https://doi.org/10.20378/irbo-51967

The Presence of Native Americans in Chicano Literature

Heiner Bus

In his *Chicano Manifesto*, one of the most comprehensive texts of the Movement, Armando B. Rendón states: "Not only . . . do the brown men and the red men have common bonds to the land and in blood from ages past, we have the common experience of the white man's deception and brutality whenever land, money, and cultural supremacy are at stake."[1] Rendon's call for a united effort of the two groups is founded on the ideas of the Chicano heritage as "a Spanish-Mexican Indian confluence of civilization" (70). Although this definition has become a commonplace, the profound exploration of the individual components has yet to come: "We have hardly begun to investigate the fathomless inheritance that is ours from our Indian forbears, the Nahuas, the Toltecs, the Aztecs, and the North American Indians" (280). Readers of Chicano literature are familiar with Alurista's *indigenismo*, "drawing from the Mexican indigenous heritage and the actual realities of barrio living in the United States."[2] They are also acquainted with the efforts of critics and anthologists to provide a wider context for Chicano literature.[3] Besides Alurista, the novelist and short story writer Miguel Méndez M. particularly stresses the Indian aspect: "As a characteristic that binds our literature, one could well cite the acknowledgement and full acceptance given in it to the Indian, in the glorification of his past as well as in the pride taken in inheriting his color."[4]

In his prose Méndez is preoccupied with the Indio, the Meso-American roots of his *Peregrinos de Aztlán*. A tendency to concentrate on this segment and to neglect the Native Americans is quite obvious, although lately a shift of emphasis can be noticed. Ricardo Sánchez strongly contradicted Alurista's 'indigenismo' which he called "pollyana indianness," "pyramided jive and distortion" and accused him and others of unrealism: "No, there are no pyramids nor fancy ideas at the Navajo nation, just as our barrios are not beautiful and edifying."[5] This line of argument includes a rather restrictive temporal and regional perspective which Alurista certainly could not accept.

The great variety of the Chicano experience prohibits such a prescriptive view. We have to acknowledge the different degrees of intensity in the exchange between the two groups. And it is legitimate to approach the present with the help of the myth which, at a first glance, appears to blur and romanticize harsh realities. In his introduction to the Alurista inter-

view, Juan Bruce-Novoa discovers a new reconciliation of the past and present, the 'exotic' and the close-at-hand:

> Although in the earliest poems the indigenous presence was mainly Nahuatl-Mayan—a fact decried by his detractors for its supposed irrelevance to Chicano reality—he later evolved toward a Third World emphasis on one hand, and the inclusion of indigenous peoples more geographically related to the U.S. Southwest on the other. (265)

This part of Aztlán contributes to the theme a long, uninterrupted history of co-existence quite different from the barrio situation. Therefore, writers setting their works, for example, in rural New Mexico are much more stimulated to design recent and apparent scenes of interrelationship.

The immediate presence of the Indian urged many writers and political activists to reflect quite extensively upon the common history. In his fight to reclaim the old Spanish-Mexican land grants, Reies López Tijerina affirmed the bonds by separating historical fictions from truth: "We have not robbed the Indian, as some accuse us, nor do we seek harm for the Indian. The Indian is our brother, and that same law of the Indies commands us to live as brothers with the Indians."[6] And in another statement Tijerina described his ties to the land: "The Indian was our mother. The Spaniard was our father, yes, but the Indian was our true mother. Our father, the Spaniard, left us. We decided to stay with our mother, the Indian, here in New Mexico. This was our country. The land was our birthplace. We were a New Breed."[7] Such ideas are supported by Rudolfo A. Anaya who characterized New Mexico as the meeting place of the individual and the communal traditions.[8] This special quality of the place has been equally accepted by the Chicano and the Indian: "In a real sense, the mythologies of the Americas are the only mythologies of all of us, whether we are newly arrived or whether we have been here for centuries. The land and the people force this mythology on us. I gladly accept it; many or most of the American newcomers have resisted it."[9] Their common history, political demands, and the overlap of their systems of values have moved Chicanos and Indians to unified actions on various practical levels, for example, the Poor People's Campaign of 1968, the founding of D-Q University at Sacramento in 1971, or the commemoration of the 1680 Pueblo Revolt documented in Rudolfo A. Anaya and Simon J. Ortiz eds., *A Ceremony of Brotherhood, 1680-1980.*[10]

As we have already noticed, a number of Chicano writers have paid homage to their Native American heritage, still it is not easy to define the visible results of such confessions in their literary products and to relate them to the achievements of recent Native American literature.[11] It is significant that in his *Chicano Writers* Juan Bruce-Novoa asked his partners: "Does Chicano literature share common ground with Black literature? Differences?" but did not inquire about their affinities to Native American

literature, although some of the writers laid down their opinions in another context.

Of all authors interviewed Alurista related his poetry most closely to his Indian background:

> Poetry is the traditional means of philosophical, theological, and scientific expression in the Indian world. The Indians wrote in poetry, not because they did not write prose, but simply because they thought that poetry was more realistic, more dialectic, more dynamic . . . in poetry we find reality depicted in its dynamic sense. Everything moves, changes in the world. Everything is experiencing constant transformation. Nothing is static. We are constantly dying and constantly being reborn. This applies to our material world, our psychological world as well as our spiritual world . . . That is the beauty of poetry. The continuum, the process is what is important in poetry. It gives us a glimpse of what reality is all about. Reality in motion. (274-5)

In answering the next question Alurista continued to specify the necessity of re-constructing the Chicano self in his poetry, mainly by revitalizing Indian world views: "We do believe that part of our responsibility, as creators, is to humanize, and this is to live in harmony with all other beings who are our brothers. Human beings are not superior to plants. Human beings are not superior to animals" (278). Thematic choices are involved when Alurista agrees with the Indian concept of "the mythological time-space that unifies the personal and historical time-space" (279). The poet goes beyond perspective, theme and world view by referring to the responsibilities of the creator in and for society. This notion comes very close to the role of the writer in the Indian storytelling tradition. In his article "An Overview of Chicano Letters: From Origins to Resurgence," Francisco Lomelí comments on this common ground: "This style of transmission is particularly appropriate to our Hispanic heritage as well as to our Indian background, both rich sources of oral tradition whose literatures sometimes depended on it almost totally."[12] The critic Vernon E. Lattin confirms this background information in his analysis of novels from both literatures:

> Moreover, in Anaya and Momaday, the novels themselves are also forms of rediscovery, attempts to return to the sacred art of storytelling and myth-making that is part of Indian oral tradition. They are attempts to push the secular mode of modern fiction into the sacred mode, a faith and recognition in the power of the world."[13]

In the following paragraphs I want to discuss five selected Chicano literary texts published between 1976 and 1984 to find out how and in

which context Chicanos depict Native Americans. I shall proceed chronologically to avoid general classifications obscuring the individual approach.

Rudolfo Anaya has indeed applied some of the techniques of oral storytelling in his novel *Heart of Aztlan*, for example, the legends and myths he intersperses, the open ends, and the loose episodic structure. The Chicano and Indian qualities of the book are highly visible in the character of Crispín, the old blind seer who plays a crucial role in Clemente's search for identity in an urban environment. He evidently represents the agrarian, land-based component in the hero which has to be strengthened to help him cope with the challenges of the barrio in general and the demands of his social group for leadership in particular. Crispín spiritually connects him with the mythology of the land: "The earth was the new covenant between the people and their gods," and "The mystery of his melody and the magic of his words carried them out of their present time and misery to a time of legends and myths, and in that time he made them encounter the truth of their being."[14] As the Indian and Chicano mythologies are interchangeable, the revitalization of the collective memory of the Chicano with the help of the blind Indian seer can produce the lifting power for the problems dragging down the individual in the modern barrio and factory world.[15]

In his story "The Retribution," Nash Candelaria ironically explains the common New Mexican roots of the two ethnic groups. Through his mode of presentation he also very well illustrates a storytelling technique. The scene is set in 1846: The 'Irishman' Miguel and Tercero of the Rafa clan are sorting out pieces of the family history that they have learned from Grandfather Rafa. When Tercero finds out that Miguel was only informed about the Spanish component of the past, he eagerly fills in the Indian aspect: "So. He did not tell you about his Navajo grandmother. My great-great grandmother. Well, let me tell you, because somehow this is as much the story of the Rio Grande as conquistadors, land grants, and ricos."[16] The Indian connection was established with the acquisition of the Los Rafas land grant by José Antonio I. who had to keep the Navajo warrior Ojo Torcido, Twisted Eye, off his new possessions. Despite its fierceness the fight reveals some surprising facts and attitudes:

> Ojo Torcido could speak Spanish. There were rumors that his mother had been a Spanish settler who had been kidnapped in one of those many raids in which the Navajos captured slaves and wives. Whatever truth to the rumor, Ojo Torcido spared many a life that another might not have. His captives were sheep rather than settlers. His tribe was said to own the largest flocks in New Mexico. Larger by far than the richest Don in the Rio Grande Valley. (181-2)

Both emotionally and materially the Indian is recognized as an equal

opponent. Such a remarkable enemy makes it difficult for Don José to achieve retribution. His strategy takes advantage of a custom of the land, the capturing and trading of slaves with its traditional consequences, the mixture of bloodlines.

During the annual fall gathering at Taos, Don José discovers that the Indian chief's daughter is to be sold as a captive. He can purchase her before her father is able to make "his move towards negotation. The general bargaining had not yet begun" (185). The buyer's procedure and motives are described as personal and representative features:

> Don José moved quickly, with the kind of heedlessness that had enabled the Spanish to conquer Mexico and push northward to settle the Southwest. There was still enough vitality in the blood to act out old assertiveness on those rare occasions when one thought of pleasures more immediate than 'mañana' . . . he had no son to carry on the family name . . . It was a curse that he bore in the same way that he suffered sheep stealing by the Navajo chief. Having the daughter of his tormentor as a slave somewhat avenged the loss of sheep, but there was no remedy for his lack of a son. His wife was getting older and tired after bearing nine children of which only the girls survived. (185)

Heedlessness and assertiveness, which the Spanish settlers no longer have to demonstrate in their daily lives, are now employed for the individual macho satisfaction of pleasures, revenge, and the preservation of the male blood line. Two curses are supposed to be lifted; the deadly lust for revenge is combined with a vital desire.

The new household situation is quickly comprehended by Doña María Rafa: "The señora had a grim sense of humor, for she named the slave girl Concepción. Then she watched her like a hawk" (185). The human entanglements are retold in a rather ironic style as the thin crust of civilized manners and moral superstructures are easily broken by self-persuasion. Then the savage human drives are lived out:

> The conception was anything but immaculate. Don José had his way with Concepción as was his pleasure. Partly it was for revenge. There was no question that it was for lust. Perhaps too Don José hoped for that son that he did not have. And, at some level even he did not understand, he might have intuited that any son of his who was a grandson of Ojo Torcido would be a force to be reckoned with. (187)

Don José's behavior and motives indicate that both Spaniard and Indian obey the laws set by the land and its people. The Christian who never tires in pointing out the heathenish nature of the Navajos is reduced to basic emotions and rituals. Tercero, the storyteller, does not condemn Don José; rather, he assumes an ironic point of view by contrasting the spanish

reality with its myths. The introduction of Indian blood into his family works miracles as Doña María becomes pregnant to avenge Don José escapade, thus following his pattern of intended punishment and achieved live-giving reality. In this way, she takes the initiative again and actively contributes to the final paradox of the story of retribution.[17] In the end Don José is the proud possessor of two male heirs, one with Irish and the other with Indian blood. But he has lost his wife, his Indian mistress, his favorite horse, his macho stature; later he will even abandon the land grant. The new vitality in his family is gained by the blood mixture and is paid for by his social fall: "Ultimately all things are reconciled in the blood. Since we are all God's children, it is inevitable. Especially here on the Rio Grande (. . .) the family cursed the day he had ever seen Concepción. 'Retribution!' they said. 'We would have been ricos if it had not been for that Indian!'"[18]

The intended revenge tragedy has turned into a tragicomedy. Don José's contacts with the Indians have changed his system of values: preserving life has become more important than securing his material possessions. The spirit of retribution has created a practical model of co-existence of various ethnic backgrounds within one family. The story gains the level of allegory when we think of the Indian, the Spanish and the Anglo elements as constituting the multi-racial character of the Southwest and its long history of retributions.

It is notable that in the end the concept of storytelling is acknowledged as a permanent process of re-interpreting the past, confirming the idea of the Southwest as a multi-cultural region which can only be grasped by interconnecting the past, present and future in the activity of the storyteller. Cultural techniques and the blood guarantee the immediacy of the Indian heritage in this specific environment. This explains why from the beginning Ojo Torcido has been treated as an equal to Don José who initially struggled against this reality of mutual give-and-take.

In his poem "From the North Time, to the South Today,"[19] Sergio Elizondo skillfully incorporates the historical and present day experiences of three ethnic groups in an account of the growth of private values and attitudes. A central event from the Native American past serves as his starting point; the second and third parts link the present situation of the Indians with that of the Blacks and Chicanos through parallel, contradiction, reduction and derivation.

The first line, "Wounded Knee Dakota South," abruptly evokes the place marking and symbolizing the final defeat of the Indians. The inversion "Dakota South" breaks up the familiar syntax and calls back the local dichotomy of the title of the poem, thus combining Wounded Knee with the arguments of the 'we' and 'I' of the conclusion. It is remarkable that in the following lines Elizondo does not directly confront the reader with the massacre but rather depicts a situation of anticipation constituted

by two elements, the restlessness of the Indian horses and the feeling of futility among the "old men." Animated nature seems unconcerned with the forebodings of men and animals;[20] it even furnishes a romantic, two-dimensional frame to the scene of coming despair and tragedy:

White view with dream of
white birches on the sides
ahead blue waters which
come down from wet hills.

The images of serenity and fertility foreshadow the final statement of the poem where liberty and love as healing power for the wounds of the past are symbolized by a "blossom on the tallest rosebush in my garden." On the one hand, the autonomy of nature underlines the grossness of the historic incident; on the other, it vaguely hints at the fundamental creative forces which the unsentimental observer discerns in the reconstruction of a crucial event from the experience of another minority group to establish a sound basis for his argument.

In the second stanza this observer clearly discloses his Chicano identity when he uses the derogatory "Merkins" (Americans)[21] and a typical scene from the collective memory to extend the historical foundation of modern sentiments and strategies of survival. By locating his new facts "100 years later" than Wounded Knee, the poet keeps them pending between the poles of the centennial of Mexican defeat and 1990, thus focusing on the recent past, the present, the near future.

The Indians' desperate resistance against the temptations and confusing classifications of 'first class' culture to preserve their identity by narcoticizing themselves—"Indians in reservations drink red mountain wine to tan the personality which wants to get out of 'second class' culture"—is mirrored in the "Chicanos of East L.A." who "drop pills to change the reality of the Merkin." The poet evaluates the activities and self-appreciation of his own ethnic group by adding "theirs is fine, is OK, they say." Although Chicanos, in contrast to the Indians, have advanced to more active and clever methods of struggle, the ground they stand on is still shaky, largely a matter of pretense as the final modification, "they say," indicates.

The whole second stanza describes and analyzes strategies of defense, both of the minorty and the majority. "Merkins . . . attack" and "take by force" but they also show fear. This instability is well expressed in the lines:

attack with slave horses
taken by force from corral
never on foot,
fear under Texas

hats-
more truth in the eyes
half out of the sockets.

Their warfare thus reveals itself as yet another strategy of defense.

The complicated structure of the present is characterized by "Images deranged / to confuse- / is defense against dumb ethic." The mutual destruction of prejudice prepares the way for new values as indicated by the concluding "commiseration in action." The truth behind this rather hopeful outlook is a trust in the fact that basic human emotions and cultural background symbolized by the color of the skin are "impossible to change" by "Merkins without class." In this section of the poem once again simple natural agents like the moon and the sun disclose the prevailing values.

The second stanza sees Indians and Chicanos on the same level of emancipation. Only the poet's recognition of mixed emotions in the "Memory of Merkins from afar," that is, in the collective memory of his group, makes available a method of ending the game of hide-and-seek in progress. Elizondo qualifies the superior heritage of "Brother copper tones" as a melting process caused by the moon and the sun which obliges the group to clear the way for new approaches. This duty includes modesty and pride as it deeply respects the state of mind of other minorities and refrains from any act of usurpation. The narrator rejects the role of a spokesman outside his domain, although physical defeat and some remaining energy to fight the total loss of identity unify Indians and Chicanos. This outlook retrospectively confirms the detached perspective of the first lines of the poem where commiseration could not be derived from Indian history.

At the beginning of the last stanza the fundamental differences between minorities and the majority are stated in very general terms:

Another rhythm,
outside inside
colored
form and time.

Here the poet retreats to the generalities of the beginning of the second stanza. "Impossible to change skin by force." Later this will be specified for "Indians, Blacks and Chicanos" who "Live simple strong sincere, feet on the ground." The three groups also share the characteristics of keeping "eyes closed / the mind closed / so the Merkins' disease / won't enter / heart in bloom." Against the American "dumb ethic" and the "Flames of greed,"[22] the poet establishes a land ethic manifesting itself in contrastive food images like "petals of food for brothers" versus "scorn for fat pigs," and "They parsley garnish" versus "we basic purslane." It is not through the 1962 Black celebrations of revenge that the earth is redeemed "but for

our things you know; never mind." In his final command the poet hoists the flag of love represented by a rose as a simple, creative and effective symbol of liberty regained to ask colors, water, air and deer to return to a reformed world.[23]

Although in the third part "Indians, Blacks and Chicanos" are called upon to save their own values, the conclusive gesture remains the individual act of a poet in command with a distinctive Chicano voice celebrating his personal power of transcending his memory of past and present oppressions. Obviously the rose symbol can hardly be applied to an Indian background, although the context of the land ethic would suggest this. The poem builds up a series of nature images—water, trees, moon, sun, petals, air, deer—which culminates in the rose blossom, thus indirectly linking up various collective experiences with the process of the individual growth of knowledge. The recognition of a common bond of basic emotions and the conditioning of man by brutalizing circumstances is necessary to formulate the positive message. And in this ethnic triad the Indian experience plays a crucial role as it demonstrates the imminent threat of drowning in the dominant culture. This situation triggers the spirit of resistance and encourages the retrieval of common values. Wounded Knee gets the poet on the way to identifying with his own past and makes him search for people who have traveled parts of the same road. Wounded Knee is the overwhelming symbol of injustice, of mankind gone astray which provokes the creative effort of moral reform, of a new beginning, in the last stanza. Elizondo's personal statement sets an example for the reconciliation of past and present. In this respect it is a didactic poem teaching commiseration and respect.

Alurista's poem "teach not"[24] argues against the fatal combination of didacticism and exploitation, the main stream culture's lack of respect for the Indian world. He proposes the following list of offenses for "you / who did not listen": "teach not / our words and stain them / . . . / suck not its light / . . . / cut not our bodies / . . . / sell not / the wind of warriors breath / . . . / sing not our songs." The addressee is further identified as someone living in darkness, and characterized, of course, by his historical and present day attitudes towards the Indian. As a member of the mainstream society, he does not possess any authority whatsoever to approach the minority; even an intended benevolent gesture is exploitative and thus not welcome.[25] It is quite logical that this radical advocate of indigenous rights excludes his opponents from sharing in a revolutionary concept of humanity springing from the history of suffering and the liberation of the people through the revitalization of tribal traditions:

winged our heart does soar
sin más caras that mummify
while drummers drum the drum
and singers sing the song

a world is overturned
and new manwoman blossom

The poem celebrates the self-contained world of the Indian which cannot be understood by the outsider who necessarily carries his burden of the sins of the past.

In the immediately succeeding poem "i" (47), Alurista takes up the Indian theme again, this time, as the title indicates, in a more subjective manner. In the very first lines a tone of resignation, of mistrust in the effectiveness of Indian mythology is set: "I am tired of chasing coyote with a prayer stick." This confession is confirmed with the following lines when Coyote's profound connection with the natural and human worlds is challenged. He who stands for energy, perpetual motion, for survival and the full range of human potentials[26] is now reduced to normal human dimensions, to someone who deplores his "knowledge lost." One of the most striking signs for his fall is his failure to cope with the white invaders of Indian reservation land: "he not know the beasts / that trespass paper land." In the middle of the poem the 'I' actually ponders on the idea of killing Coyote: ". . . one could . . . / does in deed ask to / kill? kill? / coyote? wolf?" The solution to this dilemma is not brought about by an activity of the disillusioned 'I' but by the Land itself. Alurista undermines the negative context with positive images like "continent / unbound" and "in deer longing/ ocean sands / to sink its hoofs / gently . . ." From these images the final invocatory scene emerges. The essentials of the animal gesture are transferred to the water as the life-giving substance by the technique of syntactic ambiguity:

to sink its hoofs
gently to bring
the humbleness of water
on, to high mesa corn fields
far, to the land chanting
kachina, kachina!
let life blossom

The Land which comprises man as one component among many others appeals to its own spirits to secure the survival of its creatures. The Coyote figure proves an ineffectual mediator; it apparently prevented the 'I' from total surrender to the cycles of nature.

Comparing this poem with the first one, we can see that both texts argue against the self's tendency to conquer the earth and the universe, to establish the individual as usurper or even creator in his own right. They plea for a system of values in which the harmony of many components of equal status is the ruling principle.

The same reverence for the land and admiration for those who are

used to interpreting and respecting its laws pervades the introductory poem "Bribe" of Pat Mora's *Chants*.[27] It contains an Indian woman's chant, an invocation of the land, of Mother Earth to furnish them with the creative energies needed for rug weaving:

> Guide my hands, Mother,
> to weave singing birds
> flowers rocking in the wind, to trap
> them on my cloth with a web of thin threads.

The bribery is presented as a religious ceremony, "chanting . . . kneeling, digging, burying," an act of gentle persuasion in whose course "turquoise threads" are returned to the original provider of this gift. The rug weaving itself is split up into two phases, the re-creation of the beauties of nature and the eventual imprisonment of birds and flowers which deprives them of their external manifestations of vitality. This means that the artists do not solely imitate but take away the consent of nature gained by the bribe of handing back another part of her.

This typical Indian concept of man's activities offers the Chicana a strategy to achieve her own ends. But unlike the Indian women, she buries her writer's tools, "a ballpoint pen and lined yellowing paper."[28] And she closes with her waiting for the magic to work: "Like the Indians / I ask the Land to smile on me, to croon / softly, to help me catch her music with words."

This borrowed strategy includes a re-interpretation of the function of the artist. By giving away the tools of her trade and reducing herself to the unpretentious and largely passive role of listener and recorder, she places the source of her creativity outside her own person. She comes very close to the idea of oral literature in which the individual artist loses his central importance. The emphasis shifts to a delicate equilibrium between the speaker and the listeners, the particular shape of the message and the whole legacy of the tribe. In contrast to the rug weavers, the poet does not intend to remove parts of nature, she just wants to "catch her music with words," to transpose something from one medium into another. Her sacrifice is as valuable as the Indian women's, for she trades in the 'first class' concept of the poet.

Nonetheless, the tone of the poem, determined after all by the curiosity of the poet and the term bribe with its connotative meanings of trickery and even deceit, hints at the eventual futility of her efforts. Although with the Chicana we observe the same closeness to the Land, her act remains but the imitation of a ritual. Her sacrifice is not totally sustained by the personal experience of man and nature moving in harmonious, complete life cycles. She is not able to support her gesture with a traditional chant.[29] As we learned from Alurista, the barriers between individual cultures cannot or should not be easily surmounted. And finally, the 'first class'

poetology has a ring of artificiality[30] in contrast to the naturalness of the scene remembered. So the Chicana cautiously tries a slightly uneven deal.

The poem obviously praises and envies the effectiveness of an Indian ceremony unattainable for the outsider. Nevertheless, we should not forget to note that the Indian ritual is set in the past. It is presented as a memory, part of a forgotten world which should be respected but not usurped beyond the confines of the ethnic group.

In conclusion, we note that the Native American theme is relatively rare in Chicano literature. A young ethnic literature tends to concentrate on its own native and urgent problems. As we have remarked in our introduction, the attachment of the Chicano to the Native American can be seen quite differently, depending on the self-definition of the various Chicano groups. The reservedness of the writers can also be explained by the deep respect they hold for the vital goods of another ethnic minority. The long tradition of the distortion of the image of the Indian and the Chicano in American mainstream literature seems to serve as a warning.

But whenever Chicano writers contribute to this subject, their engagement is quite intensive and manifold. Their treatment is related to the individual choice of subject and their point of view. Nash Candelaria dealt with the common roots of the Chicanos and the Native Americans dating back to the period of Spanish colonization. Their contacts eventually resulted in a mutual enrichment securing the continuity of life and the leveling of seemingly irreconcilable differences. As Rudolfo A. Anaya shared this concept of common origins, the old Indian myths were transferable into the modern Chicano world of his novel *Heart of Aztlan*. They were essential for the individual's search for identity. Only his firm embodiment in the history of the group enabled him to participate in a useful social role. Alurista was not so much interested in the social function of the individual but rather in the values of the Native Americans which he wanted to have protected against the oppressor's subtle methods of a new colonialism. In his confessional poem 'i' he insisted on man's submission to the laws of the Land, an attitude which made all human constructs obsolete. The preservation of native wisdom guaranteed the rebirth of mankind.

Pat Mora and Sergio Elizondo looked at the Native American heritage from a more detached and 'less historical' perspective. Pat Mora expressed her admiration for those who had understood and humbly accepted the teachings of Mother Earth. She eagerly longed for identification with the Indian ritual and even sacrificed her own concept of creativity. Elizondo did not make any attempts at identification but used the Native American experience as a means to find new values to build a new world liberated from the oppressions of the past. The poet acknowledged the correspondences between the groups but respected each property as singular and basically non transferable. From his survey of history and the command to bring love into this destructive world, Elizondo derives con-

clusions and formulates them in a public message through a poetic medium. In this respect, Elizondo's poem was much more inclusive than, for example, Alurista's.

Elizondo's attitude avoided the pitfalls of romanticizing the Native Americans. It clearly drew a realistic line between the two groups. In her sociological study *The Spanish-Americans of New Mexico*, Nancie L. González conceded: "Even though the two groups borrowed freely from each other's cultural inventory in the early days of Spanish conquest and, therefore, share a number of culture traits and complexes today, the differences are considerable."[31] And later she says: "there appears to be little love lost between them."[32] In his interview in *Chicano Authors*, José Montoya already pointed at misunderstandings:

> In my poetry I didn't reject the union with the Native American, I just felt that it wouldn't happen, that the two worlds were very separate. In the last few years I've come to realize that two things are necessary, and they're beginning to happen: one, we as Chicanos must assume the responsibility of our Indianness; two, the Indian must accept our Mexicanness and what it means. That's the next, most important phenomenon in the Movement. New Mexico has had the answer for a long time—communal existence adopted long ago; Indios and Mexicanos joining forces to kick ass; *compadrazco* between the two. It's the next major crisis in our development.[33]

Judging from the analysed texts, one of the most positive results of this mutual awareness and recognition will be a re-interpretation of man in nature and of the rank of the individual in the group. This will also concern the writer himself whose status has to distinguish itself from that in mainstream literature. To this process the rich Hispanic and Indian heritage of oral literature will contribute considerably. This may also undermine the traditional dichotomy between form and content. The treatment of the Native Americans in Chicano literature promises that it will not repeat some of the mistakes of much of American mainstream literature. The deep respect for Native American culture as part of the common history or as a remarkable independent achievement should prevent Chicano writers from usurpation and romanticism.

[1]Armando B. Rendón, *Chicano Manifesto* (New York: Macmillan, 1971), 80.
[2]Juan Bruce-Novoa, *Chicano Authors. Inquiry by Interview* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980), 265.
[3]Cf. e.g., Antonio Castañeda Shular, Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, Joseph Sommers, eds., *Literatura Chicana. Texto y Contexto* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972) which includes texts by "lo mexicano," "lo puertorriqueño," and "lo hispanoamericano."
[4]In Bruce-Novoa, 90.

[5]Ibid., 233.
[6]"From Prison: Reies López Tijerina," in Ed Ludwig and James Santibáñez, eds. *The Chicanos. Mexican American Voices* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1971), 215-222.
[7]Stan Steiner. *La Raza. The Mexican Americans* (New York: Harper, 1970), 86.
[8]Cf. David Johnson and David Apodaca, "Myth and the Writer: A Conversation with Rudolfo Anaya," *New America*, 3:3 (1979), 76-85.
[9]In Bruce-Novoa, 195.
[10](Albuquerque: Academia, 1980).
[11]Even a publication largely from the outsider's perspective like Dieter Herms and Hartmut Lutz, eds. *Native Americans. Chicanos und Indianer in der USA* (Berlin, 1985), fails to establish a firm link between the cultural products of the two ethnic groups.
[12]In Eugene E. García, Francisco A. Lomelí, Isidro D. Ortiz, eds. *Chicano Studies. A Multidisciplinary Approach* (New York, 1984), 108.
[13]Vernon E. Lattin, "The Quest for Mythic Vision in Contemporary Native American and Chicano Fiction," *American Literature*, 50 (1978), 625-640.
[14]Heart of Aztlan (Berkeley: Quinto Sol, 1976), 7, 83.
[15]*Heart of Aztlan* serves as a starting point of my investigation. I am fully aware of the fact that the Indian theme in Anaya's works deserves a more detailed study.
[16]In *A Decade of Hispanic Literature. An Anniversary Anthology* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1982), 180.
[17]Although, following the tradition that a woman who claims the same liberties as the male has to be seriously punished, she will die giving birth.
[18]Candelaria, 188. It would be interesting to interpret this episode as an inverted Pocahontas legend.
[19]Sergio Elizondo, *Libro para batos y chavalas chicanas* (Berkeley: Editorial Justa, 1977), 6-9.
[20]"Waters of the river that undulates, pines that watch from afar."
[21]"Gabachos" in the Spanish version.
[22]This feature is again contrasted with the more positive notion of the Americans being thirsty.
[23]"Years ago / there were also / colors / but the / water / and the air / fragile they fled—/ frightened deer"
[24]Alurista, *Spik in Glyph?* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1981), 46.
[25]Cf. Geary Hobson, "The Rise of the White Shaman as a New Version of Cultural Imperialism," in G. Hobson, ed., *The Remembered Earth, An Anthology of Contemporary Native American Literature* (Albuquerque: Red Earth Press, 1979), 100-108.
[26]Cf. Gary Snyder, "The Incredible Survival of Coyote," *Western American Literature*, 9 (1975), 255-272; also Paul Radin, *The Trickster, A Study in American Indian Mythology* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1975, 2nd ed., 1956), and Barre Toelken, "The 'Pretty Languages' of Yellowman: Genre, Mode, and Texture in Navajo Coyote Narratives," *Genre*, 2 (1969), 211-235; reprt. in Dan Ben-Amos, ed. *Folklore Genres* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976), 145-170.
[27]Pat Mora, *Chants* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1984), 7.
[28]There is an error in this line; it should read "a ballpoint pen and lined yellow paper;" editor's note. ✤
[29]Although Pat Mora gave her book the title *Chants*, therefore she unpretentiously

suggests that her prayer of the first poem was well received, that the succeeding poems constitute the music of the land caught in words.
[30]The paper she is digging in is already yellowing. This fact hints at the sterility of her craft. (See editor's note 28.) ❦
[31]*The Spanish-Americans of New Mexico, A Heritage of Pride* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1969), 27.
[32]Ibid., 28, see also Clyde Kluckhohn and Dorothea Leighton, *The Navaho* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1946).
[33]In Bruce-Novoa, 130-131.