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# El Grito

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*Address all correspondence to:*  
P.O. Box 9275, Berkeley, California 94709

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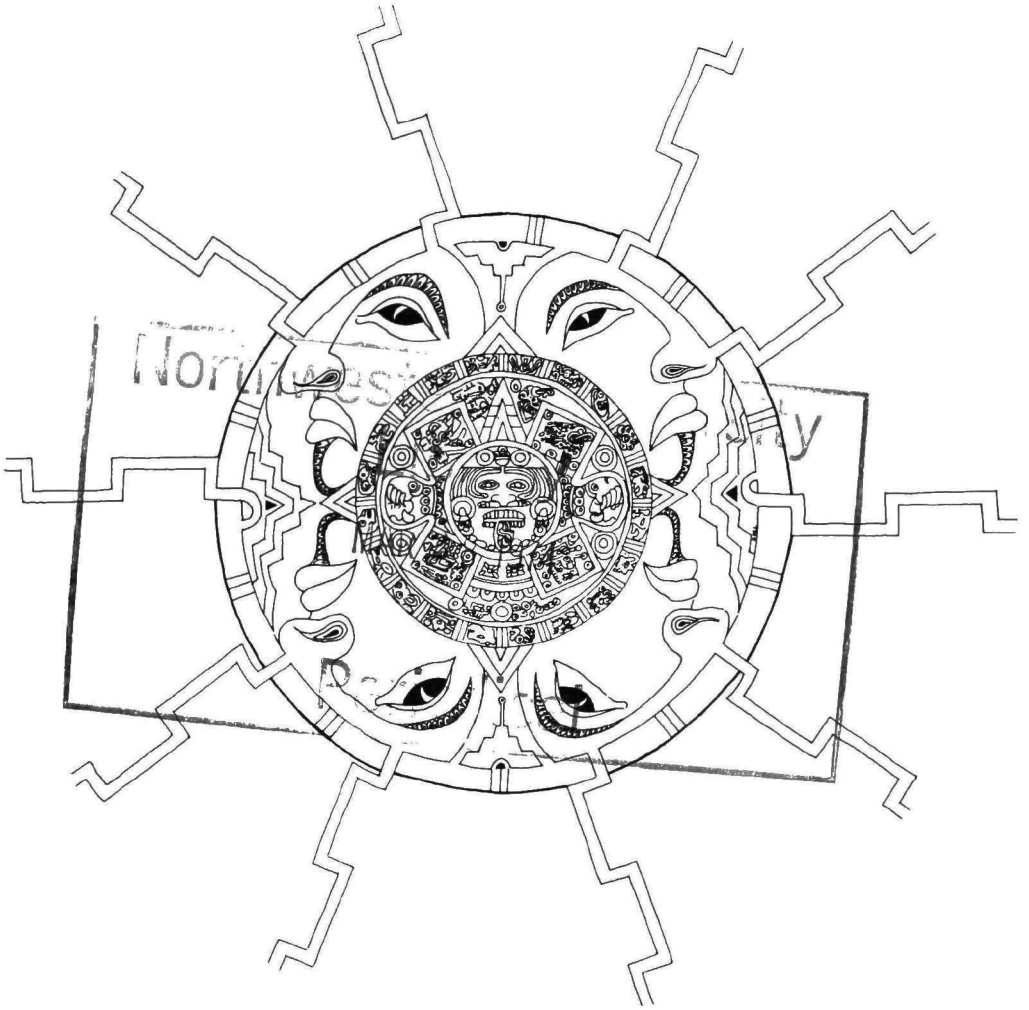
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Editorial Offices: 2150 Shattuck Ave.,  
Suite 1006, Berkeley, California 94706



### EDITORS

OCTAVIO I. ROMANO-V., Ph.D.  
*Behavioral Sciences*  
*University of California*  
*Berkeley*

HERMINIO RIOS-C  
*Literature Division*  
*Quinto Sol Publications*

### SPECIAL CONTRIBUTOR

EDEL VILLAGOMEZ: Art contributor  
and consultant



# Contents



# Contents

ROLANDO R. HINOJOSA-S. “Voces del barrio,” excerpt from ESTAMPAS DEL VALLE Y OTRAS OBRAS. (Art work by Edel Villagómez) . . . . .	3-8
ESTELA PORTILLO “The Paris Nightgown,” short story from her forthcoming book. (Art work by Edel Villagómez) . . . . .	9-19
LUIS JAVIER RODRIGUEZ Excerpts from his forthcoming book . . . . .	20-25
RICHARD GARCIA “Song of the Whale,” from his published book, SELECTED POETRY. (Art work by Edel Villagómez) . . . . .	26-31
Selections from Richard Garcia’s forthcoming books for children, NUMEROS-NUMBERS; LETRAS-LETTERS. (Art work by Diego M. Ríos-A) . . . . .	32-37
JOSE ACOSTA TORRES “Sinfonía,” selection from CACHITO MIO. (Art work by Edel Villagómez) . . . . .	38-43
J. L. NAVARRO “The Commission,” short story from BLUE DAY ON MAIN STREET. (Art work by Edel Villagómez) . . . . .	44-56
ERASMO GAMBOA Chicanos in the Northwest: An Historical Perspective . . . . .	57-70
RAYMOND PADILLA Freireísmo and Chicanizaje . . . . .	71-84
Cover art by Diego M. Ríos-A, age 11	

## ROLANDO HINOJOSA

*Estampas del Valle y Otras Obras* is the winning entry in the 1972 national Premio Quinto Sol for Literature. *Estampas del Valle y Otras Obras* establishes Rolando R. Hinojosa as a writer of many dimensions. He is an excellent short story writer who masterfully handles point of view, creates complex structures, and sensitively and convincingly recreates Chicano dialect in his work, "Por esas cosas que pasan."

Hinojosa has not only mastered the short story art form; he also employs the literary form of the Estampa as few writers have been able to do. Certainly Julio Torri's own aesthetic principle is applicable to Hinojosa's prose. (Julio Torri introduced the Estampa as a literary form in Mexico.)

El horror por la explicación y la amplificación me parece la más preciosa de las virtudes literarias. Prefiero el enfatismo de las quintaesencias al aserrín insustancial con que se empaquetan usualmente los vasos y las ánforas.

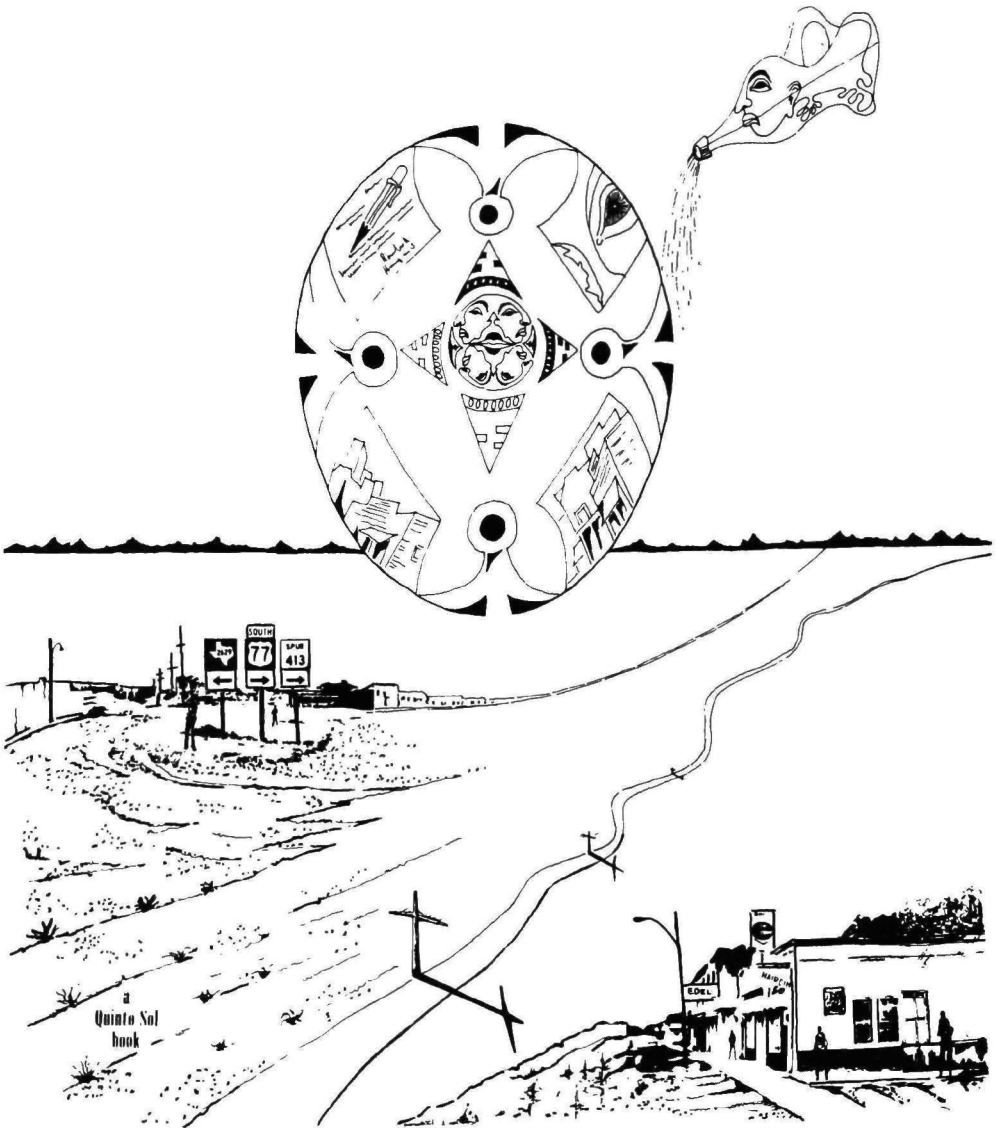
In *Estampas del Valle y Otras Obras* Hinojosa presents a diversity of skillfully etched characters and expertly sketched places. There are sketches that rival the 18th century pen of don Diego Torres Villarroel, but they are satirical without acidity, and humorous without the caricaturesque deformation of the human being reflected in the work of Torres Villarroel.

*Estampas del Valle y Otras Obras* is presented in bilingual form. The translation from the Spanish original was rendered by Gustavo Valadez of Stanford University, and José Reyna of Texas A&I University. Hinojosa's work is suitable for use in high schools, community colleges, and universities. The bilingual dimension makes the work accessible to monolingual English speaking students, as well as bilingual students at different levels.

*Estampas del Valle y Otras Obras* is the fifth major Quinto Sol publication to be published in bilingual form, the others being: *El Espejo: Anthology of Chicano Literature*, . . . *y no se lo tragó la tierra*, *Cachito Mío*, and *Perros y Antiperros*.

# ESTAMPAS DEL VALLE Y OTRAS OBRAS

ROLANDO R. HIZOJOSA-S



a  
Quinto Sol  
book

## VOCES DEL BARRIO

Cuando el sol se baja y los bolillos dejan sus tiendas, el pueblo americano se duerme para no despertar hasta el día siguiente.

Cuando el sol se baja y la gente ha cenado, el pueblo mexicano se aviva y se oyen las voces del barrio: la gente mayor, los jóvenes, los chicos, los perros . . .

Dicen que la Sooner Contracting de Ardmore anda buscando gente

...

Si no me equivoco, uno de los contratistas es Víctor Jara, el Pirulí.  
¿Con ese? Ni a cruzar la calle, contimás el estado.

Niños, váyanse a jugar a la calle y dejen a los mayores hablar.

¡A la momita, a la momita! Ese poste de teléfono es el home-base.

Tules virules, nalgas azules.

Juan Barragán bebe leche y caga pan.

¡No se vale ver, no se vale ver!

Te las hago largas a ti y a Vargas, si no las das, ¿pa qué las cargas?

Pin marín de don pingüé

Cúcara, mácara, pípere fue

Dos y dos son cuatro; cuatro y dos son seis; seis y dos son ocho: y ocho, diez y seis.

Cuenta la tablita

que ya la conté

Cuéntala de vuelta

que ya me cansé.

¿Y por qué no saliste anoche?

No me dejaron; ya sabes. ¿Te quedaste esperando?

Hasta la una.

Pobrecito.

No te burles.

Si no me burlo, Jehú . . . ándale, vámonos al parque.

¿Y tu hermanito?

Ahí anda, jugando a las escondederas.

Vente.

Cuidado que nos ven agarrados de la mano.

Ah, raza . . .

¿De veras te quedaste esperando?

Hasta la una . . .

¿Y qué le dijo la enfermera, doña Faustina?

Pues casi nada, quiere que le saquemos las anginas al niño.

¿Y eso la qué?

Dice que sin anginas no le darán tantos catarros.

Esas son cosas de los gringos que no tienen más qué hacer.

Ahora voy yo, ahora voy yo: ¿Quieren tortillas duras?

¡No!

¿Duras?

¡No!

Ah, ¡durazno!

Ahora yo, que va la mía: Lana sube, lana baja.

¡La navaja!

No sé, cuñao, eso de irse con contratista desconocido está arriesgado.

De acuerdo, si hay veces que con los conocidos . . .

Claro . . . Verdá . . . Ya lo creo . . .

¿No me explico, Federico?

¿Me entiendes, Méndez?

No me chingues, Juan Domínguez.

¡Niños, no molesten a los mayores!

Creo que ya es hora de irnos. ¿Dónde estará Adela? Eh, tú, Andrés ¿qué se hizo tu hermana?

La dejé en el parque, amá.

Ve por ella, ándale. Hasta mañana, doña Faustina.

Si Dios es servido, doña Barbarita.

Ahora le toca al barrio dormir. En los barrios se habla de mucho y, como de milagro, siempre se halla de qué hablar noche tras noche.

El barrio puede llamarse el Rebaje, el de las Conchas, el Cantarranas, el Rincón del Diablo, el Pueblo Mexicano—verdaderamente los títulos importan poco.

Lo importante, como siempre, es la gente.



## VOICES FROM THE BARRIO

When the sun sets and the Anglos leave their stores, the Americans fall asleep and don't wake up until the following day.

When the sun sets and people have eaten, the Mexicans come alive and the voices of the barrio can be heard: older people, youths, kids, dogs . . .

"They say that Sooner Contracting from Ardmore is looking for people . . ."

"If I'm not mistaken, one of the contractors is Víctor Jara, 'el Pirulí' (Lollipop)."

"With him? I wouldn't even cross the street much less the state!"

"Children, go on outside and play in the street and let us adults talk."

"Let's play hide-and-go-seek. This telephone pole is home-base."

"A tisket, a tasket, a green and yellow basket."

"Gussie's mad and I'm glad, and I know how to please him."

"No fair peeking, no fair peeking!"

"Star of wonder, star of bright, first star I see tonight, I wish I may, I wish I might, get the wish I want tonight."

"Eeny meeny miney mo, catch a nigger by his toe, if he hollers, make him pay, fifty dollars every day."

"Two and two are four; four and two are six; six and two are eight: and eight, sixteen."

"I see London, I see France, I see Linda's underpants."

"And why didn't you go out last night?"

"They wouldn't let me; you should know that by now. Did you wait long?"

"Till one."

"Poor baby."

"Don't make fun of me."

"I'm not making fun of you, Jehú . . . C'mon, let's go to the park."

"And your little brother?"

"He's around somewhere playing hide-and-go-seek."

"C'mon."

"Careful. They might see us holding hands."

"Oh, these people . . ."

"You really waited a long time?"

"Till one."

"And what did the nurse tell you, doña Faustina?"

"Not much. She wants us to have our son's tonsils removed."

"What for?"

"She says that without the tonsils, he won't get so many colds."

"Those are ideas of Anglos who haven't anything better to do."

"It's my turn now, it's my turn: Knock, knock."

"Who's there?"

"Ida."

"Ida who?"

"I dunno."

"I don't know. It's kinda risky working for a contractor you don't know."

"Agreed. Why, there are times when even those we do know . . ."

"Yeah, right . . . of course."

"One potato, two potato, three potato, four."

"All-y, all-y auction, all in free."

"Step on a crack, break your mother's back."

"Children! Don't bother us."

"I think it's time for us to go. I wonder where Adela's at. Hey, Andy, what happened to your sister?"

"I left her at the park, Ma."

"Go get her, right now. See you tomorrow, doña Faustina."

"God willing, doña Barbarita."

Now it's the *barrio*'s turn to sleep. In the *barrios* a lot is discussed and, miraculously, there's always something to talk about, night after night.

The *barrios* can be called el Rebaje, el de las Conchas, el Cantarranas, el Rincón del Diablo, el Pueblo Mexicano—really, names don't matter much.

What does count, as always, are the people.

## ESTELA PORTILLO

Estela Portillo, author of *The Paris Gown*, was the recipient of an honorary award for literature in the THIRD ANNUAL PREMIO QUINTO SOL for literature. She is an extremely versatile writer, excelling in different genres: poetry, drama, essay, short novel, and short story. In her work she probes into elemental human passions, explores contemporary issues, and at times engages in metaphysical and philosophical discussions. She has the power to create exceptionally strong and unforgettable characters. Certainly an excellent example of Estela's ability to develop powerful characters is doña Josefa, who is the main character in her play, *The Day of the Swallows*.

Her work is powerful, sensual, and pregnant with archetypal symbols.



## THE PARIS GOWN

Estela Portillo

“Cognac with your coffee, Theresa?”

“No, thank you, Gran . . . Clo.” Somehow the word “grandmother” did not fit Clotilde Romero de Traske, sophisticated, chic, and existentially fluent. Theresa had anticipated this after dinner *tete a tete*. In her mind there were so many things unclear about this woman who had left her home in Mexico so long ago. The traces of age in Clotilde were indistinguishable in the grace and youthful confidence exuded from her gestures, her eyes, her flexible body, and the quick discerning mind. Clotilde Romero de Traske, art dealer at the Rue Auber, was a legend back home. The stories about her numerous marriages, her travels, her artistic ventures, and the famous names that frequented her salon were many. But no one had ever discussed how she got to Paris in the first place when the women of her time had had small freedoms. Her life abroad had become scandal in epic to the clan of women in aristocratic circles back home. There was a daring in her grandmother’s eyes.

“How do you like Paris, child?”

“I love it! It’s like . . . like. . . .”

“An opening up . . . as does a flower to the sun. That is the feel of Paris.”

“Yes, that is the way I feel. I’m happy to be here.”

“You should be. You are very lucky too. Everyone should see Paris before they are twenty-five. . . . I heard that somewhere. It is true. It is like no place else in the world.”

“You never went back home, Clo?”

“My dear girl, no one can truly ever go back home. . . . for one changes and the home was a different you.” The older woman spoke gently. “We journey; we find new tempests. These are good. This is the way beauty and trust are pieced.”

Theresa sat silent. She had suddenly glimpsed into a beautiful clear depth in a human being. She felt sudden love and admiration for her grandmother. Clotilde’s fragile, ember quality of spirit grew and filled the room. Theresa felt half-way beyond caprice into a giving. Theresa felt Clotilde had a deep and lasting comprehension of her place in the

universe. How fresh and open was the world in this room. Theresa felt that the room itself was a composite of what Clotilde had become in the life process. Every piece of art and sculpture gave the impact of humanness. The colors were profuse and rich; they seemed to touch impulse and awaken still undefined passions. Yes, it was a room with a singular ferocity for life.

"I understand you are traveling with a university group?" Clotilde's expressive eyes searched her granddaughter's face.

"Yes . . . it is a way we are allowed to travel away from home; the old traditions still have strong ties. They teach us early that the world is too dangerous for innocent, young girls. I think it's silly!"

Clotilde smiled. "I agree with you one hundred percent." She put down her cup and walked to the mantelpiece over the fireplace as if she chose to observe her granddaughter from a new perspective. Theresa was somewhat startled by the impression Clotilde made with the room as background. A convex reflection of mood, the older woman was a human focal point against the subjectivity of artistic experience in meaningful arrangement around the room. Emotionally coded, Clotilde stood, a liberated form from civilized order. All this was a sensing to Theresa who knew little about art.

"The art in this room, Clo, it's so . . . so . . ."

"What other artists call it . . . without doctrinaire implication. That says nothing, really, but it means that the artist makes his own rules for finding a strength out of the life experience."

There it goes again! thought Theresa . . . that flash of galvanic illumination . . . a look inside spirit again. Theresa asked: "You are an artist yourself?"

"A terrible one; it did not take me long to find that out when I first came to Paris."

"So you became a dealer in art."

"More of a lover of art . . . look!" Clotilde went up to a massive sculpture. She touched it reverently. "Have you ever heard the name Gaudier-Brzeska? This is his work. He has made out of stone and metal what I would like to make out of life, or have tried to make out of life."

Theresa leaned over in her chair; her eagerness to know was unmasked. "Explain it to me, Clo. . . ."

"Gautier was a man of great passion; many consider him a primitive. He plunged into the instinctual and emotional to surface with an energy, a feeling, an ability free of barbarism."

Theresa was somewhat puzzled. "Isn't barbarism equated with the primitive?"

"Perhaps I look at the world as if I were standing on my head, Theresa, and many artists do. For that reason we define barbarism different from Civilization."

"I remember, Clo, that history says that Civilization downed barbarism by making reason dominant over instinct."

"If you see it from a historical viewpoint. But look at it from a human viewpoint; barbarism is the subjugation of the instinctual for reason. I know that within the pretty works of the great Hellenes, reason is primary and instinct secondary. But man's reason is a boxed-in circumstance that has proved itself more violent against human beings than instinct. Instinct is part of survival law; it is also a part of what gathers a wholeness. Barbarism is a product of limited reason. And what reason is not, at least in part, limited? Instinct is an innate law without barrier. . . . It is important to leave the field of invention open in art . . . as in life."

Theresa almost jumped up from her chair, her arms outstretched as if to encompass the room. "That's what I feel about this room! It is an open field! I see how this room is your beliefs, your history . . . how beautiful!"

"And isn't history, really, a personal thing, not belonging to nations, but to individuals?"

She was pleased by Theresa's natural discovery. Theresa, with extended hand, touched the Gautier figure as if savouring the meaning of a new part added to herself.

"I understand now, Clo, why you never went back. In a world still archaic, women suffer the barbarism of men. An injustice." Theresa looked at her grandmother with questioning eyes. Clotilde touched her cheek with the tips of her fingers and smiled at her granddaughter.

"I used to think so . . . when I was very young."

"Don't you feel that way anymore?"

"No . . . I don't think so. Maybe, because I know that the instinct that respects all life, the instinct that understands equality, survives in all of us in spite of overwhelming, unfair tradition. Men know this instinct, too, although thousands of years of conditioning made them blind to the equality of all life. The violence of man against woman is a traditional blindness whose wall can be broken. Isn't that the objective of love . . . to break walls?"

"But the unfairness is still there, Clo, even today. The woman has a secondary role to that of the man, and the brutish mind accepts it. I can imagine how it must have been in your time!"

Clotilde maintained the crystal of her world. "Men have attempted fairness since the beginning of time; it's just that sometimes they are overwhelmed . . . overwhelmed." She walked up to the window and looked out as if trying to gather a memory . . . pain and all. Theresa sensed it and went up to her and leaned her head on Clotilde's shoulder. Both looked out into a garden with its own kind of freedom. It had no symmetry, no pattern; the lawn and trailing vines, the cypress trees and

profuse flowers had only been given a kind of order, only to free the life from complete chaos. Everything reached for the sun in its own way. Theresa caught a lovely fragrance.

“Mmmmm . . . what is that?”

“It is Italian jasmine; it is a beautiful part of my life brought into my garden.”

“Tell me, Clo, how did you escape the blind tradition?”

Clotilde laughed her silvery laugh. “I thought you would never ask!”

Theresa was intense about her question. “They never talk about that back home, only about the terrible things you do in Paris. Inside all our womenfolk, as they sit around the card table with their gossip, there is a wish, a wanting to be you . . . I felt it many times.”

Clotilde hugged her granddaughter. “It is wonderful that you feel so much!” Theresa caught her grandmother’s hands and led her to a settee.

“Come, tell me the story.”

Clotilde did not resist. She sat back and cast off the years.

“How does one begin without condemnations, Theresa? When we are young, to condemn is simple and an easy way out for even our mistakes. I remember my indignant feeling of injustice! I felt like a victim from a very early age. But I would show them all! That was my battle-cry!”

Clotilde shook her head in memory and continued: “Yes, tradition was much heavier in my time. There was but a single fate for the gentlewoman . . . one variation of a cloister or another. To marry meant to become the lonely mistress of a household where husbands took unfair freedoms, unfair only because the freedoms belonged to them and were unthinkable for women! Children were the recompense, but children should not be a recompense; they are human beings belonging to themselves; and we should not need recompense. It can turn to bitterness, then we become the bitterness itself, a patterned, strict garden of dead things, poisoned things. If we did not marry, there was total dependency on the generosity of pitying relatives, with church and its rituals for comfort. The nunnery or running away with the stable boy offered many sacrifices and discomforts. No . . . no . . . There must be another solution, I would tell myself!”

“How did you turn to art, Clo?”

“I don’t know whether you remember uncle Gaspar. He was considered the bohemian in the family. He had tried painting, writing, the theatre, in his attempt to keep the gypsy spirit. I liked uncle Gaspar. When he was around, I felt the gypsy spirit. He made me laugh and feel important. That was a lot to a girl. One Christmas he gave my brother an artist’s palette. He brought him some books on design and color. My brother, Felix, became engrossed in his attempt to paint. In time, he discarded the palette and went on to other interests. I found it one day



with the books, and began to awkwardly sketch and paint. This became an outlet, a hope. Felix had little talent. I think I had little talent too. But I stuck to the practice; I worked at it everyday . . . so naturally I acquired a certain proficiency and decided I had a talent and my brother did not. I had a compulsion to compare, to outdo him, because he was a boy with born privileges and I was a girl born into a kind of slavery. I poisoned my garden early in life, but to an extent, it was my nature to want freedom. I had a mind that craved and that weighed the inequalities as a gross injustice. I found ways of justifying my opinions, my martyrdom. My brother and I used to ride a lot. We had a pair of matched stallions, beautiful horses. Riding along the path of the high hills was an excitement that grew in the body and escaped in the wind. It was a taste of wild freedom. I was the better rider, or maybe it was my greater desire for the wildness that made me the better rider. It happens that way, sometimes, when you are fierce enough about things. . . .”

Her voice trailed off in memory. There was a brief silence that caught the languid mood of afternoon. Then Clotilde continued her story:

“My father would say. . . . A man must never allow a woman to outdo him. How typical of him! The way of the varón, and Felix was his varón. . . . I was just a daughter, an afterthought, so I thought. My mother would whisper to me. . . . Let your brother win when you race. It would please your father. . . . I did not wish to please my father with the accomplishments of my brother. To outdo him became my constant form of revenge. My father resented the fact and overlooked my ability to outdo, as if it did not exist. This was adding salt to my wounds. . . . I think I began to hate my father, poor father!” Clotilde caught Theresa’s glance for a second. There was a slight sliver of anxiety in Clotilde’s voice. “You must remember, Theresa, it was my poison.”

“But it was unfair to you!”

“Yes, it was unfair. . . . It was. Felix wanted to get out of going into the banking institute; he wanted to travel. My uncle Gaspar had painted glorious pictures of Europe, specially Paris. There were stories about the left bank, Montmartre, where one could buy delicious madness for a few francs . . . where people were alive. That was Gaspar’s favorite expression. Felix told my father he wanted to go to Paris to study art. My father fumed and objected, but of course Felix got his way. My father excused it, saying the boy was sowing his wild oats! You know what I did? I decided to confront my father and ask him what he was going to do about my wild oats. Poor man! His reaction was violent. He accused me of insanity and wilfulness. Perhaps, he said, what I needed was a nunnery. He meant it too!”

“You had no freedom, Clo?” Theresa’s voice was full of sympathy.

“That was the price the female paid for being *bien gentil!* I began to argue with my father, to rationalize, to reason, to prove to him what a fine brain I had; I deserved better than the fate women had in the town. I drove him half-crazy with the potency of legitimate complaint. It was then that his natural instinct of survival prompted him to do what he did.”

“What did he do?”

“He decided to marry me off to a neighboring widower old enough to be my father. Mind you, it was more than just desperation on his part; it was also a good business venture. Don Ignacio was the wealthiest man around. It was the usual contract marriage between parents of means. Daughters did not have a say in the matter. It was an excellent way of joining two fortunes by blood.”

“How cruel, Clo. It must have been terrible for you.”

“I thought at the time that it was the end of any kind of hope as a human being. I was repulsed by Don Ignacio. I began to show it. My father punished me and threatened the convent again. So then I tried to starve myself, lock myself up in my room forever. I even ran away on my horse and stayed out in the hills until my father sent out a searching party who found me half starved and with a bad case of pneumonia. For the first time in my life, I felt the full attention of my parents. While getting over my illness, I prayed my father would forget about the proposed marriage. One afternoon my father came into the bedroom. He was gentle and kind and truly concerned about my health. I took advantage of my illness and asked him to promise not to make me marry Don Ignacio.” Clotilde paused and walked slowly to the window again. There was a stir of wind in her hair. She whispered almost in a child’s cry. “You simply do not unpetal a flower for your advantage. You give it the chance of life!”

Theresa knew the answer. “He refused, didn’t he?”

“Yes, he refused.” Her eyes roamed the great expanse of horizon as if trying to forget, not the pain, but a loved one’s shortcoming. “I remember a similar garden while I was getting well. . . . no, now that I think of it, it was different. It was impressive and almost manicured to perfection. It was a showcase with swans in a pond and flowers arranged by specie. There was hedge after hedge where children played hide-and-go-seek. One afternoon, during my illness, I watched some children bathing in the pond. They were three or four years old, no more. There was a little boy who decided to join the bathing children, so he took off his clothes and waded in. His nurse caught sight of him and with great indignation caught him up in her arms and spanked his little bare back. It was a curious episode of innocence and the declaration of a truth. I remember going back into the house with the imprint in my mind. For the next few weeks, I felt a growing peace. I did not

argue, or beg, or cajole, I simply enjoyed my time for contemplation. It was an attempt to accept. I tried, but I could not. One morning I awoke knowing the answer to my problem. I realized that my new-found calm was a part of the plan. So was my attempt to accept. I got well and offered no complaints about the proposed engagement. My father breathed a sigh of relief. I had come to my senses. I would obey him like a good daughter and marry the man that he had chosen for me."

Theresa's voice was somewhat incredulous. "You were giving up?"

"No . . . never. I simply had discovered a way out. But it took planning, calm and a feigned acceptance. I became docile and pretended a certain excitement over the plans for the engagement ball. The most difficult thing to accept was Don Ignacio's fawning over me. But I had to stand it; it was part of the plan. My father showed his generosity by telling me that expense was no object. I was to have the most exclusive, grandest ball anyone had ever had. He asked what my heart desired." Clotilde's voice broke momentarily. She quickly composed herself and continued. "I had devised a particular wish that would be part of the camouflage for my plan. I told my father I wanted a Paris gown. The most beautiful ever seen. I became very excited over the plans for designing the gown. I corresponded with French dress-shops and filled the dinner table conversation with detailed descriptions. My father was tremendously pleased I had finally fallen into the routine pattern of girls lost in their own frivolity. I had been saved. When the gown arrived, everybody was excited. It was a maze of tulle and lace and pearl insets. The ultimate of fashion. It was the most beautiful gown anyone had ever seen in that town. Every day was filled with the plans for the ball. There were gifts to put on display; there was the accounting and the usual courtesies before the engagement announcement. It was not a difficult thing to do. But, every night I would lock my room and put on the ball gown. For hours I would contemplate what I was going to do. I had to build the courage, for my plan included something completely against the grain of gentlewomen. It would scare me to even think of it. But I know I had to do it. I would stare at my image in the Paris gown and tell myself that it was the price of freedom. . . . there was no other way. That Paris gown was to become my final revenge against the injustice of men."

The afternoon sun had lost its full ardor. The pale coolness of early dusk melted gently in the sun. As the sun fell, the line of light chose among the garden freedoms pieces of shadow touching the world with a gentle sobriety. If there were a time in each day more suitable for sadness . . . or for finding gentle love . . . perhaps this time. . . . The modes of the now could not be forgotten for an old story. Nevertheless, the falling shadows upon light were a part of long ago as much as the story was a part of now.

Clotilde picked up the threads of her design of long ago: "I remember talking to my father about making an effective entrance. A champagne toast at the precise hour of nine after the guests had supped and drunk to their enjoyment, at a time when the music becomes a part of the breathing passion, at this particular time, my father would offer a toast to the bride and groom. Not until then would I descend the staircase leading to the main ballroom where the guests were gathered. My father was impressed. Yes, it would be very effective; it would show off the Paris gown to its fullest. Don Ignacio approved. It would show off his new possession. Yes, everybody was in agreement.

"I stayed in my room the night of the ball listening to the rising talk and the sounds of the banquet. It was a foreign thing to me, for my thoughts were with the wind and a wide, wide freedom, soon, very soon. The gown was laid out on my bed in full glory. It was truly a beautiful thing. A few minutes before nine I began to put the final touches to the plan. I stood there before my mirror, full of an unknown terror at what I was about to do. I opened the door of my bedroom to meet the full force of happy voices awaiting my entrance. I heard the orchestra begin the music that was to signal my entrance. Then my father's voice, full of pride, was audible to me. He made a short, modest speech about the friendship between the two families about to be united. Finally I heard the words . . . May I present my daughter and the future bride of Don Ignacio Maez de Tulares. Let us toast the future of the ideal couple. . . . The glasses were now raised. I swallowed hard and slipped silently down the hall leading to the staircase. My throat was tied and my hands trembled, but I knew I could not falter. Soon I was at the top of the staircase. Immediately, I heard the cries and horrified exclamations among the guests. I thought at the moment of closing my eyes, but I was certain to fall. Also, I did not wish to appear afraid or ashamed, so I tried to look down into their faces. All wore the same frozen, shocked look of disbelief. I saw my mother fall into a faint, and the choleric face of Don Ignacio was punctuated by a fallen jaw of disbelief and anger. He threw his champagne glass and it smashed on the floor, then he turned and left without ceremony. No one noticed his departure, for all eyes were upon me. . . . All this I saw as I came down the stairs . . . *stark naked*. . . ."

There was a sudden flurry of curtains and the light that gave life to the art in the room softened mysteriously to a promise. Clotilde touched the buttons of her blouse, still lost in that memory of what she had planned as a way of freedom. Theresa came up to her and kissed her cheek. "Oh, Clo . . . you were so brave, so brave!"

"I think now it was a kind of insanity finding its own method to fight what I considered a slavery. It was simple after that. My father could not abandon an insane daughter, but he knew that my presence

meant constant reminder. He let me come to Paris with sufficient funds . . . and here I made my home. . . . my home.”

“Do you miss the other home?”

“Yes, I left part of myself there and the people of my blood . . . of course there is a certain nostalgia . . . but no regrets. That’s what I hope you will learn in your journeys . . . never to have regrets.”

“You have found . . . the freedom . . . the equality?”

“Yes, my child, I have known the depth of feeling in all its glorious aspects.” Both women looked out the window and caught the full colors of life.



## EXPRESIONES DE MI BARRIO

## BARRIO EXPRESSIONS

Luis Javier Rodríguez

Luis Javier Rodríguez was the recipient of an honorary award for Chicano literature in 1972. His work represents writing which he began when he was fifteen years old, some four years ago. It deals with the Chicano urban experience, and this experience has been his principal teacher. Luis Javier writes about gangs, and cities, and love and dreams. In a sense, he is a young philosopher in quest for an understanding of life as seen from the Chicano urban perspective. His writing is direct, and honest. And this honesty is apparent in his descriptive passages. That he has not despaired is a tribute to Luis Javier. That he has written about his life as he has seen it is a valuable contribution to our knowledge about aspects of barrio existence, and he reaffirms our belief that philosophy, creativity, and art are as much a part of the barrio as are the gangs and the effects that some cities have on people. The illustrations are by Luis Javier Rodríguez.

El barrio sometimes gives you a mystical feeling, you feel righteous because you know it's super bad. Sometimes it gives you shame. But these are your people and you are one of them. The shame doesn't last because you hear them cry and you cry with them, and when you hear them laugh, you laugh too.

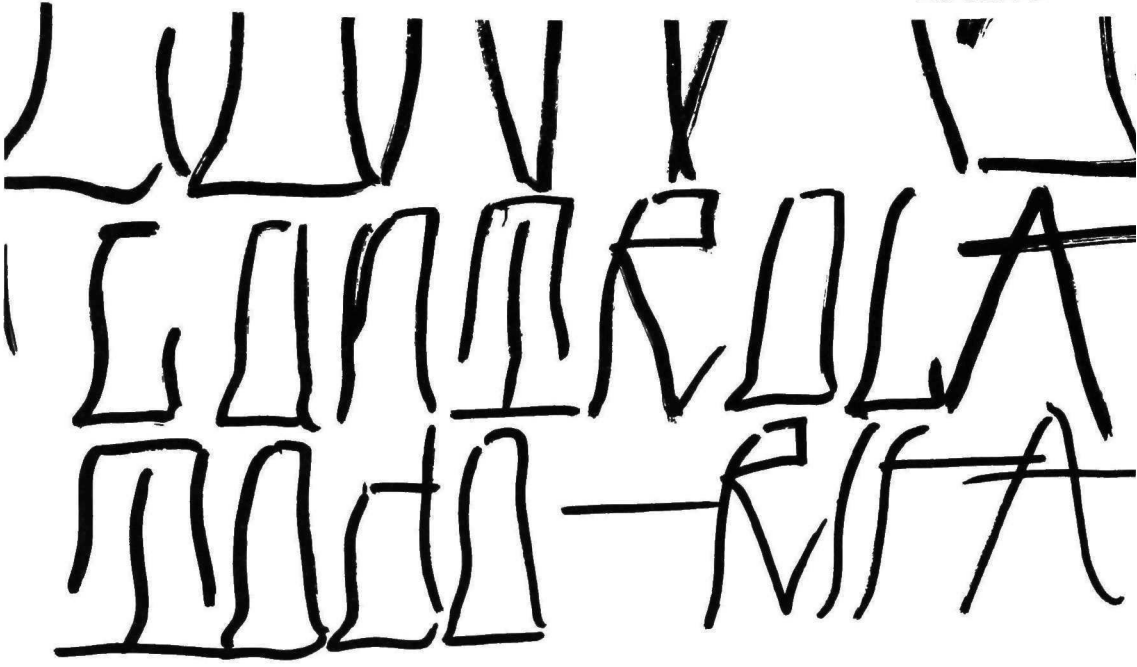
= RIFAMOS =  
 CON-BARRIO  
 T

“Órale, ése, ay canto que tu barrio no vale.”

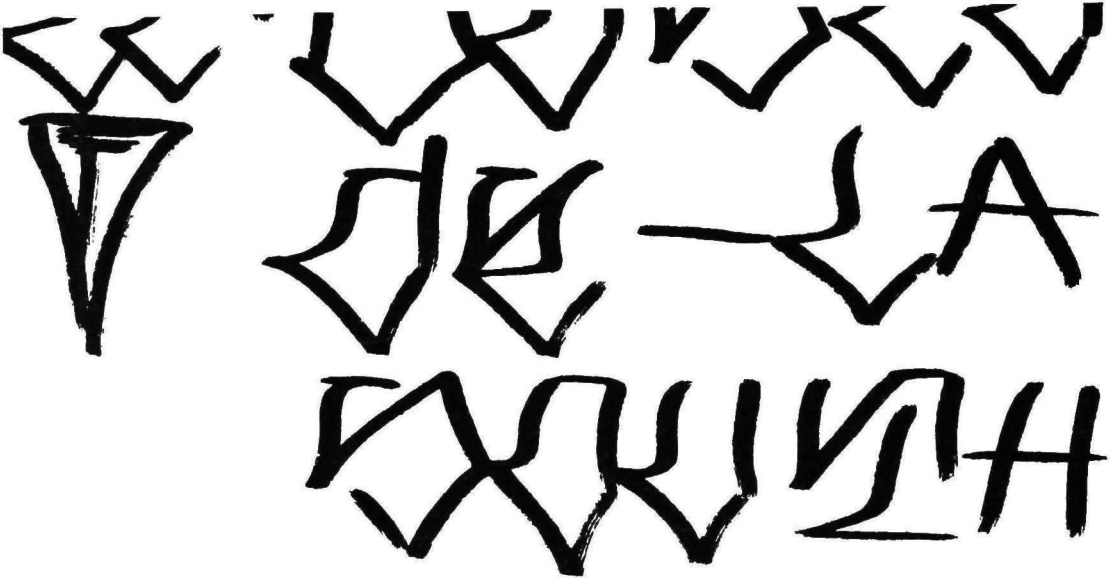
“Chale, bofo, mi barrio es más firme. ¡Si quieres pleito, caiga!”

= FELL =  
 BARRIO

Pero one dude did not split. Perhaps he didn't realize, in the excitement and noise, what was happening. . . . The Lomas shadows jumped in for the kill. Steel blades punctured his brown skin. Not even a yell. Just pain. He fell, not knowing what was happening, or why. He fell, eight knife wounds in him. Pero that was not all. One tall shadow picked up a tire rim, raised it high, and then thrust it down on the bleeding youth's head. “Damn, damn! No more, please, no more!” as his mind fell into unconsciousness. Lomas had had its revenge.



I have many love-dreams. Beautiful flutes have constantly played in my mente. Aztec flutes with rainbow harmonies in between. I am a foolish sentimentalist and I am a man. It doesn't seem compatible but, ése, it has to be.



... freedom never lasts more than you can dream. ...



MAS X LOCC  
 72 72

Statues of Santos were always visible: La Virgen de Guadalupe, Niño Jesús, with flowers, candles, and offerings. These were household items. My momma always on her knees, praying with her corazón. She was always on her knees, either praying or scrubbing.

WIL FONOS

Lowriding is our way of cruising on the boulevards. We lower our cars, or get lifts, so we can dance down the road. . . . The Black kids also have shorts, as these cars are called. Many of the Jewish kids ride low, too. But it is a Chicano creation that sprang from the barrios of L.A., since the days of the old Pachucos.

AS O A N C A S N

A girl in the seventh grade taught me my first try at pachuco writing. All the vatos don't write the same, but most can read it even though it may be difficult for an outsider to understand. The writing can't be mistaken for anybody but us, for nobody in the whole world writes like it.

silence

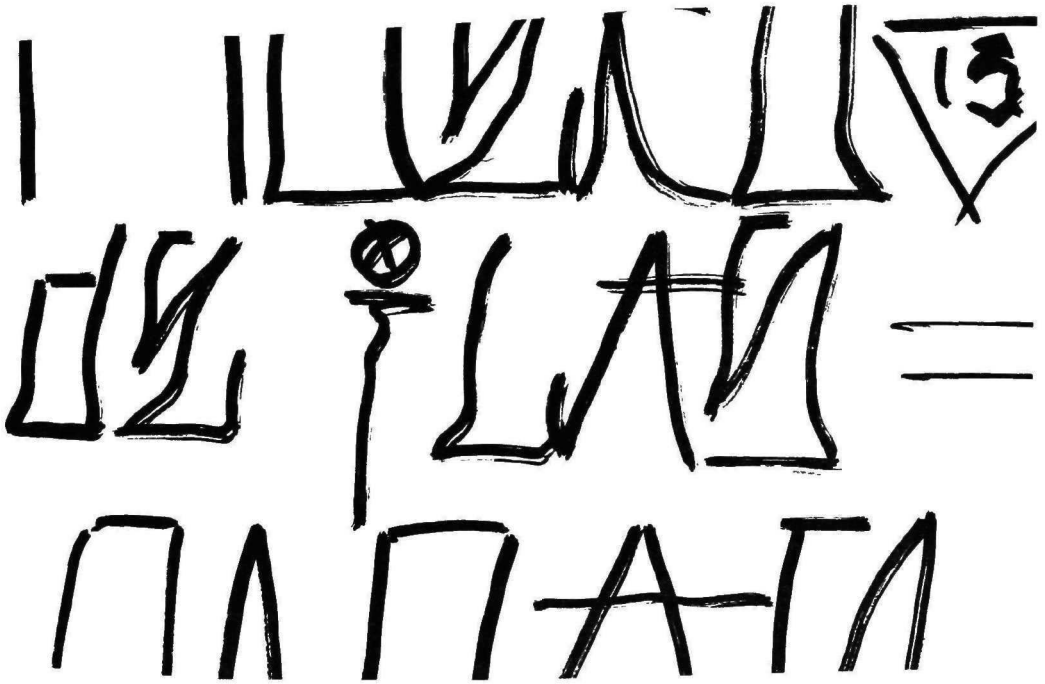
Silence

Then the familiar whistle echoes in the air

Dudes walk out from behind garbage alleys, brick walls, and poolrooms

They strut four and four, with a special rhythmic walk and cold, hard eyes

Children gather and girls snicker. Dark mothers curse from open windows. There are bats, chains, fileros, and enthusiasm. They pass the writing on the walls, a reflection of their existence. In a moment, as fear is suppressed and anger rises, the suspense will end and the sky will be marred by the sounds of sirens and the moans of wounded soldiers. It is a short battle. Dark, red blood spills on the cement as locura takes over their spirit. When it is over, vatos run in all directions.



One of the most famous guys in the neighborhood was a vato from Lomas named Robby "Rags." He was shot five times and stabbed forty times and still lived. Man, to me, then, that dude was bad! He was an accumulation of everything that was super-bad, everything I wanted to be. I was young, then, a naive child wanting to be something infinite.



## RICHARD GARCIA

Richard García is without question one of the finest young Chicano poets in the country. He was born and raised in San Francisco, but has traveled extensively. The poetry in his book, *Selected Poetry*, reflects his experiences and observations in the Middle East, Mexico, and different parts of the United States. But, whereas his poetry reflects his experiences and observations, it is experience and observation as perceived in a dream or as seen in the twilight area between dream and wakefulness.

Awake I see myself dreaming  
Climbing the stairway of my throat  
Entering my head  
Always the half-light stains me

.....  
I have walked too long  
Beneath the wax face of a sleeper  
Have slept too long without dreams.

In addition to his book, *Selected Poetry*, Richard García has written two books of poetry for children. One book deals with numbers 1-10, and the other book deals with letters of the alphabet. Both books were originally written in English and were translated into Spanish by Luz Hernández. They are highly recommended for bilingual-bicultural classes at the elementary school.

Quinto Sol Publications will publish these two bilingual books, illustrated, in the very near future. Children will especially appreciate these books since they are amply illustrated by 11 year old Diego Marcial Ríos-A. (See cover design of this issue of *El Grito*.)

# SELECTED POETRY



RICHARD GARCIA

**THE SONG OF THE WHALE****Richard Garcia****1**

It is a calling of memory  
Of drowned sailors and angels  
And undersea echoes, a ghost  
With his foot caught in a clam  
Beneath the sea a door squeaks open  
It is the song of the whale

It is the whale sneezing  
The whale burping, the whale of childhood  
Winking and smiling  
The whale of the captains dream  
Smoking a pipe, the whale of the saint  
With ribs like a church

It is a womans calling  
That keeps the sailor awake  
That unties ships and jellyfish  
Unlocks the barnacles babies from the rocks  
It is a smell almost remembered  
Of sulphur, iodine and salt

I know you won't believe me  
But each sound becomes the song of the whale  
There are sea dogs and sea cars  
Sea planes leave bubbles in the sky  
Along the undersea rivers I am heard for miles  
I yawn, I gargle, I sigh.

## 2

I was listening to the song of the whale  
Listening to myself listening  
Sharpening my silence like a knife  
My black mirror, my obsidian silence  
The surf of my silence carving ships and chimneys  
Balconies where the wind was waiting  
Curled in a shell

Something rustles in the next room  
It is the song of the whale  
Someone crinkles paper  
Like the surface of the sea  
Writes letters and throws them away  
Makes up his mind changes his mind  
A rising a smashing of waves

There was a sound of propellers  
Of voices too high to hear  
Whining through telephone wires  
Winds trapped in stairwells and elevator shafts,  
A chair sliding, a womans laughter  
Through the walls I heard these sounds  
Moving silently like fish

Like a train in the night  
Time passed me by  
At midnight, when one hour  
Embraced another hour  
And the bridge sighed over the bay  
A sound opened and let me in  
A humming of stars an echo of bells  
It was the song of the whale.

3

I was on my knees  
Looking for a finger or a key  
For something I lost, an echo  
A sound I couldn't hear.

Through the keyhole  
I heard rape.  
An angry elephant.  
A beating in a cell.

But I stopped my ears  
I couldn't listen  
To the woman screaming birth.  
To a man die.

To the waves lapping blood.  
To a moaning that grew and grew  
It was my echo coming back  
In the shape of a whale.



4

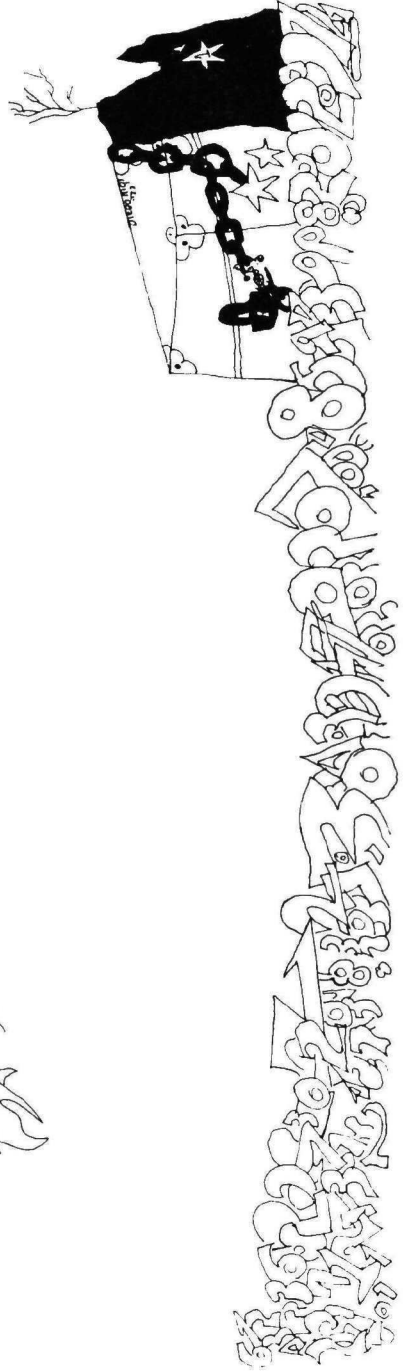
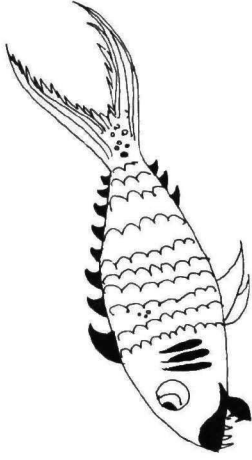
There was the song  
Passed along by the birds  
By the frog, the squirrel  
The raccoon and the last survivors  
Of the skunk tribe

There was the song  
Carried along the clotheslines and the traffic  
The lovers and typewriters and sighing utensils  
Of the neighborhood

I heard it in the supermarket  
In the squeaking of an old ladies grocery cart  
I followed her, I don't know why  
Between the cabbages and the soap  
Into the night

There was the crushed breathing  
Of God's whale, the whale of vengeance  
The suicidal pilot whale stranded on the beach  
Stuck with cigarette butts and carved initials,  
Beneath his shiny skin I read the map of his troubles

There were many sounds in the night  
And between each sound there was silence.  
And I swam away, alone with the stars  
Constellations of whale and crab and smoke ring  
Combing the waves with my mustache.

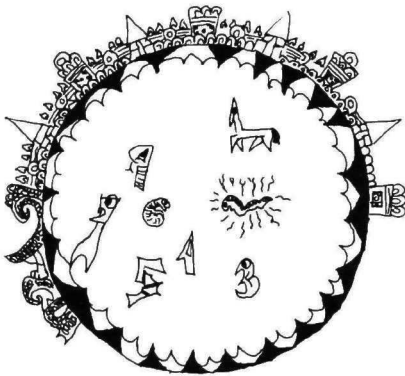
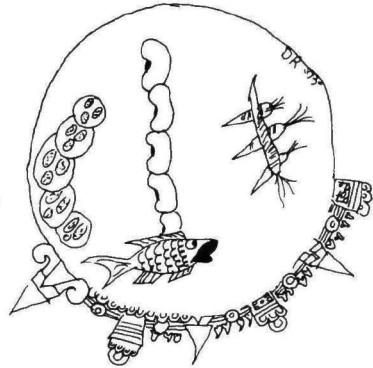


All the numbers  
 Floated around inside zero  
 Like alphabet soup

But zero got too fat  
 And spilled all its numbers  
 In the sky. These were the first stars.

All the numbers  
 Climbed out of the sea.  
 This was the first sand.

They dried themselves  
 And climbed the trees.  
 These were the first leaves.



Como en sopa de alfabeto  
 Todos los números  
 Dentro del cero flotaban

El cero demasiado engordó  
 Y en el cielo  
 Los números se derramaron.  
 Las estrellas primeras éstas fueron.

Del mar surgieron  
 Todos los números.  
 Las arenas primeras éstas fueron.

A sí mismos se secaron  
 Y se treparon a los árboles.  
 Las hojas primeras éstas fueron.



Erase un cero  
Mordiéndose la cola.

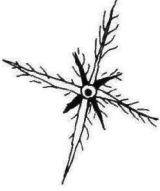
Un puntito luego apareció  
En su centro  
Que creció y creció

Uno llegó brillante  
Como el Sol

Un poste  
Una serpiente  
Una nube delgadita

Uno muy solito se sintió  
Y en el espejo se miró.

Uno y uno  
como once se ven  
Dos postes, dos ojos de una serpiente.



There was a zero  
Biting its tail

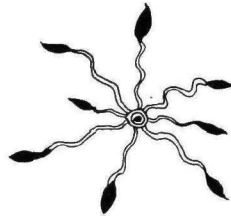
Then a dot appeared  
In the middle  
And grew and grew

And one came shining  
Like the sun

One pole  
One snake  
One skinny cloud

Then one got lonely  
So he looked in the mirror

One and one  
Looking just like eleven  
Two poles, two snake eyes.



Ajum alguien dijo  
 Era una **A** atorada en la garganta  
 Era una **A**, un respiro  
 Finalmente la **A** salió  
 Un murmullo, un suspiro

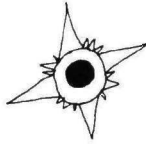
La **A** empezó a susurrar  
 Y el Sol se comenzó a levantar.



Ahem someone said  
 It was A stuck in a throat  
 It was A breathing  
 Finally A came out  
 A very quiet letter  
 A whisper, a sigh

A began to hum  
 And the sun began to rise.

La **B** del túnel galopante salió  
La **B** bajo la luz se bamboleó  
Sus cuernitos brillando con el sol  
Como un arco sin flecha  
La **B** tuvo su principio burbujeante  
Pero la **B** era tímida y balbuceaba  
Cuando con las flores platicaba.



B came charging out of a tunnel  
B came stumbling into the light  
His horns were shining in the sun  
Like a bow with no arrow  
B began in his bumbling way  
But B was bashful and stuttered  
While talking to a flower.

## JOSE ACOSTA TORRES:

Los quince cuentos del libro de José Torres, *Cachito Mío*, se escogieron por su variedad de contenido. Tratan de guerra y paz; del cielo y del suelo; de los angeles y de los animales; de la vida y la muerte. En estos cuentos se oye el triste llanto del padre adolorido por su suerte y el alegre canto del poeta ante el colorido del gran misterio de la vida.

\* \* \*

The fifteen stories included in José Torres' book, *Cachito Mío*, were selected for their variety of content. They deal with war and peace; the sky and the earth; angels and animals; life and death. In these stories one hears the sad lament of a father pained by his fortune, and the merry song of the poet as he contemplates great and colorful mystery of life.

\* \* \*

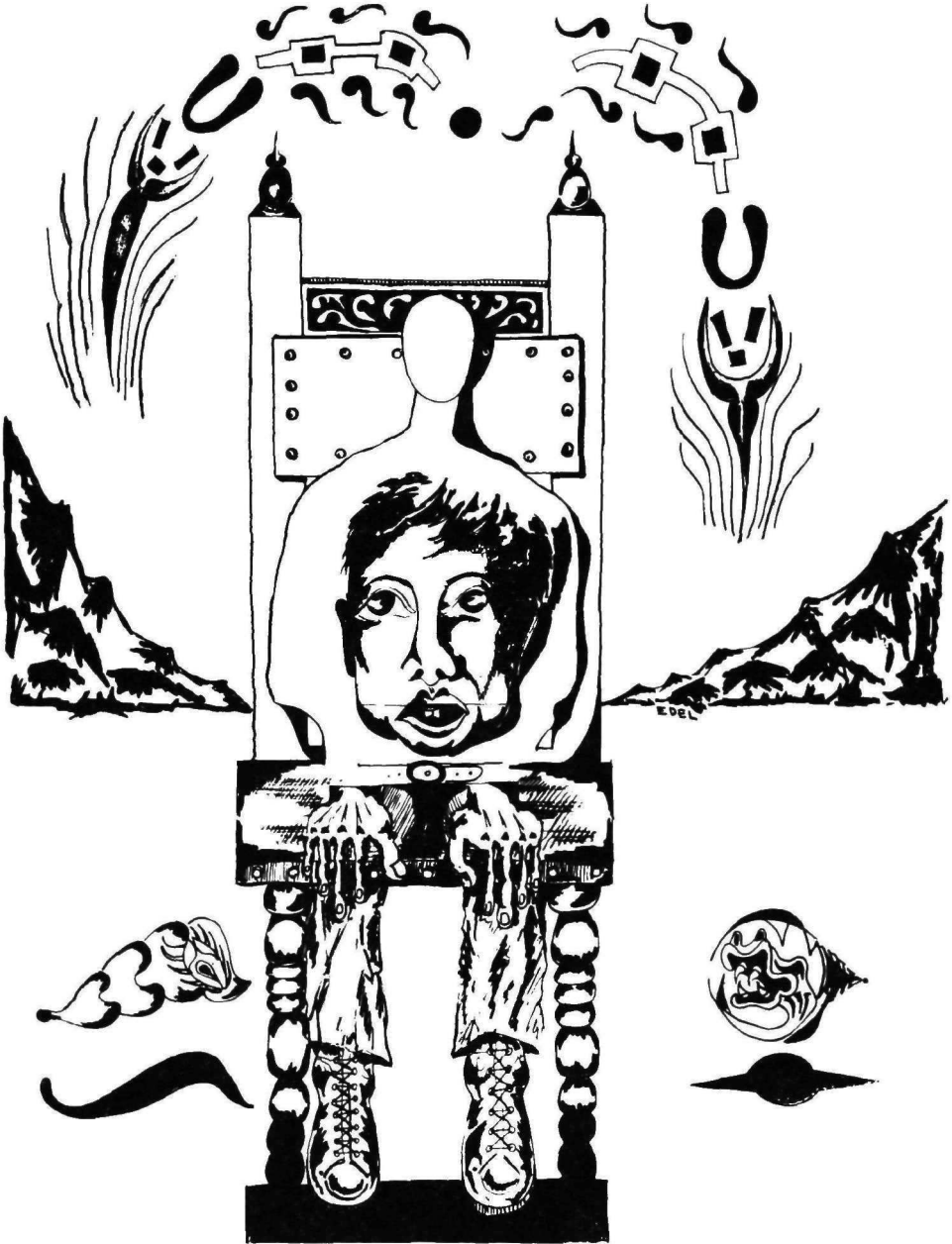
*Cachito Mío* may be thoroughly enjoyed by children as well as by adults. It is for this reason that it makes an excellent reader for bilingual-bicultural classes, high school Spanish classes, and college Spanish classes. At the elementary school level, *Cachito Mío* may be used at the fourth or fifth grade levels and above. *Cachito Mío* may be used as a second or third year reader in high school Spanish classes. High school classes in which Spanish is taught as a first language may use *Cachito Mío* after the first semester, certainly after the first year. *Cachito Mío* may, of course, be read and studied in college classrooms purely for its literary value.

In this issue of *El Grito* we present a selection from *Cachito Mío*, which will be available very soon.



# CACHITO MIO

BY  
JOSÉ ACOSTA TORRES



*A Cachito le gusta muchísimo la música mexicana. En este cuento, don Pepe le platica a su hijo que la música es hermosa como una princesa.*

## SINFONIA

José Torres

Cachito, hoy te voy a platicar de lo que llamamos la lengua universal, la música. Te voy a hablar como si la música fuera una hermosa princesa que te habla con la voz de un violín. Escucha, pues, las palabras de esa bella princesa.

Me llaman música—sinfonía, melodía y canto por sobrenombre. El Señor me tuvo consigo al principio de sus obras como su reina. Todavía no existían los abismos y los mares, y yo estaba concebida. Aún no habían brotado las fuentes de agua ni la tierra había sido creada, ni los ríos, ni los ejes del mundo, y yo ya existía. Eran mis diarios placeres el holgarme continuamente en su presencia celestial, siendo después todas mis delicias el estar con los hijos de los hombres.

Soy la voz del pensamiento divino cuando comulga con sus criaturas. Soy el apóstol de amor que alegra los corazones de buenos y de malos. Soy la paz dulce y suave, melódica y acariciante que abraza al mundo entero en el tema universal que le llama música, arte, y poesía.

Ámame como el oro, como joya preciosa, como la niña de tus ojos, que mis caminos son deliciosos y llenos de paz todas mis sendas.

Si me admites, llenaré tu mente y corazón de miel, acariciaré tus sentidos, arrancaré suspiros de tu alma para saciarme en ti y tú en mí; y seré inmortal, porque una vez en ti, no moriré. No. No moriré, sino que viviré en tu memoria como una primavera de tu corta vida, como un alegre cántico de tu imaginación infantil cuando aun siendo más pequeño pensabas como un hombre. Sí. Soñabas como un hombre sobre el panorama de tu alegre porvenir.

Si me estudias y sientes elevar tu espíritu y pensamiento hacia Dios, sentirás gozar en las fibras de tu alma y corazón mi voz. Podrás ser santo y serás un artista y un poeta aunque nunca escribas nota o poesía ni toques un violín.

Entiende bien que entre mí y el ruido vulgar está de por medio un abismo insondable. No todo el ruido de los hombres es música. Más

sinfonía es la voz de un niño inocente, el murmullo de las olas del mar, el manantial que esparce su agua arrulladora, o la voz de la danza majestuosa de un árbol que corresponde a mis caricias en mi senda de amor.

Entre mis más famosos amantes cuento legiones: David, el insigne cantor de salmos en Israel, los mexicanos Agustín Lara y Juventino Rosas; y un sinnúmero de seres que me supieron amar como yo los amo a todos.

No olvides que mi sinfonía es la voz de los ángeles, el arte del profeta, el maná del poeta y el sonido celestial y universal que puede ser tuyo también . . . si me estudias, me aprecias y quieres amarme como yo te quiero a ti . . .

*Cachito likes Mexican music very much. In this story, don Pepe tells his son that music is as beautiful as a princess.*

## SYMPHONY

José Torres

Today, Cachito, I am going to tell you about the universal language, music. I am going to talk to you as if music were a beautiful princess who speaks with a voice as sweet as a violin. Listen to the words of this beautiful princess!

My name is music—symphony, song, and melody are my other names. From the beginning God held me as His queen among all of His works. I had already been conceived before the oceans and the abysses came into existence. The sources of water, the rivers, the world's axis, the earth itself—none of these had been created, yet I already existed. It was my daily pleasure to loll continuously in His celestial presence. Later, I delighted in being among the children of mankind.

I am the voice of divine thought when it communes with His creations. I am the apostle of love and I bring joy to the hearts of those who are good, as well as to those who are evil. I am peace, soft and sweet, melodic and caressing; I am that which embraces the whole world in the universal theme called music, art, and poetry.

Love me as you would gold, a precious jewel, or the very pupil of your eye, for my ways are delightful, and my pathways full of peace.

If you take me into your being, I shall fill your heart and mind with nectar, I shall caress your senses, I shall draw sighs from your soul to satiate myself in you and you in me; and I shall be immortal, because once I am part of your being, I will not die. No, I will not die; I will live in your memory as a springtime in your short life; I will live as a gay canticle of your childhood imagination, when even though you were young you thought as a man. Yes. You dreamed like a man about the prospects of your happy future.

If you look at me and feel your spirit and your thoughts reach out to God, you will feel my voice rejoicing in the innermost fibers of your heart and soul. You may be a saint or you may be an artist and a poet even if you never compose a note or write a poem, or play a violin.

Understand clearly that there is an unfathomable abyss separating me from common noise. Not all of man's noises are music. A greater symphony is the cry of an innocent child, the ripple of the ocean waves, the lulling spring that spreads its waters, or the whispering of the majestic dance of a tree which returns my caresses in my lover's lane.

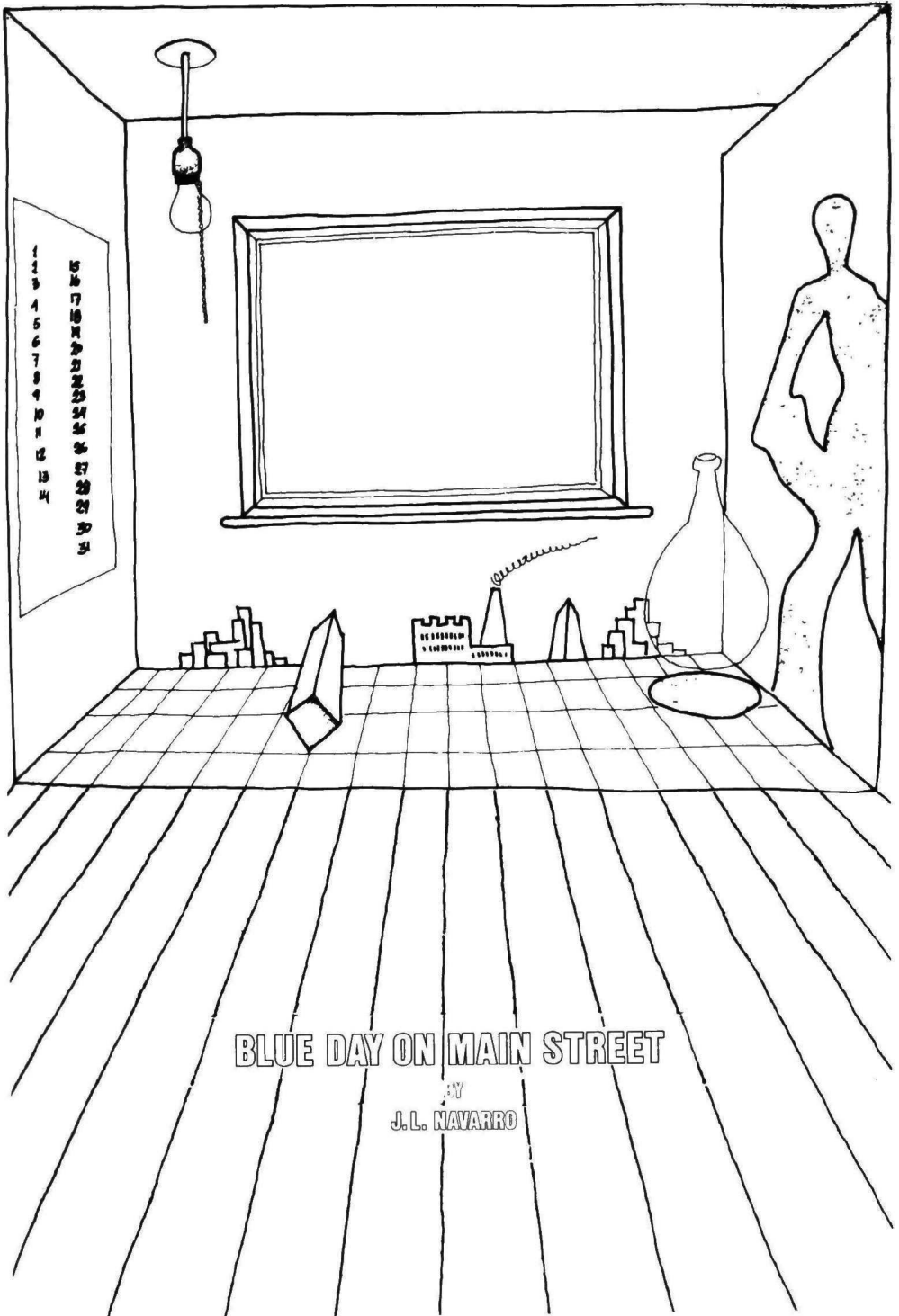
Those who have loved me are many: David, noted singer of psalms of Israel, the Mexicans Agustín Lara and Juventino Rosas; and a multitude of people who love me as I love everyone.

Don't forget that my symphony is the voice of the angels, the art of the prophet, the poet's manna and the celestial and universal sound that can be yours, too . . . if you study me, appreciate me, and wish to love me as I love you. . . .

BLUE DAY ON MAIN STREET is a collection of 12 short stories and a one-act play. It includes some of J. L. Navarro's earliest works, written during his late teens, as well as works written up to the year 1971. Since 1971, Navarro has continued to write and has completed a short novel, as well as a number of short stories and plays.

In his work, J. L. Navarro presents a wide range of expression. His diversity includes surrealistic reflections, fantasy, social realism, pachuco-sailor confrontations, urban degeneration and its effect on youth today, whether they are Chicanos or non-Chicanos. He also offers views of the counter culture juxtaposed to bored, middle age, and middle class America. But his central focus is on youth confronting city life or completely rejecting it.

"The Commission" is a selection from BLUE DAY ON MAIN STREET.



BLUE DAY ON MAIN STREET

BY  
J. L. NAVARRO

## THE COMMISSION

by

J. L. Navarro

The area around Gig's Cafe on the Strip was shadowed with the shade of the afternoon. It was the end of March, the beginning of spring. The day was pleasantly warm with a mild, rambling breeze brushing against the incongruous variety of people that made up the Sunset Strip on any given day of the week.

Tony sat alone at one of the cafe tables, serene in posture and inwardly content to be alive on this fine spring day among the rest of the cafe's patrons. He was smoking a cigarette and he drank coffee as he watched the people as they passed on the walk, looking more than once when an attractive girl came by, each time supressing the urge to reach out and grab onto some cheek flesh. This would not have been altogether impossible, for the cafe was an imitation of a Paris sidewalk cafe where people lounge in the open air, grazing elbows with the passers-by.

At the moment he was casting a wishful gaze at a blonde hippie girl across the street. She was standing on the corner with a dozen or so copies of the Free Press tucked under her arm, looking expectantly at the traffic that was coming her way.

He noted, while bringing the coffee cup to his lips, that the hippie girl had enormously large breasts. Abnormally large, he thought, for a girl her age. To his estimation, she could not have been more than sixteen.

Tony sipped on his coffee, wondering how big the blonde's nipples were. Were they pink or brownish? Were they smooth or pimply? He casually drank in the image of her sybaritic body. Her buttocks and thighs seemed to want to burst from her bell-bottom capris.

Putting the coffee cup down, Tony began to wish he had brought his glasses along to see the girl's features more clearly. But he could not afford to wear his prescription glasses at this time. Not when he was working.

He sat reposed on the thin wire-structured chair, relaxed and self-confident behind his non-prescribed shades, one leg resting on the knee of the other, projecting the debonair style of the man-about-town. He plucked a bit of gray lint off his black tapered slacks; and then (uncon-



sciously) he glanced over his heavy-knit olive green sweater, making sure there were no traces of last night's hamburger on the sleeves or chest area. This quick inspection was prompted by having observed a woman at the next table who had forked some tuna salad to her mouth only to have it fall from the prongs to her blouse. Her face turned crimson, her body rigid, and she forced an embarrassed grin on her escort.

Tony pretended not to have noticed and turned to look at the blonde across the street.

The insistent reverie . . . under the purple sheets . . . soft jazz . . . bottle of sherry . . . Two glasses . . . and the blonde, nude . . .

. . . *why?* . . .

*Rebecca, why did you have to go to Italy?*

*Big tits . . . the blonde, nude . . . god, she has big tits.*

. . . *"for the culture"* . . .

*No time for pleasure.*

His last commission had come to an abrupt end when Rebecca had gone to Italy with her husband. On a business trip. She was sorry, but Tony, of course, could not come along. It would be an indiscretion of which she would never hear the end; so she said, whatever that meant. Although she had made him a present of a check guaranteed to carry him through for at least three months. It should be enough, she said, until you get yourself another. And, for consolation, she assured him that if nothing turned up before her return, she would be more than willing to have him back.

Now, two months later, sitting at the corner at Gig's Cafe on the Strip, almost penniless, Tony sat waiting for the next one. The one still unknown to him. He stared at the blonde, thinking, wondering who it would be. She would be old. They were always old. Not prunes, no. But old, matured women who invariably thought of themselves as sophisticated. He really didn't want another one. He wanted the blonde.

. . . the blonde. She was all smiles now. A car had pulled up and she sold a copy of the Free Press to the fat, bald man behind the wheel. The fat man didn't seem to be the Freep type reader. The ads, maybe?

What time, what day was it?

The money was running low and, to boot, Rebecca had wired him a message informing him that she would not be returning to the States with her husband as intended. She would be staying on in Naples to absorb more of the Italian culture. Wish you were here. . . .

It had come as no surprise to him. Women like Rebecca were the sole support of men like Tony, and they were just as (if not more) unpredictable and fickle as the men she dealt with. All the same, he thought. They're all the same. Only for the culture. Touring the sights, saving the important ones for later. In the end, all the same.

He looked across the street at the young blonde and wondered if perhaps he was getting old. He was only twenty-eight, and yet he felt ancient.

He shifted his eyes from the blonde to the women that passed on the walk and the women who sat around him in the cafe area. He caught the eye of quite a few of them. But they were either with escorts, or the look they gave him wasn't the look he was waiting for. And he knew the "look" well enough to distinguish a good prospect from a bad one. A bad prospect was a waste of time, and right now time was something he could not afford to waste. Of course, if circumstances began to lead down hill, he had dabbled with the idea of becoming a hippie. This mode of living was one he would not altogether go along with. But, if things got any worse, he would have no choice. Then again, the alternative didn't really seem a bad one, not while he watched the blonde hippie girl across the street.

On the sly, he cast a furtive glance at himself in the reflection of the cafe's window. The green pull-over sweater and black slacks looked well on him. His dark hair was not short, not long, combed back with a natural wave to it. He received an immediate impulse to smile at himself, but this would have been too immodest. As it was, while looking at himself, he was making as if he were searching for someone inside the cafe. On the other side of the pane, beyond his reflection, he saw a waiter zig-zagging through the tables with a tray of food and drinks. In the reflection of the street he could see the blonde hippie girl standing on the corner.

Then, as if she had suddenly materialized, he noticed that a tall woman was standing next to him, or rather behind him. When he turned to look up at her, she smiled at him and said, "May I sit down?"

A pang of joy swept over him as he watched the evenness of the woman's false teeth. Her smile was captivating.

"It's such a lovely day," she said. "I am a bit tired. And the other tables all seem to be crowded."

"It's perfectly all right. I was getting lonely sitting here by myself anyway."

"That makes two of us," the woman said, pulling the chair out to sit down. "My name's Helen."

"My name's Tony."

"I'm very pleased to meet you, Tony."

He looked at the woman, trying to appraise her status. She was a pleasant enough looking woman, pretty and youthful, who wore the appropriate modern-conservative apparel of the day. Somehow she represented a retired actress, not retired by age, but rather by lack of parts—or talent. Whatever, she seemed fashionable enough to him to further pursue their relationship. After all, a job was a job.

"Would you like anything?" he asked.

"No, really, it's quite all right. I have—"

"I insist," he said.

She spread the luster of her gray eyes on him as if observing a poor but gallant young man.

Maybe she was wise. Somehow he knew that this wasn't her second time around.

"What will it be?" he said.

"Oh, a glass of lemonade will be fine."

"You know," said Helen. "You remind me a lot of my son. He was killed in the war."

Tony had an itch to ask which war it had been, but decided against it. Best to be prudent.

The woman though, anticipating the question, answered, "In the Korean War."

The waitress came back and set the glass of lemonade and cup of coffee down on the table. Tony watched her huge behind tumble in rhythm as she walked away.

"A very lovely girl," said Helen. "She gave you a rather friendly smile. Do you know her?"

"She's a friend of mine." He smiled at the woman. *But no money.*

"My son . . ." Helen lapsed her words with a sigh and lifted her head to the high clouds, not with a searching gaze but with a certainty in her eyes. "Oh, he was popular, too—with the girls. He was such a well-liked, friendly young man. Handsome, outgoing." She looked at Tony, inquiring his face and seeing herself in the reflection of his shades. "He would have been thirty by now. I hope you don't mind me asking, but . . . how old are you?"

Before Tony could catch himself, the lie had slipped out:

"Twenty-four."

"Really?" said Helen with surprise. "My, you certainly are mature looking for your age."

The annoyance this caused Tony was quickly covered up with as gracious a response as he could manage.

"Thank you."

He smiled at her, exposing his front clip-ons, and drank some coffee. Through the corner of his eye, he glanced at the young hippie girl across the street.

*God, she has big tits.*

*. . . wish you were here . . .*

"My son was a student of engineering at Yale before he enlisted. He didn't have to go, you know. Oh no. He could easily have been deferred. A top student all the way." Again, she looked up at the sky, focusing her eyes on the pinnacle of a cloud strung at midnight. "I

suppose it was his sense of duty that prompted him to act so rash," she said, as if speaking to the cloud she watched. "He was such a brilliant young man." She turned hastily to Tony. "Excuse me if I seem overly boastful about Wendell. But I was so very proud of him."

Tony, keeping pace, just smiled.

"I remember the time Wendell and Sue Ann went out together. I remember it as if it were yesterday. It was their first date. For the both of them. Oh, my, you should have seen the look on Wendell's face when he came . . ."

Tony tuned all his attention to Helen's face. Classic features, delicate, lovely. Her skin, creamy white, for a woman her age was excitingly smooth, soft looking. The only lines on her face were thin lines that parenthesized her mouth, and they were only acutely noticed when she smiled. Her chestnut hair was pinned up, stacked high on her head, and she had a beauty mole between her neck and collar bone. Tony visualized her in the nude. He imagined her body to be firm, fleshy and well preserved; her arms, the curve of her legs, the rounding quality of cleavage of her breasts, all gave indications that she was a woman still well equipped with the essential necessities.

The breeze came in gently around them and with it the fragrance of the woman's body stirred in Tony's direction. Excellent, he thought. Exact. So many women her age wore scents that did not at all become them. They were either too sweet or too poignant. But this woman, Helen, was scented with a subdued aroma that suggested her style in sex: Dim room, not totally dark, easy movements, and when passion reaches its meridian, the heat goes up and . . .

"Did you go to college?" she asked.

"For a while. I didn't care too much for it."

"I'm surprised to hear that. You seem to be a bright young man. What do you do?"

"Nothing. That is, nothing academic."

Helen took a lady-like sip from her lemonade, and said, "What are you doing? I mean, what do you do now?"

"Like I said: Nothing. Actually I'm unemployed at the moment."

"Ohhhhh?" she said. "It seems to me that a young man with your fine appearance should have no difficulty in obtaining work."

"Well, frankly, I am looking for work."

"Anything in particular?"

"You might say so, yes."

"Wendell, my son, worked as a parking lot attendant for a while. He even worked in a car wash. God knows, he didn't have to. We—my husband and I—had no complaints about his choice of jobs. These were summer jobs, of course, when he was still in high school. I suppose he wanted to know what the lower-strata of boys were like. Wendell had a

tremendously inquisitive mind and he was such a great humanitarian. You know, to this very day, I keep telling myself that he would have made an excellent Peace Corps worker."

*Her husband?* (Tony had pegged her for sure as a wealthy widow.)  
*Maybe I'm getting rusty.*

"Are your parents living here in Los Angeles?"

"No," he said. "They live in San Francisco."

In San Francisco. Never the same place twice. With Rebecca it had been New Orleans. Always a lie. The brief sketches he gave of his past were always slightly distorted, and by this very act of altering his past he achieved a feeling of physical and mental restoration.

"San Francisco," Helen said. "Oh, what a fine town. Wendell spent a summer there once with some friends of his. Some Japanese boys he met at a scout jamboree." She lifted her head to the sky. "Wendell had such a high feeling of self-esteem. He was a model boy all through his childhood, and as a teenager he participated only in the valued behavior of the community. Why, he made eagle scout in half the time it takes the average boy. Were you ever in the boy scouts?"

"No," said Tony. "I never cared too much for their uniforms."

"Ahhhhh," said Helen, as if it were indeed a shame. "It would have been marvelous experience for you. Somehow I can't help thinking of you as a former boy scout. I don't know quite how to explain it. There's a certain look about you—"

Tony was beginning to think that the woman was just wasting his time. All this talk about her son was boring him. Maybe all she wanted was some one to talk to who might have been her son. One of those. The milk and cookie type. Although, her appearance didn't suggest this. She radiated too much sensuality. Her physical structure and her manner of comport did not at all agree with each other. But, of course, they came in all shapes and sizes, physically and mentally. In the past, though, he had never met a woman quite as nebulous as the woman he faced now.

"My husband was in the bologna business," Helen said. "Poor dear, he loved his work so much that it resulted in his end. Wendell and I were forever urging him to guard his health. But Henry was a proud man, and stubborn, too. He had ulcers, you know. A horrible fate, under the circumstances. He was something of a fanatic, I suppose, when it came to his work. Doctor Lank had put him on a strict diet for his weight and ulcers. Only Henry would not leave his product alone. For eighteen years he packed bologna sandwiches for work, and he devoured them with apparent relish in front of his employees five days out of the week, never once letting them know the unfortunate condition of his stomach. Yes, Henry was a proud man. Wendell respected him highly. He would still have been around today if it hadn't have

been for his pride. He was fond of saying, I remember quite clearly, 'If my bologna is good enough for the people, then it's certainly good enough for me.' He was a bit of a leftist when it came to his business."

I knew it, Tony thought. He felt a great deal of reassurance in what Helen had said. His sense of prey was still intact.

But what about the commission? As in a chess game, it was easy to foresee one or two moves ahead, possibly three. Only the outcome was always a dubious haze. And, now, he certainly wasn't going to settle for a stalemate.

"The bologna isn't what killed him though," said Helen. "Although, indirectly, I suppose it did. . . ."

*Bologna factory? The bologna business must bring in good money. Only for the commodities of living well. Gadgets were always an attraction.*

"... he died that way, poor dear. Wendell had begged him, implored him to stay home. His ulcers were acting up, you know. But Henry would not heed—"

*Didn't she say he died? In the factory?*

"The factory?" he said, inching his ear to her with interest. "What happened?"

"Well, like I said, a crate of bologna fell on his head. He was taking his p.r. man and photographer on a tour of the company. Wendell begged him not to go. But no. With two bologna sandwiches in his briefcase, Henry went off to the plant. While he was pointing out a new processing machine to his p.r. man, down comes this crate of bologna from a pile of others onto Henry's head. It seems ironic that Henry suffered and was killed by the very bologna that he cherished above everything else in the world. First the ulcers, and then the crate that split his head like a knife cleaving a log of bologna."

*How poetic . . . a log of bologna.*

"Oh, I shudder to think of it," she said. "What a deploring topic. Everytime I recall the tragedy I—" She sniffled and from her purse she brought out a thin, slightly scented handkerchief. She dabbed at her nostrils and then she broke her mood into a concise laugh. "How foolish of me. You must think I'm a sentimental old hen."

"Of course not. You must have loved him very much."

The blonde, for the first time, was looking in Tony's direction.

"Oh, I did, I did. He wasn't an attractive man, by any standards. But, oh, I don't know. . . . I sometimes—"

*. . . want to know you better than the image of you. Touch your golden hair. You're an object at a distance. Space conquers over us. I quench only on your image. I will never hear a greeting, initial statement from you. Only your image. Your tits, thighs, long blonde hair . . . at a distance . . . only . . .*

“... we were poles apart. I was much closer to Wendell, in all respects. We shared our troubles, our joys and triumphs together. Everything. . . . Henry was more of a dear friend to me than a husband, really, and far from being a lover.” Helen snatched quick glances about her, moving her already parting lips to Tony. “Sexually he wasn’t very active. The bologna business took up most of his energy. It seems a pity. To have lived for work alone. Wendell on the other hand loved work, but he took time out for pleasure as well. Simple, everyday pleasures that make life worth living. Why, if it hadn’t have been for Wendell I don’t know what I would have done with myself. Sex, oh yes. My, was he sexy. Trim and muscled body. A model boy if there ever was one. Such dimensions!” A slow sigh expired as her head rose to the sky.

While Helen contemplated the clouds, Tony allowed himself a long desirous gaze at the blonde.

He turned to Helen.

Heads or tails, win or lose, time to lay it on the line.

“Are you doing anything tonight?”

Helen brought her eyes down from the sky with a puzzled look on her face. “Pardon?”

“Have you got any engagements this evening?”

“No. I don’t believe I have.” She watched him, transfixed, almost as if she were seeing some one else. “Why do you ask?”

“No special reason. I just thought we might spend the evening together.”

“Why, it sounds lovely. Yes, I like that very much. Together, just the two of us.” She looked at him for a long while. Then she said, “Do you mind?” and she reached out her hand to take his shades off. She looked into his eyes, searching for something he knew wasn’t there. “Perhaps we better leave now. You know how long it takes a woman to get ready.”

At her house, an elaborate layout in the Hollywood Hills, well secluded in the density of surrounding trees and bushes, they drank brandy while Helen changed into something more formal, and she chatted about Wendell and the many great times they had had together.

From her bedroom, she called, “Make yourself at home. Feel free to look around if you wish.”

Tony, who had been sitting on the living room couch, stood with brandy-on-the-rocks in hand and began to amble about the house.

He toured the kitchen, the backyard, the den, a guest room, and the library before he came to the room with the blue door. He opened the door and felt for the light switch along the wall. The room had no window. The switch was of the variety that one pushes in and has touch control over the intensity of light desired. The light was blue in its

globe incasement. He turned the circular control to the highest degree of light.

The room, surprisingly, was modestly furnished in comparison to the rest of the house. It curiously resembled a motel room. There was only a bed and two chairs, a bureau, and a nightstand. On the floor, Tony felt the soft cushiony red rug beneath his feet. The room itself was not very large, and the object that commanded immediate attention was the single bed with its resplendent purple spread. The second most striking thing about the room was its walls. There were no paintings on them; rather, they were decorated with many 8x11 photographs of males. All young. Most of the pictures were full-face shots.

Tony was carefully examining the photo of a young man whom he thought he recognized when Helen suddenly came into the room.

"Ah, here you are. I was beginning to wonder where you had disappeared to. I see you found your way to Wendell's room."

Of course, he thought. It could be no one else's room but his.

"Who are all these men?"

"Wendell's friends. He had many friends, as you can see. He was a very popular boy, Wendell."

Yes, Tony thought; and apparently partial to displaying only his male companions. There was not a single female's picture on any of the four walls.

"We had better be going," Helen said, heading for the door.

Before leaving, Tony went to the picture of the young man whom he thought he knew and read the scripture: To Mother with Love, Wendell.

"Hurry," Helen called, "or we'll never be out of here."

. . . with Love, Wendell . . .

Tony knew he recognized the face from somewhere, and he was sure that it was not Wendell.

They went to a Chinese restaurant on Santa Monica Boulevard. Helen had suggested going there. Wendell had taken her there often, she said.

After dinner, Tony suggested an underground movie.

"Certainly," said Helen; hardly letting a minute go by without adding, "I don't know when I've had more fun. Wendell and I used to do this often."

It was past two when they arrived back at her house. Tony hadn't even hinted at going there. While she drove home she acted as if Tony had all the right in the world to be with her.

When they stepped into the living room, Helen said, "You may use Wendell's room tonight."

She led the way to the room with the air of an indifferent house maid. Tony opened the door and stepped in, expecting Helen to follow.



But no. Instead, she closed the door and Tony heard her muffled footsteps over the carpet, heading for her own quarters.

Is that all? The End? Over?

He suddenly felt like a character in a Disney flick. Like a hollow tin can.

There he stood, in the center of the small room, turning around in one spot, looking at the pictures on the walls. The pale blue light gave the faces eery and unearthly contours. All evening Tony had wondered about the pictures, especially of the fellow whom he thought he knew. He went up to the photograph and studied it; then, the light being insufficient to kindle any significant clues, he struck a match. He examined the wild pep pill eyes, the smiling elastic mouth, and the huge dominating teeth recessed behind the thick lips. The face seemed to be all eyes and all teeth. Where had he seen that face before? The flame fed on the sliver of cardboard and neared uncomfortably to his fingertips. He blew it out, let it fall to the carpet and then crushed it in with his shoe. He lit another match, straining his mind to remember the face. He stared at the mouth, the teeth, the thick lips, the eyes, thought, but nothing came to mind.

Blowing the match out, he took one of the chairs and put it next to the bed. Sleep was weighing on his eyes. He began to take his clothes off, hanging each garment neatly over the back of the chair, stripping to the skin. Then he stood there naked, feeling like an object of observation by the gallery of inanimate eyes that stared at him from the walls.

He folded the blankets back and slipped himself between the clean, cool sheets. He turned on his side and faced the nightstand. The top of the stand was notched with numerous cigarette burns. Out of curiosity he opened the drawer of the stand and discovered a handsomely bound edition of the Marquis De Sade. It figures, he thought.

He closed the drawer, turned once again and shut his eyes, still seeing the blue light overhead, pale in his mind.

Slade? . . . Of course!

Tony threw the covers off and went to the picture of the male with the wild eyes and gargantuan teeth.

Herbert Slade. Herby the Hug Slade. New York '64. Of course. It was all so clear now. They had both been at a party that night. Tony had taken an interest in him because Slade was going around the room, hugging male and female alike. When he had come up to Tony his hug had been refused. Come on, come on, everyone said. He's Herby the Hug. Let him do his thing. Slade had been trying to pass himself off as a painter at the time.

What the hell, thought Tony. He looked at the scripture again: *To Mother with Love, Wendell*. Then he went from one picture to the next, examining the signatures. They all had the same dedication and signed by the same name. They only differed in handwriting.

Tony thought he began to understand what was going on. But it was too much to think of at the moment.

He went back to bed and sleep began to run through him like a pleasant drug. The back of his eyelids became screens on which he saw himself running through cornfields. Row after row of corn stalks and long yellow fibers protruding from out the husks. . . . *Nude, voluptuous body running through the furrowed fields, laughing in the sun. The blond, running, wanting to be caught . . .*

*. . . what are you doing in Naples? . . .*

The door swung slowly into the room, rousing Tony out of his dream. He saw Helen's body silhouetted by the dim lights of the hallway. She wore nothing more than thin, tight black panties. Her breasts hung firm and round, nipples tense.

She stepped into the room, her hair now combed down in a flip like a young girl's.

"Wendell?" she whispered.

She came nearer the bed, taking small, dainty steps.

Tony watched her, saying nothing. He watched her until she came so close that he could smell the perfumes on her body.

"Wendell? . . . Wendell, dear, are you awake? Mother's come to keep you company."

# CHICANOS IN THE NORTHWEST

## AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

By

Erasmio Gamboa

### FOREWORD

Chicanos in the Northwest are relatively isolated from the heavy concentration of Chicanos in the southwestern states. As a result, two facts are apparent. One, a disproportionate amount of publication has come from the southwest relating to Chicanos, some of which is not applicable in the northwest. One such affirmation, that Chicanos are 80 to 85 per cent urban, clearly does not hold true. Secondly, research from the southwest has excluded the Chicano in the North. To date, no research has been attempted of Chicanos in the northwest by either Chicanos or non-Chicanos.

It is the purpose of this paper to shed some light on this part of La Raza which has long been ignored.

Due to limitations of time and space only Washington will be considered and within this area primary consideration is given to the Yakima Valley, an area where the majority of Chicanos either migrate to, or reside.

### INTRODUCTION

Washington State, like California, is a leading producer of agricultural products. The industry has grown from small family farms to increased acreage and specialized agri-business of substantial size. A combination of fertile soil, irrigation and a cheap labor supply has produced an industry valued in production in 1965, at 675,127,000 dollars.<sup>1</sup> Within the state, the Yakima Valley is the most important agricultural region and it also is the center of the Chicano population. Yakima County, a part of the valley, ranks among the top 15 counties in the United States in the cash value of its crops; it has ranked as high as fourth.<sup>2</sup> Until the recent increase in mechanization and the use of chemicals, this industry was totally dependent on a large Chicano labor force without which it could not survive. Since the early part of this century, this labor force has consisted of both interstate, as well as

intrastate migrants. For the industry, the seasonal need for workers has posed a problem; how to acquire an ample supply at the precise time and how to dispose of them when not needed. It is in this context that Chicanos will be viewed in the following study.

### The Yakima Valley

The Yakima Valley is an arid basin in Central Washington, separated from the western part of the state by the Cascade Mountains. Through this valley flows the Yakima River and its tributaries. The valley extends from Ellensburg to the city of Yakima. Through the use of reservoirs in the Cascades and a system of irrigation, fruit crops are grown in the upper valley and row crops in the lower valley. The crops became the most important products of the Yakima Valley. Hops were first grown in 1877, and by 1890, were among the most important crops.<sup>3</sup> One year later, the powerful Yakima Hop Growers Association was organized to promote the interests of hop producers in the valley.<sup>4</sup> Sugar beets were first introduced around 1889.<sup>5</sup> The purity and the sugar content of the beet juice prompted an offer by the Washington Sugar Company of free seed to those who would plant and agree to sell to the company factories. In 1918, the Utah and Idaho Sugar Company had three factories located in the valley.<sup>6</sup> Asparagus was planted along with potatoes early in the valley, but did not become important until after the 1930's. In the upper valley, fruit was planted as early as 1866.<sup>7</sup> Through the center of the valley runs the Northern Pacific Railroad, built in 1887, facilitating the shipment of the valley's products.

Cattle was the first enterprise attempted by Anglos in what had previously been Indian land. The introduction of cattle is attributed to Chief Kamiakin of the Yakima Indian Tribe in 1840.<sup>8</sup> Irrigation, the life line of the valley, is also attributed to Chief Kamiakin who built the first irrigation canal in 1853.<sup>9</sup> Through both the Pre-emption Land Law of 1841 and the Homestead Law of 1862, it was possible for the early settlers to acquire as much as 220 acres for as little as \$75.00.<sup>10</sup> By 1900, agriculture had replaced cattle in importance and a system of irrigation had been firmly established.

Labor shortage was recognized as a problem as early as 1890, when agents from the Puyallup area went into the Yakima Valley to recruit Indians from the reservation.<sup>11</sup> To forestall a labor shortage, the Yakima Hop Growers Association sent circulars to recruit on their own. Filipinos were tried in the hop fields and fruit areas in the early 1920's.<sup>12</sup> Serious conflicts resulted, however, when the Filipinos entered into the Anglo dominated fruit picking jobs. In September of 1924, a mob of Anglo workers forced a group of 25 Filipinos out of

Cashmere, an apple producing area.<sup>13</sup> Two days later, a band of 200 Anglo workers forced Filipino cannery workers in Wenatchee, a city 12 miles south of Cashmere, to leave the area.<sup>14</sup> Finally, in the Yakima Valley town of Toppenish, all Filipinos were forced to leave by local residents.<sup>15</sup> The feeling of disdain and overt racism of the 20's has yet to disappear from Toppenish, the center of the Yakima Valley, as well as the surrounding communities.

### History of Chicano Migration

It is difficult to establish when the first members of La Raza first arrived in the state of Washington. Through personal interviews, it is clear that the first families came directly to the Yakima Valley in the late 1920's as farm workers and some as farmers. According to these first families, they were preceded by single Mexican farm workers. This would appear to be supported by Grebler who states that from 1915 to 1919, of the 91,000 Mexican immigrants, 9.4 per cent went to states other than Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado or California.<sup>16</sup> Discrepancies in the reporting of figures could well boost that percentage. An interview with a family residing in the Yakima Valley since 1889 supports the 1920's as the arrival of La Raza.

The first arrivals came from Wyoming, Idaho, Montana and Colorado, settling in the area around Toppenish and Wapato. The next distinct group of arrivals did not come until the late 1930's and early 1940's. These Chicanos settled in the lower Yakima Valley around Mabton and Sunnyside, coming almost exclusively from the Rio Grande Valley of Texas.

To understand why Chicanos came to the northwest, it is necessary to understand the economic development of both the Mountain states, the Rio Grande Valley, as well as the development of agriculture in Washington.

California and the Mountain States area are the primary sugar beet producing areas of the western United States. The sugar beet industry depends on government protection in the form of protective tariffs, a large investment, and initially it required a large labor force. Sugar companies, in order to encourage reluctant farmers to plant and recover a million dollar investment, guaranteed a price prior to planting, contracted all acreage and most important took the task of providing a seasonal labor force.

Mexican workers were widely used in Colorado and adjacent states around 1910 to do the back-breaking work of thinning, weeding and harvesting.<sup>17</sup> Mexican workers were recruited directly from Mexico by company agents who paid the train fare to the area of work and back. Because of peak labor periods both in the Spring and Fall, efforts to

keep the workers tied down became a problem. Immigrants from Mexico were recruited, actually held in bondage, for the entire period while the Chicanos were bound to the sugar companies by contracts. These contracts were prepared and executed by the companies in their favor, committing the worker to the company. During the First World War, Chicanos and Mexicans became the chief source of labor. Such a labor shortage existed, that an agent of the Spreckels Sugar Company of California raided Carranza's army and recruited 1,400 soldiers as beet workers.<sup>18</sup>

The restrictions on European and Asian immigrants and the opening of jobs in the manufacturing industries for Anglos caused bitter rivalry for Mexican and Chicano workers in the late 20's. In Colorado and adjacent states, families were encouraged to settle near the beet growing areas. Plots were sold on company land and financing provided, obligating the workers to the company. In other cases, families were offered five dollars more per acre of beets if they would remain in the area year round.<sup>19</sup> Soon thousands were either barely subsisting on menial winter jobs or on charity. The absence of manufacturing industries in these areas provided no means of upward economic mobility. The companies used widespread exploitation against the helpless Chicanos. One practice was for the company to measure the acreage in their favor and pay the worker accordingly. One family interviewed asserts that it was actually moved out of Worland, Wyoming, by the Holly Sugar Company for getting others to protest this abuse. In another instance, families were run out of the localities for attending union organizing activities.

When reports reached these areas of the shortage of help in the Yakima Valley entire families were only too eager to leave. The Chicanos who came to Washington in the late 1930's and early 1940's migrated from a small area in the Rio Grande Valley, mostly from the city of Edinburg and surrounding communities. As a whole, they were primarily families that had entered from Mexico in the early 1900's. These families had come as laborers clearing mesquite brush for agriculture and later provided the labor force as agricultural workers.

The Mexican Revolution plus the demand for labor by the vegetable and cotton growing interests caused an increase in the Chicano labor force in Texas from 71,062 in 1900 to 683,681 in 1930.<sup>20</sup> Immediately this tremendous surplus of labor began to be shipped off to all areas of the United States. During October of 1919, an Idaho newspaper complained that several thousand Mexican sugar beet workers had been stranded in the state.<sup>21</sup> Later, an entire train load of Mexican workers bound for Alaskan canneries were also left stranded in Seattle when the company went broke.<sup>22</sup>

With the injection of tremendous numbers of workers into the labor supply, Chicanos and Mexican workers resembled a huge army headed

by unscrupulous Chicano labor contractors. Farmers were eager to gather their crops, indifferent to the length of time workers were employed. Wages quickly dropped due to the lack of competition for workers. Consequently, in 1938 the Texas Employment Service estimated that a worker working six months in the cotton fields could barely earn \$37.50 for the entire cotton season!<sup>23</sup> To escape the decrepit housing and poor health conditions caused by the presence of a huge labor supply, the cotton fields of California and the hop and bean fields of Oregon and the crops of the Yakima Valley offered an escape to the north.

In the Yakima Valley with the increase in sugar beet acreage, a similar need for labor developed. By 1939, Yakima was producing 86.6 per cent of all sugar beets in the state.<sup>24</sup>

The need for Chicanos from Texas began with the increased acreage of sugar beets, as well as the planting of asparagus and potatoes on a large scale in the lower Yakima Valley in the late 30's.

Although the first workers came without an obligation to the sugar company, what was an effort to escape systematic exploitation ironically resulted in exploitation at the hands of Chicano labor contractors who in a few years built up a lucrative business. At ten dollars per person, this form of exploitation of the worse kind was created by the grower's need for workers. In 1933, a reported shortage of some 8,000 hop workers in the French settlement of Moxee City in the Yakima Valley alone resulted in a call for Indians from British Columbia, Filipinos and Mexican nationals.<sup>25</sup>

### The Beginning of Chicano Enclaves

Chicanos who came from Texas differed from those who came from the Mountain States area. Those from Texas returned each year to their homes in the south, while those from Wyoming and Montana stayed.

Most of these early settlers lived around Wapato and surrounding communities. While no exact numbers are presently available of those who came and stayed, it is clear that they were mostly family relationships or friends who came together. It must be kept in mind that as early as 1933, Mexican workers had already been recruited for work in the hop fields.

By the 1940's, Chicanos were firmly established in the Yakima Valley. Cultural life style, which is an essential part of La Raza, played an important part in the early years. Dances were held first in homes and then in halls. When asked in an interview about social activities, a man responded, "Cuando llegamos, llegamos bailando."<sup>26</sup> The first public dances were held in Harrah around 1941. New family relationships were made through marriages or through "compadrazgo." It was familiar to

hear that either a dance, baptism or celebration was taking place somewhere and Chicanos would flock to that location. Tortillas, essential to every Chicano, were made by those women who didn't work in the fields and sold to those that did. Made by hand, these tortillas were sold in labor camps and found wide acceptance. In the 50's, the potential was recognized by an Anglo couple in Zillah. Today "El Ranchito" stands as a prospering tortilla factory distributing throughout Washington, as well as out of state. Chicanas are still making the tortillas; the business, however has always been Anglo owned.

"No Mexicans Allowed" and "White Trade Only" signs were found throughout the valley as late as 1945. In one instance, a Chicano was arrested three times for refusing to leave a business premise. Each time, released from jail, he would return and insist on being served. Theaters were segregated and Chicanos had to sit apart from the Anglo movie goers. As early as 1942, Mexican films were brought to the valley by a Chicano. They were shown in theaters and in tents that were moved from one community to another.

During the Second World War, the Chicano population increased as agriculture further developed. The war also brought Chicano soldiers from all over the southwest to both Camp Hanford, close to Yakima, and the Yakima Firing Range. Soldiers coming into the valley towns demanded an end to segregation. In Toppenish, when refused at a theater, they forced themselves into the segregated theater and seats. By the late 40's, there existed a Spanish radio broadcast on a temporary basis in Toppenish. Today, there are several radio programs, as well as a Chicano television program.

Few Chicanos entered school for there were no laws pertaining to child labor that covered agricultural workers. Of the few that did enter school in the 40's, even less graduated. Many found the fields more welcoming than the attitudes of the local school officials, as well as teachers. Those who tried to graduate were systematically held back, either because of low achievement or requirements. In both cases, the fault was not the Chicano's, but of the economic system that kept them in the fields and of the insensitive school administration. One respondent remarked, "I had all the requirements to graduate, but Washington State History. How could I get that? When we moved out of the state, no one taught it."<sup>27</sup>

The war also brought an increase of bracero workers. In some places of the Yakima Valley, boarding houses were established by the larger companies such as Stokely Van Camp. As a whole, these workers fared better than the Chicano worker. They were guaranteed minimum wages plus a provision for health and accident insurance. Admittedly the coverage was low, however these guarantees are still beyond the reach of the Chicano workers in Washington or elsewhere. Besides depressing



wages for the Chicano residents, the bracero program brought widespread disregard of civil rights. "La migra," as the immigration officials were called, would surround entire fields checking all workers' legal status. These officers had wide powers and could take into custody all without proper identification. Private homes did not escape the scrutiny of these officers. According to reports, many raids favoring grower interests were carried out in the middle of the night, especially at the end of the harvest. The result was widespread abuse not only by the border patrol, but also by the local law enforcing officials and the Highway Patrol, both of which lacked Chicano representation. They would make the Chicano a favorite target, no doubt augmenting the local revenues by this practice. Lack of drivers licenses, out-of-state plates, drunk driving or mere suspicion was enough for persons to be taken in and held until bail could be posted. The Chicano, never faring well in court, usually forfeited bail.

From the 30's to the 50's, Chicano men, women and children literally swarmed over the fields of the valley, with no exceptions. However, when it came to rates of pay, women and children were not worth as much. The wages increased from \$.75 to \$1.25 per hour, in this period. The living conditions in Yakima migratory labor camps, which had been regarded as the worst in the west, improved little and some camps got worse.<sup>28</sup> Welfare benefits which excluded Chicanos because of strict residence requirements were in favor of the community. This practice perpetuated migration as Chicanos were forced to leave every winter. Migration became an endless cycle. The lack of legal and political status kept the Chicano population of the valley existing as aliens. Though there were reported sit downs in some fields, this was no match for the powerful grower associations, such as the hop growers who organized in the late 1800's. This, coupled with labor contractors working as a means of control between the worker and farmer, further oppressed the worker. By the early 50's, mechanization began to displace many in the almost exclusive Chicano labor force. Chicanos, who at one time were eagerly sought, now became a problem in the Yakima Valley.

### The Chicano Today

It is safe to say that at the peak of the labor need there are more than 100,000 Chicanos in the state. Active Mexicanos, a group in Seattle, in a recent survey of King County, disclosed 25,000. In Yakima County it is estimated by local Chicano sources that there are some 20,000. Each year more than 40,000 migrants pour into the state in search of work. Of these, 41 per cent are Chicanos.<sup>29</sup> Those who reside in other parts of the state have yet to be counted. They live in Walla Walla, southeastern area, the Columbia Basin, and Lower Yakima

Valley which is composed of two additional counties, plus the entire Puget Sound coast of Washington extending to Lynden, eight miles from the Canadian border.

The past fifty years has meant little for the majority of Chicanos in terms of social and economic advancement. The attitudes and overt acts of racism practiced on the first Asian workers has not changed. In the rural areas there is no one lower in the social strata than the Chicano. Consequently, he must take the brunt of this racism.

Presently, there are no Chicano doctors, lawyers, political office holders, only a handful of elementary and secondary school teachers and no one in a responsible position in the law enforcing agencies of the Yakima Valley. Though there is in existence a share-holding cooperative for farm workers in Toppenish, none exist elsewhere, and few Chicano businesses are of any importance.

Most Chicanos that have been able to enter into non-agricultural positions have done so as laborers or as sales personnel. Furthermore, they have not entered because of good will towards Chicanos, but due to competition for Chicano trade. In a recent survey, community leaders were asked opinions of migrant workers. In response to questions such as honesty, morals, credit risk, and propensity to commit incidents, only 4 per cent answered favorably.<sup>30</sup> Only recently have Chicanos been able to enter into positions with state agencies serving the community. This was a result of pressure by the local community action programs pointing to the need for Spanish speaking employees. This year, however, the federally funded O.E.O. programs in the valley were terminated, largely because of the lack of endorsement by the county government. Today the vast majority of Chicanos have yet to break out of the migrant cycle. Those who have settled have learned that it takes more than merely establishing residence to escape poverty. In the Yakima Valley, there is no economic discrimination against either residents and migrants, both of whom are toiling in the fields.

The question remains: why have Chicanos been unable to advance? The following will be a look at the social and economic forces working against advancement.

Although Chicanos have retained their culture, it is effectively used against them. In school they are punished for speaking Spanish while in the Chicano community they are ostracized for speaking English. In the economic system, they have become mere tools of production for the agricultural interests. When Anglos speak of Chicanos, they immediately associate a low way of life which is attributed to their culture. Chicanos, especially the young, begin to feel ashamed and lead a meaningless life psychologically as well as economically. Furthermore, rejected by the Anglo society, they are driven into a caste-like system. Unfortunately, Chicanos have yet to take advantage of this cohesiveness

to organize as an effective body against the dominant power structure.

The Catholic Church, which has always held great influence on Chicanos, reports that in the Yakima Diocese, 46 per cent of all baptisms are Spanish surnamed, implying Chicanos.<sup>31</sup> A former migrant Chicano is now a priest. Yet his main activity has been organizing spiritual retreats. There is no progressive group within the clergy or the parishes. Each year thousands of dollars are contributed by Chicanos through parish sponsored fiestas, yet little benefits the Chicanos in return. Because of strong financial influences, the Catholic Church in the Yakima Valley has been intimidated. Last year a Catholic publication, *Our Times*, which carried a column in Spanish by an outspoken Chicano was forced to terminate. The church must begin to show its sensitivity and humanism towards the Chicanos. It must begin to offer more than spiritual salvation, by supporting the quest for economic salvation of the Chicano. Credit must be given to the church since it was instrumental in bringing the O.E.O. programs to the valley; however, later it gave little support to make it a success. Chicanos, by using the custom of *compadrazgo* to organize effectively could demand deeds and support from the church instead of mere verbiage.

Each year there is a constant drop in agricultural jobs, yet few Chicanos are completing secondary schools and fewer reach college. In 1967, the median grade level of migrants was the fifth grade.<sup>32</sup> A study of Sunnyside showed that of 100 children in the first grade more than one third were Chicanos. Yet by the time they had reached the eighth grade level only two existed.<sup>33</sup> There is a total lack in sensitivity towards the Chicanos in the schools of the valley. Children are still expected to adapt to the schools instead of the schools changing to meet the needs of the Chicanos. Over sixteen years ago, it was recommended that teachers with the same background be employed to teach these children.<sup>34</sup> Although there are funds available for bilingual education *no school in the valley has taken the initiative*. Even federal funds for free lunches are not being used to the fullest extent for Chicano children. One Chicano who applied as a teacher in Granger, where the majority of the population is Chicano, was refused and an Anglo hired in his place; there is no question that the Chicano was qualified since he is now teaching in Seattle. For those who do attend schools, the mis-education received does little since there are few books at home and none in labor camps. Child labor laws are violated everyday. Recently Chicano employees from the Toppenish Employment Security Office met with the school superintendent to call attention to this abuse. Two buses which were sent to the Del Monte Corporation labor camps returned filled with Chicano school children. The damage being done by this abuse is unmeasurable. Though federal programs for the education

of migrant children and adults exist, this is not enough. Chicano teachers must be trained in colleges and accepted by the local school districts. Only then will children be convinced that it is possible to escape the cycle of poverty. Once again only through the effective organization of the entire Chicano community can representation be gained on the school boards. Presently, one state wide group, the Chicano Education Association, has been organized to work in this area.

Legal representation for Chicanos is severely lacking. Limited by economic necessity they gain little or no representation. Because of conflict of interests, few lawyers will represent Chicanos especially in litigations with growers. When they do represent Chicanos, they are understandably intimidated by the local economic interests. Chicanos are targets of patrol cars waiting for the least infraction. Many persons are known on a first name basis by officers. It was related to me that in one city, a patrolman observed a Chicano driver as he passed by. Without stopping him, the patrolman later presented a citation to his wife at home. Cases of beatings are also numerous. Held in lieu of bail, farmworkers are further deprived economically by being unable to work. When they post bail and are released, they fare badly in court. During a 1969 legal services project, a judge in Granger could not remember whether she had ever had an acquittal in her court.<sup>35</sup> Few Chicanos are exonerated and fines are excessive under the pretext of serving as examples.

The impact of poverty has trapped the Chicano in poor health conditions. Through a health clinic now being operated by a properly trained staff and administered in part by the farm worker himself, conditions have improved. Even so, the staff has found difficulties in gaining access to labor camps. There is a reluctance by private doctors to treat Chicanos because of inability to pay. Health conditions in labor camps regulated by revised 1969 standards have been largely ignored. Under these standards the owners of camps had up to five years to improve conditions; reluctance to upgrade conditions are further facilitated by waivers which are granted by the Employment Security Department. Prenatal care especially in the labor camps is rare; 36 per cent of children of migrants die solely due to lack of medical attention at time of birth.<sup>36</sup> Many persons suffering from malnutrition are not exposed to preventive inoculations and contract serious diseases; unobservable ailments are also prevalent. In a retraining program for agriculture workers in Arizona, half of those over fifty were found to suffer from serious back ailments.<sup>37</sup> The propensity of accidents in agriculture make it the third most dangerous industry, which in turn further endangers farmworkers. As a consequence, the life expectancy of migrants in Washington State is a mere 38 years.<sup>38</sup>

Though there have been several Chicano candidates for political

offices, none has been elected. Chicanos, until the formation of the Mexican American Federation in 1967, were not politically organized. Eliminated from participation by literacy tests and lack of Spanish speaking registrars, Chicanos have never exercised a fundamental right. With these and other problems now eliminated, the obstacle of resident requirements still keeps the Chicanos from participating fully in political elections. By following the example of La Raza Unida Party, it is possible to reorganize on a state wide level, similar to the Mexican American Federation of Chicano voters. Both the Republican and Democratic parties, aware that Chicanos will vote for the Democratic ticket, offer no effort in helping to organize the Chicano voter. Nevertheless by registration and by voting in block, as Chicanos, it is possible to affect change at the local level.

Each year fewer farmworkers are needed. Many are being displaced by mechanization and increased chemical use. Much of this research is being carried out in the valley itself through the Irrigated Agriculture Research and Extension Center, an extension of Washington State University. Research on herbicides and improved plant stocks suitable for mechanization have had a direct consequence on farmworkers.

Corporations such as Del Monte, Green Giant, Stokely, and others are only biding time until thorough mechanization takes place. This expectation is used as rationale for the lack of attention given to the needs of workers. In 1965, 9 per cent of the top agriculture corporations produced fifty per cent of the food of this country; additionally, the top 3 per cent hired one third of the total farm labor.<sup>39</sup> Each year in the Yakima Valley, through the State Employment Security Department, state employees are sent to Texas to facilitate recruitment of hundreds of workers for corporate farms. Once here, they are obligated either to the company or to its crew leaders, through advanced finances or carefully prepared contracts. In addition, workers have a portion of their pay deducted to ensure that they will remain for the entire period. Behind a maze of "no trespassing" signs in remote labor camps, these workers are hidden from public view.

These corporations play an important part in determining the economy of the valley. They are the owners of canneries and processing plants while farmer cooperatives or smaller companies usually own the fresh produce plants. These corporations advise as to the type of produce and reserve the right to dictate the time of harvest to guarantee a steady flow of produce. Through the control of the final processed product, they also influence market demand. A corporation can force the price of fresh produce, including their own, to a low level knowing that they can hold the product in storage, or be guaranteed profits through their canning and packing operations. The smaller farmer who sells to the fresh produce market is held in check through con-

tracts to these larger firms. With fixed costs, held by a contract, he has no other recourse but to cut farm worker wages if necessary.

Rates of pay for workers are also influenced by the larger firms, and grower associations. Growers will establish a rate of pay and usually look to the larger corporations for examples. Once a rate of pay has been established, policy is more important than market value of produce. In order to maintain a low wage policy, a surplus of labor is essential. A psychological fear of losing the crop through lack of labor can create a demand for labor at higher wages. With a surplus of labor there is no fear that this scramble will take place. Without bargaining power and forced by the seasonal aspect of farm labor, the worker is left little but to accept or go unemployed. The lack of unemployment compensation makes welfare the only alternative during the slack periods. Welfare, despised by the Anglo community, becomes another subsidy to the agriculture industry and perpetuates this cycle of poverty.

The agriculture industry is highly organized as opposed to the farm laborer. Corporate interests, growers associations and individual farmers serve on the Farm Labor Advisory Board to the Employment Security Department. Assisted by state and federal agencies, labor contractors as well as recruitment of workers from out of state, and below-standard housing conditions go unchallenged.

The United Farm Workers Union, recently organized, has become the most effective of all Chicano organizations in the state. Already establishing the legal right of workers to organize, negotiating contracts with struck hop growers, it is creating a new awareness on the part of both workers and community people. The future of the Chicano worker depends largely on its success.

The solution to the problem of the Chicanos in the state, especially the Yakima Valley, are both social and economic in nature. At the present time, there is little indication that changes will happen to drastically change the Chicano's predicament in this state. In a recent survey, farmers were asked what changes they thought could be done to improve the situation of migrant workers in the state; 40 per cent responded "nothing."<sup>40</sup> When asked what the workers could do themselves to improve their situation, 31 per cent responded "be more ambitious."<sup>41</sup> The answer is clear, then, that change will not come until change is created by the Chicanos themselves. We have to become ambitious not in the fields, but in drawing more Chicanos into effective and usable organizations in every community where Chicanos exist. Workers have to be encouraged to join the farm workers union, community people must support it, people must register to vote, vote together, and demands must be made for representation in school boards as well as community and state agencies.

Chicano studies must not lose sight of the problems outside of the

university community. Culture classes and touring labor camps is not the answer. Essential to change is an understanding of how Chicanos are used in the economic system. Only by providing an understanding of the exploitive system within our own state can Chicano studies hope to be effective in providing persons willing to work to change it. Change, however, will come. Once Chicanos believe in the need of making change in Anglo society to allow equal participation, nothing can stop them, for their place in society is long overdue.

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# FREIREISMO AND CHICANIZAJE

an essay

Raymond V. Padilla

## PROLOGUE

*"We have never rejected positive contributions from men of the Third World or of the director societies. But confrontation with our particular world has taught us that any ideas coming from another part of the world cannot simply be transplanted."*

—Paulo Freire in  
*Cultural Action For Freedom*

## INTRODUCTION

Paulo Freire is a man of complex thought. His thinking encompasses philosophy, religion, history, the social sciences, as well as other disciplines. Paulo Freire is an inter-disciplinarian, intellectually concerned with universals.

Paulo Freire values action. His main concern therefore is with history which both results from and creates action. To say that Freire's concern is with history is to say that Freire's concern is with culture, since history only occurs within culture. Man is the only creature that produces culture. Freire's main concern is with and for man. Paulo Freire is a humanist searching for man's salvation.

Paulo Freire is a particular individual—un hombre de carne y hueso—and as such exists and has existed within a particular place, time, culture, and history. His actions are therefore defined by and limited to his existential particularities. His thinking aspires toward universals.

It is the responsibility of the critic to specify carefully the perspective or perspectives from which he is approaching Paulo Freire's thought and actions. I approach Paulo Freire as a Chicano—with all the ambiguity and restlessness which that concept and reality implies. I recognize that my thought carries with it, and is carried by, a particular history, culture, biography, and personality. These are alien to Paulo Freire. Paulo Freire as a particular individual possesses and is possessed

by a particular history, culture, biography, and personality. These are alien to me.

As a Chicano I am interested in discovering what Paulo Freire's thought has to say to me about myself and about my circumstances. I also wish to discover—to whatever extent possible—the meaning that his actions have for himself and his thought. I then want to ask myself what Paulo Freire's actions mean for my own thought and action.

### PAULO FREIRE IN REFLECTION

*Man.* For Freire, the “ontological vocation of man is to be subject.”<sup>1</sup> Man is at the same time an “unfinished being.” Man exists within a world which manifests an “unfinished reality.” Both man and reality are *becoming*.

Although man is an unfinished being, he is also a conscious being. Consciousness leads man to critical reflection. Critical reflection permits man to recognize his incompleteness.

*Consciousness.* Freire believes that consciousness is not an empty pot waiting to be filled. He attributes two essential qualities to consciousness. One is intentionality. Intentionality means “to be always conscious of something; to be pointing beyond itself.”<sup>2</sup> Intentional consciousness encompasses the simultaneity of man-world: subjectivity and objectivity.

The second quality is “splitting.” By splitting Freire means that “Consciousness has the possibility of splitting itself and becoming consciousness of consciousness.”<sup>3</sup>

*Reality.* Reality is the dialectization of man and the world. Therefore, according to Freire, reality is in a process of constant change. Reality cannot be truly apprehended through a “rigid or formal linguistic discourse.”<sup>4</sup> Reality is not a given nor something waiting to be perceived by man. For Freire, reality “only *is* because it is becoming.”<sup>5</sup>

*The Fundamental Situation of Man Within the World.* Man is a creature of praxis, i.e., of action and reflection. Within the world, man receives images. As a result he establishes relationships with the world. These relationships are characterized by a critical posture, plurality, consequence, and transcendence. It is the critical posture of man which permits him to define himself in an I, not-I relationship. Criticalness also allows man to challenge and to be challenged. It is criticalness that turns man into a transformer.

By plurality Freire means that man is not merely a creature that responds to stimuli. Instead, man is above all a decision maker. As a decision maker, man is a creature of consequence, since real consequences attend man's actions and decisions.

As a result of criticalness, plurality, and consequence, man is trans-

centent. This attribute results because man separates things, and in doing so he can see limits. It is in his perception of limits that man, according to Freire, can transcend the world—at least potentially.

In Freire's view, then, man is a creature of praxis through which man becomes both a creator and transformer. As creator and transformer, man creates a cultural world. It is this cultural world that becomes a historical world. As previously noted, however, man (in Freire's view) is in a dialectical relation with the world, conditioning it and being conditioned by it: "Men are conditioned by the products of their own actions."<sup>6</sup> "In objectifying the world, men objectify themselves and culture appears as the alienation . . . of the very being who creates it."<sup>7</sup>

*Permanent Transformation.* Because of this alienation, Freire believes that man must be engaged in a critical and *permanent* process of transforming reality.<sup>8</sup> The transformation process must be permanent because if, for example, man transforms the world at moment "B", in order to overcome the alienation of moment "A", the actions at moment "B" will create their own alienation if there is no further transformation.

The dialectical relationship between man and world, as well as the need for permanent transformation, can be illustrated as follows:

1. Man's praxis at moment "A".

MAN'S PRAXIS UPON THE WORLD	—————	CREATES	—————>	THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE WORLD. PRO- DUCTS. CULTURE.
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2. Inversion of praxis.

THE TRANSFORMA- TION OF THE WORLD. PRODUCTS. CULTURE	————	CONDITIONS (OBJECTIFIES)	————>	MAN THROUGH INTROJECTED CULTURE
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3. Man's praxis at moment "B".

MAN'S PRAXIS UPON THE WORLD	—————	CREATES	—————>	THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE WORLD. PRO- DUCTS. CULTURE.
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4. Combining 1 through 3 above:

CONDITIONING

MAN'S PRAXIS UPON THE WORLD	—————	CREATES	—————>	THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE WORLD. PRO- DUCTS. CULTURE
-----------------------------------	-------	---------	--------	--

SUBSEQUENT  
PRAXIS OF MAN

*The Dialectic of Overdetermination.* If indeed man and world are dialectically related as illustrated above, why is it necessary to focus on man's alienation? It would seem that the dialectical process is, if anything, self-regulating. Here Freire enters the notion of the dialectic of overdetermination.<sup>9</sup> My interpretation of this notion (Freire is somewhat opaque on this point) is that the "inversion of praxis" can, in some sense and at least partially, overcome the praxis of man. Such partial paralysis of man's praxis occurs through the introjection of culture (i.e., conditioning) during the inversion of praxis. Consequently, there is a need to extroject culture if conditioned man is to become a transformer once again.

*Cultural Action (Education).* The means by which man can extroject culture Freire calls "cultural action" (education). Cultural action implies human practice. It assumes man being in and with the world. Freire believes that the understanding of cultural action should itself be arrived at dialectically. Equally important for Freire, cultural action can lead to either the domestication of man or his liberation.

According to Freire, cultural action for domestication contains the following aspects. It involves the transfer of facts and information, and it leads to the adjustment of man to reality. Cultural action for domestication is anti-dialogical (involves actors and spectators without communication). It is sloganistic and while it claims neutrality, the claim is merely a cover-up for the hidden choice to perpetuate the culture of domestication. The curriculum of cultural action for domestication is developed by an educator *for* an educatee. Finally, this mode of cultural action has built into it an acceptance of the status quo.<sup>10</sup>

By contrast, cultural action for liberation involves an "authentic act of knowing."<sup>11</sup> It leads to the transformation of reality. Its method is dialogical and problematizing. Cultural action for liberation attempts to subvert the culture of domination (domestication) through a curriculum developed by the educator and the educatee. Finally, cultural action for liberation attempts to "unveil reality." It does so by demythifying and denouncing the dehumanizing structures of the status quo.

Each individual must choose between either cultural action for domestication or cultural action for liberation. For Freire the humanist, the choice is clearly on the side of liberation. Moreover, he suggests that the point of departure for cultural action for liberation is "the investigation . . . of generative themes."<sup>12</sup>

*Generative Themes.* In Freire's thinking, generative themes must be the programmatic content of education. These themes are derived from the educatee's reality. Reality here means not only the empirical and the concrete, but also reality as perceived by the educatee. The search for generative themes has at least two aspects: One is an assessment of the concrete reality; another is an assessment of the perceived reality.

For Freire, however, these two aspects are not independent of each other but are dialectically related. I interpret Freire's search for generative themes as a search for the educatee's *beliefs*. The educatee's beliefs are important because, in Freire's view, they necessarily condition his behavior. Paulo Freire uses the term "value orientations" to indicate the educatee's beliefs, or (speaking more precisely) to indicate the mental set within which the educatee's beliefs are implicit.

*A Methodology for discovering Generative Themes.* While doing work at the Agrarian Reform Training and Research Institute (ICIRA) in Chile, Freire and his co-workers developed a methodology for identifying generative themes. The research is done in two phases which added together produce a "decodification" of the educatee's "cultural totality."<sup>13</sup> As indicated previously, this "cultural totality" contains both the educatee's concrete and perceived reality. I will briefly summarize both phases of the research project.

Phase one. *The decodification of the concrete reality.* The investigating team goes into the field and each member independently tries to understand the educatee's culture as well as he can through direct observation and study. After spending time in the field, the investigating team assembles to discuss its findings. Through continuous discussion, the investigating team attempts to understand the educatee's culture, noting especially the contradictions which the investigating team feels exist in the culture under study. The investigating team returns to the field as often as is necessary to ensure that it has enough data to understand the culture of the educatees. As a result of such understanding, the investigating team can list the objective contradictions which it has discovered in the educatee's culture.

Phase two. *Integrating concrete reality with perceived reality.* The contradictions identified by the investigating team are then presented to the educatees in a codified form. Throughout the investigation the educatees have been organized in the form of a *círculo cultural* (cultural circle) which functions as a discussion group. The codified contradictions then become the material to be discussed by the cultural circle. The discussions of the cultural circle are tape recorded. These recordings then become the object of analysis for the investigating team. Freire suggests that these recordings represent, in coded form, the educatees' views of the contradictions previously discovered by the investigating team.

If the investigating team can decode the recordings of the cultural circle, the result will be the discovery of the educatee's generative themes. These themes represent the basic orientations which the educatees have toward the world. The next and last step is to present the generative themes, in codified form, to the cultural circle. These codified themes then become the programmatic content of the educatees'

curriculum. By discussing these themes, the educatees will attain a critical understanding of themselves and their social environment. Paulo Freire calls this process *conscientization*.

As a preliminary finding, Freire reported that the Chilean investigating team had tentatively isolated two themes prevailing in their particular educatees. The two themes were *work* and *theft*.<sup>14</sup> Though not considered a theme per se by Paulo Freire, he notes throughout various discussions that *fatalism* appears as a general and fundamental feature of the peasant's world view.<sup>15</sup>

*Conscientization.* Freire defines conscientization as "desenvolvimento de la toma de conciencia," literally "the uncovering of consciousness."<sup>16</sup> The prime characteristic of conscientization is that it generates a critical attitude in the educatee. This critical attitude is directed at the educatee's existential reality, with a focus on the social conditions and structures which limit his freedom and the full expression of his human potential.

However, for Freire, the importance of conscientization is that it must lead to action. The educatee with a critical attitude will not only reflect but also (and most importantly) act on the society around him. As such, he becomes a transformer of that society; his goal is to liberate himself from oppressive social conditions. Through conscientization Freire aims to transform the "passive" and "fatalistic" peasant or urban dweller into an actor-transformer. It would appear that the hallmarks of a conscientized person are his/her critical posture toward the world, the ability to make decisions autonomously, and the capability and commitment to transform the world into a more humanized place.

*History and Geography.* Freire developed his thinking within and in response to a very specific historical and geographic context. The focus of Freire's thinking is the contemporary Brazilian nation. As Freire sees it, Brazil has a long history of political, cultural, and economic oppression. This oppression can be felt on two related levels. At the national level, the Brazilian masses are oppressed by domestic ruling elites. At the international level, Brazil as a whole is oppressed by the elite super powers. Historically, Brazil has been dominated by exploitative colonialist regimes.<sup>17</sup>

Notwithstanding its tortuous history of oppression, Freire believes that Brazil is currently undergoing a process of fundamental democratization. According to Freire, this process involves an increasing activity of the people in their historical process ("... implica una creciente activación del pueblo en su proceso histórico.").<sup>18</sup> However, due to the long history of oppression, the people are not well equipped to transform their society from a closed to an open one. Hence, it is precisely for this reason that Paulo Freire accepts the challenge to develop a pedagogy of the oppressed. Such a pedagogy must take into account

both the ontological vocation of man (which is to be subject) and the peculiar conditions of Brazil's transitional society. For Freire, the pedagogy of the oppressed is an attempt to help the Brazilian people change from a closed to an open society. This is accomplished by critically placing the people in their historical process.<sup>19</sup>

### CRITICAL COMMENTS

The preceding introduction to some of Paulo Freire's thoughts is intentionally brief and schematic. It does not represent a summary, much less a synthesis, of Paulo Freire's thought.<sup>20</sup> The purpose of the preliminary discussion is to develop at least a general context within which I can place the ensuing critical observations. However, both the critical remarks which follow and the preceding descriptive section ultimately need to be viewed in the context of Freire's own works.

As a philosophy, Freire's humanistic thought sends a powerful message. It is a message most readily received by *los de abajo* (the underdogs), especially those underdogs who have become aware of their situation. For many Chicanos, Freireismo could well become the new clarion call to the promised land and to salvation.

Yet, as noted by Freire himself, a basic necessity of the man in process of liberation is critical thought. I agree with Freire on this point. Now I propose to bring that critical thought to bear on some of Freire's other ideas.

*Love.* According to Freire, when cultural action for liberation is carried out to its fullest extent, one of the new aspects of the world will be the loving nature of human relationships. Such love would presumably aid in destroying the oppressor-oppressed dichotomy of the present less-than-perfect world.

However, as a philosophical and religious concept, love can indeed make the world go round. But in the existential world to which we are all bound, war, power, greed, and hate—to name a few things at random—are also effective forces for action. And it is not merely a question of opting for love *or* hate. Either can be passed off for the other, at least if one is willing to give some credence to both Machiavelli and Freud.

In our existential world, the concept of love is extremely difficult to carry out through praxis. Man seems to be disposed to a fundamental confusion between *el amor de dios y el dios del amor* (love of God and god of love).

*Neutrality.* In Freire's thought, cultural action is either for liberation *or* for domination. Generally, Freire's thought is developed along dialectical lines. Yet in discussing neutrality Freire reduces the liberation-domination continuum into a dichotomy. As with the concept of love,

Freire's concept of neutrality seems to hearken to ancient Christian thinking: you are either with me or against me.

It is true, of course, that once one acts that action cannot be neutral, i.e., action has a real meaning of and in itself which is final. But this is an interpretation of action in the abstract. And action does not occur in the abstract. Action derives its meaning from its interactional context: the human world. In the human world action can be more-or-less oppressive or it can be more-or-less liberating.

The idealistic interpretation which Freire has of neutrality reduces the world to black and white, good and evil. The interpretation of neutrality needed by those who struggle in the real world—the political world—is that actions can be more-or-less oppressive or more-or-less liberating.

*A Theory of Learning.* In Freire's pedagogy, all men and women have the capacity to know. With some modifications, this assumption has a long and honorable tradition in Western thought. Plato believed that the soul possesses all knowledge and truth. Hence, the Platonic pedagogy consisted in drawing out from the learner that knowledge and truth which he already possessed but which in some sense he had forgotten. Plato, following his master Socrates, conceived of the dialogue as a suitable method for achieving truth and knowledge with the educatee.<sup>21</sup>

For St. Augustine, and later St. Thomas Aquinas, man also has an inherent capacity to possess knowledge and truth.<sup>22</sup> For these clerics, the validity of this assumption can be readily demonstrated. God is all knowing. God is within every man. Hence, every man has the capacity to know. Moreover, in Christian thought to know is to know God. To know God one must establish a relationship of love with Him.

Freire also believes that man has the inherent capacity to know. Unlike the pagans, Freire does not attribute this capacity to the soul. Unlike the Christians, he does not attribute this capacity to God. For Freire, man can know because he is *human*.

If man does not know, it is not because he has forgotten (as Plato suggests) or because he does not love God (as Christians believe). In Freire's thought, if some men do not know it is because other men have legislated that they cannot know.<sup>23</sup> Hence, Freire's theory of learning is eminently sociological. As a result, Freire's pedagogy is also eminently sociological.

The main technique in Freire's pedagogy is the dialogue. In dialogue man can regain his humanity. Having regained his humanity, man can then liberate himself from those who legislate his ignorance. Having liberated himself, the oppressed can also liberate the oppressors.

A basic weakness with Freire's pedagogy is that the oppressed cannot liberate themselves entirely on their own. The oppressed somehow



cannot begin to dialogue spontaneously. Nor can they autonomously overcome the "fatalism" and "submerged consciousness" which Freire ascribes to them. In dialectical terms, the oppressed have been overdetermined by the structure of domination.

It is here that Freire introduces the "coordinator."<sup>24</sup> In essence, the coordinator becomes the "giver of dialogue." The coordinator must receive special training to ensure that he does not dominate those whom he would assist in their own liberation. The coordinator appears as an intermediary between the dehumanized oppressed and their humanization. Since the coordinator cannot be one from within the group—because their consciousness has been overdetermined—the coordinator's role is taken up largely by middle class, often college trained, individuals.

*Freire and the Western Tradition.* As indicated above, Freire's thought is derived from and lies within well worn patterns of Western thought. Whether it is the Socratic dialogue, Christian love, Hegelian and Marxist dialectics, or Buberian existentialism, Freire's thought and posture is European in its orientation.

For the Chicano, this Western tradition of thought and culture is only a part of his total cultural and historical reality (not to mention biology). As active and critical Chicanos, we are looking not only toward our European heritage, but also—and perhaps especially—toward our indigenous heritage and legacy. The real alternative to that which has been imposed may be that which has been repressed within us. And what has been repressed most ravenously is our *indigenismo*.

The desire to examine critically our indigenous elements does not stem from a secret wish to live in the past, nor does it constitute an attempt to revive and re-establish that past. We only wish to know and examine what we possess as our legitimate heritage.<sup>25</sup>

To the extent that Freire's thought ignores our indigenous reality, to that extent will those who accept Freire's thinking be alienated from themselves.

*Return to the Cactus.* Freire's search for generative themes basically involves an anthropological and sociological search for the "value orientations" of the oppressed. A conclusion which he has drawn from this search is that the oppressed are possessed by a fundamental sense of "fatalism" toward the world and toward themselves.

This conclusion is alarmingly close to the conclusions drawn by Gabacho social scientists who have written about the "value orientations" of the Chicano. As a result of their conclusions, Gabachos have advocated that the Chicano be given positive role models. Freire has concluded that the oppressed must save themselves through dialogue. Herein lies a basic difference between Freire and the Gabacho social scientists. On the other hand, both the role model approach of

Gabachos and the conscientization technique of Freire require intervention from outsiders. The Gabacho would intervene with the middle class values of Americana; Freire's pedagogy is initiated through coordinators—most of whom inevitably come from the middle class or are in process of assimilating into the middle class. In either case, the oppressed are assumed incapable of generating their own liberation.<sup>26</sup>

*Oppressor: Liberate Thyself.* The above conclusion is hidden within the Freirian pedagogy. Ironically, Freire himself draws the opposite conclusion: the oppressor cannot liberate himself; he can be liberated only by the oppressed as they liberate themselves. In Freire's thinking, the oppressed carry not only the weight of oppression, but the weight of the oppressor as well. The extirpation of the oppressor requires no less than gaining for him his liberation. In this posture, the oppressor ends up by having his hands washed for him. And the oppressed end up by saying: Forgive them, for they know not what they do.

### IN SEARCH OF A CHICANO PEDAGOGY: EN BUSCA DE UNA PEDAGOGIA CHICANA

*Llevando Chispas al Fuego—Taking Coals to Newcastle.* While Freire seems to have found a pedagogy of the oppressed, we are still searching for a pedagogy of the Chicano. As Chicanos engaged in that search, we need to be wary of importing outside formulas merely because they have new and catchy phrases. It is important for us to utilize our own resources as we begin to construct our unique theories and philosophies.

Part of Freire's appeal seems to develop from the way in which he coins new labels for old situations. He also uses old labels in novel ways. Freire speaks of conscientization, dialogue, praxis, cultural action, love, liberation, and oppression. He decries "banking education" and promotes the de-sacralization of schools. Freire speaks of limit-situations, problematizing, and generative themes. He becomes obscure with ideas like the *inédito viable*—the untested feasibility. What is the meaning behind this language?

For the Chicano who reads *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and then runs out to the barrio to conscientize *la gente*, there may be disillusionment lurking behind this new verbiage. Have we not already been hard at work conscientizing the Chicano? We, of course, have not called it conscientization. We could call it—and we do call it—*Chicanización*: Chicanoization. Have we not, and are we not now, engaging in praxis? We call it *el movimiento*. Have we not felt our brotherhood and love? We call it *carnalismo*. And if our struggle has not been and is not now for liberation, what has it been for?

Trading *Chicanización* for conscientization, *el movimiento* for prax-

is, or *carnalismo* for love and dialogue is not going to contribute very much to the Chicano's struggle for survival. The shiny new formulas may give us the illusion that we have at last found the way. But in reality we will only be alienating ourselves from our authentic experience and circumstances. We will have launched ourselves in a new search for utopia.

*The Dangerous Other.* Freire's pedagogy is utopian. As such, it ignores what José Ortega y Gasset calls "the dangerous other."<sup>27</sup> That dangerous other is nothing more than you to me and me to you, and us to everybody else—and everybody else to us. It is fine to posit a world where love and dialogue prevail. But our daily actions occur in a very real world where love and dialogue are quite scarce.

It is not a matter of being for or against love and dialogue. It is a matter of surviving in an inhospitable world controlled by real and inhospitable majoritarian forces. It is a matter of learning to deal politically in a politicized world.

*Doble Mestizaje.* A Chicano pedagogy must take into account the Chicano's *doble mestizaje* (double mestizaje), or what I prefer to call *Chicanizaje*. Our bilingualism and biculturalism is only one aspect of this *Chicanizaje*. Our *indigenismo* is an equally important aspect. Philosophically and practically we as Chicanos have not yet come to total terms with either our mestizaje or our *Chicanizaje*. Through *el movimiento*, however, we are continuously gaining new insights into our very nature. A Chicano pedagogy might well consist in devising a methodology for understanding the various dimensions of *Chicanizaje*.

*A Proposal.* Given the needs of the Chicano, and the power and resources which are at his disposal, the most radical Chicano pedagogy which I can conceive of involves two steps. First, every man and woman who has at least a high school diploma should return to his own family to instruct those who do not know how to speak, read, or write English well. Since it is most difficult to instruct those most near and dear to one, an alternative procedure is to tutor your neighbor.

Secondly, those who are teaching English in turn will become the students of those whom they are teaching. From the latter they will learn the Chicano language, culture, and traditions of their parents.

I have used language as an example of an area where mutual teaching can occur. But the number of skills and areas of knowledge that can be exchanged is as great as the number of Chicanos that can be brought together in different combinations.

Imagine, for example, teaching basic math in exchange for learning to cure with herbs and folk medicines.<sup>28</sup> Imagine teaching how to fill out an income tax form in exchange for learning how to cultivate a garden *como lo hacen los viejitos*. Imagine teaching a monolingual how to obtain a driver's license in exchange for listening to some *cuentos*—

and recording them for someone else to enjoy. Imagine an explosion of teaching and learning between millions of Chicanos so that someday, somehow, we may be able to wed technology to tradition and thus achieve a mutualistic synthesis. If you can imagine that, then you may have a glimpse of what Chicanizaje is all about.

While this process of mutual teaching may or may not take place, and I suspect that elements of it are transpiring today, it serves to illustrate the concept of Chicanizaje, in its pedagogical manifestations, as a mutualistic system of instruction as opposed to Freire's sacerdotal coordinators who become the self-appointed givers of dialogue to the silent and oppressed masses.

#### NOTES

1. Paulo Freire, "Alfabetización de adultos y 'concientización'" *Mensaje*, No. 142 (September, 1965), p. 495.

2. Paulo Freire, "Adult Education as Cultural Action," Manuscript with no place of origin indicated, Fall, 1969, p. 9 of "Part One-Continuation." (Parts of this essay are included in Paulo Freire, "Cultural Action: A Dialectical Analysis," CIDOC, Cuaderno No. 1004, Cuernavaca, Mex., 1970.)

3. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

4. *Ibid.*, Part One, p. 1.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

6. *Ibid.*, Part Two, p. 2.

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 4-6.

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

13. In my estimation, these ideas are most adequately discussed in Paulo Freire, *Annual Report, Agrarian Reform Training and Research Institute (ICIRA), Activities for 1968*, Santiago, 1969. (Translation of part of this work can be found in John DeWitt, "An Exposition and Analysis of Paulo Freire's Radical Psycho-Social Andragogy of Development," unpublished Ed.D. Dissertation, Boston University, 1971.) See also Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Chapter Three.

14. *Ibid.*

15. *Ibid.* See also Paulo Freire, "Acción cultural liberadora," *Víspera*, No. 10 (May, 1969), pp. 23-28.

16. *Op. cit.*, "Alfabetización de adultos y 'concientización'," p. 495.

17. See Paulo Freire, "Cultural Action: A Dialectical Analysis," CIDOC, Cuaderno No. 1004, Cuernavaca, Mexico, 1970.

18. *Op. cit.*, "Alfabetización de adultos y 'concientización'," p. 495.

19. *Ibid.*

20. A number of writers (whose number increases daily) have attempted to interpret and analyze Paulo Freire's writings. See, for example, the work of John DeWitt cited in note 13 above. For an anthology containing various perspectives see

Stanley M. Grabowsri (ed.), *Paulo Freire: A Revolutionary Dilemma for the Adult Educator*, Occasional Papers No. 32, Syracuse University, 1972.

21. J. J. Chambliss, "The Guardian: Plato," in Paul Nash, Andreas M. Kazamias, and Henry J. Perkinson (eds.), *The Educated Man: Studies in the History of Educational Thought*, New York, 1965, Chap. 1.

22. See Pearl Kibre, "The Christian: Augustine," and John W. Donohue, S. J., "The Scholastic: Aquinas," in Nash, Kazamias, and Perkinson, *supra*, Chapters Four and Five, respectively.

23. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, New York, Herder and Herder, 1971, pp. 128-129.

24. *Op. cit.*, *Annual Report, Agrarian Reform Training and Research Institute (ICIRA)*. See also above *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Chapter Three, on the role of the investigator in searching for "generative themes."

25. Part of the enthusiasm for our indigenous culture is exemplified by the current popularity of lecturers such as Andrés Segura. See Andrés Segura, "Continuidad de la tradición filosófica Nahuatl en las danzas de Concheros," *El Cuaderno*, III, No. 1 (Winter, 1973), pp. 16-33.

26. Some critics have charged that this aspect of Freire's pedagogy contains an element of hidden elitism. See Manfred Stanley, "Literacy: The Crisis of a Conventional Wisdom," in Stanley M. Grabowsri (ed.), *supra*, pp. 36-54.

27. José Ortega y Gasset, *Man and People*, New York, W. W. Norton, 1957, Chap. 7.

28. A contemporary Chicano anthropologist, Dr. Octavio I. Romano-V., has informed me that the training period of an accomplished curandero can last up to twenty years or more.

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