



---

Living Borders/Buscando America: Languages of Latino Self-Formation

Author(s): Juan Flores and George Yudice

Reviewed work(s):

Source: *Social Text*, No. 24 (1990), pp. 57-84

Published by: [Duke University Press](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/827827>

Accessed: 06/02/2013 14:37

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at  
<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Duke University Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Social Text*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

# Living Borders/Buscando America: Languages of Latino Self-formation

JUAN FLORES AND GEORGE YUDICE

## 1 Latinos as a Social Movement

"My grandparents didn't get special language instruction in school. In fact, they never finished high school because they had to work for a living." Latinos hear this and similar statements every time the question of bilingual education comes up. Such statements highlight an important difference — the maintenance of another language and the development of interlingual forms—between this "new" immigrant group and the "older," "ethnic" immigrants. The fact is that Latinos, that very heterogeneous medley of races, classes and nationalities<sup>1</sup> are different from both the "older" and the "new" ethnics.<sup>2</sup> To begin with, Latinos do not comprise even a relatively homogeneous "ethnicity." Latinos include native-born U.S. citizens (predominantly Chicanos — Mexican-Americans — and Nuyoricans — "mainland" Puerto Ricans) and Latin American immigrants of all racial and national combinations: white — including a range of different European nationalities — Native-American, black, Arabic, and Asian. It is thus a mistake to lump them all under the category "racial minority,"<sup>3</sup> although historically the U.S. experiences of large numbers of Mexican-Americans and Puerto Ricans are adequately described by this concept.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, both of these groups — unlike any of the European immigrant groups — constitute, with Native-Americans, "conquered minorities."<sup>5</sup>

If not outright conquered peoples, other Latin American immigrants, heretofore inhabitants of the "backyard" over which the United States claims the right of manifest destiny, have migrated here for *both* political and economic reasons, in part because of U.S. intervention in their homelands. From the time of José Martí, who lived in New York for over one third of his life during the 1880s and 1890s, slowly establishing the foundations for the Cuban independence movement, to the 1980s sanctuary movement for Central American refugees, U.S. actions (military incursions as well as economic sanctions) in Latin America have always generated Latin American migrations. The policies of U.S. finance institutions (supported by the U.S. government and, at times, by its military), moreover, have brought enormous foreign debt to Latin America and with it intolerable austerity programs that have induced many to seek a living in the United States.<sup>6</sup>

The result is a U.S. Latino population projected to be over 30 million in 1990, a minority population unprecedented in the history of the United States. Sheer numbers are in themselves influential but the way in which the numbers increase is more important: as a result of continuous immigration over the last 30 years, as well as the historical back-and-forth migration of Mexican-Americans and Puerto Ricans and more recently of other national groups, Latinos have held on to Spanish over more generations than any other group in history. 90% of U.S. Latinos/ Latin Americans speak Spanish.<sup>7</sup> In contrast, speakers of Italian dwindled by 94% from the second to the third generation.<sup>8</sup>

The civil rights movement spurred new forms of consciousness and political action among Chicanos and Nuyoricans. They and other Latinos have been able to use the language issue as a means to mediate diverse types of political enfranchisement and social empowerment: voting reform, bilingual education, employment opportunities, and so on.

In fact, the conditions for identity-formation, in all its dimensions (social, political, and especially aesthetic), have been largely provided by the struggle over how to interpret language needs and the adjudication and legislation, on that basis, of civil rights directed primarily (but not exclusively) to Latinos.

In recognition of these conditions, which were not in place when the two major trends in ethnicity theory (the "melting pot" of the early twentieth century and the "new ethnicity" of the '50s and '60s) emerged, we feel that there is greater explanatory power in a "new social movement" approach to Latino identity. By "new social movements" we refer to those struggles around questions of race, gender, environment, religion, and so on, which cannot be fully encompassed under the rubric of class struggle and which play out their demands on the terrains of the body, sexuality, language, etc., that is, those areas which are socially constituted as comprising the "private" sphere. This is not to say that the inequalities (and causes rooted in relations of production) referred to by class analysis have disappeared. On the contrary, from the perspective we adopt such inequalities (and their causes) can be seen to multiply into all spheres of life. Capitalist society does not cause racism any more than it does linguistic stratification; it does, however, make all these differences functional for the benefit of hegemonic groups. A social movement approach does not so much disregard class exploitation as analyze how racism, sexism, linguistic stratification, etc. are mobilized through "both discursive positions and control of the means of production and coercion."<sup>9</sup> Under these circumstances, political agency is, according to Stanley Aronowitz,

constituted in the gap between the promises of modern democratic society and its subversion by the various rightwing states. Politics renews itself primarily in extra-parliamentary forms which, given the still potent effectivity of the modern state form, if not its particular

manifestations of governance, draws social movements into its orbit. Some call this cooptation, but it is more accurate to understand it as a process related to the economic and cultural hegemony of late capitalism, which draws the excluded not only by its dream work, but by the political imaginary that still occupies its own subjects.<sup>10</sup>

What is particularly different about the new social movements is that they enter the political arena by “address[ing] *power itself* as an antagonist,” such that they must deploy their practices in the cultural as well as economic spheres. To understand Latinos, then, we must understand the conditions under which they enter the political arena. Among these conditions, which were not in place when the “ethnic” (European) immigrants negotiated their enfranchisement in the U.S., are the welfare state (which in part brought to the fore the terrains of struggle and which neoconservatives are currently attempting to dismantle) and the permeation of representation by the consumer market and the media.

In what follows, we explore how Latino identity is mediated and constructed through the struggle over language under such “postmodern” conditions.

## 2 The Struggle Over Language

First of all, the name, “America.” Extrapolating from Edmundo O’Gorman’s meditation on the “invention of America,”<sup>11</sup> we might say that “America” has been conceived over and over again throughout history. The name “remains the same,” but it has had successive reconceptualizations (it is rewritten in the Borgesian sense that Pierre Menard rewrote *Don Quixote*) and with each one the terrain changes. The current mass migration of Latinos to the United States engenders such a process of reconceptualization, bringing to mind F. J. Turner’s notion of America as a moving frontier and giving it another twist so as to invent a new trope: America as a “living border.” If the “discovery” of “America” transformed the ocean into a frontier on whose other side lay a “new” world, and if that new world was subsequently defined by the westward movement and capitalization of the margin, under-writing “the record of social evolution”<sup>12</sup> or modernity and providing a “‘safety valve’ for the discontent of a new industrial proletariat”<sup>13</sup> largely comprised of European immigrants, then the latest reconceptualization of America, by Latinos, is a cultural map which is all border, like the inter-lingual speech (or Spanglish) of Chicanos and Nuyoricans.

I [...] opt for “borderness” and assume my role: My generation, the *chilangos* [slang term for a Mexico City native], who came to “el norte” fleeing the imminent ecological and social catastrophe of Mexico City, gradually integrated itself into otherness, in search of that other Mexico grafted onto the entrails of the *et cetera*... became Chicano-ized. We de-Mexicanized ourselves to Mexi-understand ourselves, some without wanting to, others on purpose. And one day, the border became our house, laboratory, and ministry of culture.<sup>14</sup>

Contemporary Latino artists and writers throw back the anxiety of ambivalence cast upon them as an irresolvable perplexity of naming and placing. Gómez-Peña talks of “this troubled continent accidentally called America” and “this troubled country mistakenly called America.”<sup>15</sup> “AmeRícan,” announces Tato Laviera in the title poem of his third book of Nuyorican poetry, “defining myself my own way many ways Am e Rícan, with the big R and the accent on the f.”<sup>16</sup> The hallowed misnomer unleashes the art of brazen neologism. The arrogance of political geography backfires in the boundless defiance of cultural remapping. The imposed border emerges as the locus of re-definition and re-signification. The cover illustration of *AmeRícan* boasts a day-glo Statue of Liberty holding aloft a huge *pilón* of liberty, the majestic torch of *comida criolla*, *ajo y plátano*. Latino taste buds water with mofongo and mole. “English only Jamás!,” “Sólo inglés, no way!

Latino affirmation is first of all a fending off of schizophrenia, of that pathological duality born of contending cultural worlds and, perhaps more significantly, of the conflicting pressures toward both exclusion and forced incorporation. Another Nuyorican poet, Sandra Maria Esteves, thematizes this existential split in much of her work: “I am two parts/a person boricua/spic past and present alive and oppressed.”<sup>17</sup> Esteves enacts the bewilderment, darting back and forth between unreal options and stammering tongues, “Being Puertorriqueña Americana Born in the Bronx, not really jíbara Not really hablando bien But yet, not gringa either, Pero ni portorra, pero sí portorra too Pero ni que what am I?”<sup>18</sup> She cannot “really” be both, she realizes, but she senses a unique beauty in her straddling position, and is confident in the assertion, which is the title of her poem, that she is “Not Neither.”

Contrary to the monocultural dictates of the official public sphere, the border claims that it is “not nowhere.” This first gestus of Latino cultural practice thus involves an emphatic self-legitimation, a negation of hegemonic denial articulated as the rejection of anonymity. Though no appropriate name is available in the standard language repertoires, whether English or Spanish, namelessness is decidedly not an option. Whatever the shortcomings and misconceptions of bureaucratic bilingualism, alinguality is neither the practiced reality nor a potential outcome of Latino expressive life. The interlingual, border voice characteristically summons the tonality of the relegated “private” sphere to counter the muzzling pressure of official public legitimation.

The trope of a border culture is not thus simply another expression of postmodern aesthetic indeterminacy, along the lines of Derrida’s decontextualized frame or *parergon*, “the incomprehensibility of the border at the border,”<sup>19</sup> or a Baudrillardian simulacrum (*neither copy nor original*).<sup>20</sup> The trope emerges, rather, from the ways in which Latinos deploy their language in everyday life. It corresponds to an ethos under

formation; it is *practice* rather than *representation* of Latino identity. And it is on this terrain that Latinos wage their cultural politics as a “social movement.” As such, Latino aesthetics do not pretend to be separate from everyday practices but rather an integral part of an ethos which seeks to be politicized as a means to validation and self-determination. And it is precisely the projection of this ethos into the culture at large and into the political arena which threatens the dominant “Anglo” culture with loss of control of its physical and metaphorical borders. As the shrillest voices of the English-Only movement have put it, such Latino language and cultural practices threaten national unity and security.<sup>21</sup> Latino disregard for “our borders” may result in the transformation of the United States into a “mongrel nation.”<sup>22</sup>

There are misguided persons, specifically Hispanic immigrants, who have chosen to come here to enjoy our freedoms, who would legislate another language, Spanish, as co-equal and co-legal with English... If Hispanics get their way, perhaps someday Spanish could replace English entirely.... we ought to remind them, and better still educate them to the fact that the United States is not a mongrel nation.

Language has been accurately characterized “an automatic signaling system, second only to race in identifying targets for possible privilege or discrimination.”<sup>23</sup> Unpack the discourse against the language of Latinos and you’ve got a panoply of racist and classist repudiations:

These children [of illegal aliens] will remain part of that population which never learns English, and threatens to make America a bilingual country, costing the American taxpayer billions of dollars.

Token citizenship will not help poor, unskilled Hispanics when they find themselves in a permanent underclass, isolated by a language barrier. The hopes that brought them here in the first place will turn to despair as they become dependent upon government handouts....

Congress has presented the indigenous population of Mexico with an open invitation to walk across our Southern Border....<sup>24</sup>

Language, then, is the necessary terrain on which Latinos negotiate value and attempt to reshape the institutions through which it is distributed. This is not to say that Latino identity is reduced to its linguistic dimensions. Rather, in the current sociopolitical structure of the United States, such matters rooted in the “private sphere,” like language (for Latinos and other minorities), sexuality, body, and family definition (for women and gays and lesbians), etc., become the semiotic material around which identity is deployed in the “public sphere.” The purpose always seems to be to maintain hegemony or to negotiate empowerment of those groups which have been discriminated against on such bases.

The attack on the perceived linguistic practices of Latinos is a vehicle for attacks on immigration, bilingual education, inclusion of Latinos in the services of the welfare state, and above all, a repudiation of the effect

that Latinos are having in reshaping U.S. culture. Furthermore, such attacks highlight the influence that the dominant groups in the U.S. expect Latinos to have on foreign policy. Their rhetoric harbors the fear that U.S. imperialism in Latin American countries is boomeranging and eroding U.S. hegemony.

The language question then is a smoke screen for the scapegoating of Latinos on account of recent economic, social and political setbacks for the United States. "Anglo insecurity" looks to the claims of Latinos and other minority constituencies for the erosion of the United States' position in world leadership, the downturn in the economy, and the bleak prospects for social mobility for the next generation.<sup>25</sup> In fact, now that dominant U.S. national rhetoric seems no longer able to project a global communist bogey, on account of political changes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, this rhetoric will increasingly consolidate its weapons against Latinos as the drug-disseminating enemy within. The War on Drugs will increasingly become a War on Latinos and Latin Americans, as the recent brutal U.S. invasion of Panama has demonstrated. Furthermore, U.S. intervention in Latin America will increase as "the Pentagon searches for new ways to help justify its spending plans."<sup>26</sup>

### **3 Toward a Multicultural Public Sphere (Versus Hegemonic Pluralism)**

The effect of dominant U.S. reaction to the special language needs that Latinos project and the rights that they claim on that basis has been to strengthen the moves toward unity on the part of diverse Latino communities. Otherwise divided by such identity factors as race, class, and national origin, there are economic, social and political reasons in post-civil-rights U.S. why Latinos can constitute a broadly defined national and trans-national federation which aspires to reconceptualize "America" in multicultural and multicentric terms that refuse the relativist fiction of cultural pluralism. It is for this reason that we have proposed to look at Latino negotiation of identity from a social movement perspective rather than a (liberal-sociological) ethnicity paradigm.

It is a commonplace among contemporary theorists of ethnicity in the U.S. that the assimilationist or "melting pot" paradigm of the first half of the century "failed to explain what it most needed and wanted to explain—the persistence of racial stratification...."<sup>27</sup> The "new ethnicity" paradigm, which emerged to remedy the failure of assimilation theory and, as we stated above, to counter the gains made by blacks and other "racial minorities" in the wake of civil rights activism, makes the basic claim that ethnicity becomes the category around which interests are negotiated when class loses its moorings in postindustrial society. The "new ethnicity" can be understood to form part of what Habermas has posited as a "neoconservative postmodernism," that is, the rejection of "cultural modernism," because it has eroded traditional moral values, and



the continued espousal of infrastructural modernity or capitalism cum technical progress and rational administration.<sup>28</sup> The false premise of this argument, of course, is that the economy can be independent of culture; this theory thus serves the purpose of providing a cultural (or ethnic) politics in postindustrial society with no need to resort to economically based categories such as class: "In trying to account for the upsurge of ethnicity today, one can see this ethnicity as the emergent expression of primordial feelings [or "reenchantment," GY & JF], long suppressed but now reawakened, or as a 'strategic site' chosen by disadvantaged persons as a new mode of seeking political redress in the society."<sup>29</sup> The falsity of the model, of course, is that blacks and other "racial minorities" can be equated with white "ethnic" groups.<sup>30</sup> The result is reinforcement of existing class inequalities expressed in ethnic/racial terms.<sup>31</sup>

"Racial" movements could be understood to be the first of the "new social movements" or "new antagonisms" that call into question forms of subordination (bureaucratization and consumer commodification of "private" life) in the post World War II U.S. They do not, however, retreat from "cultural modernism"<sup>32</sup> (the erosion of traditional moral values undergirded by class, race, and gender discriminations) but rather extend it to the point of questioning "infrastructural modernism." Among the challenges is the push to legitimate the adjudication and legislation of rights on the basis of group need rather than the possessive individualist terms that traditionally define rights discourse.<sup>33</sup> "New ethnicity" theory is only one of a panoply of strategies by which neoconservatives have sought to contest the extension of rights on the basis of group criteria (affirmative action, headstart programs, anti-discrimination statutes, and so on). The result has been the acknowledged loss of foundations for rights and the shift to a paradigm of interpretability. Group rights must take place, then, in a *surrogate terrain*, like language or the family. According to Minow,

One predictable kind of struggle in the United States arises among religious and ethnic groups. Here, the dominant legal framework of rights rhetoric is problematic, for it does not easily accommodate groups. Religious freedom, for example, typically protects individual freedom from state authority or from oppression by private groups. Ethnic groups lack even that entry point into constitutional protection, except insofar as individuals may make choices to speak or assemble in relation to a chosen group identity.<sup>34</sup>

If the framework of rights is an impoverished one for the struggles of the new social movements, then what has been the means to greater political participation? One alternative has been to engage in the struggle of needs interpretations. According to Nancy Fraser, "political issues concerning the interpretation of people's needs [are translated] into legal, administrative, and/or therapeutic matters,"<sup>35</sup> *differentially* according to the identificatory features (race, class, gender, religion, and so on) of the group.



Fraser goes on to argue that in each branch (juridical, administrative, therapeutic) of the late capitalist welfare state, there are gender and racially defined subsystems such that certain genders and races are positioned differently as regards possession of rights or eligibility for benefits and services.<sup>36</sup> The struggle around needs, then, is more typical of those groups that are socially “marked.”<sup>37</sup>

Such “markedness” is at work in the struggle over Latino *language needs*; it was only by arguing for the legitimacy of the need for special language education that the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 was legislated as a civil right.<sup>38</sup> And it is around this “need” that dominant groups have launched their counter-attack. Some of the arguments for bilingual education posit a need for a positive self-image premised on the validation of the mother language and the culture of the minority student. However, based on instrumental rationality, dominant groups insist that the need of immigrant groups is to assimilate into mainstream society and thus the only special educational benefit that need be provided is special English instruction.

During the Carter administration, bilingualism and biculturalism were weakened by a new bilingual education law (1978) which limited access to bilingual programs and required teachers to know English as well as Spanish. A 1979 study “exposed” bilingual programs to be “a strategy for realizing the social, political, and economic aspirations of the Hispanic peoples.”<sup>39</sup> Carter himself said: “I want language taught—not ‘ethnic’ culture, etc.”<sup>40</sup>

Arguments for and against bilingual education aside, our point is that the struggle over needs interpretations—in this case around the need for special language education—is what in the present historical conjuncture in the U.S. mediates accumulation of value politically, economically, and socially. Latinos, after all, have made significant gains (they have professionalized) in the educational system because they can more easily qualify for the job requirements (Spanish language literacy) of bilingual education. Language, as we shall demonstrate below, is also the terrain on which Latino “aesthetics of existence” or affirmative self-formative practices operate.

According to Habermas, oppositional, resisting discourses emerge when the validity of legal norms is questioned from the perspective of an everyday practice that refuses to be depoliticized by the “steering mechanisms” of law, bureaucracy, and consumerism.<sup>41</sup> Through such resistant everyday practices, Latinos have contributed to reshaping the public sphere of American society. Or perhaps it would be more exact to say they have contributed to the emergence of a contestatory “social sphere” which blurs the public/private dichotomy because needs “have broken out of the domestic and/or official economic spheres that earlier contained them as ‘private matters’.”<sup>42</sup> Another way of conceiving this contestation is to

imagine social space as networks of conflicting and allied public spheres. What is defined as “private” from the purview of one, is “public” or political from the purview of another.

The relevance of casting Latino negotiation of identity as a contribution to the creation of an alternative public sphere can be brought out by situating it within Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge’s expanded understanding of the concept. They do not limit it to 1) the institutional settings of public opinion (media, parliaments, etc.) but extend it to 2) “the ideational substance that is processed and produced within these sites,” and 3) “a general horizon of social experience,”<sup>43</sup> or “drive toward self-formation and self-reconstruction” (in the collective sense of “self”) which is limited or crippled by the first sense.<sup>44</sup> An alternative model can be culled from Bakhtin’s writings on “behavioral ideology” and the constitution of identity through the reaccentuation of speech genres. Ideological or discursive production is institutionally bound but is generally (except in cases of outright force) open to modulation whereby persons “author themselves” or make discourse “one’s own” in the media of speech and behavioral genres.<sup>45</sup> Our utterances are necessarily enunciated and organized within such genres, which bear institutional marks. Self-formation is simultaneously personal and social (or private and public) because the utterances and acts through which we *experience* or gain our self-images are reaccentuated in relation to how genres have institutionally been made sensitive or responsive to identity factors such as race, gender, class, religion, and so on.

In postmodernity, “private” identity factors or subject positions may become unmoored from institutionally bound generic structures, turning “intimacy [...] the practical touchstone for the substance of the public sphere.”<sup>46</sup> Experience, situated thus, is what fuels the utopian and contestatory potential of self-formation:

What is even more significant is that subjective or psychological phenomena are now increasingly seen as having epistemological and even practical functions. Fantasy is no longer felt to be a private and compensatory reaction against public situations, but rather a way of reading those situations, of thinking and mapping them, of intervening in them, albeit in a very different form from the abstract reflections of traditional philosophy or politics.<sup>47</sup>

Alternative public spheres, with their different, situated knowledges, are, for Negt and Kluge, constituted by the conflictual back and forth *crossover* of everyday experience and fantasy over the boundaries of the hegemonic public sphere.<sup>48</sup>

On the other hand, the hegemonic public sphere itself “tries to develop techniques to reincorporate fantasy in domesticated form.” This is precisely the function of “new ethnicity” theory: to coopt the alternative public sphere of a multicultural society in such a way that ethnic differ-

ence is reduced to its superficial signs, or from Negt and Kluge's perspective, a sublimation of the "unconscious practical criticism of alienation"<sup>50</sup>

#### 4. Bowing to Prospero: Richard Rodriguez's Reprivatization Of Crossover Experiences

There is no better example of the attempt to channel the "crossover" toward an ersatz pluralism than Richard Rodriguez's "middle class pastoral": *Hunger for Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez*.<sup>51</sup> It is the story of a now influential "public" man who traded his former identity (as oppressed working class Chicano), his former symbolic authorities (his parents), his former language (Spanish) by assimilating to the *gringo* middle class under the tutelage of new symbolic authorities (his teachers and intellectual mentors, especially Richard Hoggart). His life reads like an advertisement against bilingual education; Spanish is the "private" language of the ethnic, English the "public" language of empowerment:

Supporters of bilingual education today imply that students like me miss a great deal by not being taught in their family's language. What they seem not to recognize is that, as a socially disadvantaged child, I considered Spanish to be a private language. What I needed to learn in school was that I had the right—and the obligation—to speak the public language of *los gringos*. The odd truth is that my first-grade classmates could have become bilingual, in the conventional sense of that word, more easily than I. Had they been taught (as upper-middle-class children are often taught early) a second language like Spanish or French, they could have regarded it simply as that: another public language. In my case such bilingualism could not have been so quickly achieved. What I did not believe was that I could speak a single public language....

Fortunately, my teachers were unsentimental about their responsibility. What they understood was that I needed to speak a public language....<sup>52</sup>

This passage conceals a romanticized projection concerning the "privacy" of Spanish, for Rodriguez clearly recognizes that Spanish could also be a "public" language. He makes this recognition only to discard it on the basis that his disadvantaged status could not let him aspire to an alternative publicity in Spanish. It is his own rejected sentimentalism toward Spanish, then, which lies at the root of the bad faith which he attributes to bilingual educators and others who seek to keep, cultivate or invent Latino culture and language as a competing, alternative public discourse. Instead, Rodriguez draws a tighter and tighter net around that which he (and the dominant culture) has defined as private until it is strangled out of existence and he emerges as his own abstracted interlocutor: "I hear an echoing voice—my own resembling another's. Silent! The reader's voice silently trails every word I put down. I reread my words, and again it is the reader's voice I hear in my mind, sounding my prose."<sup>53</sup> Who is this interlocutor but the symbolic Other (the law of the Anglo father or teacher) with whom he has identified after his linguistic and cultural "castration":

I write today for a reader who exists in my mind only phantasmagorically. Someone with a face erased; someone of no particular race or sex or age or weather. A gray presence. Unknown, unfamiliar. All that I know is that he has had a long education and that his society, like mine, is often public (*un gringo*).<sup>54</sup>

Regarding the “castration” metaphor (which marks the moment of entry into the “public” realm of the symbolic), it should be remembered that Rodriguez has symbolically renounced his Chicanoness by attempting to shave off the darkness of his skin:

I took my father’s straight razor out of the medicine cabinet. Slowly, with steady deliberatness, I put the blade against my flesh, pressed it as close as I could without cutting, and moved it up and down across my skin to see if I could get out, somehow lessen, the dark.<sup>55</sup>

At the end of this same chapter (“Complexion”), his public identity has made his skin color meaningless. It is the value that he has gained as a public individual (*un gringo*) which contextualizes his complexion’s meaning:

The registration clerk in London wonders if I have just been to Switzerland. And the man who carries my luggage in New York guesses the Caribbean. My complexion becomes a mark of my leisure. Yet no one would regard my complexion the same way if I entered such hotels through the service entrance. That is only to say that my complexion assumes its significance from the context of my life. My skin, in itself, means nothing.<sup>56</sup>

After this thought, Rodriguez returns to consider *los pobres mexicanos* with whom he has worked during the summer. Their skin color signifies disadvantage, it speaks their “private” silence to him: “Their silence is more telling. They lack a public identity. They remain profoundly alien.”

This is surely a comforting thought for conservatives who would like to see all entitlements for Latinos removed. They need not fear the blurring of boundaries between public and private. Rodriguez charges that it is the advocates of bilingual education and minority compensation who have sold their identity to bureaucratic policy makers:

The policy of affirmative action, however, was never able to distinguish someone like me ( a graduate student of English, ambitious for a college teaching career) from a slightly educated Mexican-American who lived in a barrio and worked as a menial laborer, never expecting a future improved. Worse, affirmative action made me the beneficiary of his condition. Such was the foolish logic of this program of social reform.<sup>57</sup>

Yet it is he who has cashed in on his legitimation of middle-class privilege. The irony is that despite his disavowal of Chicano or minority status, he is read, that is, his book is assigned in numerous college English courses precisely because he reassures “anguished Anglos” that the “latinization of America will, in time, lead to Hispanic integration.”<sup>58</sup> He has spoken against bilingual education and affirmative action from Reagan’s White House and has done quite well on the college lecture circuit as Prospero’s tamed servant

(a nifty turn of events for a book that begins thus: "I have taken Caliban's advice. I have stolen their books. I will have the run of this isle.").<sup>59</sup>

It is no mere coincidence that Rodriguez is one of only two Latino writers (the other is Luis Valdez) cited by Werner Sollors in *Beyond Ethnicity. Consent and Descent in American Culture*,<sup>60</sup> for he fits the refurbished rhetoric endemic to the "ethnicity paradigm": viz. the negotiation of assimilation and cultural pluralism. "The language of consent and descent has been flexibly adapted to create a sense of Americanness among the heterogeneous inhabitants of this country."<sup>61</sup> Both Sollors and Rodriguez coincide in deriving this dynamic of consent and descent from the Puritans to the most recent immigrants. Sollors quotes Timothy Smith to the effect that the process of immigration (uprooting, migration, resettlement, community-building) constituted for the Puritans a transcendent experience that laid the basis of American ethnicization. This process, according to Smith and Sollors, even includes Afro-American *immigrants*!<sup>62</sup> And the literature that it, the ethnicization process, provides, functions as a "handbook" or a "grammar" for "socialization into the codes of Americanness."<sup>63</sup>

Rodriguez, in a recent *The New York Times* supplement, *A World of Difference*, appeals first to the grammar school and then to consumerism for the "handbook" that can harmonize the diversity that constitutes the United States:

Language is the lesson of the *grammar* school. And from the schoolmarm's achievement came the possibility of a shared history and a shared future.... At the bank or behind the counter at McDonald's, or in the switch room of the telephone company, people from different parts of town and different parts of the country, and different countries of the world learn that they have one thing or another in common. Initially, a punch clock. A supervisor. A paycheck. A shared irony. A takeout lunch. Some nachos, some bagels, a pizza. And here's a fortune cookie for you: Two in their meeting are changed.<sup>64</sup>

## 5 Crossing Over The Contradictions Of Latino Market And Media

Rodriguez is not entirely correct, however, about the integrative force of consumerism for producing assimilated "Americans." Diverse Latino communities are also partially united by market and media courting of the 100+ billions of dollars that the 30+ millions of Latinos offer. One advertising agency's pitch to businesses reads: "[O]ur market is very young and very, very sensitive. You don't have the clutter of the Anglo market."<sup>65</sup>

Language, again, is the terrain on which the heterogeneous constitutencies of Latinos are rallied not only as consumers but also as cultural subjects. This is certainly a major factor which was not in place when theories of ethnicity were devised to account for the incorporation of the "older" immigrants into U.S. society. Language is the major cultural glue provided by Spanish Television. Two of the major networks,

Univision and Telemundo, highlight the transnational and unifying character of their programming. Indeed, Telemundo's slogan is: "*Telemundo: uniendo a los hispanos.*"

Strategists of marketing and the commercial media have not joined the English Only movement, nor do they seem to share the anxieties over cultural balkanization or contamination which propel it. Rather, the corporate "publicity sphere" has availed itself of the multicultural reality as a way of targeting consumer markets and taste cultures. Though for their own interested motives, advertisers reach out to the "Hispanic" market with campaigns custom-made for the culture, with special attention to holidays, family and religious life, and to the up-beat, success-story side of Latino experience. Citibank, for example, makes an effort to salute prominent Hispanic businessmen, especially those who "got help along the way from Citibank. One owns a chain of travel agencies; another runs six McDonald's franchises." They claim with pride that, worldwide, Citibank "employs more Hispanics and does more business with Hispanics than any other bank."<sup>66</sup> Pan Am has even adapted its jingles — "it is a very musical market" — to appeal to its "Hispanic" customers, "so we retained the theme but added a Latin feel with percussion and woodwind instruments."<sup>67</sup>

The Spanish language, of course, figures prominently in this ethnically tailored publicity. While many campaigns are rendered simultaneously in Spanish, advertisers recognize that translation is not enough. Here again the "Latin feel" plays a key role. Pepsi Cola, for instance, took pains, and advice from their "Hispanic" marketing agency, to adapt their slogan "Catch that Pepsi spirit":

If we had put that straightaway into Spanish, viewers would have considered it voodoo, something about a spirit flying through the air. So we changed it to read, 'Vive el sentir de Pepsi.' That means, Live that Pepsi feeling. That's what the English slogan intends to say, but you have to know the idiosyncrasies of the market to put it across.<sup>68</sup>

Citibank goes even further; beyond capturing in Spanish the spirit of the English copy, they resort to the bilingual pun to catch the sympathetic giggle of potential customers and make them feel included. "We're going to play on the language here," their spokesman at Castor Spanish International says, "telling them that 'We always say sí at Citibank' (pronounced see-tee-bank in Spanish)."<sup>69</sup>

Ironically, this practice of linguistic and cultural adaptation on the part of commercial publicity is more suggestive than the traditional public sphere of Latino expression, especially those dimensions of it that go beyond mere responses to hegemonic negation. As publicity agents suggest, "When translation isn't enough, try 'trans-creation'." The idea of "trans-creation," for the advertisers a gimmicky term aimed at maximizing specificity in targeting differentiated consumer publics, is appealing



and apt as a characterization of border culture expression and self-definition. As one "Hispanic" media executive puts it, the "proper execution" calls for a sense of "the familiar Spanish patois of the community, reflecting not only different words and meanings, but also differences of rhythm of speech and inflection." Latino artists and poets also need to "trans-create" in this sense, at least at a tactical level, as does the wider Chicano and Nuyorican community in its everyday speech and expressive practices. In order to vocalize the border, traversing it is not enough; we must be positioned there, with ready and simultaneous access to both sides.

Perhaps the commonality between these two otherwise divergent worlds is the issue of needs. The advertiser bent on "reaching" and "selling" the Hispanic market, and the Latino cultural agent who would voice and envision the people's life-world, both inhabit a public sphere conceived of as the arena for the articulation and satisfaction of collective needs. Beyond the contention over rights and policies, the force of consumption, understood in its broadest sense, holds sway in the culture of experience. Here the private sphere, rather than being categorically autonomized, informs the public and even fuels the drive for social legitimation. "Trans-creation," whether from commercial or expressive and representational motives, serves to counteract the reduction of social experience to the dominion of laws and consensual ethical norms.

Such "crossovers" are a reality today, rooted in the bilingualism and biculturalism of Latinos. Many critics have correctly pointed to the erosion and misrepresentation by the mass media of traditional cultural forms and experience. But the market and the media are not the only forces in society and their interaction with other factors such as state bureaucratic apparatuses, law, and social institutions, can have consequences that go beyond the simplistic "colonization" of the Latino lifeworld. For example, the contradiction created in the dominant classes by divergent treatment of Latino language practices (opposition in the "social" sphere and enthusiastic acceptance and application in the commercial sphere) has opened up a space in which Latinos negotiate new cultural forms that impact upon the culture at large.

Compromised as it is, even Coors' turn to Spanish language advertising to undo the negative effects of its hiring policies with regard to Latinos,<sup>70</sup> demonstrates the extent to which consumerism blurs the cultural boundaries which so threaten dominant non-Latino groups. Those dominant groups which fear the "threat" of Latinization of U.S. culture, if also owners of businesses or directors of social and political institutions that could profit from Latino patronage, often find themselves having to cater to the needs interpretations of Latinos. The hysterical objections made against the public reach of Latino ethos through market and media, objections similar to those against bilingual education, only testify to the pervasiveness of Latino influence:



Freedom of speech is not unlimited. As Justice Brandeis has pointed out, no one is free to shout "fire" in a crowded theater. Speech and information are often curtailed in matters relating to national security, for example. Cutting off American citizens from sources of information in the language of their country, fostering language segregation via the airwaves, these are major problems that warrant the steps we propose [i.e., limiting the growth of Spanish-language radio stations].<sup>71</sup>

Latino experience in the U.S. has been a continual crossover, not only across geopolitical borders but across all kinds of cultural and political boundaries. Political organization, for example, is necessarily coalitional; in order to have an impact Latinos have formed alliances to elect officials who will represent their interests. Throughout the sixties and seventies, Latinos formed or reformed dozens of national lobbying organizations. Uppermost in their lobbying efforts are counterarguments against discriminatory practices in immigration, hiring and educational policies, opposition to government intervention in Latin America, especially Central America, and, of course, promotion of language issues. It should be added that Latinos of all backgrounds (with only the partial exception of Cuban-Americans) are assiduous supporters and participants in the solidarity and sanctuary movements. These forums are very important because they exert a progressive influence, especially as regards women's issues like abortion, on groups that have a conservative cultural heritage. Furthermore, the political and cultural crossover involved in these activities contributes to the creation of alternative public spheres in the United States.

Crossover does not mean that Latinos seek willy nilly to "make it" in the political and commercial spheres of the general culture. They are vehicles which Latinos use to create new cultural forms that cross over in both directions. The music of Willie Colon, Rubén Blades, and other U.S. based Latino and Latin American musicians is a new pan-Latino fusion of Latin-American forms (Cuban *guaguancos*, Puerto Rican *plenas*, Dominican *merengues*, Mexican *rancheras*, Argentine *tangos*, Colombian *cumbias*, barrio drumming) and U.S. pop, jazz, rock, even do-wop, around a salsa base of Caribbean rhythms, particularly Cuban *son*. Salsa cuts across all social classes and Latino groups who reside in New York, home ground of this fusion music. Originating in the barrios, it made its way to "downtown" clubs and across borders to the diverse audience of the Latin American subcontinent. The crossovers have resulted in a convergence phenomenon which does not represent anything other than its malleability and openness to incorporation.<sup>72</sup>

Salsa, perhaps better than any other cultural form, expresses the Latino ethos of multiculturalism and crossing borders. Willy Colon, for example, became a salsero precisely to forge a new "American" identity:

Now look at my case; I'm Puerto Rican and I consider myself Puerto Rican. But when I go to the island I'm something else to them. And in New York, when I had to get documents, I was always asked: "Where are you from?" "I'm American. "Yeah, but from where?" They led me to believe that I wasn't from America, even though I have an American birth certificate and citizenship... I live between both worlds, but I also had to find my roots and that's why I got into salsa.<sup>73</sup>

Finding one's "roots" in salsa means more creating them from the heterogeneous sounds that traverse the barrio than going back to some place that guarantees authenticity. Salsa *is* the salsero's homeland and the means to self-validation.<sup>74</sup>

Despite its popularity and certain minor breakthroughs, salsa has not (yet?) "made it" in mainstream U.S. culture. Latino artists and entrepreneurs have had to form their own labels, an alternative recording industry. Only in recent years, especially with the impetus of Rubén Blades' thematization of "crossing over" in the film "Crossover Dreams," has the dominant recording industry not only taken on salseros on national labels (Blades' *Agua de Luna*, based on the stories of García Márquez, is on Elektra) but also marketed them nationally. Furthermore, the alternative public spheres of contemporary rock, such as "Rock Against Racism," have been opened up by the collaborations of such "mainstream" musicians as the Rolling Stones, David Byrne and Paul Simon with salseros, Chicano rockers like Los Lobos, and Latin American stars like Milton Nascimento and Caetano Veloso.<sup>75</sup> Hip Hop has also brought together Afro-Americans, Latinos, and Afro-Latin Americans.<sup>76</sup>

## 6 Trans-creating A Multicultural America

Rubén Blades has insisted that a culturally effective crossover, which he prefers to call "convergence," is not about "abandonment or sneaking into someone else's territory. I propose, rather, convergence. Let's meet half way, and then we can walk either way together."<sup>77</sup> At the end of the interview he adds that he does "not need a visa" for the musical fusion which he seeks. He does not want "to be *in* America" but rather participate in the creation of a new America. The lyrics of the title piece of his *Buscando America* (Elektra/Asylum, 1984) make this point:

Estoy buscando América,  
Estoy llamando América,  
luchando por la raza  
y nuestra identidad.  
Estoy buscando América,  
Esta es mi casa,  
Estoy llamando América  
y vamos a encontrarte

I'm searching for America,  
I'm calling for America,  
Struggling for our people  
and our identity.  
I'm searching for America,  
This is my home,  
I'm calling for America  
and we're going to find you

entre esta oscuridad.  
Estoy buscando América,  
Estoy llamando América,  
Te han desaparecido  
Los que niegan la verdad.  
Estoy buscando América,  
Estoy llamando América,  
y a nosotros nos toca,  
hoy ponerte en libertad.

in all this darkness.  
I'm searching for America,  
I'm calling for America,  
Those who deny the truth  
have disappeared you.  
I'm searching for America,  
I'm calling for America,  
It's up to us today  
to give you your freedom.

Latinos, then, do not aspire to enter an already given America but to participate in the construction of a new hegemony dependent upon their cultural practices and discourses. As argued above, the struggle over language signals this desire and the opposition to it by dominant groups. This view of language, and its strategic operationality in achieving a sense of self-worth, is the organizing focus of Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera. The New Mestiza*.<sup>78</sup> "Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity—I am my language. Until I take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself."<sup>79</sup> Like Rondón's arguments about salsa,<sup>80</sup> the language of the new mestiza is the migratory homeland in which "continual creative motion [...] keeps breaking down the unitary aspect of each new paradigm."<sup>81</sup> Anzaldúa acknowledges that her projection of a "new mestiza consciousness" may seem cultureless from the perspective of "male-derived beliefs of Indo-Hispanics and Anglos;" for her, on the contrary, she is

participating in the creation of yet another culture, a new story to explain the world and our participation in it, a new value system with images and symbols that connect us to each other and to the planet.<sup>82</sup>

Another way of constructing Anzaldúa's mestiza poetics is as follows: all cultural groups need a sense of worth in order to survive. Self-determination, which in this case focuses on linguistic self-determination, is the category around which such a need should be adjudicated and/or legislated as a civil right. In order for this right to be effective, however, it would have to alter the nature [or, to be more exact, the social relations] of civil society.

Such a claim, constructed in this way, only makes sense in a social structure that has shifted the grounds for enfranchisement from one of rights discourse to the interpretations that underpin such discourse. What is the justification, however, for needs interpretation? Our claim is that group ethos, the very stuff (or the "ethical substance," in Foucault's terminology)<sup>83</sup> of self-formation, is what contingently grounds the interpretation of a need as legitimate so that it can be adjudicated or legislated as a right. Another claim is that group ethos is constituted by everyday aesthetic practices such as the creative linguistic practices of Latinos which in the current historical conjuncture do not amount to subalternity,

but rather to a way of prying open the larger culture, by making its physical, institutional and metaphorical borders indeterminate, precisely what we have seen that the dominant culture fears.

Latino self-formation as trans-creation — to “trans-create” the term beyond its strictly commercialist coinage — is more than a culture of resistance, or it is “resistance” in more than the sense of standing up against concerted hegemonic domination. It confronts the prevailing ethos by congregating an ethos of its own, not necessarily an outright adversarial but certainly an alternative ethos. The Latino border trans-creates the impinging dominant cultures by constituting the space for their free intermingling — free because it is dependent on neither, nor on the reaction of one to the other, for its own legitimacy. Dialogue and confrontation with the monocultural other persists, but on the basis of what Foucault has called “the idea of governmentality,” “the totality of practices, by which one can constitute, define, organize, instrumentalize the strategies which individuals in their liberty can have in regard to each other.”<sup>84</sup>

It is in these terms that the positing of a relatively self-referential cultural ethos for oppressed groups can evade the attendant essentialist or exceptionalist pitfalls. For this ethos is eminently practical, not an alternative to resistance but an alternative form of resistance, not a deliberate ignorance of multicultural realities but a different and potentially more democratic way of apprehending them. The strategic value of this “relationship of self to self” is of utmost importance, since it defines the position from which to negotiate the existing relations of power as domination. For rather than aiming at some maximally transparent communication among hierarchically divergent subject positions, in Habermas’ sense, the goal of this cultural-ethical self-formation is the adequate constitution and definition of the subject position itself. As Foucault explains in his critique of Habermas:

I don’t believe there can be a society without relations of power, if you understand them as means by which individuals try to conduct, to determine the behavior of others. The problem is not of trying to dissolve them in the utopia of a perfectly transparent communication, but to give one’s self the rules of law, the techniques of management, and also the ethics, the ethos, the practice of self, which would allow these games of power to be played with a minimum of domination.<sup>85</sup>

“Practice of self” is understood here to refer to individuals, but is readily transferable to collective self-conducts; the relations of power are called strategic “games,” but the re-writing of the rules, or the playing out of other games with other rules, clearly interfaces with the dynamics of political and cultural struggle. And the utopian horizon, which Foucault discards in its Habermasian version, is still present in this strategy of minimizing domination, especially when the view is toward the process

of collective self-formation among oppressed and “other” groups. Gómez-Peña, that reliable voice of the border perspective, addresses this futuristic dimension in terms which also suggest the content and tactics of the new ethos, the alternative, multicultural “practice of self”:

The U.S. suffers from a severe case of amnesia. In its obsessive quest to ‘construct the future,’ it tends to forget or erase the past. Fortunately, the so-called disenfranchised groups who don’t feel part of this national project have been meticulously documenting their histories. Latinos, blacks, Asians, women, gays, experimental artists and non-aligned intellectuals have used inventive languages to record the other history from a multicentric perspective. Our art functions both as collective memory and alternative chronicle,’ says Amalia Mesa-Bains. In this sense, multicultural art, if nurtured, can become a powerful tool to recapture the desired historical self. The great paradox is the fact that without this historical self, no meaningful future can ever be constructed.<sup>86</sup>

Ethnicity-as-practice is primordially genealogical, intent as it invariably is on a recapturing and re-constituting of the past. It relies, as Michael M.J. Fischer terms it, on the “post-modern arts of memory,” the collective power of recall which is only a power if it functions actively and constitutively. This retrospective, testimonial search is for Fischer “a (re)invention and discovery of a vision, both ethical and future-oriented. Whereas the search for coherence is grounded in a connection to the past, the meaning abstracted from that past, an important criterion of coherence, is an ethic workable for the future.”<sup>87</sup> The “alternative chronicle” is more than merely recuperative: it is eminently functional in present self-formative practice and anticipatory of potential historical self-hood. Sandra Maria Esteves, in a poem cited earlier (“I am two parts/a person boricua/spic”), bemoans the forcible, physical loss of her antecedence: “I may never overcome the theft of my isla heritage... I can only imagine and remember how it was.” But that imagination and remembrance enliven her dream-work, which in turn “realizes” that lost reality in a way that leads to eventual and profound self-realization. Her poem ends, “But that reality now a dream teaches me to see, and will bring me back to me.”<sup>88</sup>

In the post-modern context, the mnemonic “arts” of border expression are conducted in “inventive languages,” a key phrase of Gómez-Peña signalling the characteristic expressive tactic of this process. Language itself, of course, is the most obvious site of Latino inventiveness. Whether the wildest extravagance of the bilingual poet or the most mundane comment of everyday life, Latino usage tends necessarily toward interlingual innovation. The interfacing of multiple codes serves to de-canonize all of them, at least in their presumed discrete authority, thus allowing ample space for spontaneous experimentation and punning. Even for the most monolingual of Latinos, the “other” language looms constantly as a potential resource, and the option to vary according to different speech contexts is used far more often than not. “Trans-creation,” understood in

this sense of intercultural variability and transferability, is the hallmark of border language practice.

The irreverence implicit in trans-creative expression need not be deliberately defiant in motive; it reflects rather a largely unspoken disregard for conventionally bounded usage insofar as such circumscription obstructs the need for optimal specificity of communicative and cultural context. The guiding impulse, articulated or not, is one of play, freedom, and even empowerment in the sense that access to individual and collective referentiality cannot ultimately be blocked. Interlingual puns, multi-directional mixing and switching, and the seemingly limitless stock of borrowings and adaptations attest to a delight not only in excluding and eluding the dominant and exclusionary, but in the very act of inclusion within a newly constituted expressive terrain. Rather than rejecting a language because of its association with a repressive other, or adopting it wholesale in order to facilitate passage, Latino expression typically "uses" official discourse by adapting it and thereby showing up its practical malleability.

Nuyorican vernacular includes the verb "gufear," from which has derived the noun "el gufeo." The colloquial American word "goof" is clearly visible and audible, and certainly the "Spanglish" usage has its closest equivalent in the phrase "goofing on" someone or something. But as a cultural practice, "el gufeo" clearly harkens to "el vacilón," that longstanding Puerto Rican tradition of funning and funning on, fun-making and making fun. Popular culture and everyday life among Puerto Ricans abound in the spirit of "el vacilón," that enjoyment in ribbing at someone's or one's own expense, for which a wider though overlapping term is "el relajo." We might even speak, in fact, of a Puerto Rican ethos of "el relajo" which, in its interplay with "el respeto," serves to mark off consensual guidelines for interpersonal behavior.<sup>89</sup> Setting limits of "respectability" and testing them, "relaxing" them, defines the dynamic of Puerto Rican culture at the level of behavioral expression. The role of "el relajo," often practiced of course by the subaltern classes in their interaction with their masters, is not derivative of or conditioned by "el respeto"; rather, the delineation of individual and group dignity draws its power from the ability to "relax (on)" the prevalent codes of "respect."

Terms and practices like "el vacilón" and "el relajo" are the Puerto Rican version of the Cuban "choteo," perhaps the most widely understood usage among the Latino nationalities and having its particular variants in the diverse national cultures. In all cases, "el choteo" involves irony, parody and many of those elements which Henry Louis Gates, Jr. has identified as constitutive of "signifyin(g)" in the African-American tradition: repetition, double-talk and semantic reversals and, most generally, gestural imitation for the sake of re-figuring.<sup>90</sup> Colonial and elite cultures in Latin America have been constant prey to "el choteo," which also



operates within and among the group to bolster or deflate spirits, whichever seems appropriate. The “signifying monkey” might instead be a dog or a mule or a pig, or even “un bobo,” a town fool or simpleton. But like “signifyin(g)” “el choteo” does have its agent, some unsuspected, improbable master of the trope who embodies the arts of memory and (re-)invention.

“El gufeo” takes the process even one step further: Latino “signifyin(g)” in the multicultural U.S. context adds to the fascination of its home-country or African-American counterparts because of its interlinguality. Double-talk in this case is sustained not merely by the interplay of “standard” and vernacular significations but by the crossing of entire language repertoires. Border vernacular in fact harbors a plurality of vernaculars comprised of their multiple interminglings and possible permutations. The result is not simply an extended range of choices and juxtapositions, the kind of “splitting of tongues” exemplified by border poet Gina Valdés at the end of her poem “Where You From?”

soy de aqui  
y soy de alla  
I didn’t build  
    this border  
that halts me  
the word from  
tera splits  
on my tongue.<sup>91</sup>

The real “signifyin(g)” potential of this discourse resides in the actual interpenetration of semantic and syntactic fields, when meanings and structures become destabilized and their referential uniformity discarded. The poetry of bilingual practitioners like Alurista and Tato Laviera abounds in this kind of doubling, another striking example being the play on the words “sunrise”-“sonrisa” (smile) which occurs in the writings of both Victor Hernandez Cruz and Louis Reyes Rivera. Hernandez Cruz ends his often-cited poem “You gotta have your tips on fire” with the lines,

You never will be in the wrong place  
For the universe will feel your heat  
And arrange its dance on your head  
There will be a Sun/Risa  
on your lips  
But  
You gotta have your tips on fire  
Carnal.<sup>92</sup>

In “Problems in Translation” Reyes Rivera takes up the same interlingual pun to dramatize his “discovery” of a connotative richness in his effort to adopt a new-found Spanish vocabulary:



Esa sonrisa  
 is not just a smile  
 but a brilliance you lend  
 from the life in your eyes  
 the width of your mouth  
 as they both  
 give rise to the meaning of sunfilled  
     spread  
 across  
     your  
 high  
     boned  
 gentle  
 face.<sup>93</sup>

Poetic and colloquial language use is of course only the most obvious and readily illustrated case of re-figuration in Latino cultural expression. Examples are multiplied when account is taken of the traditions of musical “signifyin(g)” in salsa, Latin jazz, Tex-Mex and Latin rock, or the characteristic interplay of Caribbean or Mexican visual worlds with North American settings among Nuyorican and Chicano artists. One thinks of Jorge Soto and his “signifyin(g)” on that classical work of Puerto Rican painting, Francisco Oller’s “El Velorio” (1893). Soto reenacts and transfigures the jíbaro wake of the original by populating the scene with the trappings of New York tenement life. A particularly suggestive example from recent years is provided by the “casitas,” the small wooden houses which have proliferated in the vacant lots of the South Bronx, El Barrio and other Puerto Rican neighborhoods. Though modelled after working-class dwellings on the Island of the earlier decades, before the industrialization process overran the neighborhoods with concrete boxes, the “casitas” are typically decorated and furnished with objects pertinent to the immediate New York setting: billboards, shopping carts, plastic milk cartons and the like. The effect is a remarkable pastiche in which otherwise disparate visual and sculptural worlds cohabit and collapse into one another in accordance with the intergenerational historical experience of the Puerto Rican migrant community. Perhaps most impressive cultural “signifyin(g)” occurs as the contrasting of urban spatial languages, as the tropical “casita” with its strong rural reminiscences in the form of open porches, truck gardens and domestic animals jars with and yet strangely complements the surrounding scene of strewn lots and gutted buildings. Nostalgia and immediacy parody each other in the “invention” of a tradition which captures, in striking and cogent ways, the texture of “multiculturalism” in contemporary “America.”<sup>94</sup>

For, as Gómez-Peña suggests, in order for the “multicultural paradigm” to amount to more than still another warmed-over version of cultural pluralism, the entire culture and national project need to be conceived

from a "multicentric perspective." It is at the border, where diversity is concentrated, that diversity as a fact of cultural life may be most readily and profoundly perceived and expressed. It is there, as Gloria Anzaldúa describes it in her work *Borderlands/La Frontera*, that the mestiza "learns to juggle cultures. She has a plural personality, she operates in a pluralistic mode.... Not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns the ambivalence into something else."<sup>95</sup> Renato Rosaldo sees in Anzaldúa's Chicana lesbian vision a celebration of "the potential of borders in opening new forms of human understanding": "She argues that because Chicanos have long practiced the art of cultural blending, 'we' now stand in a position to become leaders in developing new forms of polyglot cultural creativity. In her view, the rear guard will become the vanguard."<sup>96</sup>

Understood in this sense, multiculturalism signals a paradigmatic shift in ethnicity theory, a radically changed optic concerning center and margins of cultural possibility. The presumed "subcultural" tributaries feel emboldened to lay claim to the "mainstream," that tired metaphor now assuming a totally new interpretation. Tato Laviera once again is playing a pioneering role in this act of resignifying: in his new book, entitled *Mainstream Ethics*, Laviera demonstrates that it is the very concurrence of multiple and diverse voices, tones and linguistic resources that impels the flow of the whole culture of "America." The challenge is obviously aesthetic and political in intent, but it is also, as the title indicates, an eminently ethical one. "It is not our role," the book's introduction announces, "to follow the dictates of a shadowy norm, an illusive *main stream*, but to remain faithful to our collective and individual personalities. Our ethic is and shall always be current."<sup>97</sup> Appropriately, the Spanish subtitle of the volume, "*ética corriente*," is more than a translation; it is a "trans-creation" in the full sense, since "current" or "common," with its rootedness in the cultural ethos of everyday life, stands in blatant contrast to the fabricated, apologetic implications of "mainstream" in its conventional usage.

The Chicano poet Juan Felipe Herrera has an intriguing gufeo fantasy. "What if suddenly the continent turned upside-down?" he muses.

What if the U.S. was Mexico?  
 What if 200,000 Anglosaxicans  
 were to cross the border each month  
 to work as gardeners, waiters,  
 3rd chair musicians, movie extras,  
 bouncers, babysitters, chauffers,  
 syndicated cartoons, feather-weight  
 boxers, fruit-pickers & anonymous poets?  
 What if they were called waspanos,  
 waspitos, wasperos or wasbacks?  
 What if we were the top dogs?  
 What if literature was life, eh?

The border houses the power of the outrageous, the imagination needed to turn the historical and cultural tables. The view from the border enables us to apprehend the ultimate arbitrariness of the border itself, of forced separations and inferiorizations. Latino expression forces the issue which tops the agenda of American culture, the issue of geography and nomenclature.

Let's get it straight: America is a continent not a country. Latin America encompasses more than half of America. Quechuas, Mixtecos and Iroquois are American (not U.S. citizens). Chicano, Nuyorrican, Cajun, Afro-Caribbean and Quebequois cultures are American as well. Mexicans and Canadians are also North Americans. Newly arrived Vietnamese and Laotians will soon become Americans. U.S. Anglo-European culture is but a mere component of a much larger cultural complex in constant metamorphosis.<sup>99</sup>

For the search for "America," the inclusive, multicultural society of the continent, has to do with nothing less than an imaginative ethos of re-mapping and re-naming in the service not only of Latinos but all claimants.

### Notes

1. We agree with Guillermo Gómez-Peña that "[t]erms like 'Hispanic,' 'Latino,' 'Ethnic,' 'minority,' 'marginal,' 'alternative,' and 'Third World,' among others, are inaccurate and loaded with ideological implications.... In the absence of a more enlightened terminology, we have no choice but to utilize them with extreme care." "The Multicultural Paradigm: An Open Letter to the National Arts Community," *High Performance* (Fall 1989): 20.

2. We have decided to emphasize "Latino" for, unlike "Hispanic," it is not an identity label imposed by the politicized statistics of the Census Bureau and the market who seek to target particular constituencies for political and economic manipulation. As for the shortcomings of "Latino," we hope that this article contributes to their critique. In a nutshell, the term "older immigrants" refers to the way in which assimilationist or "melting pot" sociologists (from Robert Park to Milton Gordon) constructed the experiences of late nineteenth and early twentieth century immigrants according to a dynamic of contact, accommodation, and assimilation that eventually amalgamated them into the dominant culture. The term "new ethnics" refers to the period of (white) ethnic revival, largely coinciding with civil rights struggles and their aftermath, in which "racial minorities and white ethnics became polarized on a series of issues relating to schools, housing, local government, and control over federal programs." This revival has also been understood as the dying flash of white ethnicity in a longer historical process of acculturation. Cf. Stephen Steinberg, *The Ethnic Myth. Race, Ethnicity, and Class in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1982), pp. 48-51.

See also Richard H. Thompson, *Theories of Ethnicity. A Critical Appraisal* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1989), for whom the "rediscovery of ethnicity [by its American observers] is largely a response to the black protest movement of the 1960s, the state's subsequent definition and legitimation of that movement as an ethnic (but not primarily a class) movement, and the resulting increase in the United States of other ethnically defined movements by Hispanics, Asian-Americans, and "white ethnics," who, observing the 'success' of black organization and the state's receptivity to it, have quite unmysteriously followed a similar tack." (p. 93)

3. "Racial minority" is a term used to distinguish the historical experiences (enslavement and/or institutional exclusion from political, economic, and especially social enfranchisement) of certain groups (viz. African-Americans, Latinos, Asian-Americans, and Native-Americans) from those of European immigrant groups for whom the dynamics described by ethnicity theories made possible the enfranchisements denied to the former. Cf. Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States. From the 1960s to the 1980s* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986).

4. The historical discrimination against Mexican-Americans and Puerto Ricans is an experience which cannot be permitted to disappear by projecting Latinos as an overarching group. Such discrimination involves a complex of racial, class, and "otherness" factors which often make middle-class sectors of other Latino groups anxious and seek to dissociate themselves. On the other hand, the fact that discrimination has been directed at all Latino groups contributes to a pan-Latino rejection of discrimination aimed at any particular group.

5. Cf. Steinberg, pp. 24, 40 *et passim*.

6. The increase in the Latin American population in the United States can be more accurately compared with the *overall* European influx rather than with the numbers of any one particular group. If Latin American immigration, in conjunction with the high fertility rate of U.S. Latinos, continues into the next century (which is likely), then proportionately the number of Latinos will rival or supersede that of the European immigrants since the turn of the 19th century. From 1820 to 1930, the estimated "net immigration of various European nationalities" is as follows: Germans, 5,900,000; Italians, 4,600,000; Irish, 4,500,000; Poles, 3,000,000; Canadians, 2,800,000; Jews, 2,500,000; English, 2,500,000; Swedes, 1,200,000; Scots and Scots-Irish, 1,000,000. Cf. Steinberg, *ibid.*, p. 41.

7. Cf. Michael Lev, "Tracking The Hispanic TV Audience," *The New York Times* (Dec. 13, 1989): D 17. Lev's figures are taken from a Nielsen Hispanic Television survey funded by two of the largest Spanish TV networks, Univisión and Telemundo Group, Inc.

8. Such decreases are comparable for other European immigrant populations in the United States. Cf. Joshua Fishman, *et al.*, *Language Loyalty in the United States* (The Hague: Mouton, 1966), pp. 42-44.

9. Stanley Aronowitz, "Postmodernism and Politics," *Social Text*, 18 (Winter 1987/88): 108. Reprinted in Andrew Ross, ed., *Universal Abandon? The Politics of Postmodernism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), pp. 46-62.

10. *Ibid.*

11. Edmundo O'Gorman, *The Invention of America. An Inquiry into the historical nature of the New World and the meaning of its history* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961).

12. Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Holt, 1920), p. 11.

13. Richard Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment. The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800-1890* (New York: Atheneum, 1985), p. 40.

In the case of African-Americans, of course, it was not such a "safety valve" but the racist state which contained their discontent.

14. Guillermo Gómez-Peña, "Documented/Undocumented," in *Multi-Cultural Literacy. Opening the American Mind*, eds. Rick Simonson and Scott Walker (Saint Paul, MN: Graywolf Press, 1988), p. 127.challenges.

15. "The Multicultural Paradigm," p. 20.

16. Tato Laviera, *American* (Houston: Arte Público, 1984), p. 95.

17. Sandra María Esteves, *Yerba Buena* (Greenfield Center, NY: Greenfield Review, 1980).

18. Sandra María Esteves, *Tropical Rains* (New York: African Caribbean Poetry Theater, 1984).

19. Jacques Derrida, "The Parergon," *October*, 9 (Summer 1979): 20.

20. Cf. Jean Baudrillard, *De la Séduction* (Paris: Galilée, 1979). Apropos of the simulacrum, Latin Americans have dealt with problems of cultural identity in terms of the "neither-nor" since the conquest. The difference between "neither-nor" and "not neither" (or "not nowhere") is that the former is usually expressed by elites who feel in an ambivalent position vis-à-vis metropolitan cultural valuation while the latter is situated in the struggles of subordinated groups against a cultural "nonexistence" which elites are too often willing to exploit.

Enrique Lihn has parodied the *ningunista* discourse in *El arte de la palabra* (Barcelona: Pomaire, 1979). "We are nothing: imitations, copies, phantoms: repeaters of what we understand badly, that is, hardly at all: deal organ grinders: the animated fossils of a prehistory that we have lived *neither here nor there*, consequently, anywhere, for we are aboriginal foreigners, transplanted from birth in our respective countries of origin" (p. 82; our emphasis). This is a parody of the anxious discourse of those elites who seek to define the nation. Roberto Schwarz has written an in-depth critique of this kind of "national problem." "Brazilian Culture: Nationalism by Elimination," *New Left Review*, 167 (Jan./Feb. 1988): 77-90.

21. Cf. R. Butler, "On Creating a Hispanic America: A Nation Within a Nation?" quoted in Antonio J. Califa, "Declaring English the Official Language: Prejudice Spoken Here," *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review*, 24 (1989): 321.

22. Terry Robbins, Presentation at Florida International University (Oct. 8, 1987), quoted in Califa, p. 321. Terry Robbins is a former head of U.S. English operations in Florida.

23. Deutsch, "The Political Significance of Linguistic Conflicts," in *Les Etats Multilingues* (1975), quoted in Antonio J.

24. An English First analysis of Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, Pub. Law No. 99-603, 1986 U.S. Cong. Code & Admin. News (100 Stat.) 3359, quoted in Califa, p. 313. Califa, "Declaring English the Official Language: Prejudice Spoken Here," *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review*, 24 (1989): 328.

25. Cf. Joshua Fishman, "'English Only': Its Ghosts, Myths and Dangers," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 125, 132 (1988), quoted in Califa, p. 329.

26. "Government and private experts agree that the threat of war with the Soviet Union is diminishing. As a result, the nation's military services argue that a portion of the Pentagon budget in the 1990's must be devoted to combating drugs and being prepared to bring American military power to bear in the third world." Stephen Engelberg, "In Search of Missions to Justify Outlays," *The New York Times* (Jan. 9, 1990): A14.

27. Thompson, p. 90.

world." Stephen Engelberg, "In Search of Missions to Justify Outlays," *The New York Times* (Jan. 9, 1990): A14.

27. Thompson, p. 90.

28. Cf. Jürgen Habermas, "Modernity—An Incomplete Project," in *The Anti-Aesthetic. Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (Port Townsend, WA: Bay Press, 1983), p. 14.

29. Daniel Bell, "Ethnicity and Social Change," in Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, eds., *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), p. 169, as quoted in Thompson, op. cit., p. 99.

30. According to Michael Omi and Howard Winant, the formation of the concept of ethnicity in the United States is rooted in a different historical conjuncture than ours and, thus, occludes this difference if invoked to account for the negotiation of value by non-European immigrants: "But both assimilationist and cultural pluralism had largely emphasized European, white immigrants, what Kallen called 'the Atlantic migration.' The origins of the concepts of 'ethnicity' and 'ethnic group' in the U.S., then, lay outside the experience of those identified (not only today but already in Park's and Kallen's time), as racial minorities: Afro-Americans, Latin Americans, Native Americans and Asian Americans (blacks, browns, reds and yellows). The continuity of experience embodied in the application of the terms of ethnicity theory to both groups—to European immigrants and racial minorities—was not established; indeed it tended to rest on what we have labelled the *immigrant analogy*." *Racial Formation in the United States*, pp. 16-17.

31. As Stephen Steinberg argues, "Kallen's model of a 'democracy of nationalities' is workable only in a society where there is a basic parity among constituent ethnic groups. Only then would ethnic boundaries be secure from encroachment, and only then would pluralism be innocent of class bias and consistent with democratic principles." *The Ethnic Myth*, pp. 260-61. The reference is to Horace Kallen, "Democracy Versus the Melting Pot," in *Culture and Democracy in the United States* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1924). This critique extends to later studies like Nathan Glazer, *Affirmative Discrimination* (New York: Basic Books, 1975).

32. "[N]umerous new struggles have expressed resistance

33. Laclau and Mouffe, p. 184. See also Martha Minow, "We, the Family: Constitutional Rights and American Families," in *The Constitution and American Life*, ed. David Thelen (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 319. Against the new forms of subordination, and this from the very heart of the new society. Thus it is that the waste of natural resources, the pollution and destruction of the environment, the consequences of productivism have given birth to the ecology movement. Other struggles, which Manuel Castells terms 'urban', express diverse forms of resistance to the capitalist occupation of social space. The general urbanization which has accompanied economic growth, the transfer of the popular classes to the urban periphery or their relegation to the decaying inner cities, and the general lack of collective goods and services have caused a series of new problems which affect the organization of the whole of social life outside work. Hence the multiplicity of social relations [not subordinatable to "class"] from which antagonisms and struggles may originate: habitat, consumption, various services, can all constitute terrains for the struggle against inequalities and the claiming of new rights." Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985), p. 161.

Given that these new forms of subordination and terrains of struggle were not in place before World War II, the conditions of possibility for group self-understanding are no longer those which made prior theories of ethnicity socially and politically operational.

34. "We, the Family," p. 322.

35. Nancy Fraser, "Women, Welfare, and Politics," in *Unruly Practices. Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p. 154.

36. For example, "[I]n the 'masculine' subsystem...claimants must prove their 'cases' meet administratively defined criteria of entitlement; in the 'feminine' subsystem, on the other hand, claimants must prove conformity to administratively defined criteria of need." Ibid.

37. "[I]n a given context the presence of a particular unit is in contrast with its absence. When this situation holds it is usually the case that the unmarked form is more general in sense or has a wider distribution than the marked form." John Lyons, *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 79. The example chosen by Lyons demonstrates that markedness is directly related to socially instituted norms of "generality." One can say "Is the dog a he or a she?" but one would not ask the same if referring to a "bitch," whose gender is necessarily female. Markedness relies on already instituted norms of generality; the theory, however, does not question the grounds on which such a generality is instituted. As regards ethnicity, "WASP's" are taken to be the unmarked form, while other groups are understood as "unmarked." And yet, nearly 90% of U.S. citizens are not WASPs.

38. In an April 1988 study—"New Voices: Immigrant Students in the U.S. Public Schools," financed by the Ford Foundation, it was argued that "schools were doing a poor job of meeting the immigrant students' needs" (our emphasis). Cf. Associated Press, "Study Finds Obstacles Exist For Immigrant Schoolchildren," *The New York Times* (May 10, 1988). Both this and another study advocated increasing the number of Hispanic teachers to meet the cultural needs of students and thus ease the increasing dropout rate and other apparent education dysfunctions. Cf. Peter Applebome, "Educators Alarmed by Growing Rate of Dropouts Among Hispanic Youth," *The New York Times* (March 15, 1987): 22.



39. Quoted in Thomas Weyr, *Hispanic U.S.A. Breaking the Melting Pot* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), pp. 62-63.
40. Ibid.
41. Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action. Vol. II. Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), p. 365.
42. Fraser, p. 156.
43. Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, "The Public Sphere and Experience: Selections," trans. Peter Labanyi, *October*, 46 (Fall 1988), p. 60, translator's note.
44. Fredric Jameson, "On Negt and Kluge," *October*, 46 (Fall 1988): 159.
45. Cf. V.N. Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, trans. Ladislav Matejka and I.R. Titunik (New York: Seminar Press, 1973), pp. 91-97 and M.M. Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres," in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, trans. Vern W. McGee (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), pp. 61-102.
46. Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, *Geschichte und Eigensinn* (Frankfurt: Zweitausendeins, 1981), p. 944, quoted in Jameson, p. 172.
47. Jameson, p. 171.
48. Ibid., p. 78. 49. Ibid., p. 79. 50. Ibid., p. 76. 51. (Boston: David R. Godine, 1982). 52. Ibid., p. 19.
53. Ibid., p. 187. 54. Ibid., p. 182. 55. Ibid., p. 124. 56. Ibid., p. 137. 57. Ibid., p. 151.
58. Thomas B. Morgan, "The Latinization of America," *Esquire* (May 1983): 56.
59. Ibid., p. 3.
60. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 46, 153, and 241.
61. Ibid., p. 259. 62. Ibid., pp. 54-55. 63. Ibid., p. 7.
64. (April 18, 1989), p. 16.
65. Patrick Barry, "When translation isn't enough, try 'trans-creation'," Special supplement on "The Hispanic Market," *Advertising Age* (Feb. 14, 1983): M-21.
66. Ibid., p. M 26. 67. Ibid.
68. Susan Dentzer, "Learning the Hispanic Hustle," *Newsweek* (May 17, 1982): 84.
69. Barry, p. M 26.
70. "[A] show of disregard can cost a firm heavily in lost sales, as the Adolph Coors Co. discovered several years ago. Charged by Hispanic groups with discriminatory hiring practices that led to a boycott of its products, the brewer has fought to rebuild its image, in part by making donations to Hispanic causes." Dentzer, p. 86.
71. Letter from Gerda Bikales, executive director of U.S. English, to the Secretary of the Federal Communications Commission ("FCC") (Sept. 26, 1985), quoted in Califa, pp. 319-20. Cf. also Associated Press, "Group Wants to Stop Ads in Spanish," *San Jose Mercury News* (Dec. 23, 1985).
72. "[E]l barrio es el hilo conductor"; "[la salsa] representa plenamente la convergencia del barrio urbano de hoy [porque asume] la totalidad de ritmos que acuden a esa convergencia"; "La salsa no es un ritmo, y tampoco es un simple estilo para enfrentar un ritmo definido. La salsa es una forma abierta capaz de representar la totalidad de tendencias que se reúnen en la circunstancia del Caribe urbano [incluyendo Nueva York] de hoy; el barrio sigue siendo la única marca definitiva." Cf. César Miguel Rondón, *El libro de la salsa. Crónica de la música del caribe urbano* (Caracas: Editorial Arte, 1980), pp. 32-64 *et passim*. "We object to Philip Morris or any other companies who are advertising in languages other than English," said Stanley Diamond, head of the California chapter of U.S. English, an advocacy group. "What they are doing tends to separate out citizens and our people by language."... This fall Diamond...chapter launched a coupon mail-in protest against a Spanish-language Yellow Pages.... "We certainly would feel that the corporations, the telephone company with the Spanish Yellow Pages should change.... We will do everything we can to put this advertising in English only... and in no other language," said Diamond. In Florida, U.S. English spokeswoman Terry Robbins...has written as a private citizen to McDonald's and Burger King protesting Spanish in fast-food menus. "Why does poor Juan or Maria have a problem ordering a Whopper?" she asked. "It isn't that they aren't able to, they don't want to."
73. Humberto Márquez, "Willie Colon inventa cosas para que la vida no duela," *El Diario de Caracas* (Feb. 23, 1982): 14-15.
74. Ibid.
75. Cf. Jon Pareles, "Dancing Along with David Byrne," *The New York Times* (Nov. 1, 1989): C 1. George Lipsitz makes a similar argument about Los Lobos' networking with other groups to create a new mass audience, a new public sphere: "For [drummer] Perez, the world of rock-and-roll music is not a place that obliterates local cultures by rendering them invisible; rather it is an arena where diverse groups find common ground while still acknowledging important differences. The prefigurative counter-hegemony fashioned by Los Lobos has indeed won the allegiance of musicians from other marginalized cultures. Their songs have been recorded by country and western star Waylon Jennings as well as by polka artist Frankie Yankovic. The Cajun accordion player and singer Jo-Ei Sonnier views Los Lobos as artists whose cultural struggles parallel his own." "Cruising Around the Historical Bloc—Postmodernism and Popular Music in East Los Angeles," *Cultural Critique*, 5 (Winter 1986-87), p. 175.
76. Cf. Juan Flores, "Rappin', Writin', and Breakin': Black and Puerto Rican Culture in New York, *Dissent*, (fall 1987): 580-84.

77. *Chicago Sunday Times* (Jan. 26, 1987).
78. (San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunte Lute, 1987).
79. *Ibid.*, p. 59.
80. See note 71.
81. *Ibid.*, p. 80. 82. *Ibid.*, p. 81.
83. The "ethical substance" is one of the four dimensions that comprise "ethics." It delimits what moral action will apply to: for example, the pleasures among the Greeks, the flesh among the early Christians, sexuality in Western modernity, and, we argue, group ethos—ethnic, feminist, gay, lesbian, etc.—in multi-cultural societies. Cf. Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure* (New York: Vintage, 1986), pp. 26-28.
84. Michel Foucault, "The Ethic of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom," in *The Final Foucault*, eds. James Bernauer and David Rasmussen (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988), p. 19.
85. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
86. Gómez-Peña, "The Multicultural Paradigm," p. 22.
87. Michael J. Fischer, "Ethnicity and the Post-Modern Arts of Memory," in James Clifford and George E. Marcus, eds. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p. 196.
88. Esteves, *Yerba Buena*, p. 7.
89. Cf. Antonio Lauria, "'Respeto,' 'Relajo' and Interpersonal Relations in Puerto Rico," *Anthropological Quarterly*, 37, 2 (1964): 53-67.
90. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).
91. Gina Valdés, "Where You From?" *The Broken Line/La Linea Quebrada*, 1, 1 (May 1986).
92. Víctor Hernández Cruz, *Snaps*.
93. Louis Reyes Rivera, *This One For You* (New York: Shamal, 1983).
94. For discussions of casitas see the planned volume sponsored by the Bronx Council on the Arts, especially Luis Aponte, "Casitas as Place and Metaphor" and Joseph Sciorra, "We're not just here to plant. We have culture': A Case Study of a South Bronx Casita, Rincón Criollo." Cf. the discussion of Sciorra's work in Dinita Smith, "Secret Lives of New York: Exploring the City's Unexamined Worlds," *New York* (Dec. 11, 1989): 34-41.
95. Anzaldúa, p. 79.
96. Renato Rosaldo, *Truth in Culture: The Remaking of Social Analysis* (Boston: Beacon, 1989), p. 216.
97. Tato Laviera, *Mainstream Ethics* (Houston: Arte Público, 1988).
98. Juan Felipe Herrera, "Border Drunkie at 'Cabaret Babylon-Azlán,'" *The Broken Line/La Linea Quebrada*.
99. Gómez-Peña, "The Multicultural Paradigm," p. 20.