

In the early part of the Chicano Movement, Chicanas began to make their mark in poetry. It was an outcry for justice, not just from dominant society but also from her own world which had its own male or macho domination. The poetry of the following Chicanas are featured: Emilia López, Josie Mora (Alivia Nada), Inés Hernández Tovar, Bernice Zamora, Gloria Treviño, Margarita Cota Cárdenas, Miriam Bornstein Somoza and Raquel Elizondo.

CONTEMPORARY CHICANA POETRY: 1969-1977

by

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Since the birth of the Chicano literary and cultural movement¹, much has been written on the new Chicano poetry and prose fiction with particular attention to works written by male writers. With the rise of Chicano programs at the University level throughout the United States, a new generation of Chicanos and Chicanas has received degrees and served as models and leaders in a variety of positions.

While Chicanas have in many cases been the organizers and writers of much of the literature that has surfaced since 1969, little or no recognition has been given to the Spanish-Speaking female of the Chicano literary and cultural movement. This paper will survey ten of the most

important Chicana poetesses, their concerns, themes and techniques. Special attention will be placed on how the Chicana writers will differ, if any, from Chicano poets.

Perhaps the desire to be free from the bonds of colonialism and machismo is a characteristic common to all Chicana poetesses. Exemplary of this tendency is Marcela Trujillo, who, in Chicana Themes, speaks to her Chicana sisters to awaken and arise, for revolutions cannot be won by making tortillas forever, lying down, or a life spent on their knees. "It is the Huelga/that needs you, the Causa (cause) that implores you and Education that calls you," the writer asserts. The poem is written in both Spanish and English separately. It is interesting to note that the Spanish version is more emphatic in calling women away from their sexual responsibilities to a choice in their own revolution of action or ideology. In a poem entitled "Los huevos del macho" Marcella Trujillo underscores the problem of Chicano machismo both in Spanish and English as she asserts:

"Machos claim
they have our 'eggs'
But the claim they make
alludes to Chicana robbery
Thus a macho has to invent
a false reality
to see us as 'fertilists'
and not as 'feminists'
A machista needs this
for his male vanity."³

The macho attitude as manifested in demonstrations obviates logic and intelligence:

"Machos call on their 'huevos' for action;
demonstrations and other manifestations.
They rationalize with their 'eggs' instead of their
brains.
Is that a logical solution
for any revolution?"⁴

Marcela Trujillo's poetry further reflects the double standard applied to Chicanos in matters of politics, language, social mores, and justice,⁵ the problem of communication with the bilingual Chicano child,⁶ the exploitation by the Church,⁷ and racism in America.⁸ But her poetry can also have the folk and rural flavor of a Chicano dance in the San Luis Valley of Colorado as the first strophe demonstrates:

"Constant cracking of pinon nuts
dispersed on the floor, strewn about,
crunched under the feet of corrido stomps
and the 'aye aye ayes' of Mexican shouts."⁹

In an interesting poem entitled "The Advent of My Death," she speaks of the curandera (woman healer) arriving too late, one Santa Fe Day in 1848, with the Aztec heart flower cure (Yoloxóchitl), only to find that when she was born in 1933, her "heart/soul murmured once more for the yoloxóchitl flower/and the curandera who never came/that Santa Fe Day back in 1848." The poem obviously alludes to the Anglo occupation of 1848 and the negative impact on the Spanish-Speaking in the Southwest, but in a subtle, poetic and mystical manner.¹⁰

In one of her best poetic works, "As a Woman Is," she poetically projects the quality of sound, touch and sight through the allusions of the seashell, the bursting volcano and the mountain, as she proclaims:

You are nobody -
Nothing . . .
Eres sólo una ceniza
de historia nunca escuchada
tu y yo somos piedras,
papeles de toilet . . .
Entre suspiros de espacio
y sufrimientos de piel oscura
y nariz de águila.
Estamos marcados por el tío Sam
con un big sign que dice
no queremos Chicanos."¹³

Her poetry can immerse the reader into sensual
labyrinths, with visual imagery in Spanish:

"De la mano juntos
entre ensueños de mares.
Insondables como silencio.
El momento del misterio
apareció en tus ojos.
En tus pestañas,
En tu pelo negro,
en tu cuerpo.
Y se fue extendiendo como telarañas
cautivando el sueño
de los amores libres
que tuvimos juntos."¹⁴

Emilia Anton López is concerned with hunger in this
world and defines it with colors in a poem entitled "Entresuro...":

"Es verde esperanza
por que alimenta con sueños?
Café por que domina
lo oscuro de lo real
roja por que llora sangre
entre retortijones.
Amarilla, en su espera
de llegar al intestino.
Azul, para amortiguan
entre besos su pobreza.
Es negra como poesía olvidada,
por que es muerte,
que llega despacio
y lentamente se retina
entre harapos de recuerdos humanos."¹⁵

The writer's deep concern for human justice for all
minorities of the world is seen as freedom for all humanity:

"Cuando el monte hable
con palabras verdes,
la opresión de pueblos,
Cuando el Río lllore sangre
de piedras,
Espumas turbulentas
de miseria y hambre.
Cuando el infinito
cante poemas de injusticia imperialista.
Tal vez el ideal nuestro,
sea escuchado.
La minorías han gritado
los Chicanos han alzado voces
sin esperanzas de Justicia.

Quando los montes hablen
los ríos lloren
el infinito cante:
La naturaleza entera gima.
Los dolores del tercer mundo.
Entonces, nuestra revolución
será un hecho de libertad
para la humanidad."¹⁶

Lorna Dee Cervantes, editor of Mangos, a Chicano poetic quarterly, perhaps can be best described by her "Self Portrait" in which she expresses:

"I melt into the Stone Indian features of my
face
Olmec eyes. I am an old brown woman of the
moon.
I am the milk raw woman side of Ometéotl.
Quetzalcoatl has his sex in me. His long cock
is a soft pink plume of subtle poetry. His face
is in my dark eyes. Ancient rites on a pyramid
of small colored stones. We make slow sacri-
ficial love."¹⁷

The old and the new, their customs and approaches to reality, are seen in a poem entitled simply "Grandma":

"Mi abuela makes tortillas in the back room.
Grandma. Her wrinkled brown hands
pulling weeds before sunset.
I am a mystery to her.
I eat her tortillas speaking fragmented Spanish.
We are friends
but to her I am a puzzlement.
Grandma. Chorizo in the morning.
Breakfast.

'Por qué no te quieres casar?'

Abuelita,
You don't understand."¹⁸

Like many Chicano writers, Lorna Dee Cervantes expresses in "Heritage" the frustration of being denied both in the U.S.A. and in Mexico for being Chicana and "puchaseed" as her name hangs about her like a loose tooth. Her protest against Chicano males for their machismo is best reflected in "You Cramp My Style, Baby," in which she expresses disdain for the Chicano who uses Chicanas as sexual objects and shouts "Viva la Raza"; to add insult to injury, the Chicano will mija (like saying child or girl) the Chicana until she can scream and then say:

"Esa, I love
this revolution -
Come on Malinche,
gimme some more!"¹⁹

In a lengthy but well-written poem entitled "Beneath the shadow of the freeway" the writer sings of days of old with Grandma and mother, the fresh geraniums, the work, the seagulls, the screams, the singing of mockingbirds, and a mother's wisdom. It is the voice of a Chicana that listens to her mother's warning of being too soft, but immerses herself in the ways of her grandma who believed in myths and birds:

"It's summer now. Every night I
sleep with a gentleman to the
hymn of mocking birds,
and in time, I will plant geraniums,
I will tie up my hair into loose braids
and trust only
what I have built
with my own hands."²⁰

Josie Mora, better known as Alivia Nada, was born and raised in la calle del diablo in Lubbock, Texas. Writer of poetry both in Spanish and English, she has a keen sense for understanding and describing her environment. Her poetry is rhythmic and pure, devoid of superficial techniques. In a poem entitled "Por la calle del diablo" (By Devil's Street), she reconstructs in Spanish, almost in ballad style, the folklore of the barrio: the Pepes, los Pongues, the wisdom of grandma, the early dawn pilgrimage to church, the weekend machos, the seasonal work, the broken-down homes, and the many people who are marked in the history of her memory:

"Por la calle del Diablo
donde yo nací
con sus historias de espanto
que yo nunca vi . . .

cada domingo madrugábamos
para ir a misa,
en ayunas a comulgar

y en las tardes de verano
casi al cruzar la calle
nos llevaba mi abuelita
al arrollo a jugar . . .

casas todas descompuestas
una que otra no muy mal
con mas de una familia
en cada un hogar

conocí muchas gentes
que hoy llevo en mi memoria
que la vida de esos tiempos
se quedará en la historia."²¹

Like Lorna Dee Cervantes, she is quick to criticize people of Mexican heritage who scorn her because her Spanish is not good. The writer asserts that it was here where she was born and it was the public schools that only taught her English and yet she is called a "pocha." The poem ends

when the poetess addresses herself in first person to her critics by proclaiming "I am but a mere extension of you."

"Pero no me critiques
fijate bien en mí
y no me niegues tu cruz
que so y nada mas
una extensión
de ti."22

Alivia Nada, writing in Spanish, creates the freshness and simplicity of nature to express lyrically some thoughts of love in "Eres tu":

"Como una gota de miel clara
mas clara que una gota de lluvia
mas tibia que la lluvia en el verano.

Eres como el rocío en la flor
que amanece en la mañana
que le da vida y fortaleza
al extremo mas profundo.

Y al anocheecer
si no vuelve amanecer
ha quedado una semilla
para que brote otro día."23

Inéz Hernández Tovar was born in Galveston, Texas of Indian and Chicano parents. Currently, she teaches at the University of Texas-Austin. In her poetry, we see both the Indian and Chicano reality, her deep feelings toward Death and Solitude, her reflections on love, the injustices towards women, her political convictions and her attitude towards the Chicano male. Her poetry is written in Spanish, English, and in bilingual form. Exemplary of English poetry reflecting her Indian reality is a poem entitled "For Janice, Chillamamook," in which the writer reminisces on the small detailed things of this world that were taught to her by her mother, unlike toys, barbie dolls, monopoly sets or T.V. sets of her Gringa friends.

She learned to see and feel pain not only of people, but for our other brothers:

"You felt pain
for a cockroach
trapped by a spider,
a lame beggar
who could not walk,
a child with the
thought of a tear
in her eyes"24

Inéz Hernández Tovar pays homage to her Indian mother, mother of the Nez Perce, and becomes embodied in true Indian spirit as she utilizes nature in describing her mother:

"Mother of the Nez Perce
with the laugh of clear
mountain streams
solace for this thirsty
child's soul

Mother of the granddaughter
of your father Weukshanat
of the earth of the chants
of your heart

Mother with the eyes
of a doe
frightened by crowds
and cowards
and sham

other of my solitude
and of my song
who with a smile
gave me the world

his poem is from your
daughter."25

This deep feeling for the pain of others is seen poetically through the peregrino (pilgrim) who places flowers on roads, sings to the wind, discovers humble worlds beneath his tent; he is the Indian of the Mother Earth, the root of the life-sun, the poet of the life-force who cultivates hearts and gives love:

"Indio de la Tierramadre
árbol de la vidadol
peregrino de Laredo
de energía
y cascarón

poeta por quien
el polvo conocido
que mapatas se convierte
en moviviento
tanto que la tierra
te abraza y te aprieta

mesquite seco
que vives por los poros
con tus poemas
cultivas corazones
y regalas amor."26

Death is a faithful and friendly companion in

"Realidad I", and solitude, like death, overcomes and dominates her sensual feelings for her loved one in "Compañero."

The ability to construct and weave Spanish and English is demonstrated aptly in "Pensavientos" where the author expresses concern for all that is chained as seen through the chained dog, yearnings of liberty; her sentiments are with the Indian:

Actually
the camino de flores
has many sharp piedras
es verdad

miedo
frozen static
halts abruptly
and sometimes
irrevocably

llorar lágrimas
gotas claras
de mi pluma
libre
de la lluvia
fresca
crecen
flores

con el viento
nocturno
acariciándome

no me molestan
ni las chicharras

pero un perro
ladrando
encadenado
yearnings of liberty
do
disturb me

indio
como te enredas
en mis trenzas
mas amanezco
rebelde el sentimiento
vuela
hacia ti!"²⁷

In a Spanish poem entitled "Rezo" (Prayer) Inéz Hernández Tovar creates her own "Hail Mary" prayer and pays homage to the Holy Mayan goddesses, Tonantzin, our holy mother earth spirit, la llorona (the legend of the weeping mother), the inferior position in which woman was placed by Spaniards, and asks the mother spirit to liberate minds and put in order our Aztlan-home:

"Ruega por nosotros
huestra madre de las reinas
lágrimas diosas mayas . . .

ruega por nosotros
Santa Madre de los Dolores
diosas indias
que vieron la hija Malinche
acusada, abusada . . .

ruega por nosotros
querida madre de la soledad
hijas mestizas . . .

ruega con nosotros
madre cariñosa
árbol de la vida . . .

Ayúdanos respetada madre
de los risas y de la fuerza
a liberar mentes
y poner en orden
nuestra casaztlan

Abuela
ayúdenos

Madre
ayúdenos

hija
ayúdanos

hermana
ayúdanos

mujer
ayúdanos,

Por mis padres
Gracias y Amor
de su hija
Amen."28

Bernice Zamora, author of Restless Serpents, is a native of Colorado who has published poetry in Mosaic, The Muse, Sou'Wester, Expression, Anomie Universal, and La Onda Special Edition: Poetry. Perhaps the most salient characteristic of her writings is her skillful manner in handling the English language. This does not preclude writings in Spanish or in bi-lingual form. Restless Serpents covers a variety of perspectives from childhood experiences to the drumming pains of the author.

In the first section entitled "Living in Aztlan" the author reminisces about the first vato that kissed her as a 12 year old girl. The writer adroitly points out that while her mother and teacher said "Shame on you", fostering guilt in the little girl, no one ever even thought of saying "Shame on you" to the young male who instigated the situation. In "Gata Poem" woman is once again seduced by a Chicano who "glistened in the sun like a bronze god" as he beckons:

"Ven, mujer,
Ven, conmigo . . .

As the writer realizes she is but a cat dressed in black,

" Qué quieres, señor?
Qué quieres conmigo?"

It is man with his promises of singing eternally in shining
suns, of living together in nine worlds, that entices

"Ven, gatita,
Ven conmigo

y me fui."29

It should be noted that apart from the symbolism implied with color and cat, there is double entendre in the dialectal Spanish meaning of "gata". It connotes a female servant, which in this case, follows a pattern for woman.

The author castigates the Chicano male in "Mirando aquellos desde los campos" (Looking at Them from the Fields) as she sets the stage by quoting Edward Dahlberg from The Sorrows of Priapus, "Copulation is a dangerous pastime." Bernice is touching upon a sensitive but true Chicano pattern as she states:

"Yes, one bed, one wife -
Too much and too little -
for esos propagators intertwined
at the rising of the Dogstar - "
Yes, the marriage beds
and wives wither, and
yes, husbands bear their heads
and divining rods through
boarhouses and vomitoriums
yes, whoremongering
craving, diving ruin . . ."

Yet the Chicano male has a perennial taste for his machismo or his compas (buddies) as the author questions the continuance of these practices, and concludes:

"Que bueno
que se apuran entonces
porque querriamos preparar
los coffins hoy día
for your senile carcasses
forty years old and worming."³⁰

Bernice Zamora also reflects on the past, an age almost forgotten, and underscores its importance as she listens:

". . . to secrets rolling through tall weeds
of my abuelos' mountain. I listen to their
laughter among field mice.

From tomb to tomb voy andando,
buscando un punto final
to an age ya mero olvidado!"³¹

In a sonnet skillfully written in English, Bernice Zamora speaks of weary woman pöndering on masculinity, its realm, bloody passions - only to return "worn, rebuked and spent/to feminity content":

"Do not ask, Sir, why this weary woman
wears well the compass of gay boys and men.
Masculinity is not manhood's realm
which falters when ground passions overwhelm.
O, no! It is a gentle, dovelet's wing
that rides the storm and is never broken.
It is whispered, secret words that bring
to breath more hallowed sounds left unspoken.
Men, Sir, are not bell hammers between rounds
within the rings of bloody gloves and games.
Men, Sir, ought not rend the mind round square's round
spent, rebuked, and trembling in fitted frames.
So I return, Sir, worn, rebuked, and spent,
to gentle femininity content."³²

Bernice Zamora appropriately concludes her poetry with a poem entitled "Restless Serpents" in which the theme of restless serpents vis-à-vis the writer is foregrounded in the quote, "The duty of a cobra's master is fraught with

fettered chores." Here the allusion is to the cobra master (author) who is confronted with neglect, spite, disregard, lapses, and other devastating strokes of restless serpents which lyrics alone can only soothe. It is the author who, like the foundling who sees the slithering serpent approaching, and like the master fraught with fettered chores, must perennially soothe the strikes of restless serpents.

"Lyrics -
lyrics alone soothe
restless serpents, strokes
more devastating than
devastation arrived."33

Gloria Treviño, like Bernice Zamora, is a native of Colorado. However, unlike Bernice Zamora, Gloria Treviño writes almost exclusively in Spanish in a style that is as natural as the author herself. Gloria Treviño's poetry is pure and crystalline as a meadow stream. Her poetry is not one that has been reworked and polished; it flows from the heart in simple but true form. It reminds us of the melodic corridos which are a part of the Chicano's heritage.

Probably her most noted poem is "Quien soy?" (Who Am I?) in which the author, from a Chicana point of view, traces the Chicana female in history. One notes the natural rhyme and rhythm:

"Soy Malinche
sufri las desgracias del conquistador
Soy la Virgen María
sufri los dolores del castigador

Soy la Adelita
sufri las batallas de la revolución

Soy la llorona
sufri la venganza de la superstición

Soy la mujer Mexicana . . .

Soy la mera sangre . . .

Soy la historia Mexicana!
Soy la historia Meshicana!
Soy la historia Americana!

Mírame bien
Escúchame bien
Yo soy la mujer Mexicana."³⁴

Gloria Traviño is not concerned with man/woman confrontations but rather with dealing with the struggle together with her fellowmen as expressed in "Sí, venceremos." Her thoughts are of death, solitude, history, the underdog, the migrant, love, injustices and the identity as a person. In a poem reminiscent of a ballad, with internal rhythm and rhyme entitled "Lloro, sí lloro," Gloria Treviño shows how drink is used differently by the Anglo, the Mexican and the Chicano:

"Dicen que el Anglo
toma para olvidar
y el Mexicano para recordar
pues, yotomo para llorar.

Lloro por mi raza . . .

Lloro por mis padres . . .

Lloro por los migrantes . . .

Lloro por las Chicanas . . .

Lloro por mi lengua . . .

Lloro, sí lloro, y aunque digan
que el Anglo toma para olvidar,
y el Mexicano para recordar
pues, yo tomo para llorar.

In a historical and philosophical poem concerned

with suffering and discrimination and injustices, entitled "No llores niño, yo sé", (Don't Cry, Child, I Know), Gloria Treviño develops the aforementioned themes in a complete cycle of man from birth to death as we see him as a child ashamed of the color of his skin, the mocking of his native language, the denial of society, the drugs, the effort to become equal by going to Vietnam to return content to rest finally in peace in the hometown cemetery - "Don't Cry, Child, I know."³⁶

Solitude as a recurrent characteristic among Chicana poetesses is aptly handled by the use of the future tense for rhyme and the use of antithesis for thought reminiscent of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz:

"Nací en una soledad intensa
y moriré en una soledad imensa

Aunque penetras mi alma
nunca espantarás mi tristeza

Me oyerás hablar
Me oyerás cantar

Pero nunca mirarás las lágrimas
escondidas en mis entrañas

Me desearás
Me abrazarás
pero nunca jamás
en mi soledad entrarás

Porque nací en una soledad materna
y moriré en una soledad nocturna."³⁷

Margarita Cota Cárdenas, a native of California, is currently a Ph.D. candidate and an instructor at the University of Arizona. Her poetry is characterized by an acute sensitivity and passion; her themes include love, motherhood, feminine identity, social injustice, man/woman conflict, and historical and mythological figures as characters for contemporary definition. Like Bernice Zamora, Margarita Cota Cárdenas is highly skillful in handling language for her poetry, although in this case it is Spanish.

Her poems have been published in Letras Femeninas, Caracol, Xalman, Papeles de la Frontera and Poema Convidado. Her book of poetry include Noches despertando conciencias, Marchitas de mayo y otras, and Antimitos y contraleyendas. In addition to her poetry, she has a collection of short stories in a work entitled Puppet and Other Signs of the Barrio.

In the first section of Noches despertando inconciencia,³⁸ entitled "Desveladas Tempranas" (sleepless Risings), we see some of her early poems dating from 1970, much of which are concerned with themes of love. Exemplary of this predominant theme is "Misticismos" (Mysticisms), a passionate and emotional poem dedicated to a loved one:

:" . . . cómo esos labios me hacen soñar
al oír tus palabras
en sentir tus mordidas,
al palpar tus mejillas.
Cómo tus labios sugieren gozar.

¡Ay! ¡Cuán ese cuerpo me hace pensar,
en extasiados dolores del impuro gozar!
Cuán esa alma hace suspirar,
al momento de verte y de contemplar
esos labios, tus manos calientes, tus ojos y ma
Cómo me mata el deseo, ¡sabroso quemar!"³⁹

By 1975, the author focuses much attention on the position of woman vis-à-vis man. In "Deletreando al Cosmos" (Spelling the Cosmos), Margarita Cota Cárdenas sees women as letters of the alphabet who germinate and bring together man who is like a bull, a stone, a myth, and nothingness. The problem of being more macho or less macho is apparent in a separatist culture; such is the case in "Y en qué estamos", (Where Are We?)

"Ser menos mujer
 es
 ser mas macho.
Ser menos macho
 es
 ser mas mujer.
 Qué confusiones
Qué cultura tan separatista
 casi nunca decimos 'ello'
 sólo se dice 'el' o 'la'
Que aspiraciones tan neutras las mías
 sólo quería definir
 el YO
Qué equivocada Qué confundida
 Que menos y mas me voy."⁴⁰

Woman, moreover, is not a lily, to be loved as a sister, but the equal opposite, an hembra, to enjoy without mystery the flames of man; two egoists playing with destiny.⁴¹ This, however, does not mean that woman will submit to man at his pleasure; the myth of the Latino divorced female as easy prey is discounted in "Tant Pis, Tant Pis."⁴² Nevertheless, the Chicana in the year of the woman cannot afford to believe everything feminist. "Manifestacion tardía" (Late Demonstration) defines the borders. First, she is a WOMAN in her orgasms, births and death. In her beliefs, she cannot be an accomplice to foreign definitions; she can only be a CHICANA who helps her "sisters", but only if there is worth, merit,

uniqueness and freedom. As a Chicana she must seek her essence and break away from the long line of myths. In today's insincere tokenism of women, Chicanas must think for themselves, not for the Macho nor their maternal drives; she is to suffer and bleed but at least when she dies alone together with the void, she will have paid homage to her people and created her own cosmos as a Chicana, a sister, and a woman.⁴² The breaking away from tradition, from the point of view of the woman, is illustrated in a warm and sensitive poem in which the writer confesses to the "Madre raza" her escape in attempting to free herself from legends and redefining history. In the first person she states:

 ". . . dí que comprendes
 resucita conmigo
ya era tiempo
 de abortar los mitos
 de un sólo sentido."⁴³

Margarita Cota Cardenas' concern for social justice and the underdog is illustrated in "Lápida para 'puppet'" (Gravestone for a Puppet), which represents a common scene even today: A 19 year old barrio boy, a marionette of destiny, is shot by the "cops." He was known as "un buen batito", (a good dude), courageous and obliging, only to be buried by his mother's side without a gravestone. The author reflects:

 "el barrio es pobre
 'carnalito'
no nos olvidamos de
 tu triste vida
 ni de
 tu inútil fin."⁴⁴

Finally, the author can capture the folklore of Sonora, the land of her ancestors, with mystical and poetic warmth. It is the

celebration of the feast of San Francisco and pilgrims,
young and old, with lanterns, fill the hillside during a warm
summer night, like fireflies sparkling in the darkness:

" . . . afuera un desfile desordenado
de luciérnagas
bailando variando
su vaivén vertical
en la cálida noche sonoreense

en grupos de lucecitas distantes
que se acercan y se alejan
en un instante

de pronto un par de luciérnagas
a la luz de los mas fuertes faroles
son una cara india anciana
muy noble
y un sombrero de paja
con el brazo alzado
hacia el cielo . . .

. . . lucecitas peregrinas
unas jovencitas y niñas
otras arrugadas y señoras
devotas pagando sus mandas."

frágiles luciérnagas
en camino a Magdalena
para amanecer cumplidos
el día de San Francisco." 45

Miriam Bornstein Somoza was born in Mexico in 1950.
Currently, she is a Ph.D. student at the University of Arizona.
Her collection of poems published by Scorpion Press entitled
Baja cubierta reflects a search for new structures in society.
Her sensitive and suggestive poetry is concerned with love,
the identity of women, time and man/woman relationships. Her
poems "Un saludo" (A Greeting) and "Toma de nombre" (The Taking
of a Name) concern the problem of labels which identify, limit
and enclose the female. As a married woman she is:

"...fulana de tal
esposa de fulano
madre de zutano
and sometimes I have a
premonition that I am only
woman of no one."46

The idea of equality of the sexes is seen not through
civil legislation but through beginning all over as cataclysms
strike earth:

"...entonces regresaremos
no a ser Eva o Adám
sino
un ser evadánico
que quizá
no sea mas viejo
pero sí mas sabia."47

Like Margarita Cota Cardenas, Miriam Bornstein Somoza'
love poetry is suggestive and sensual. Her thoughts of a past
lover become poetic nuances in "Poema para un amante" (Poem for
a lover):

"Hablando con el humo de tu alma
sé que existes
en el vocablo de la desesperación

ahora deletreando mi existencia
recuerdo unos poemas de amor
que te escribí en el olvido

tu me encierras en la noche
y ya en la mañana
por eso sé que existes
en la cercana e tapa del recuerdo

tu nostalgia me vigila la vida
y mientras
en el umbral de la existencia 48
te espero tejiendo madrugadas."

In "Homenaje" (Homage) the author focuses on the
problem of being a female and married as she addresses herself
to a friend, born alone but now chained to marriage, detained,
uttering only "first my children, then myself." It is the

latter that will remain year after year, the wish for a sense of self-hood will linger on.

Finally, as a symbol of final exploitation of woman, the author contemplates the life of the prostitute whose body has been slowly consumed by night, but who lives by day ostracized in solitude, who walks lost in a void. But in the darknes she looks for her shadow and queries in silence what she might have been, what she never became, and what she is; and yet in her conflict and toil, she dozes now, hoping to awaken as one:

" . . . En la oscuridad que circunda tu vida
 buscas tu sombra
 indiferente a ti y a todos
 con un preguntar sin fin
 ahogas tus noches en tus días
 buscando un destello silenciosa
 de lo que pudieras haber sido
 de lo que nunca fuiste
 de lo que siempre eres

mujer
 que en mil noches de entrega
 en nudos y sudor
 dormitas ahora
 esperando despertar
 a la noche
 UNA."50

Raquel Elizondo, a native of Laredo, Texas, has published her poetry in the anthologies, Ta Cincho and Trece Alien. Moreover, her work has been included in Tejidos, a bilingual journal from the University of Texas. In Raquel Elizondo's poetry there is a constant struggle and desire to show reality like it is. She is concerned with life and its philosophic implications the creation of a child, the pains and sorrows of her people, the wise old grandmother and the social inequities of the Southw.

In a curious cemetary scene, Raquel Elizondo with the grace of innocence depicts a typical Chicano trip to the cemetar; where the cows roam, to pay homage to Aunt Florinda. For the

adults it is a ritual, for the kids a festival, and for grandma an altar. At its conclusion they would visit the "other" cemetery, the Protestant one, and have a picnic in front of J. J. Wilson's tomb - after all it was the only one with benches around it.⁵¹

In a poem describing the creation and elimination of life, the author reminisces to times of innocence and purity

"Semillas de serpiente pulsante
se han penetrado en mi
recuerdos de la ignorancia del ayer
todo puro, limpio, virginal

semillas de serpiente pulsante
se han adueñado de mi
lo que ayer era uno
ahora son dos

semillas de serpiente pulsante
dentro de mi
después de un plazo brotará
la flor de la feminidad

semillas de serpiente pulsante
las he arrojado de mi
todas vueltas una
criatura
parte de ti
parte de mi."⁵²

In a short poem, Raquel Elizondo reveals her feelings of woman as she states:

"Llena, llena
De Qué
Pues de Pena

Antiguamente
Misteriosa, venerada

Recientemente
Desflorada - salvajemente Pisoteada

Llena
De Qué, Pues?
de Pena."⁵³

In a touching poem about her grandmother, an old and wise figure, always looking out the window, living in a world of nebulous shadows, eagerness and thoughts, we see a lasting impression placed on the author with reference to brotherhood:

"Eres pequeña y quizá
no comprendes
el porqué de mis palabras
pero pongo mi fe en el futuro
de mi gente y de mi sangre
y presiento que no es
en vano

anda, vete, hija
y cuando tu gente de ti
pida ayuda
extiende tu mano."54

Along with Raquel Elizondo, Angélica Martínez is the co-editor of Tejidos at the University of Texas - Austin. A serious student of literature, Angélica Martínez has been very active in a variety of Chicano activities. While she has taken a role as an activist, her poetry seldom uses the rhetoric of Chicano nationalism. Rather, the writer is intent in dealing with the struggle and activism creatively in her literature. In addition to poetry, Angélica Martínez writes short stories, theatre, and is developing a novel.

In true activist spirit, Angélica Martínez describes "Amerikans" with incisive perspicacity:

"In secure white flight thick walls
any night in anytown
jaded husbands, bitchy wives
engage in cocktail hour conversations.
The Wives are prone to see anal-ysis
doll house partners in a deal,
victims of fair sex paralysis.
Their mates are criminals
in white collars.
They love their cars, Scotch, whores
and dollars."55

Her description of Austin as a college town is amusing and correct, of "drunk frat rats and burocrats/good ol' boys in redneck hats", a "rusty urban process/bending over in exchange/for sellout passes."⁵⁶

Her relationship with men is uncomplicated and expressed in the last strophe of "Sin complicaciones":

"Vatito, vatito color de cafe
si tu no me quiereres
me quiere José." ⁵⁷

Like many of the poetesses discussed, Angélica Martínez' relationship with her grandmother is of great importance and lasting impact. Four words from her grandmother are repeating like an echo in her subconscious "No te rajes, hijita (Don't give in, child). In a moving cemetary scene, the author concludes speaking of life without the shadows of uncertainty:

"hablé de la vida sin decir una mentira
que fácil llegué a la verdad
sin palabras
para borrarles al miedo y el sufrimiento
no les mentí en silencio." ⁵⁸

The perennial reverses of life - - promises that fail goodbyes, seductive lies, drugs, God, etc., are mere "reminders piling up against the advisability of vulnerability becoming the denial of fulfillment and conquered emptiness with time" in "Against the Reliability of the Score." It is a lesson in turning "inward to the tender void/becoming delicately hard."⁵⁹

Angélica Martínez can also be acutely sensual, as exemplified in the bi-lingual poem "Corriente nocturna" (Nocturna Current):

"We join luminosos
human floodlight
bathes luna and her man
pours in all their shadows
dark, dry lowlands asking to be seas
pull and drink our liquid senses
luna and we dissolve

ebbtide leaves us immobile
sent back almost intact
luna y su hombre disappear
el sol seca nuestras lágrimas
promesas húmedas de océanos eternos."⁶⁰

Finally, Angélica Martínez, in "Selfish Mushrooms"
ponders on her endeavors and makes no excuses for her actions:

"Now I lay me down to sleep
I have to say I'm in too deep
If I should die before I wake
nobody grieve, I tasted cake..."⁶¹

CONCLUSIONS:

While it can be stated that machismo is of general concern to most Chicana writers, it is probably more correct to say that the variety of styles, dialects, languages and themes utilized are most notable and unique for an ethnic group.

Machismo as a cultural trait inherited from colonial Mexico is historically the direct importation of a Mediterranean characteristic by the Spaniards. The practice of beating the women was another sordid pattern established by the Spaniards who became known as gachupines.⁶² Coupled with the Judeo-Christian concept of the female as an inferior being to man, the Mexican and the Chicana female have had the difficult task of receiving equal representation. The Chicana, more than the Mexican counterpart, has recently gained a voice in achieving a platform of rights within the Chicano movement. The Chicana writer will question traditional roles assigned to her culturally, negate labels and sometimes equate herself as the opposite of the macho -- the hembra.

While most are preoccupied with the male/female conflict, they are, nonetheless, sensitive and sensual persons capable of feeling and savoring real love. With the exception of a few writers who looked at man as a brother in the struggle, most Chicanas expressed a struggle for proper recognition of their rights as females. It is interesting to note that one writer cautions Chicanas not to be fooled by easy feminist slogans but to search for their own essence and to be a

Chicana first.

It would appear that Chicano poets see their female counterpart in a dual role. The Chicana is a compañera in the movement but at the same time she is a sex object, used and abused by man. Some of the male poetry reflects the identical male/female conflict but from the point of view of the man which views the female as "loose" and thereby at fault. Part of the problem is heightened by the threat that the female poses in changing her traditional role. By assuming a more aggressive role hitherto assigned to the Chicano, she eliminates the concept of the aggressor enjoyed by the male.

One point in common with both is the underscoring of social prejudice and injustice against the raza. It is the poor, the underdog, the pachuquito, that become the folk heroes. Another point in common is a tenacious and conscious effort to cling to cultural roots. While male writers will glorify their Emiliano Zapatas and Pancho Villas, the Chicanas will utilize the Adelitas or simply las abuelitas (the grandmothers) as models to follow.

One characteristic which is predominant more in Chicana writers than their Anglo counterparts is the overt tendency to show their suffering. Culturally, Mexicans and Chicanos do not have reservations in singing or writing of their suffering. It could, moreover, be argued that the Chicana and Mexicana probably live in a more demanding macho world and thereby have a greater need in expressing their suffering.

One salient characteristic of Chicana writers is their ability to write well both in English or Spanish. Some

will weave Spanish with English in a most natural and proficient manner. In one case, a Chicana wrote the same poem twice in two different languages. This variety and flexibility is further enriched by the use of dialects, Indian expressions, symbols and mythology.

Finally, the Chicana writer is acutely sensitive and aware of her immediate reality. She has the ability to totally envelop an object with emotion and passion; to saturate herself into the quintessence of her cosmos and still fight for her cause and the cause of her people.

It is the realization that "revolutions cannot be won by making tortillas forever", and that no matter what the outcome "If she should die before she wakes, nobody grieve, she tasted cake."

Footnotes

- 1 While it can be said that the Chicano movement had its beginnings shortly after 1848, reference is made to the most current movement arising in 1969, with the Chicano Student Conference held in Denver, Colorado.
- 2 Marcela Trujillo, a native of Alamosa, Colorado, is currently teaching at the University of Minnesota. Her poetry has been published in Foothills, National Anthology of College Poetry, El Tiempo, Floriscanto Anthology, Time to Greez and Hispanic Colorado.
- 3 Marcela Trujillo, Chicana Themes: Manita Poetry (unpublished) 1975.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 "Double Standard," Chicana Themes, (unpublished) 1975.
- 6 "Put It On My Desk," "Teacher, Teacher, Teacher," Chicana Themes, (unpublished) 1975.
- 7 "El pecado mortal," Chicana Themes, (unpublished) 1975.
- 8 "Las ruedas del mundo," Chicana Themes, (unpublished) 1975.
- 9 "San Luis Valley Dance, c-1930's-1940's," Chicana Themes, (unpublished) 1975.
- 10 "The Advent of My Death," Time to Greez, (San Francisco, 1975).
- 11 "As A Woman Is," Chicana Themes, (unpublished) 1975.
- 12 "Winds of Aztlan," Chicana Themes, (unpublished) 1975.
- 13 Emilia López, "No queremos Chicanos," (unpublished) 1977.

Translation of Spanish section:

"You are but mere ashes
of history
never to be heard
You and I are but stones,
toilet paper . . .
Between spatial sighs
and dark-skinned sufferings
and eagle-shaped noses.
We are marked by Uncle Sam
with one big sign that reads:
We don't want Chicanos."

- 14 Emilia López, unpublished love poetry - no title, 1977.

Translation:

"Together, hand in hand

within ocean dreams and desires
impregnable like silence.
In your eyes, the moment
of mystery appeared
in your eyelashes
in your dark hair
in your body
and soon it extended
itself like cobwebs
engulfing a dream
of our loves
we shared together."

- 15 Emilia López, "Entrescuro . . ." unpublished, 1977.

The writer sees the following characteristics in each color:

- green - hope - because it fulfills our dreams
- brown - because it dominates the darkness of reality
- red - because it cries with blood within spasms
- yellow - because of the long wait before reaching
the intestines.
- blue - because it cushions between kisses, poverty
- black - because like forgotten poetry,
it is death
which arrives slowly
and departs sluggishly within
the rags of human rememberances.

- 16 Emilia Anton López, unpublished (no title), 1977

This poem expresses poetically the following thoughts
When the woods speak in green tones of the oppression
of peoples, when the river cries the blood of its
stones and when the infinite sings poems of imperial-
ist injustices, perhaps then our ideals will be heard
for minorities have shouted, Chicanos have raised
their voices without hope of justice. It is only
when these manifestations occur that the pains of the
Third World will cease and our revolution will be a
work of freedom for all humanity.

- 17 Lorna Dee Cervantes, "Self-Portrait", read at Canto Al Pueblo, Milwaukee, April 1977.

- 18 Lorna Dee Cervantes, "Grandma", read at Canto Al Pueblo, Milwaukee, April 1977.

Translation of Spanish: abuela - grandma; Chorizo -
Mexican sausage; Por qué no te quieres casar?
Why don't you want to get married?; abuelita -
grandma (with affection).

- 19 Lorna Dee Cervantes, "You Cramp My Style, Baby," unpublished, 1977. Malinche is a symbol of the betrayed woman in Mexico. Malinche was the lover of the invading Cortés.
- 20 Lorna Dee Cervantes, "Beneath the Shadow of the Freeway," unpublished, 1977.
- 21 Alivia Nada, "Por la calle del Diablo," unpublished, 1975.
- 22 Alivia Nada, "El Hijo Perdido," unpublished, 1975.
- 23 Alivia Nada, "Eres tu," unpublished, 1975.

Translation:

Like a drop of clear honey
clearer than a rain drop
warmer than a summer rain

You are like the dew on a flower
that appears at dawn
which gives life force
to the most profound end

and at dusk
should the dawn not arise
there will be a seed
to bloom another day

- 24 Inés Hernández Tovar, "...For Janice, Chillamamook",
Con razón corazón (private booklet), 1977, p.7.
- 25 Con razón corazón, "...For Janice, Chillamamook", p.8.
- 26 Con razón corazón, "Poema para José", p.12.

Translation:

"Indian of the mother earth
tree of the life-sun
Pilgrim of Laredo
of energy
and of the bark

Poet for whom the
dust known as
feetscorcher is
converted
into moving/wind

So much so that
the earth
embraces and engulfs you

-35-

Dry mesquite tree
that lives through the pores
with your poems
- cultivate souls
and deliver love"

27 Con razón corazón, "Pensavientos," p.19.

Translation: De Flores - of flowers; es verdad - it
is true; miedo - fear.

llorar lágrimas:

to cry tears
clear drops
of my liberated
pen

of clear
raindrops
the flowers
grow

with the nocturnal
wind
caressing me
they do not bother me
not even the locusts

but a barking dog's
imprisoned
yearnings for liberty
do
disturb me

Indian
How you tangle
yourself within
my pigtailed
the more I awaken
rebelious, my
feelings
fly
towards you.

28 Con razón corazón, "Rezo," pp.25-26.

Translation: Pray for us
Our Mother of Queens
Mayan tears of goddesses