other writers.

O'Neill began his literary training and career in Puerto Rico as a teenager in association with a magazine, *El palenque de la juventud* (The Young People's Arena), that featured the works of some of the most important writers in Puerto Rico—Luis Muñoz Rivera, Lola Rodríguez de Tió, Vicente Palés, and many others. O'Neill's first published book, *La indiana borinqueña* (1922, The Puerto Rican Indians), was a dramatic dialogue in verse, more appropriate for reading aloud than staging. Here O'Neill revealed himself to be intensely patriotic and interested in Puerto Rican independence from the United States. His second published book, issued by Spanish American Publishing in 1923, was the three-act play *Moncho Reyes*, named after the central character.

In 1924 O'Neill published a book of nationalistic poetry, *Sonoras bagatelas o sicilianas* (Sonorous Bagatelles or Sicilian Verses). In the prologue, Manuel Quevedo Baez stated that "Gonzalo is a spontaneous and ingenuous poet He is a poet of creole stock, passionate, tender, and as melancholic as Gautier Benítez" (Gautier Benítez was Puerto Rico's greatest poet to date). Although all of his plays, even *La indiana borinqueña*, enjoyed stage productions, it was his third play, *Bajo una sola bandera* (1928, Under Only One Flag), that went on to critical acclaim and various productions on stages in New York and Puerto Rico. *Bajo una sola bandera* examines the political options facing Puerto Rico, as personified by down-to-earth flesh-and-blood characters. A glowing review in San Juan's *La democracia* (Democracy) on April 16, 1929, marveled that O'Neill conserved perfect Spanish and his Puerto Rican identity, despite having lived in the United States for forty years. O'Neill certainly continued to write, although the remainder of his work is unknown or has been lost. However, newspapers

report that another play of his, *Amoríos borincanos* (Puerto Rican Loves), was produced for the stage in 1938.

Following the example of Gonzalo O'Neill, many other Puerto Ricans wrote for the stage and even published some of their works from the late 1920s to the 1940s. They included Alberto M. González, Juan Nadal de Santa Coloma, José Enamorado Cuesta, Frank Martínez, and Erasmo Vando. But one poet-playwright, Franca de Armiño (probably a pseudonym), stands out among the rest as a politically committed woman.

Franca de Armiño authored three works that have been lost and are inaccessible today: *Luz de tinieblas* (Light of Darkness), a book of poems on various themes; *Aspectos de la vida* (Aspects of Life), philosophical essays; and *Tragedia puertorriqueña* (Puerto Rican Tragedy), a comedy of social criticism. Her one published and available play, *Los hipócritas: comedia dramática social* (The Hypocrites: A Social Drama), self-published in 1937 at the Modernistic Editorial Company, is a major work that demands critical attention. Dedicated "to the oppressed and all those who work for ideas of social renovation," the work is set in Spain during the time of the Republic and is openly anti-fascist and revolutionary, calling for a rebellion of workers.

Los hipócritas, which begins with the 1929 stock market crash, deals with a daughter's refusal to marry her father's choice, the son of a duke. Rather she is romantically involved with the son of the working class, Gerónimo, whom her father calls a communist and who has led her into atheism. The plot becomes complicated with Gerónimo organizing workers for a strike, a fascist dictatorship developing in Spain, and a corrupt priest trying to arrange for Gloria to become a nun so that the church will receive her dowry. The play ends with Gloria and Gerónimo together, the traitors unmasked, and the workers' strike prevailing over police, who attack them brutally. While full of propaganda and stereotyped characters, *Los hipócritas* is a gripping and entertaining play that reflects the tenor of the times, as far as the Depression, labor organizing, and the Spanish Civil War are concerned.

Bernardo Vega, cigar roller who settled in New York in 1916, reconstructed life in the Puerto Rican community during the period between the two great wars. His *Memorias de Bernardo Vega*, written in 1940, was published in 1977, with its English translation published as *The Memoirs of Bernardo Vega* in 1984. Valuable as both a literary and a historical document, Vega's memoirs make mention of numerous literary figures, such

as poet Alfonso Dieppa, whose works either were not published or are lost to us. Vega is an important forerunner of the Nuyorican writers of the 1960s because he wrote about New York as a person who was there to stay, with no intention of returning to Puerto Rico to live.

The literature of this period is also represented by a newspaper columnist who wrote in English and was very active in the communist party: Jesús Colón, author of columns for the *Daily Worker*. Colón's was a heroic intellectual battle against the oppression of workers and racial discrimination. Nevertheless, he wrote about and supported Puerto Rican culture and literature, even to the extent of founding a small publishing company that issued some of the first works of the great Puerto Rican novelist and short story writer, José Luis González. In 1961 Colón selected some of the autobiographical sketches that had appeared in newspapers and published them in book form in *A Puerto Rican in New York*. This was perhaps the one literary and historical document that was accessible to young Nuyorican writers and helped to form their literary and social awareness, as well as stimulate their production of literature. Colón, a black Puerto Rican, had created a document that presented insight into Puerto Rican minority status in the United States, rather than just immigrant or ethnic status. In this it was quite different from all that had preceded it. In 1993 another important collection of his works, *The Way It Was*, was published posthumously.

WORLD WAR II TO THE PRESENT

Chicano Literature

Scholars consider the year 1943 to mark the beginning of a new period in Mexican-American history and culture. This is the date when the so-called "Zoot Suit Riots" occurred in the Los Angeles area. Zoot suits were used by Mexican-American youth as a mark of identity for their subculture: they had high-waisted baggy pants, a long jacket, and feathered, wide-brimmed hat. The riots mark a stage in the cultural development of the Mexican-American when there was a consciousness of not belonging to either México or the United States. It was a time to assert a separate independent identity, just as the zoot-suits subculture was doing by adopting its style of dress, speech, and music. This was also a time when Mexican-American soldiers in World War II

proportionately suffered more casualties and won more medals for valor than any other group in U.S. society. Now they felt that they had earned their rights as citizens of the United States and were prepared to assert that citizenship and to reform the political and economic system so that they could participate equally. Thus the quest for identity in modern American society was initiated, and by the 1960s a

younger generation, made up of the children of veterans, was to take up this pursuit of democracy and equity in the civil rights movements and to explore the question of identity in all of the arts, especially literature.

Because of the interruption caused by the Depression, repatriation, and World War II, and the decreased production of literature that ensued during the 1940s and 1950s, the renewed literary and artistic productivity that occurred during the 1960s has often been considered to be a Chicano Renaissance. In reality it was an awakening that accompanied the younger generation's greater access to college and its participation in the civil rights movements, the farm-worker labor struggle, and the protest movement against the Vietnam War.

For Chicano literature, the 1960s were characterized by a questioning of all the commonly accepted truths in society, foremost of which was the notion of equality. The first writers of Chicano literature committed their literary voices to the political, economic, and educational struggles. Their works were frequently used to inspire social and political action, quite often with poets reading their verses at organizing meetings, at boycotts, and before and after protest marches. Of necessity, many of the first writers to gain prominence in the Chicano movement were the poets who could tap into an oral tradition of recitation and declamation—like Abelardo Delgado, Ricardo Sánchez, and Alurista (Alberto Urista). They created works to be performed orally before groups of students and workers in order to inspire them and raise their level of consciousness.

The most important literary work in this period that was used at the grass-roots level, as well as by university students to provide a sense of history, mission, and Chicano identity was an epic poem, *I Am Joaquín/Yo Soy Joaquín* (1964), written by an ex-boxer in Denver, Colorado named Rodolfo "Corky" González. The short, bilingual pamphlet edition of the poem was literally passed from hand to hand in the communities, read from at rallies, dramatized by street theaters, and even produced as a slide show on film with a dramatic reading by Luis Valdez, the leading Chicano director and playwright. The influence and social impact of *I Am Joaquín* and poems like "Stupid America," by Abelardo Delgado, are inestimable. Delgado's poem was published and reprinted in community and movement newspapers throughout the Southwest, then cut out of those papers and passed from person to person. "Stupid

America" was included as well in Abelardo's landmark collection, *Chicano: 25 Pieces of a Chicano Mind* (1969). This period was one of euphoria, power, and influence for the Chicano poet, who was sought after, almost as a priest, to give his blessing in the form of readings at all cultural and Chicano Movement events.

The 1960s was an era of intense grass-roots organizing and cultural fermentation and a time of renewed interest in publishing small community and workers' newspapers and magazines. Some of them, like the California farmworkers' *El Malcriado* (The Brat) and Houston's *Papel Chicano* (Chicano Newspaper), were often published bilingually. During the late 1960s and early 1970s literary magazines proliferated, from the academic—such as Berkeley's *El grito* (The Shout [for Independence])—to the grass-roots type printed on newsprint and available for twenty-five cents—such as San Antonio's *Caracol* (Shell)—to the artsy, street-wise, avant garde, and irreverent—such as Los Angeles's *Con Safos* (Safety Zone).

Quinto Sol

El Grito, which appeared in 1967, was the most influential Chicano literary magazine. It initiated the careers of some of the most prominent names in Chicano literature and, along with Editorial Quinto Sol—the publishing house that it established in 1968—began to delineate the canon of Chicano literature by publishing works that best exemplified Chicano culture, language, themes, and styles. The very name of the publishing house emphasized its Mexican/Aztec identity, as well as the Spanish language: the "quinto sol," or fifth sun, referred to Aztec belief in a period of cultural flowering that would take place some time in the future, in a fifth age that conveniently coincided with the rise of Chicano culture. Included in its 1968 anthology, *El espejo/The Mirror*, edited by Quinto Sol's owners, Octavio Romano and Herminio Ríos, were such writers as Alurista, Tomás Rivera, and Miguel Méndez, who remain models of Chicano literature today. *El espejo* recognized the linguistic diversity and the erosion of Spanish literacy among the young by accompanying works originally written in Spanish with an English translation. It even included Miguel Méndez's original Yaqui-language version of his short story "Tata Casehue." In *El espejo* and later Quinto Sol publications, there was a definite insistence on working-class and rural culture and language, as exemplified in the works of Tomás Rivera, Rolando Hinojosa, and most of the other authors published in book form. There was a

promotion of works written bilingually and in *cal*, the code of street culture that involves switching between English and Spanish and various social dialects of each in the same literary piece, as in the poems of Alurista and the plays of Carlos Morton.

Tomás Rivera, Rudolfo Anaya, and Rolando Hinojosa

In 1970 Quinto Sol reinforced its leadership by instituting the national award for Chicano literature, Premio Quinto Sol (Fifth Sun Award), which carried a \$1,000 prize and publication of the winning manuscript. The first three years' prizes went to books that today are still seen as exemplary Chicano novels and, in fact, are still among the best-selling Chicano literary texts: Tomás Rivera's *...y no se lo tragó la tierra/ ...And the Earth Did Not Part* (1971), Rudolfo Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima* (1972), and Rolando Hinojosa's *Estampas del valle y otras obras/Sketches of the Valley and Other Works*.

Rivera's outwardly simple, but inwardly complex novel, like much in the line of experimental Latin American fiction, demands readers take part in unraveling the story and its meaning and come to their own conclusions about the identity and relationships of the characters. Drawing upon his own life as a migrant worker from Texas, Rivera constructed a novel in the straightforward, but poetic, language of migrant workers. In the novel a nameless central character attempts to find himself by reconstructing the overheard conversations and stories and events that took place during a metaphorical year, which really represents his whole life. It is the story of a sensitive boy who is trying to understand the hardship that surrounds his family and the community of migrant workers. He first rejects them, only to embrace them and their culture as his own at the end of the book. In many ways *...y no se lo tragó la tierra* came to be the most influential book in the Chicano's search for identity.

Rivera, who became a very successful university professor and administrator (he ascended to the position of Chancellor of the University of California-Riverside before his death in 1984), wrote and published other stories, essays, and poems. Through essays like "Chicano Literature: Fiesta of the Living" (1979) and "Into the Labyrinth: The Chicano in Literature" (1971) and his personal and scholarly activities, he was one of the prime movers in promoting Chicano authors, creating the concept of Chicano literature, and establishing that literature and culture as legitimate academic areas in the college curriculum. In 1989 his stories were collected and published under the title of

The Harvest, which was also the title of one of his stories, and in 1990 his poems were collected and published under the title *The Searchers*, both by Arte Público Press, which has also kept his first novel in print and has recently published *Tomás Rivera: The Complete Works* (1990). In 1987 *...y no se lo tragó la tierra* was translated into a Texas dialect under the title of *This Migrant Earth* (1987), by Rolando Hinojosa. The translation that accompanies the Arte Público bilingual edition was done by poet Evangelina Vigil-Piñón. By any account, Tomás Rivera remains the most outstanding and influential figure in the literature of Mexican people in the United States, and he deserves a place in the canon of Spanish-language literature in the world.

Rudolfo Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima* is a straightforward novel about a boy's coming of age. Written in poetic, clear English, it has reached more readers, especially non-Chicano readers, than any other Chicano literary work. In *Bless Me, Ultima* we again have the search for identity, but this time the central character, Antonio, must decide between the Spanish heritage of the plainsman/rancher or the Indian heritage of the farmer. In his attempts to understand good and evil and his role in life, he is guided and inspired by a larger-than-life folk healer, Ultima, who passes on many of her secrets and insights about life to Antonio. In fashioning this novel, Anaya puts to good use his knowledge of the countryside of New Mexico, its romance, and its picturesque qualities. His novel is full of mystery and references to the symbols and folk knowledge of American Indian, Asian, and Spanish culture. Anaya went on to become celebrated in his home state and to head the creative writing program at the University of New Mexico. His subsequent novels—*Heart of Aztlán* (1976), *Tortuga* (1979, Tortoise), *The Silence of the Llano* (1982), and *Lord of the Dawn: The Legend of Quezalcoatl* — all dealing with Chicano/Indian culture in New Mexico, have not succeed as well with the critics.

Anaya is a promoter of the concept of Aztlán, the mythical place of origin of the Aztecs, supposedly located in what has become the five states of the Southwest. He and numerous other Chicano writers have derived both poetic inspiration and a sense of mission in reviving the cultural glories of México's indigenous past. For Anaya, and especially for poets and playwrights like Alurista and Luis Valdez, the Aztec and Mayan past has been a rich source of imagery, symbols, and myths.

Rolando Hinojosa is the most prolific and probably the most bilingually talented of the novelists, with original creations in both English and Spanish published in the United

States and abroad. His Quinto Sol award-winning *Estampas del Valle y otras obras/Sketches of the Valley and Other Works* is a mosaic of the picturesque character types, folk customs, and speech of the bilingual community in the small towns along Texas's Rio Grande Valley. Hinojosa's art, at times reminiscent of the local color crónicas of the 1920s, is one of the most sophisticated contributions to Chicano literature.

Estampas was the first novel in Hinojosa's broad epic of the history and culture of Mexican-Americans and Anglos of the valley. His epic is centered in fictitious Belken County and features two fictitious characters and a narrator—Rafa Buenrostro, Jehú Malacara, and P. Galindo—all of whom may be partial alter egos of Hinojosa himself. What is especially intriguing about his continuing novel, which he calls the Klail City Death Trip Series, is his experimentation with various forms of narration—derived from Spanish, Mexican, English, and American literary history—in the novel's respective installments. *Klail City y sus alrededores* (1976, *Klail City and Surroundings*) owes much to the picaresque novel; *Korean Love Songs* (1980) is narrative poetry; *Mi querido Rafa* (1981, *Dear Rafe*) is part epistolary novel and part reportage; *Rites and Witnesses* (1982) is mainly a novel in dialogue; *Partners in Crime* (1985) is a detective novel; *Claros varones de Belken* (1986, *Fair Gentlemen of Belken*) is a composite; and *Becky and Her Friends* (1990) continues the novel in the style of reportage, but with a new unnamed narrator (P. Galindo having died).

While others have translated his works, Hinojosa has penned and published recreations, in English and Spanish, of them all, except for the English titles *Korean Love Songs*, *Rites and Witness*, and *Partners in Crime*. *Mi querido Rafa* is especially important because it represents the first novel to experiment with bilingual narration and demands of the reader a good knowledge of both English and Spanish and their south Texas dialects.

Because of his many awards—including Premio Casa de las Americas, 1976, the international award for Latin American fiction given in Cuba—his academic background as a Ph.D. in Spanish, and the positive response to his sophisticated art from critics and university professors, Hinojosa is one of the few Hispanic writers in the country to occupy a top position in creative writing programs. In holding the distinguished title of Ellen Clayton Garwood Professor of English and Creative Writing at the University of Texas, Hinojosa is the most recognized and highest ranking Chicano/Hispanic author in academia.

Estela Portillo-Trambley

It was not until 1975 that the Quinto Sol Award was given to a woman, Estela Portillo-Trambley, for her shortstory collection *Rain of Scorpions*, and it marked the ascendancy of women's voices in Chicano literature, which had been dominated by males. Portillo-Trambley's strong feminist and irreverent stories did much to make both the publishing powers in Chicano literature and a new generation of women writers aware of the need to persevere in getting their works published. These works were to change the character of Chicano literature in the 1980s.

In nine finely crafted stories and a novela, Portillo Trambley presents a series of female characters who draw from an inner strength and impose their personalities on the world around them. In the novela that gives the collection its title, a fat and unattractive central character overcomes her own dreams of beauty and the set roles that society has for her, to prevail as a woman who from behind the scenes controls and determines the action around her. She has chosen her life and how to live it; it will not be imposed upon her by others. In the most feminist of the short stories, "If It Weren't for the Honeysuckle," the eldest of three women who are oppressed and enslaved by a drunk and irrational male succeeds in poisoning him and in freeing the women. In this, as in the other stories, as well as in her books to follow—*The Day of the Swallows* (1971), the collection of plays *Sor Juana* (1983, Sister Juana), and the novel *Trini* (1986)—Portillo-Trambley has created strong women who prevail in a male-dominated world. Her latest work, *Trini*, is the story of a Tarahumara woman who leaves her Indian life behind and, after numerous tragedies and betrayals, crosses the border to give birth to her child in the United States, where she is able to control her life for herself and even become a landowner. In all of her work Portillo has demonstrated an uncompromising pursuit of equality and women's liberation.

New Hispanic Literary Publications

By the end of the 1970s most of the literary magazines and Chicano literary presses, including Editorial Quinto Sol and *El grito*, had disappeared. But since 1973 a new Hispanic magazine, *Revista Chicano-Riqueña* (Chicano-Rican Review), had been operating and making greater incursions into academia than any other Hispanic literary

publication. (I co-edited the review, with Luis Dávila, in Gary, Indiana.) In 1979, I founded Arte Público Press as an outgrowth of the magazine and relocated both to Houston, Texas, in time to carry on where Quinto Sol had left off and to offer the leadership in publishing the works from a now-blossoming Hispanic women's literary movement. During the 1980s Arte Público brought into print books of poetry by San Antonio poets Evangelina Vigil and Angela de Hoyos, Chicago poets and prose writers Ana Castillo and Sandra Cisneros, San Francisco Bay Area novelist and poet Lucha Corpi, Los Angeles shortstory writer and former editor of the magazine *ChismeArte* Helena María Viramontes, and New Mexican novelist and playwright Denise Chávez, who were to produce some of the best-selling and most highly reviewed Chicano books in the decade.

Along with Arte Público and *Revista Chicano-Riqueña*, which in 1987 changed its name to *The Americas Review* and was now edited by Julián Olivares and Evangelina Vigil, another magazine-book publisher, *Third Woman*, directed by Norma Alarcón, was founded in Indiana in 1980 and relocated to the University of California-Berkeley in 1985. In the meantime, another Hispanic book publisher with an academic base, *Bilingual Review Press*, also relocated from Binghamton, New York, to the Southwest, to Arizona State University in Tempe. Supported by these three establishments and various other presses that were occasionally issuing women's titles, this first full-blown generation of Chicana writers flourished, finding a welcome space for their books in the academic curriculum, not only in Chicano literature courses but also in women's studies programs and American literature courses. The majority of these Chicana writers were more highly educated than their 1960s and 1970s predecessors. Most of them were college graduates, and two of its representatives—Denise Chávez and Sandra Cisneros—had obtained master's degrees in creative writing. Because these writers were mostly dominant in English, the Spanish language was no barrier, and their works were included in literature courses and became accessible to broad circles of the reading public. As a whole, the women were thoroughly versed in the mainstream feminist movement while preserving their own Chicana identities and culture and developing their literature from it.

At the close of the decade, mainstream textbook publishers were finally responding to the reform movements occurring in academia and to the new statistics for public school markets in the most populous states, which convincingly showed overwhelming Hispanic enrollments now and into the next century. As a result, most of the textbook

publishers had begun an aggressive campaign to search out and include Hispanic writers. In 1990 the nation's largest textbook publisher, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, even went so far as to issue a high school English anthology, *Mexican American Literature*, which includes selections of works from the colonial period to the present in its more than 700 pages.

Pat Mora and Denise Chávez

Some of the writers most successful in being chosen for general American literature textbooks, and for such canonizing texts as *The Norton Anthology of American Literature* have been writers like Pat Mora and Denise Chávez. Mora is the author of three books of poetry—*Chants* (1984), *Borders* (1986) and *Communion* (1991)—the first two winners of the Southwest Book Award. Drawing upon the desert landscape and a Mexican-Indian sensibility, *Chants* is a richly textured exploration, in beautiful whispered tones, of the desert as a woman and of women as holders of the strength and endurance of the desert. In *Borders*, Mora—an El Paso native—continues in the same vein, drawing upon folk customs and the insight of healers as she explores various types of borders: the political and cultural ones between the United States and México and the borders between the sexes. Her latest book, *Communion*, indeed seeks communion with other women, other peoples of the earth, as she expands her vision to Asia and Africa.

Denise Chávez is a talented actress and a prolific playwright, but it is as a novelist that she has gained a deserved place in Chicano and American literature as a whole. For Chávez, as for Rolando Hinojosa, literature is very much the art of writing about lives, about individuals and the stories they have to tell. Both of her novels, *The Last of the Menu Girls* (1986) and *Face of An Angel* (1991), present a series of lives and characters talking for themselves within a loose biographic structure. In the case of her first novel, the unifying structure is the life of Rocío Esquivel who, through a series of interconnected stories gains maturity by rebelling against the social roles created for her. *Face of an Angel*, on the other hand, centers on the life of a waitress and her unfortunate and tragicomic amorous relationships with men. In the midst of the narration she brings in various types of unlikely elements, such as a manual on how to become a good waitress that the protagonist is writing. Both Mora and Chávez have won attention from a world that was previously off-limits to Chicano writers: the pages of the *New York*

Times Book Review, the Norton anthologies, and important fellowships and awards.

New Chicano Poets

While the women were ascending in the world of Chicano literature, so was a younger generation of male writers who were the products of creative writing programs at universities, through which they gained access to study, travel, and publishing opportunities never before open to Chicanos (nor Chicanas). To date, theirs is the only Chicano poetry that has begun to become part of the American literary establishment. Of this new cadre of American poets who no longer speak or write in Spanish and no longer derive sustenance from the oral tradition, recitation, and political action, the most famous and prolific is Gary Soto, currently a tenured associate professor in creative writing and ethnic studies at the University of California-Berkeley. Soto is the winner of numerous prestigious awards, including the Academy of American Poets Prize (1975), the *Discovery-Nation Award* (1975), a Guggenheim Fellowship (1979), an American Book Award, and many other prizes. His poetry is finely crafted, down to earth, and rigorous, mostly inspired by the life of the common working man in the fields and factories.

Quite often, as in his book *The Elements of San Joaquín*, published as are most of his other poetry books by the prestigious University of Pittsburgh Press poetry series, his work is a recollection of growing up in Fresno. While dealing with very real and concrete pictures of life in a particular time and setting, such as his youth in the agricultural San Joaquín Valley, Soto quite often approaches his subject from a classical frame of reference. For instance, in Section 2 of the book, the valley is envisioned according to the four universal elements of the Greek philosophers: earth, air, water, and fire. He takes these elements and transforms them into the particular sights, smells, and labors found in the valley.

Among Soto's other books of poetry are *The Tale of Sunlight* (1978), *Where Sparrows Work Hard* (1981), *Black Hair* (1985), and *Who Will Know?* (1990). In 1985 Soto also began publishing autobiographical prose essays that have met with a great deal of success, his first of three books—*Living Up the Street* (1985), *Small Faces* (1986), and *Lesser Evils: Ten Quartets* (1988)—winning an American Book Award.

Among the other writers who have made it into university creative writing programs as professors are Arizona's Alberto Rios and California's Ernesto Trejo and Lorna Dee

Cervantes. However, Cervantes did not follow the usual trek through MFA graduate programs in creative writing to enter into her career. She was very much a product of the 1970s and the Chicano literary movement of those days. She began reading her poetry in public at a theater festival in 1974, published her first works in *Revista Chicano-Riqueña* in 1975, and shortly thereafter founded and edited a literary magazine, *Mango*, which was freeform and experimental and not limited to publishing Chicanos. By 1981 her first book of poems, *Emplumada* (Plumed), was published by the University of Pittsburgh Press. Despite many publications in magazines and success as a performer of poetry, she didn't finish her B.A. until 1986. In 1990 she earned a Ph.D. in the history of consciousness at the University of California-Santa Cruz. Currently she teaches creative writing at the University of Colorado.

Perhaps better than anyone else, Lorna Dee Cervantes has described the pain of separation from the language and culture of family in such poems as "Refugee Ship" and "Oaxaca, 1974." Her work also deals with the dehumanizing landscape and the dehumanization that is caused by racism and sexism. Today, as her book *From the Cables of Genocide* (1991) makes clear, she is still very much a hard-driving poet who takes risks and is not afraid to deal with taboo topics and violence, whether it be racist, sexist, or psychological.

A Literature That Has Arrived

As greater opportunities in academia have opened up for both Hispanic students and writers, the larger commercial world of publishing is beginning to open its doors to a few more Chicano writers. Under the leadership of writer-scholars like Tomás Rivera and Rolando Hinojosa and publishers like Arte Público Press and Bilingual Review Press, Chicano literature has created a firm and lasting base for itself.

The larger society of readers and commercial publishing represent the new frontier for the 1990s. A strong beginning is represented by the publication in 1991 of Victor Villaseñor's generational family saga, "the Chicano *Roots*," entitled *Rain of Gold*, which is currently under development by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting as a five-part television mini-series. In 1975 Villaseñor's novel *Macho* had been published but barely promoted by Bantam; in 1991 it was reprinted by Arte Público Press and made into a feature film for commercial release. In 1990 the commercial publisher Chronicle Books

issued two books of poetry by Chicanos Gary Soto and Francisco Alarcón, and in 1991 Random House issued two books by Sandra Cisneros. Finally, in 1991 the long-awaited filming of *Bless Me, Ultima* began, with Luis Valdez as director.

Nuyorican Literature

Since 1898 Puerto Rico has been a colony of the United States; since 1917 Puerto Ricans have been citizens of the United States and Puerto Ricans have been migrants—not immigrants to the United States. Despite geographic separation, Puerto Ricans on the island and those on the continent hold in common their ethnicity, history, and religious and cultural traits and practices. Both also deal with the confrontation of two languages and cultures. Thus, whether they reside in the continental United States or on the island, Puerto Ricans are one people. That is true whether they prefer the Spanish language or English, whether they were born on the island or not. The island experience and the experience on the continent are two sides of the same coin. Thus, most attempted divisions of the people are for vested interests, inspired by politics or prejudice.

Puerto Rican culture today is the product of the powerful political, economic, and social forces that descend on small native populations and attempt to evangelize, assimilate, decimate, or otherwise transform them. In the case of Puerto Rico, in 1493 Christopher Columbus initiated the process that forever would make the island's people a blend of the cultures and races of Europe, Africa, and the Americas. It was this act of "discovery" that also resulted in Puerto Rico becoming a colony in the Spanish Empire until 1898, when it was passed into the possession of the next empire to dominate the hemisphere: the United States. It is therefore a land that has been and still is subject to overseas rule—politically and economically, as well as artistically.

Despite being an island geographically cut off from the rest of Latin America, ruled as a colony, and unable to enjoy complete self-determination, Puerto Rico has produced a rich literature that draws on its people's many cultures and experiences. From the middle of the nineteenth century, that literature assumed a creole, Hispanic-American identity, emphasizing the new speech, customs, and history of people in this hemisphere. After 1898 Puerto Rico emphasized its Latin American, Spanish-speaking

identity as separate from the Anglo-American United States.

Island Literature

At the turn of the century, the island's literature was developing along the lines of Latin American modernism, which was heavily influenced by French, Peninsular Spanish and Latin American models. As was the case in México, Perú, Argentina, and Cuba, the artists and writers of Puerto Rico turned to the indigenous people of the island, their folklore, and national models to discover the true identity of the national culture. The *mestizo* highlander, or *jíbaro*, and the Black and mulatto became cultural types that related Puerto Rico to the other island cultures of the Caribbean and thus created a space that was identifiable as home. At the same time, artists and writers challenged both the English language, imposed by U.S. military rule, and the purported benefits of Yankee customs and economic power.

One of Puerto Rico's master poets, Luis Llorens Torres (1878-1944), a European-educated intellectual, adapted the verse forms of the plaintive mountain songs (*décimas*) and affected the folk speech of the *jíbaros* in poems that spoke of pride in rural life and values. His *jíbaros* were always skeptical and unmoved by the bragging and showing off of Americanized Puerto Ricans who believed in Yankee ingenuity and progress.

Puerto Rico's greatest and most universally studied poet, Luis Palés Matos (1898-1959), was the first literary figure in his country to achieve a lasting impact on the evolution of Latin American literature, principally through the development of a poetic style that was inspired by the rhythms and language of Africa and the black Caribbean. His landmark book, *Tun tun de pasa y grifería* (1937), whose onomatopoeic title has no translation, openly claimed a Black African heritage and presence for the cultural make-up of Puerto Rico. But the primitivism, vigor, and freedom of his Black verses was only a point of departure for his critical stance toward Europe and the United States. In Palés Matos's master poem, "La plena de menéalo" (The Dance of Shake It), Puerto Rico is personified by a seductive *mulata*, who sweats rum as she erotically dances close to, but just out of reach of, a drooling Uncle Sam.

In effecting the transition of Puerto Rican literature from the island to the continent, two figures are essential. They are Julia de Burgos (1914-1953) and René Marqués (1919-

1979). The former cultivated beautiful, sensuous odes to her beloved

countryside, only to die tragically on the streets of New York. Her lyricism served the parallel desires for personal and national liberation. René Marqués, the most widely known Puerto Rican playwright, spent time in New York as well, and was able to capture the true meaning of the dislocation of native populations from Puerto Rico and their relocation to foreign lands and values. Even more moving than John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* is the plight of the family of displaced mountain folk in Marqués's *La carreta* (The Oxcart), which was first produced on stage in New York in 1953 and then published in Spanish in 1961 and in English in 1969. *La carreta*, which dramatizes a family forced to move from its farm to a San Juan slum and then to New York, ends with an appeal to Puerto Ricans not to leave their homeland and to return to the island and the values of the countryside.

To a great extent, today's major Puerto Rican writers on the island still draw on Marqués's spirit, style, and message in their attempt to preserve the integrity of the Puerto Rican culture and in their call for the political independence of the island. Prose writers like José Luis González, Pedro Juan Soto, Luis Rafael Sánchez, and Jaime Carrero satirize the complacency of the Americanized middle class, which would like Puerto Rico to become a state of the U.S. They also develop the themes of Puerto Rico's past as Edenic and the *jíbaro* as a child of nature, with an intense code of honor and decency. However, most of today's island novelists, while romanticizing the island's past, have created a one-dimensional image of Puerto Ricans in New York, only focusing on the rootlessness, poverty, and oppression of the second-class citizens who seem lost in the labyrinth of the monster city.

Puerto Rican Writers in New York

As seen in a previous section, Puerto Rican writing in New York dates back to the end of the nineteenth century, and writing in English begins about the time that Jesús Colón was writing his columns for the *Daily Worker*. This represents a rather appropriate beginning, given that most of the Puerto Rican writers of English that followed have identified themselves with the working class. Unlike writers on the island, who usually belong to an elite, educated class and often are university professors, the New York writers, who came to be known as "Nuyoricans," are products of parents transplanted to the metropolis to work in the service and manufacturing industries. These writers are predominantly bilingual in their poetry and English-dominant in their prose. They hail

from a folk and popular tradition heavily influenced by roving bards, reciters, story tellers, *salsa*-music composers, and the popular culture and commercial environment of New York City.

Young Puerto Rican writers and intellectuals began using the term *Nuyorican* in the 1960s as a point of departure in affirming their own cultural existence and history as different from that of the island of Puerto Rico and mainstream America. A literary and artistic flowering in the New York Puerto Rican community ensued in the late 1960s and early 1970s—the result of the ethnic consciousness movement and greater access to education for Puerto Ricans raised in the United States. The term *Nuyorican* was first applied to literature by playwright-novelist Jaime Carrero in his poem "Neo-Rican Jetliner/Jet neorriqueño" in the late 1960s. Subsequently the term found some stylistic and thematic development in his plays *Noo Jall* (a blending of the Spanish pronunciation of "New York" and the word "jail") and *Pipo Subway No Sabe Reír* (Pipo Subway Doesn't Know How to Laugh). But it was a group of poet-playwrights associated with the Nuyorican Poets' Café on the Lower East Side of New York who later really defined and exemplified Nuyorican literature. The group included Miguel Algarín, Lucky Cienfuegos, Tato Laviera, and Miguel Piñero. Cienfuegos and Piñero were ex-convicts who had begun their writing careers while incarcerated and who had associated with African-American convict-writers. They chose to concentrate on prison life, street life, and the culture of poverty and to protest the oppression of their peoples through their poetry and drama.

Miguel Algarín, a university professor and owner and operator of the Nuyorican Poets' Café, contributed a spirit of the avant garde to the collective and managed to draw into the circle such well known poets as Alan Ginsberg. Tato Laviera, a virtuoso bilingual poet and performer of poetry (*declamador*), contributed a lyricism and a folk and popular-culture tradition that derived from the island experience and from Afro-Caribbean culture, but was cultivated specifically in and for New York City.

It was Miguel Piñero's work (and life), however, that became most celebrated, when his prison drama, *Short Eyes*, won an Obie and the New York Drama Critics Award for Best American Play in the 1973-74 season. His success, and that of fellow Nuyorican writer and ex-convict Piri Thomas (for his autobiography) and that of poet Pedro Pietri (who developed the image of a street urchin always high on marijuana) created the perception that Nuyorican literature and theater concerned crime, drugs, abnormal

sexuality, and generally negative behavior. As a result, many writers, who in fact were affirming Puerto Rican working-class culture, did not want to become identified with the movement. Still others wanted to hold onto their ties with the island and saw no reason to emphasize different experiences. The situation was exacerbated in the early 1970s when the commercial publishing establishment took advantage of the literary fervor in the Puerto Rican community and issued a series of ethnic autobiographies that insisted on the criminality, abnormality, and drug culture of New York Puerto Ricans. Included in this array (mostly paperbacks) were, of course, Piri Thomas's *Down These Mean Streets* (1967, issued in paper in 1974), *Seven Long Times* (1974), and *Stories from El Barrio* (1978, issued in paper in 1980); Lefty Barreto's *Nobody's Hero* (1976); and (a religious variation on the theme) Nicky Cruz's *Run Nicky Run*. So well worn was this type of supposed autobiography that it generated a satire by another Nuyorican writer, Ed Vega, who comments in the introduction to his novel, *The Comeback* (1985), as follows:

I started thinking about writing a book, a novel. And then it hit me. I was going to be expected to write one of those great American immigrant stories, like *Studs Lonigan*, *Call It Sleep*, or *Father*.... Or maybe I'd have to write something like *Manchild in the Promised Land* or a Piri Thomas' *Down These Mean Streets* I never shot dope nor had sexual relations with men, didn't for that matter, have sexual relations of any significant importance with women until I was about nineteen And I never stole anything Aside from fist fights, I've never shot anyone, although I've felt like it. It seems pretty far-fetched to me that I would ever want to do permanent physical harm to anyone. It is equally repulsive for me to write an autobiographical novel about being an immigrant. In fact, I don't like ethnic literature, except when the language is so good that you forget about the ethnic writing it.

The Comeback is the story of a confused college professor who creates for himself the identity of a Puerto Rican-Eskimo ice hockey player, suffers a nervous breakdown, and is treated for the classical symptoms of an identity crisis. Throughout the novel, Vega satirizes all types of characters that populate the barrio and popular culture, including Puerto Rican revolutionaries, psychiatrists, and a Howard Cosell-type sportscaster. In Vega's *Mendoza's Dreams* (1987), an interrelated collection of stories by a fictitious narrator, Ernesto Mendoza, the author surveys the human comedy of everyday barrio life and relates tales of success as barrio dwellers reach for the American dream in small ways. In his collection *Casualty Report* (1991), Vega shows us the inverse: the physical, psychological, and moral death of many who live in the poverty and

deprivation of the Puerto Rican barrio and the larger ghetto of a racist society.

Nuyorican Poets

More than anything else, the first generation of Nuyorican writers was one dominated by poets, many of whom had come out of an oral tradition and had honed their art through public readings. Thus, the creation of the Nuyorican Poets' Cafe was a natural outcome of the need to create a space for the performance of poetry. Among the consummate performers of Nuyorican poetry were Victor Hernández Cruz, Tato Laviera, Miguel Piñero, and Miguel Algarín.

Like his fellow poets, Cruz was initiated into poetry through popular music and street culture. His first poems have been often considered to be jazz poetry in a bilingual mode, except that English dominated and thus opened the way for his first book, *Snaps: Poems* (Random House, 1969), to be published by a mainstream publisher. It was quite a feat for a twenty-year-old from an impoverished background. In all of Cruz's poetry, sound, music, and performance are central. He always experiments with bilingualism as oral poetry and searches for identity sounds and symbols. In *Mainland* (1973) and *Tropicalization* (1976) he takes the reader back to Puerto Rico and primordial Indian and African music and poetry (*Mainland*, 1973) and across the United States and to New York (*Tropicalization*, 1976), where he finds the city transformed by its Caribbean peoples into their very own cultural home. *By Lingual Wholes* (1982) is a consuming and total exploration of the various linguistic possibilities in the repertoire of a bilingual poet, and *Rhythm, Content and Flavor* (1989) is a summary of his entire career.

Tato Laviera has said, "I am the grandson of slaves transplanted from Africa to the Caribbean, a man of the New World come to dominate and revitalize two old world languages." And, indeed, Laviera's bilingualism and linguistic inventiveness have risen to the level of virtuosity. Laviera is the inheritor of the Spanish oral tradition, with all of its classical formulas, and the African oral tradition, with its ties to music and spirituality. In his works he brings the Spanish and English languages and the islands of Puerto Rico and Manhattan together, creating a constant duality that is always just in the background. His first book, *La Carreta Made a U-Turn* (1979), was published by Arte Público Press, which has become the leading publisher of Nuyorican literature, despite its location in Houston. *La Carreta Made a U-Turn* uses René Marqués's *Oxcart* as a point of departure and redirects his story back to the heart of New York, instead of back to the island, as Marqués had desired. Laviera is stating that Puerto Rico can be found

on the U.S. mainland, too. His second book, *Enclave* (1981) is a celebration of diverse heroic personalities, both real and imagined: Luis Palés Matos and *salsa* composers, the neighborhood gossip and John Lennon, Miriam Makeba and Tito Madera Smith, the latter being a fictional, hip offspring of a *jíbara* and a Southern American black. *AmeR_can* (1986) and *Mainstream Ethics* (1988) are surveys of the lives of the poor and marginalized in the United States and a challenge for the country to live up to its promises of equality and democracy.

One of the few women's voices to be heard in this generation is a very strong and well-defined one, that of Sandra María Esteves, who from her teen years has been very active in the women's struggle, African-American liberation, the Puerto Rican independence movement, and—especially—the performance of poetry. In 1973 she joined "El Grupo," a New York based touring collective of musicians, performing artists, and poets that formed the cultural wing of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party. By 1980 she had published her first collection of poetry, *Yerba Buena*, which is a search for identity of a Hispanic woman of color, the daughter of immigrants from the Caribbean, now living in the United States. All three of her books, *Yerba Buena*, *Tropical Rains: A Bilingual Downpour* (1984), and *Mockingbird Bluestown Mambo* (1990), affirm that womanhood is what gives unity to all of the diverse characterizations of her life.

Nicholasa Mohr and Judith Ortiz Cofer

The most productive and recognized Nuyorican novelist is Nicholasa Mohr. Her works, *Nilda* (1973), *El Bronx Remembered* (1975), *In Nueva York* (1977), *Felita* (1979), and *Going Home* (1986), were all published in hardback and paperback by major commercial publishing houses and are all still in print, three of them having been reissued by Arte Público Press. Her books have entered the mainstream as have no other books by Hispanic authors of the United States. They have won such awards as the New York Times Outstanding Book of the Year, the *School Library Journal* Best Children's Book, and many others, including a New York State Legislature decree honoring her. Her best loved novel, *Nilda*, traces the coming of age of a young Puerto Rican girl in the Bronx during World War II. Nilda gains awareness of the plight of her people and her own individual problems by examining the racial and economic oppression that surrounds her and her family, doing so in a manner reminiscent of Tomás Rivera's central character in *...y no se lo tragó la tierra*.

In two of her other books, a series of stories and novellas called *In Nueva York* and *El Bronx Remembered*, Mohr examines various Puerto Rican neighborhoods and draws sustenance from the common folks' power to survive and still produce art, folklore, and strong families in the face of oppression and marginalization. *Rituals of Survival: A Woman's Portfolio* (1985), in five stories and a novella, portrays six strong women who take control of their lives, most by liberating themselves from husbands, fathers, or families that attempt to keep them in narrowly defined female roles. *Rituals* is the book that the mainstream houses would not publish, wanting to keep Mohr confined to what they saw as immigrant and children's literature—like *Felita* and *Going Home*.

Although she did not join into groups and collectives, Mohr has been one of the most influential of the Nuyorican writers because of her sheer productivity and accomplishment. She has also led the way to greater acceptance of Nuyorican and Hispanic writers in creative writing workshops, such as the Millay Colony, and on the funding panels of the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York State Council on the Arts.

Another Nuyorican writer who has not participated in nor benefited from collective work is Judith Ortiz Cofer, who grew up in Paterson, New Jersey, and has lived much of her adult life in Georgia and Florida. Ortiz Cofer is one of the few Nuyorican products of the creative writing programs, and much of her early poetry was disseminated through establishment small presses in the South. They may have been intrigued by the exoticism of her Puerto Rican subjects, packaged in finely crafted verses, and a magic and mystery in her work that are similar to that of Pat Mora's poetry.

Her first book of poems, *Reaching for the Mainland* (1987), is a chronicle of the displaced person's struggle to find a goal, a home, a language, and a history. In *Terms of Survival* (1987) she explores the psychology and social attitudes of the Puerto Rican dialect and how it controls male and female roles. In these poems she also carries on a dialogue with her father. In 1989 Ortiz Cofer published a widely reviewed novel of immigration, *Line of the Sun*, through the University of Georgia Press and in 1990 an even more highly reviewed book, *Silent Dancing: A Remembrance of Growing Up Puerto Rican*, through Arte Público Press. *Silent Dancing* is made up of a collection of autobiographical essays, in the style of Virginia Woolf.

In 1988 Judith Ortiz Cofer and five other writers—Nicholasa Mohr, Tato Laviera, Rolando Hinojosa, Alberto Ríos, and Lorna Dee Cervantes—were featured reading and performing their works in an historic documentary, *Growing Up Hispanic*, directed by Jesús Treviño and broadcast on public television by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. The future of Hispanic literature in the United States promises to be very fruitful, as more and more segments of the population get the message.

Cuban-American Literature

During the first half of the twentieth century, Cubans and Spaniards dominated Hispanic arts and media in New York. While Cuban culture was on the rise in New York, the island's literature had already joined that of México and Argentina as leaders of Spanish-American letters. Nineteenth-century Cuban masters Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, José Echeverría, Julián del Casal, and José Martí and the twentieth century patriarch Nicolás Guillén received international acclaim. (Guillén has taken Spanish-American poetry from a markedly Afro-Caribbean focus to a Pan-Hispanic vision in support of universal socialist revolution.) Cuba has also contributed its share to the Latin American literary boom, with such writers as Alejo Carpentier, José Lezama Lima, and Gabriel Cabrera Infante.

It is no wonder then that the inheritors of such a rich and dynamic tradition would contribute so greatly to Hispanic culture in the United States. While the Puerto Rican mass migration began during World War II, when the American economy drew heavily on its island territory for workers, Cubans came beginning in 1959 as political refugees from a land that had never been a colony of the United States, although it had been a protectorate and an economic dependent since the Spanish-American War. Most of the Puerto Ricans had come as workers and generally did not have the level of education or the financial resources and relocation services of the Cubans.

This first mass of Cubans came with an outstanding written tradition intact. Unlike Puerto Rican writers, those in Cuba had never been obsessed with protecting the Spanish language and Hispanic culture against Anglo-American culture and language. Thus, when writers and intellectuals immigrated to the United States, many of them were able to adapt to and become part of this country's Hispanic and mainstream cultural institutions.

Today, after three decades of new Cuban culture in New York, New Jersey, Miami, and other locations throughout the United States, a Cuban-American literary and artistic presence has developed. Younger writers are no longer preoccupied with exile, with eyes cast only on the island past; instead they are looking forward to participating in the English-language mainstream or serving the intellectual and cultural needs of U.S. Cuban and other Hispanic communities. Thus, a definite separation of purpose and esthetics has developed amidst the younger writers—Roberto Fernández, Iván Acosta, Virgil Suárez, and Oscar Hijuelos, for instance—and older writers of exile—Lydia Cabrera, Matías Montes Huidobro, and José Sánchez Boudy. Also, there continues to be an influx of exiled writers like Heberto Padilla, who are disaffected from Cuban communism but have not yet created for themselves a solid niche within Hispanic and mainstream institutions, such as publishing houses, periodicals, and universities.

During the last decades Cuban-American literature has attacked the Cuban Revolution and Marxism, with the novel of exile serving as a weapon in the struggle. Following the first anti-revolutionary novel, *Enterrado vivo* (Buried Alive), published in México in 1960 by Andrés Rivero Collado, a host of others were published in the United States and abroad by minor writers like Emilio Fernández Camus, Orlando Núñez, Manuel Cobo Souza, Raúl A. Fowler, and Luis Ricardo Alonso. When they were not openly propagandistic and rhetorical, they were nostalgic for the homeland to the point of idealization. Poetry and drama followed the same course, for the most part. Later, political verse would form a special genre of its own, what critic Hortensia Ruiz del Viso has called "poesía del presidio político" (political prisoner poetry). Examples can be found in the works of Angel Cuadra, Heberto Padilla, and Armando Valladares (who resides in Spain, but is quite active in the United States).

New Directions

A key figure in providing a new direction for Cuban literature in the United States has been Celedonio González who, beginning with *Los primos* (1971, The Cousins), concentrated on Cuban life and culture in the United States. Later, in *Los cuatro embajadores* (1973, The Four Ambassadors) and *El espesor del pellejo de un gato ya cadáver* (1978, The Thickness of the Skin on a Cat Already a Corpse), he examined culture shock and conflict between Cubans and Americans and treated a taboo topic:

criticism of the economic system of the United States and its exploitation of Cuban workers. González presents us with Cubans who do not yet see themselves as Americans but who are also conscious that Cuba is no longer theirs.

Ironically, one of the most important writers in forging a Cuban-American literature and in breaking new ground in his use of the English language is a professor of Spanish: Roberto Fernández. Through his novels, Fernández touches on all of the taboo subjects in the Cuban community of Miami—the counter-revolutionary movement in the United States, racism, acculturation and assimilation—but he also helps the community to look at these subjects in a light vein and to laugh at itself. In his two open-form mosaic-like novels, *La vida es un special* (1982, *Life Is on Special*) and *La montaña rusa* (1985, *The Roller Coaster*), Fernández presents a biting but loving satire of a community transformed by the materialism and popular culture of the United States but somewhat paralyzed by nostalgia and political obsession with a communist Cuba. In 1988 Fernández continued the community saga in English, with the publication of *Raining Backwards*, his most well-known and highly regarded novel. Here, as in his other works, the hilarious parade of characters, language styles (with quite a bit of bilingual humor), and diverse social events are aimed at the helping community taking stock of its present circumstances and reckoning with a future here in the United States.

One of the most influential Cuban-American literary magazines has been *Linden Lane* magazine, which is published in Spanish. Published by writer Heberto Padilla and edited by poet Belkis Cuza Malé, who is a professor at Princeton University, the magazine has created a forum for the whole Cuban writing community, both the generation of exile and the new Cuban-American generation. In 1990 the magazine formally announced the advent of a Cuban-American literature with its publication of an anthology containing works in both English and Spanish. Entitled *Los atrevidos: Cuban American Literature*, the anthology is edited by Miami poet Carolina Hospital, also an editor of *Linden Lane*. In 1991 Arte Público Press published an anthology (*Cuban American Theater*, edited by critic Rodolfo Cortina) that also proclaimed a Cuban-American identity. Both collections feature writers dispersed throughout the United States, not just those from Miami and New York.

Among the new generation of Cuban-American writers growing up in the United States, there are a few who have gone through creative writing programs at universities and who thus have had access to mainstream publishing opportunities. An exception is Virgil

Suárez, a graduate of Louisiana State University's important writing program. In 1989 Suárez published *Latin Jazz* (1989) with Morrow and *The Cutter* (1991), with Ballantine Books. His third book, a fine collection of short stories entitled *Welcome to the Oasis*, was not accepted by commercial publishers (who prefer novels) but was published in 1991 by Arte Público Press. *Latin Jazz* is an ethnic biographical novel that portrays a whole Cuban family instead of just one individual. In alternate chapters devoted to each of the family members, Suárez provides their respective histories, hopes, and desires as they wait for a missing family member to arrive in Miami with the Mariel boat lift.

Probably the most important of the Cuban-American writers to come out of a creative writing school is Oscar Hijuelos, who is not the son of refugees from the Cuban Revolution but of earlier immigrants to New York. Hijuelos's first offering, *Our House in the Last World* (1983), is a typical ethnic autobiography and can be seen as a symbol of Cuban assimilation. It is one of the few novels that negatively portrays the island culture, as personified by an alcoholic father, while it develops the tried and true theme of the American dream in the United States. His novel *The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love* (1990) made history: it is the first novel by an Hispanic writer of the United States to win the Pulitzer Prize. It also marks the first time that a major publishing house, Simon & Schuster, has ever invested heavily in a novel by a Hispanic writer, bringing it out at the top of its list and promoting the book extensively. *The Mambo Kings* is the story of two brothers who were musicians during the heyday of the mambo and during the time when at least one Cuban, Desi Arnaz on the *I Love Lucy* show, had captured the attention of the United States. The novel thus has a historical background that lends it a very rich texture. It allows us to see a portion of American popular culture through the eyes of two performers who were wrapped up in the euphoria of the times and to see the waning of interest in things Latin in the U.S. The tragic ending of the duo is very touching but offers hope for the potential of Hispanic culture to influence the mainstream. In fact, Hijuelo's book and the recognition it has won offer hope of mainstream publishing for other U.S. Hispanic writers.

LITERATURE IN SPANISH FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS

by Alma Flor Ada

American Indian and African children, as members of cultures with a rich oral tradition, used to partake of the myths, legends, fables, animal stories, songs, riddles, and sayings of their community. In the same way the Spanish children listened to readings of the chivalry novels (novellas de caballería) and stories from *Calila y Dimna* and *El Conde Lucanor*, as well as romances, fairy tales, and fables.

Sometimes early monarchs would ask to have books written for their children, and some poets (the most notable being Lope de Vega, 1562-1635) wrote poetry for their children. But it was not until the eighteenth century in Spain and the nineteenth century in Latin America that books created especially for children became popular.

In the eighteenth century literature for children was a vehicle for teaching moral precepts. Spanish Minister Floridablanca asked Tomás de Iriarte (1750-1791) to write a collection of literary fables, while the Count of Peñafiel made a similar request of Félix María Samaniego (1745-1807). These collections of fables would become part of the education of Spanish-speaking children for the next two centuries.

The novelist Fernán Caballero (1796-1877) in Spain, like the Brothers Grimm, collected folktales and retold them in wonderfully light prose, rich in rhymes and couplets. Caballero became an inspiration for Padre Luis Coloma (1851-1914), who published her biography. In *Recuerdos de Fernán Caballero* he included some of her best stories and his own original ones. "Pelusa" is the story of an orphan girl found in a mouse nest, and "Ratón Pérez" (Mouse Pérez) is the Hispanic equivalent of the tooth fairy.

Newspapers and magazines for children abounded during the nineteenth century, and it is within this genre that one of the most important publications for children was produced. *La Edad de Oro* (The Golden Age), a magazine for children created by José Martí (1853-1895) in New York, was distributed throughout South America. The publication, written in its entirety by Martí, was short lived, but its literary quality is such that it has been reprinted many times in book format. It is unquestionably an exceptional contribution to children's literature in Latin America.

Martí raises important issues for children to reflect about: the differences brought about by class and economic status, the contributions of indigenous civilizations and the mistreatment suffered by indigenous peoples, the *mestizo* condition of Latin America, the need to feel proud of "our Indian mother," and the acknowledgment of African heritage. Because his prose is both pristine and charming, these topics are clear and accessible to children and his writing promotes their aesthetic development. This classic book can be an excellent introduction to many issues that are still pertinent today.

An interesting consequence of the Spanish Civil War was that many of the intellectuals, writers, and artists who survived it left Spain and went into exile rather than live under the Franco dictatorship. Three of them had a great influence in the development of children's literature in Hispanic America.

Juan Ramón Jiménez (1881-1958), winner of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1956, settled in Puerto Rico, as did another giant of the arts, cellist Pablo Casals. An exquisite poet, with a style of great purity expressing subtle but deep emotion, Juan Ramón strongly influenced later writers in both Spain and Latin America. His book *Platero y yo* (Platero and I), which contains vignettes of his youth in Moguer, was not originally written for children but captured the imagination of teachers, who brought it to classrooms and helped make it a children's classic.

In Cuba, Herminio Almendros made a valuable contribution to children's literature. He organized literary circles for children in the public library in Havana, setting an example that later developed into the outstanding Children's Literary Workshops (Talleres Infantiles). He published a delightful book, *Había una vez . . .* (Once Upon a Time), a collection of folktales and traditional poetry, and penned many other books for children.

In México the Spanish writer Antoniorrobes continued writing the delightful children's stories that he had originally published in Spain, but gave them a Mexican setting.

In Latin America, Argentina and México have had a long tradition of extensive publishing. In both cases publishing for children has been connected to social efforts on behalf of education, inspired by leading educators Sarmientos and Vasconcelos respectively.

In Argentina the Uruguayan writer Constancio C. Vigel (1876-1954) carried on an ample production of books for children and published a children's magazine, *Billiken*, that had wide dissemination in the rest of Latin America. His books were infused with humanism, and although they now seem antiquated, they nurtured several generations of children. In 1924, the poet Germán Berdiales published *Las fiestas de mi escuelita*, initiating a long career of writing for children with a very simple and delicate language. His anthology *Nuevo ritmo de la poesía infantil* (1943) recognized the presence of several new writers committed to a poetry truly for children, a poetry that delights and is not moralizing, didactic, preachy, or tearful. José Sebastián Tallón (1904-1954), with the delightful book *Las torres de Nuremberg*, was one contributor to this new trend, as was Fryda Schultz de Mantovani. Condrado Nalé Roxlo published a delightful story, *La escuela de las hadas* (1963, 1988, A School for Fairies), showing that it was possible to treat the old topics in new ways.

Javier Villafane reaches children through the use of puppets. His company, Títeres de la Andariega, traveled throughout Argentina delighting children and giving the message to adults that it was possible to write using repetitive text, alliterations, and onomatopoeia and a light and lively poetry. *Cuentos y títeres* (1986) contains some favorite stories and scripts for puppet shows.

Perhaps the greatest contributor to this light and humorous style has been María Elena Walsh. With an unsurpassable sense of humor, she creates a lively poetry, much of which she sets to music and sings herself. The influence of her well-loved *Tutú Marambá*, *Zoo loco*, and *El reino del revés*, on the contemporary writers is significant.

Among those currently devoted to creating for children are the poet Elsa Isabel Bornemann, *Laura Devetach* (1989), *Graciela Montes* (1988), and *Gustavo Roldán* (1986). Two Argentineans, Marta Dujovne and Esther Jacobs, lived and worked extensively in México making a significant contribution especially with books for the young readers inspired by Mexican historical past.

The rich Mexican folklore, and the renewed interest in everything national that the Mexican Revolution promoted, led to multiple recompilations of popular works. Vicente Mendoza published *Lírica Infantil de México* (Children's Popular Poetry in México), *Romance y corrido* (Ballads and *corridos*, 1939), *La décima en México* (The *décima* in México, 1947); Rubén M. Campos compiled *El folklore literario de México* (Mexican

Literary Folklore), *Tradiciones y leyendas mexicanas* (Mexican Traditions and Legends), and *Cuentos mexicanos* (Mexican stories). Aurelio Espinosa gathered *New Mexican Spanish Folklore* and Juan B. Real, in 1957, *Cuentos españoles de Colorado y Nuevo México* (Spanish Tales from Colorado and New Mexico).

While much of the popular folklore is not geared specifically to any age, but to all people, some of these authors addressed children directly. They are Alfredo Ibarra with *Cuentos y leyendas de México* (Tales and Legends from México, 1941), Pascuala Corona with *Cuentos mexicanos para niños* (1945), and Blanca Lydia Trejo with *Cuentos y leyendas indígenas para los niños*.

Two great Mexican poets, Amado Nervo (1870-1919) and José Juan Tablada (1871-1945), wrote poems that have become part of most children's poetry anthologies. A popular entertainer, Gabilondo Soler, produced a radio program centered in the character of *Cri cri, el grillo cantor* (Cri-crí, the singing cricket), which had an enormous popularity inside and outside México.

Yet for several decades the number of quality books produced for children in México in no way responded to the rich tradition of the country, its diverse indigenous roots, or its large population. The translations of foreign books and comics by far surpassed the creation of a national children's literature, as studied by Irene Herner. The last three decades of the century have seen an extraordinary development, to a great extent supported by government organizations, in particular the SEP (Secretary of Public Education). One important initiative was the publishing of *Colibrí* (Hummingbird), a children's magazine under the direction of Mariana Yampolski, who gathered excellent writers and outstanding illustrators and included traditional and original literature as well as historical and scientific information.

The Libros del Rincón (Books for a Reading Corner) is another excellent initiative from SEP. This program both reprints books published by other publishers and prints original books to create classroom collections. The selections are uniformly well chosen. Of particular interest are those that depict Mexico realistically. *Joaquín y Maclovia se quieren casar* (Joaquin and Maclovia Want to Get Married, Hinojosa y Mesa, 1987) and *Por el agua van las niñas* (Young Girls Fetch Water, Romo, 1988) are inspired and illustrated by turn-of-the-century photographs. A series of books from

this imprint presents the life of today's indigenous children in México. Examples are *Soy Nahuatl* (I'm Nahuatl), *Lagunes and Dolores* (1988), and *Soy Huichol* (I'm Huichol, González, 1988).

The Editorial Amecamecan, also with government aid, has made an outstanding contribution by sponsoring the publication of original Mexican writers. *El maravilloso viaje de Nico Huehuetl a traves de México* (The Wonderful Trip of Nico Huehuetl Across México, Muria, 1986), a spinoff of Selma Lagerloff's classic, recognizes the rich diversity of México. In *Pok a Tok, El juego de pelota* (Pok a Tok, The Ball Game) by Gilberto Rendón Ortiz (1986), Mayan mythology is woven into contemporary stories.

Private publishing houses have also begun to recognize the rich Mexican heritage and to publish beautifully illustrated versions of traditional legends and poetry. *De tigres y tlacuaches* (Of Tigers and Possums, Kurtycz and Kobeh, 1981) is an example of books inspired by the autochthonous literature while *El espejo de obsidiana* (The Obsidian Glass, Goldsmith, 1982) is part of a collection of six stories, each set in a different period of Mexican history.

In Cuba it also took a great deal of government support to develop a sizable production of children's books. The literacy campaign carried on after the Revolution raised the number of readers, but there were few books written originally for children. However, an ample children's literature, with some significant writers, emerged due to several factors: the development of a publishing house, Editorial Gent, devoted exclusively to children's books; the creation of a number of awards; government subsidies to make books inexpensive; a network of small bookstores throughout the country to make books very accessible; the development of public libraries and the children's literary workshops they offered.

It is not uncommon to find great Hispanic poets writing for children. Nicolás Guillén (1902-1989) contributed to that tradition his book *Por el mar de las Antillas anda un barco de papel* (In the Caribbean Sea Sails a Paper Ship, 1978). Mirta Aguirre, unquestionably one of the greatest poets writing for children in this century, collected her children's poetry as *Juegos y otros poemas* (Games and Other Poems, 1974). Her particular style of fusing two words to create new ones is light and bright as butterfly wings and has had a significant influence on younger poets.

Nersys Felipe has twice earned the prestigious award from Casa de las Americas with *Cuentos de Guane* (Tales from Guane, 1975) a book of childhood memories, and *Romas Ele* (1976), a story of a boy descended from slaves. This is one of the few books written in Spanish in which the African heritage has been adequately portrayed.

Two writers recognized for their works for adults have also written extensively for children. They are David Cherician, author of *Caminito del bosque* (A Road in the Forest), who writes of serious topics with a lively Afro-Caribbean musicality, and Dora Alonso (1910-), author of both narrative, *El cochero azul* (The Blue Coachman), and poetry, *La flauta de chocolate* (The Chocolate Flute, 1984) and *Los payasos* (The Clowns, 1985). Julia Calzadilla Núñez in *Cantares de la America Latina y el Caribe* (Songs of Latin America and the Caribbean), another Casa de las Americas award-winning book, takes on the challenge of singing to the Latin American countries with a poetry rich in regionalism, a poetry that celebrates the diversity of the people who live in Latin America and the Caribbean. Alga Marina Elizagaray, one of the critics who has extensively promoted the new literature outside of Cuba, has retold a series of African folktales that have taken hold in the Caribbean in a book published in México by Amecamecan, *Fabulas del Caribe* (Caribbean Fables).

In Venezuela, a non-profit organization, Banco del Libro, rescued legends of the Pemón and Guajiro indians and published them in beautifully illustrated hard-cover books under the imprint Ekare. Examples are *El cocuyo y la mora* (The Firefly and the Mulberry Bush, Kurusa, 1978) and *La capa del morrocoy* (The Turtle's Cape, 1982). Contemporary realistic stories denouncing the difficult realities in the outskirts of Caracas are found in *La calle es libre* (The Street Is Free, Kurusa, 1981), one of the few Latin American children's books to have been published abroad in English. *No era vaca ni era caballo* (It Wasn't a Cow nor a Horse, 1984), written by Jusayu, a Guajiro Indian, denounces the effects of the destructive penetration of white men into the territories of the indigenous people.

The lack of support of the publishing houses in the United States has made it very difficult to provide children's literature written locally for Spanish-speaking children in the United States. For the most part, bilingual programs have had to rely on books published in Spain and Latin America. Hispanic writers writing in English in the United States have not had an easy road to travel either, but in spite of all the difficulties a few have made significant contributions.

Special mention should be made of two pioneers, Chicano Ernesto Galarza and Puerto Rican Pura Belpré. Galarza, who emigrated very young to the United States, felt a strong need to provide a literature for Hispanic children in his adopted country. Lacking external support, he created his own cottage industry editorial effort in San Jose, California, where he published the Colección Mini-Libros, a series of small books, in Spanish and in English, illustrated with black and white photographs taken by the author himself. One of his achievements has been to create Mexican versions of the traditional Mother Goose rhymes. Some of his poems are like brief strokes painting everyday reality. Nature, fruits, plants, insects come alive in his poetry, which is close to the heart of the farm-working child and can bring the city child close to the land. Galarza recognizes the bicultural life of the children for whom he writes, and when the poem suggests it he doesn't shy away from borrowing words from English when writing in Spanish and vice versa.

A librarian in New York, Pura Belpré was an accomplished storyteller who rejoiced in sharing how she had told stories to three generations and welcomed in her library grandmothers who, as children, had listened to her stories. Her book *Perez and Martina* was one of the few publications by a major American publisher of a Latin American folktale. *Santiago* is a beautiful story of a Puerto Rican child in New York.

Nicholasa Mohr, another Puerto Rican author, has contributed her books *Nilda* (1973), *Felita* (1979), and *Going Home* (1986).

A long-time promoter of children's literature in Spanish for Hispanic children, and of literature in English by and about Hispanics for all children, Alma Flor Ada has produced a substantial number of books: original poetry in Spanish, particularly the *Abecedario de los animales* (The Alphabet of the Animals) and the anthology *Días y días de poesía* (Days and Days of Poetry, 1991); predictable stories and big books with light rhythmic text published in both English and Spanish like *El canto del mosquito* (The Song of the Teene-Tiny Mosquito); and picture books like the well-loved *Amigos* (Friends). Her first book with a major American publisher, *The Gold Coin* (Atheneum, 1991), won the Christopher Award. Her new titles include *Serafina's Birthday*, a celebration of the family storyteller; *The Rooster that Went to His Uncle's Wedding* (1992), a folktale; and *My Name is Maria Isabel* (1992), the story of a Puerto Rican girl's struggle to retain her name and identity.

Children's Book Press, initiated with federal funding to promote the development of bilingual/multicultural books, has published a number of Latin American legends and a few titles that recognize the reality of Hispanic children. The bilingual book *Las aventuras de Connie y Diego/The Adventures of Connie and Diego* has as protagonists two children with "faces of many colors" that represent the mixed heritage of so many minority children in the United States. While Children's Book Press has made a valuable contribution of beautifully illustrated books coming from the traditions and reality of the people, it has missed the opportunity to help develop minority, in particular Hispanic, writers.

A promising young writer, Rosalma Zubizarreta, has taken a motif from a poem by Alejandro Cruz Martinez and created the striking and lyrical contemporary legend of Lucia Zenteno in *La mujer que brillaba mas que el sol* (The Woman Who Shined More Than the Sun, 1992).

LATINO CHILDREN'S BOOKS

by Isabel Schon

The current renaissance in books for and about Latino children is a source of joy and satisfaction to those of us who serve the reading needs of Latino young readers. In contrast to just a few years ago, Latino/Hispanic/Spanish-speaking young readers can now select from an increasing number of insightful, well-written books—in English and Spanish—that will entertain them, inform them, and/or enrich their lives in numerous ways. Perhaps this wonderful state of affairs is a result of the recent realization by publishers worldwide of the potentially vast market of Latino and Spanish speakers in the U.S. and abroad.

Some of the statistics are difficult to ignore. The U.S. Hispanic-origin population is approaching 25 million—an almost 60 percent increase from the 1980 census. The U.S. Department of Education estimates that Hispanic children make up 73 percent of the 2 million children in the United States who have limited proficiency in English. In addition, it is important to note that Spanish is now the second language in the Western world—352 million Spanish speakers worldwide. These numbers, coupled with the fact that the field of children's literature in many Spanish-speaking countries is barely developing, may be the catalyst for the constantly improving selection in the quality and quantity of books for and about Latino children.

Nevertheless, numerous problems persist. Foremost among these is the controversy surrounding bilingualism in the U.S. today. On the one hand are those who believe that the U.S. should be an English-only country. English-only supporters believe that Spanish (or other languages) may be spoken at home but that educating children in languages other than English results in cultural and linguistic barriers. On the other hand are numerous researchers and educators who believe that developing literacy in the first language can make a substantial contribution to literacy development in the second language. Moreover, supporters of bilingualism (and multilingualism) believe that free speech in the U.S. should not be limited to speakers of English.

Books in English about Latinos

The good news is the increasing number of books about Latinos for young readers now being published in English in the U.S. The best of these possess all the qualities of well-written fiction—honesty, integrity, and imagination. Selectors also will note the increasing number of informational books that will satisfy the curiosity of young readers about Latino people and cultures. The exemplary ones can answer questions on particular aspects of the Latino experience or can enhance the reader's desire for broader knowledge.

The bad news: Many recently published books continue to provide a very limited, one-sided, or incorrect perspective about Latinos. These books either foster the common stereotypes of "fiestas," "piñatas," and other "artsy-craftsy" views of Latino people or they abound in sensationalistic information that distorts specific aspects of Latino cultures (e.g., the Aztecs depicted as barbarians involved in gory practices of human sacrifice).

Books in Spanish

The most important feature regarding recent publications in Spanish for young readers is the increasing number of distinguished books that have a high potential for reader involvement or interest. These books—published either in the U.S. or abroad—can appeal to a wide variety of young readers' interests, backgrounds, and ages. Many are truly outstanding books that provide Spanish-speaking children and adolescents with a sense of wonder and satisfaction that is enjoyed by readers everywhere.

Unfortunately two areas of concern persist. Numerous books published in many Spanish-speaking countries still insist on moralizing to young readers about what some adults consider appropriate behavior for the young. These books bore young readers with saccharine descriptions, lofty messages, dogmatic discourses, and virtuous characters that make for truly dull reading.

Another important issue that selectors should note about books in Spanish published in the U.S. is the inferior quality of many of the Spanish translations: incorrect lexical

construction, unclear phrases, and numerous grammatical, spelling, and typographical

mistakes. Some U.S. publishers are indeed starting to pay attention to their Spanish publications, but others show a complete disregard for the Spanish language.

Recurring Myth

A popular misconception that, regrettably, continues to have a most negative impact on the availability of books in Spanish in the U.S. is the recurring myth that Latin Americans do not speak "Castilian," i.e., the Spanish language as spoken/written in Spain. This is as preposterous a statement as "Americans do not understand Canadians, Australians or the British people" or "Americans cannot read books published in other English-speaking countries." Of course there are linguistic variants but not to the degree that they impede communication among English speakers and readers or Spanish speakers and readers worldwide.

There is no question that young Latino readers will benefit from the efforts of teachers, librarians, publishers, parents, and others who wish to entice them into the world of reading through insightful books that they can read and understand. The challenge, however, is to ignore long-standing myths that have discouraged Latino youth from the pleasure of books and to concentrate on books—in English and Spanish—that appeal to the universal likes, wishes, dreams, and aspirations of children everywhere.