



Roots and Resistance: The Emergent Writings of Twenty Years of Chicana Feminist Struggle

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Chicana feminists have struggled to find their voices—have struggled to be heard. Our struggles continue but our silence is forever broken. We are telling our stories and we are recording our triumphs and, by virtue of our presence, we are challenging our surroundings.

This paper is an overview of the development of writings of Chicana feminists. As such, it cannot be exhaustive. It can be a statement to the reader that Chicana writing has developed out of personal and political struggle, a fact which shapes the very nature of that writing and the impact that Chicana writers have had in political, literary, and social science circles.

This paper focuses on the many self-identified Chicanas whose political roots originate from the Chicano movement of the 1960s and 1970s. As such, these roots are based in a political knowledge of the historical emergence of the Chicano people and their connection to their Indian ancestry. They are based on an understanding of the legacy of 500 years of resistance and on an understanding of contemporary dynamics of class and race relations in U. S. society, particularly the Southwest, known as Aztlán. The analysis presented by Chicanas is an important dimension added to assess the experiences of Chicanos and thus constitutes a perspective that is the intersection of class, race, and gender.

The Struggle to Speak

Chicanas were never passive nor entirely submissive to cultural constraints, yet these constraints did limit the emergence of Chicana voices; early efforts to speak began by identifying the cultural definitions that discouraged them. Chicanas were born into a culture of silence where, like children, we were to be seen, not heard. Or stated more dramatically, “Chicanas traditionally, have been tortilla-makers, baby-producers, to be touched but not heard” (Chávez 1972, 82). The Catholicism brought

to us by missionaries influenced many of our world views and taught us the values of piety, humility and bearing our crosses in silence, for “blessed are the meek who would inherit the earth.” Consuelo Nieto noted:

For the most part, the Church has assumed a traditional stance toward women. It has clearly defined the woman’s role as that of wife and mother, requiring obedience to one’s husband . . .

Marianismo (veneration of the Virgin Mary) has had tremendous impact upon the development of the Chicana. Within many Chicano homes, La Virgen—under various titles, but especially as La Virgen de Guadalupe—has been the ultimate role model for the Chicano woman.

Mary draws her worth and nobility from her relationship to her son, Jesus Christ. She is extolled as mother, as nurturer. She is praised for her endurance of pain and sorrow, her willingness to serve, and her role as teacher of her son’s word. She is Queen of the Church.

Some Chicanas are similarly praised as they emulate the sanctified example set by Mary. The woman par excellence la mother and wife. She is to love and support her husband and to nurture and teach her children. Thus may she gain fulfillment as a woman. (1974, 37)

Thus, in our struggles to speak, the first major contradiction we encountered was between our desires to bring forth our voices and the traditions that our politics committed us to protect and preserve. Chicano activists in El Movimiento invoked these traditions and told a growing number of feminists that they were “anti-family, anti-cultural, anti-man and therefore anti-Chicano movement.” (Nieto-Gómez 1974b, 35).

It was the contradictions that Chicanas encountered within the Chicano movement, therefore, which most shaped a feminist ideology decrying *que nos dicen*, “el problema es el gabacho, no es el macho.” Within the Chicano movement Chicanas struggled for political equality and escape from the relegated tasks of dishwashers, secretaries, and rucas. Adelaida Del Castillo, for example, in response to a question on why there is an interest in Chicana feminism said, “A lot of Chicanas were sincerely feeling exploited if not alienated by certain organizations of the Chicano movement in the types of jobs that she was being given or relegated to” (1974, 8). Another Chicana activist’s description of male/female relations was quoted from *Hijos de Cuahatemoc*

When a freshman male comes to MECHA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán—a Chicano student organization in California), he is approached and welcomed. He is taught by observation that the Chicanas are only useful in areas of clerical and sexual activities. When something must be done there is always a Chicana there to do the work. “It is her place and duty to stand behind and back up her Macho.” . . . Another aspect of the MACHO attitude is their lack of respect for Chicanas. They play their games, plotting girl against girl for their own benefit. . . . They use the movement and Chicanismo to take her to bed. And when she refuses, she is a *vendida* (sell-out) because she is not looking after the welfare of her men. (Vidal 1972)

It was a bold move for Chicanas to reject the role restrictions placed upon them and an even stronger step to suggest that the “triple oppression” (Hancock 1971, 168) of Chicanas should be an issue within the movement. Most of the Chicana writings during the late 1960s and early 1970s (primarily in Chicano movement newspapers and publications) were replete with responses to Chicanos and “loyalist” Chicanas who claimed that the feminists were being divisive to the movement and products of “Anglo bourgeois feminism.” As Nieto-Gómez points out, “The Chicana feminist has had to struggle to develop and maintain her identity . . .” (1974b, 34).

However, some Chicanas viewed the search for identity as an “Anglo-bourgeois trip. The ‘Loyalists’ could only see the ‘Feministas’ as ambitious, selfish women who were only concerned with themselves at the cost of everyone else.” Nieto-Gómez then quotes an anonymous “loyalist” who expressed her concern in a California State University Northridge student newspaper, *Popo Femenil*, in an article entitled, “Chicanas Take Wrong Direction.”

Since when does a Chicana need identity? If you are a real Chicana then no one regardless of the degrees needs to tell you about it. The only ones who need identity are the *vendidas*, the *falsas*, and the opportunists. The time has come for the Chicanas to examine the direction they wish to take. Yes, we need recognition. Our men must give this to us. But there is danger in the manner we are seeking it. . . . We are going to have to decide what we value more, the culture or the individual (as Anglos do)? I hope it’s not too late. (1974b, 35)

It was precisely this sentiment that prevailed at the First National Chicano Student Conference in 1969 when women declared that “it was the consensus of the group that the Chicana woman does not want to be liberated.”

A Chicana activist from New Mexico shared a similar experience:

[In 1971] I was being called a white woman for organizing a Las Chicanas group on the University of New Mexico campus. I was not only ostracized by men but by women. Some felt I would be dividing the existing Chicano group on campus (the United Mexican-American Students, UMAS), some were simply afraid of displeasing the men, some felt that I was wrong and my ideas “white” and still others felt that their contribution to la Causa or El Movimiento was in giving the men moral support from the kitchen. (Chávez 1972, 82)

This “feminist baiting,” as García (1989) calls it, was a form of harassment that

forced many Chicanas to suppress their convictions. The term “women’s libber,” a stigmatizing label, was used as a social label assigned to those who spoke out for women’s rights in the Chicano movement. These castigated Chicanas were identified as man haters, frustrated women, and “*agringadas*,” Anglo-cized. If they spoke out against sexual inequality, they were often effectively isolated, controlled and discredited . . . Nieto-Gómez 1974b, 36)

García also notes that feminist lesbians were subjects of even more severe “feminist baiting”: “In a political climate that already viewed feminist ideology with suspicion, lesbianism as a sexual lifestyle and political ideology came under even more attack. Clearly, a cultural nationalist ideology that perpetuated such stereotypical images

of Chicanas as 'good wives and good mothers' found it difficult to accept a Chicana feminist lesbian movement" (García 1989, 226).

Despite these early attempts to silence the voices of a developing feminist consciousness, feministas were very clear that their voices did not mean a disruption to the unity of La Raza though it may have meant a disruption to a false unity based on the submission of women. Instead, feministas argued, men and women struggling together is a stronger foundation for a successful Chicano movement.

We must come to the realization that we have to work together in order to save ourselves. If the male oppressed the female, perhaps it is because he has been oppressed. We can't turn against them, and they can't turn against us. We have to help each other. Remember, what the system wants is that the movement divide itself into small factions so that eventually it will fall apart into dust. We don't want this to happen. You are my *compañero* as a *Mexicano* and I am your *compañera* as a *Mexicana*. We're together. As Chicanos we have the responsibility to look after each other. (Del Castillo 1974, 10)

Chicana feminists articulated a support for political unity:

While it is true that the unity of La Raza is the basic foundation of the Chicano movement, when Chicano men talk about maintaining La Familia and the "cultural heritage" of La Raza, they are in fact talking about maintaining the age-old concept of keeping the woman bare-foot, pregnant, and in the kitchen. On the basis of the subordination of women there can be no real unity. . . . The only real unity between men and women is the unity forged in the course of struggle against their oppression. And it is by supporting, rather than opposing, the struggles of women, that Chicanos and Chicanas can genuinely unite. (Vidal 1971, 31-32)

This unity, feministas argued, called for a fuller participation of Chicanas. Chicana feministas understood that one of their first needs as activists was to become an integral part of the movement as leaders, as conference speakers and not as "decorations." Chicanas did not accept the claim that there were no qualified Chicanas for these positions. "If we are not 'qualified', my brother, what are you doing to help us? What experiences and training are you providing us? What support do you give us that we may become articulate and politically sophisti-

cated, and that we may develop the skills of negotiation and decision making?" (Nieto 1974, 41).

In response to the claim that they should postpone their cause for a later time, feministas proclaimed that it was "illogical to ask a woman to ignore and postpone her struggle as a woman" (Nava 1973). Chicana feminists rejected the claims that as "Raza women who are triply oppressed," they did not have the right to "struggle around their specific, real, and immediate needs" (Vidal 1971, 9). In fact, the Chicana activists of the early 1970s had very well developed notions of what those needs were and were very clear that they were distinct from those of Anglo feminists. Based on her experiences and her politics, rooted in the ideologies of the Chicano movement, feministas understood their oppression and their relation to Chicano men in a historical political economic context. Sosa Riddel writes:

Exploitation of contemporary Chicanas begins in a very real sense with the Spanish conquest, regardless of what conditions were among the native peoples prior to the Conquest. . . . In word and in deed, the Spaniards relegated the native woman, and later the mestiza, to the lowest position in the structured society which came to dominate Mexico. (1974, 157-58)

In more contemporary terms, another Chicana writes,

The Chicana's socio-economic class as a non-Anglo Spanish-speaking, low-income Chicana woman determines her need and therefore her political position. The low-income Anglo woman does not have to deal with racism nor is she punished because she speaks another language. The middle-class Anglo woman only shares with the Chicana the fact that they are both women. But they are women of different ethnic, cultural, and class status. All these factors determine the different socio-economic needs and therefore determine the different political positions of these women. (Nieto-Gómez 1974b, 39)

Despite the analyses that Chicanas put forward, Nieto-Gómez also states that "it can be truthfully said that she [the Chicana] has been ignored" (1974b, 34). Most of the Chicano writings of the 1970s did not include the words of Chicanas or at best included one or two articles which in some cases had been circulated in several locations. Chicano journals contained few works by Chicanas and had virtually no Chicanas on their editorial boards. In a couple of cases (see below) journals printed special volumes on Chicanas. Chicanas developed their own vehi-

cles to circulate their ideas. *Regeneración*, edited by a Chicana, was first published in 1970. In addition to its many articles by Chicanas, *Regeneración* also published two special volumes by mujeres in 1971 and again in 1973. Another journal, *Encuentro Femenil*, was published out of the L. A. area in Spring 1973 and was another critical source for Chicana writings in the early seventies. *Imágenes de la Chicana* published two volumes out of Stanford University. A special volume in 1973 of *El Grito*, published in Berkeley, was devoted to Chicanas. Chicanas also wrote extensively in newspapers such as *Hijas de Cuahatemoc* and magazines such as *La Luz*. Occasionally, other collections of writings on "women" included writings by Chicanas; for example, *Sisterhood Is Powerful* included the essay by Longaueux y Vásquez.

The issues articulated by Chicanas in these and other writings of the early 1970s included welfare rights, child care, health, birth control, sterilization, legal rights, prison experience of Chicanas, sex roles, images of Chicanas, heroines of history, labor struggles (mostly historical), and organizing themselves as Chicanas. They were also beginning to publish works of poetry and fiction.

Encuentro Femenil published two works in 1973 and 1974 by Alicia Escalante, the leader of the Chicano Welfare Rights Organization on her personal experiences in the welfare system. In 1973, *Regeneración* also published an article entitled "Chicana Welfare Rights Challenges Talmadge Amendment" and "Chicana Service Action Center" in the same issue (vol. 2, no. 3). Clemen-cia Martínez wrote "Welfare Families Face Forced Labor" (1972).

Child care was a frequent subject; Chicanas understood the problem of availability of adequate child care for working mothers with young children. Chicanas called for 24-hour government-funded child care that was controlled by the community (Vidal 1971, 33). Chicanas voiced additional childcare concerns for bicultural, bilingual centers where their children do not face discrimination.

In the area of health, Chicanas were acutely aware of the discrimination they faced.

Anglo women contend with the cruel prejudice doctors have towards women patients. Chicanas must also contend with doctors' racism, insensitivity to the Chicano culture and the lack of bilingual medical staff. In addition, economics limit her choice of medical facilities to state and county health clinics which usually have inadequate health services. Depending on the availability of a bilingual volunteer among the patients, most doctors treat monolingual Spanish-speaking patients with less than adequate diagnosis. (Nieto-Gómez 1974b, 40)

Other Chicana writings from Texas and Los Angeles exposed the fact that Chicanas were being used as guinea pigs against their knowledge for birth control testing and that sterilization was being used as a means of population control of Chicanas. As Nieto-Gómez noted, "Darwinistic doctors who feel that the poor are the burden of the strong play God with the bodies of women. As a result, Chicanas are victims of constant malpractice. They are involuntarily experimented with, and involuntarily sterilized" (1974b, 40). Thus, the Chicana called for health clinics in the community that were "community controlled."

Many Chicanas asserted their concern for their control of their bodies through access to birth control and abortion. Showing an early inclination for forming coalitions with other Third World women, Chicanas joined a group of fifty African Americans, Asian Americans and other Latinas to say that "there is a myth that Third World women do not want to control our bodies, that we do not want the right to contraception and abortion. . . . We know that more Third World women die every year from illegal back-street abortions than the rest of the female population" (Vidal 1971, 32).

The extent to which the law serves the needs of Chicanas was also called into question by Chicana feminists. Del Castillo, for example, tells the story of a Mexican woman who was in the process of divorcing her husband when he broke into her house and raped her. She took her case to court but found that because she couldn't speak English she faced a situation of ridicule in which the lawyers and the judge laughed at her.

That's an insult to me as a Mexican woman and to that woman and to all Chicanos because here is a Mexican woman who is hoping that she can depend on the law, on the judge, to set this matter straight and he laughs at her in addition to which he admonished her and tells her off for not knowing English. Furthermore, he wanted her to pay him, the husband, damages when he has raped her in front of her children! So is there in fact any justice, or does racism impede justice for us? (Del Castillo 1974, 9)

The experience of Chicana prisoners was also an issue for Chicana feminists. An article entitled "Chicanas in Prison" appeared in *Regeneración* in 1975 (Madrid), and another appeared in *Encuentro Femenil* in 1974 entitled "La Pinta: The Myth of Rehabilitation."

Chicanas wrote about sexual stereotypes (González 1973; Suárez 1973) and the "Chicana: The Forgotten Woman" (Delgado 1971). Bernice Rincón wrote "La Chicana: Her Role in the Past and Her Search for a New

Role in the Future" (1971). The articulation of identity also included establishing connection to historical heroines such as Lucy González Parsons (Sánchez n.d.).

The working class perspective of many Chicana feminists led them to an analysis of Chicana employment issues and labor struggles. Yolanda Nava wrote, again in *Regeneración* and *Encuentro Femenil*, on "The Chicana and Employment: Needs Analysis and Recommendations for Legislation" (1973a) and "Employment Counseling and the Chicana" (1973b). Anna Nietó-Gómez also wrote "Chicanas in the Labor Force" (1974a) and "The Needs of the Spanish Speaking Mujer (Woman) in Woman-Manpower Training Programs" (1974b). Laura Arroyo wrote one of the few articles by a Chicana appearing in *Aztlán*, entitled "Industrial and Occupation Distribution of Chicana Workers" (1973). A 1971 volume of *Regeneración* contained a testimonial by María Moreno, an agricultural worker. She entitled her statement, "I'm Talking for Justice."

Writings on education include Nieto-Gómez's "The Chicana: Perspectives for Education," Nieto-Gómez and Sánchez's *New Directions in Education: Estudios Femeniles de la Chicana*, and Corinne Sánchez, "Higher Education y la Chicana" (1973). The first and third of these appeared in *Encuentro Femenil*.

In addition to works already cited on the development of Chicana feminist consciousness, other Chicanas wrote about issues of inequality and of themselves as Chicana feminists. Francisca Flores wrote on the Conference of Mexican Women in 1971 in Houston (1971), and Lionela Sáenz wrote "Machismo, No! Igualdad, Sí!" (1972). In December 1972, an article appeared in *Ms.* magazine entitled "Women of La Raza Unite!" Linda Aguilar wrote on "Unequal Opportunity and the Chicana" in the *Civil Rights Digest* (1973), and Elena García wrote "Chicana Consciousness: A New Perspective, a New Hope" (1973). An essay appeared in *La Raza* in 1973 entitled "El Movimiento and the Chicana: What Else Could Break Down a Revolution but Women Who Do Not Understand True Equality." Nieto-Gómez also wrote "La Feminista" (1974). Guadalupe Valdés-Fallis wrote "The Liberated Chicana: A Struggle against Tradition" (1974).

These and other concerns served the basis of not only Chicana activism but also of the further development of Chicana writings. Instead of yielding to the demands for our silence, Chicanas declared the existence and legitimacy of a Chicana feminism which the Chicano movement had to make room for and which was distinct from white feminism.

In light of the many struggles to speak and be heard, it is a great triumph that Chicanas have continued to speak and have continued to develop a rich collection of poetry, literature, humanities and social science writ-

ings. The benefits are there for those who hear the voices of Chicana writers.

Chicana Writings: 1975-1981

The mid-1970s marked the beginning of more systematic social science and historical analyses of the Chicana experience. During this period Chicana poetry and literature were also more extensively circulated beyond the confines of intimate sharings.

Chicana feminists continued to write about feminism. Flores addressed the issues of "The New Chicana and Machismo" (1975) and Nieto-Gómez continued as an important voice in her article "Sexism in the Movimiento" (1976). Rita Sánchez addressed the development of the Chicana voice in "Chicana Writer Breaking Out of Silence" (1977). González wrote in the *Social Science Journal* on "The White Feminist Movement: The Chicana Perspective" (1977) and Burciaga wrote on "The 1977 National Women's Conference in Houston: Gains and Disappointments for Hispanas" (1977). In 1977, Martha Cotera published *Chicana Feminist*, which was a collection of essays she had written between 1970 and 1977.

Many of the same social issues appeared as themes in these more developed analyses including an article on sterilization in *The Chicano Law Review* (Hernández 1976), images of Chicanas in popular culture and literature (Salinas 1975; 1979), "Raza Mental Health" (Carillo-Berón 1977), and "Chicanas in Politics" (Chapa and Gutiérrez 1977).

Articles appeared on the topic of Chicana psychology and counseling. Many of these were based on research projects and placed in journals of the respective disciplines. These included Teresa Ramírez Boulette's "Determining Needs and Appropriate Counseling Approaches for Mexican-American Women: A Comparison of Therapeutic Listening and Behavioral Rehearsal" (1976), "Dilemmas of Chicana Counselors" (Medina and Reyes 1976), and "Psychology of the Chicana" (Nieto Senour 1977).

Maxine Baca Zinn published several articles during this period and Martha Cotera published *Diosa y Hembra* in 1977. The period is additionally notable for the publication of several edited volumes of Chicana writings. These included Martínez Cruz and Sánchez's *Essays on La Mujer*, (1977), Melville's *Twice a Minority* (1980), Mora and del Castillo's *Mexican Women in the United States: Struggles Past and Present* (1980). *De Colores* published a special volume entitled *La cosecha: Literatura y la mujer chicana* (see Rita Sánchez 1977) as did *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, "Chicanas in the National Landscape" (1980).

The combination of these and other writings established four major points: (1) The Chicana is not inher-

ently passive—nor is she what the stereotypes say she is; (2) She has a history rooted in a legacy of struggle; (3) Her history and her contemporary experiences can only be understood in the context of a race and class analysis; and (4) The Chicana is in the best position to describe and define her own reality.

Thus, the writings of this period are a logical and political extension of the previous one. Chicana writings in the second half of the 1970s are distinguished by more elaborate analyses and research and the emergence of poetry, fiction, and autobiographical testimonios. The starting point was the rejection of traditional images and the debunking of social science myths about the Chicana. The result is the redefinition of the Chicana—by the Chicana.

Beginning with the beginning, Chicanas challenged the belief that the creation of the mestizo people originated with the violation of “a passive woman who surrendered herself and her people to the conquerors” (*Mujeres en Marcha* 1983). A first major challenge came from Adelaida del Castillo in her article “Malintzin” (1977):

Because history is notorious for depicting the female as being one of the main causes for man’s failures, it’s extremely important that we understand the ethics with which historians, most of whom have been men in the past, distribute blame and justice. Apparently, what seems to be involved here is an unconscious acceptance of morals which blindly depict the male force as one which generally strives to do good in spite of the ever-present influence of the opposite sex. Woman is perceived as being one whose innately negative nature only serves to stagnate man, if not corrupt him entirely. So just as Eve was chosen long ago by misogynistic men to represent the embodiment of the “the root of all evil” for western man, Mexico’s first and most exceptional heroine, Doña Marina “La Malinche” now embodies female negativity (*traición*) for our Mexican culture (139).

Del Castillo further asserts that this negative portrayal of Malintzin occurs because of the misinterpretation of her role in the conquest of Mexico and because of “an unconscious, if not intentional misogynistic attitude toward women in general, especially toward self-assertive women” (139). Del Castillo provides another interpretation of the historical role of Malintzin that is tied to her religious beliefs, to a more complex assessment of her relationship to Cortés, and to the cultures of the various indigenous groups. Rather than

accepting “La Malinche” as the embodiment of evil or, in the words of Octavio Paz, “the cruel incarnation of the feminine condition,” Del Castillo refutes the image of passivity and violation. In doing so she lays the foundation for Chicanas to reject the legacy which Paz insinuates: “A woman’s nature (the physical condition of her body) is by its very essence always being ‘violated’” (143) (more on “La Malinche” later).

Chicana writers took on mainstream social science to dispel the belief that Chicanas were inherently passive. In the mid-1970s, Maxine Baca Zinn wrote articles in which she stated that “the passive, submissive, Mexican woman is a creation of social scientists and journalists who have taken for granted the idea that women are dependent and unproductive creatures” (Baca Zinn 1975a, 19). In her article “Chicanas: Power and Control in the Domestic Sphere,” Baca Zinn reexamines Chicanas within the family to show that “they have had great impact on Chicano survival in an Anglo-dominated society” (1975a, 19). It is the mother’s role within the family that helps preserve its stability and its source as a “refuge and protection from an oppressed society.”

Those characteristics of Chicanas which social scientists have interpreted as passivity, dependence and submissiveness have been part of a process to preserve the stability of the family. . . . Deference to males, and the “giving in” whereby women temporarily relinquish their control of domestic sphere matters, when males exercise their generalized authority, has not been submissiveness, but a mechanism for safeguarding the internal solidarity of the family. (1975a, 29)

Baca Zinn acknowledged that patriarchal relations exist within the family but asserts that, “women control family activities,” that “Chicano families are mother centered,” and that women within the families form bonds with other women “which nurture a collective sense of their own worth” (1975a, 29).

In the same year Baca Zinn published an article entitled “Political Familism: Toward Sex Role Equality in Chicano Families.” She again pointed out the limits of social science perspectives on the Chicano family and refuted the notion that families change as a function of modernization and assimilation. Instead, she again highlighted the importance of family response to the experience of structural domination. To make her point, she described how Chicano families combine their value of *La Familia de la Raza* and *carnalismo* to join as a family unit “in ongoing struggles for racial justice.” Family involvement in the Chicano Movement, with its philosophy of justice, challenged sex role inequality within the family unit: “Political familism

itself does not transcend sex role subordination. But within the varied expressions and manifestations of El Movimiento are changes in sex role relationships and family structure, as well as the seeds of new roles for the women and men of La Raza" (1975b, 24).

The prevalence of myths in the social science literature motivated a Chicana anthropologist, Margarita Melville, to compile a collection of articles about Chicanas. The purpose of *Twice a Minority* was "to modify the stereotypes of Mexican-American women found in much of the social science literature which often views females as passive sufferers."

The myth of passivity is not the only one with which Chicanas have had to contend.

They say we are nonachievement oriented, inept, docile, apathetic, totally without aspirations; we allow ourselves to be exploited and physically and sexually abused; we are masochistic, self-belittling, self-abnegating, subservient, self-sacrificing, suffering martyrs; we are passive, dependent, possessive, depressive, and neurotic; we are producers of large families, ever fertile, dedicated super-mothers with boundless love and nurturance for all. They say we are sometimes passionate, sexy, voluptuous, darkeyed, hot-tempered beauties; other times we are chaste and sexually pure; we are "mamacitas": fat women surrounded by five or six little brown-skinned children, always cooking. This is what they say we are. Is that who we really are? (Vásquez and González 1981, 50)

The writings of this period are characterized by the debunking of social science myths about the Chicana reality.

First of all, the Chicana stereotype must be challenged. A review of existing research reveals a lack of data and a distorted and inaccurate image of the Chicana. The small bank of knowledge that does exist on the Chicana has been collected mainly by Anglos, who have lacked sufficient understanding and sensitivity to the total culture of Mexicans living in the United States. This research has dysfunctional consequences for the Chicano because of the perpetuation of false and stereotypical images of the role and function of women within the Chicano community (S. González 1977, 70).

González goes on to argue that these stereotypical images created by Anglos have a detrimental effect on the Chicana because educational, health, welfare, and law enforcement institutions form policies based on

these myths that affect Chicanas. "This has effectively barred them from a full and creative role in society."

The entrance of Chicana writers into social science circles has meant a challenge to the results and methodologies used by social scientists to depict Chicana reality. Chicana writers, such as Vásquez and González, have challenged the social deficit model whereby Chicanas are compared to an Anglo-determined ideal. They state:

Much of the early social science literature concerning Chicanos has promoted negative stereotypes about origins, history, identity, and, in particular family patterns and sex roles. Many of the negative stereotypic portrayals have been perpetuated by misapplication of a "social deficit" model to the study of Mexican-American families. That is, social scientists have assumed that the Anglo norms are ideal and that deviation from those norms is pathological. (52)

During this period, Chicana writers laid the groundwork for even the more extensive social science research to emerge during the 1980s.

Thus, not only is the Chicana not just a "passive sufferer" or silent in her subordination, but she has been active in her resistance and survival. This is further highlighted in the second major theme of the writings of this period—that the Chicana has a history rooted in struggle.

The entire volume entitled *Mexican Women in the United States: Struggles Past and Present* (Mora and del Castillo 1980) was organized to document and appraise "Mexican women's participation in the struggle against national oppression, class exploitation, and sexism. The essays present the complexity and depth of her participation and attest to her leadership, courage, tenacity, and creativity." The editors also make the point that "popular notions" portray Chicanas as passive and apathetic, yet this ignores their history as laborers and activists.

This history includes Chicana participation in the Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM), International Ladies and Garment Workers Union (ILGWU), the contemporary student movement, and of course as laborers. One author (Hart) points out that during the colonial period of "New Spain," the Spanish tradition of protecting women from the outside world was reserved for the "gente decente." Women of the "castas" and Indians, however, were laborers in the mines while more "lucky" ones worked as domestic help or selling goods in the market place (Mora and del Castillo 1980, 151). The Mexican woman has been in the fields, the factories, and the fights to free herself and her people.

Most of the Chicana writings of this and the previous period clearly demonstrate that Chicanas understood

themselves as a function of their race and class experience, the third major theme of the period 1975-81. For example, two notable studies during this period describe the labor force participation of Chicanas, noting that they are concentrated as clerical, operatives, and service workers and that in comparison to Chicanos and Anglo men and women, their incomes were considerably lower (Arroyo 1973, 1977; Sánchez 1977). As a result of her research, Arroyo notes that "Chicana workers were found to be employed in the lowest paid categories of the labor force. Chicanas like other oppressed workingclass women, remain and are kept at the bottom of the economic ladder" (Arroyo 1977, 165). The working class consciousness of the Chicana writer was rooted in her own class background and her continued connection to the barrio. Sánchez states emphatically:

The needs and interests of Chicano women in the barrio. . . . are concerned with subsistence, health care, medical attention, rent payments, food bills, physical abuse from their husbands and unemployment. It is imperative then that those few Chicano women attaining professional status or higher education recognize the low economic status of the majority of Chicano women and identify with their struggle rather than with middle class feminist aspirations, for most of us Chicano women have strong working class roots. (Sánchez 1980, 14)

The clarity of Chicana class and race consciousness is also evident in writings that distinguish their feminism from that of white feminism. The *Chicana Feminist* by Martha Cotera, for example, is replete with statements that differentiate Chicanas from middle-class white women and their respective feminisms. Many such statements were in response to the attacks that if Chicanas were fighting on behalf of their issues, they must be products of white bourgeois women. These defensive assertions gradually lessened, though writings continued in which Chicanas noted the racism that they experienced from white women (discussed below).

The passion and depth of Chicana writings originate from the need to survive, first, by deconstructing others' definitions of us, and then by replacing them with their own. The fourth theme being discussed here is embodied in the notion that the Chicana is in the best position to describe and define her own reality. In addition to political statements and history and social science analyses, the Chicana voice spoke through her poetry, literature, literary analyses and personal narratives.

Writing by the Chicana, by its very act, is a rebellious move against a traditionally imposed silence.

Embodied in the act of writing is her voice against others' definitions of who she is and what she should be. There is, in her open expression and in the very nature of this act of opening up, a refusal to submit to a quality of silence that has been imposed upon her for centuries. In the act of writing, the Chicana is saying "No," and by doing so she becomes the revolutionary, a source of change, and a real force for humanization. . . .

The Chicana, by voicing her own brand of expression has rejected the latter in favor of telling anyone who wishes to read her work, hear her voice, exactly what she is not, and who she, in fact, is. (R. Sánchez 1977)

The result is a new Chicana. "La Nueva Chicana" is captured in a poem by Viola Correa:

Hey,
See that lad protesting against injustice,
Es mi Mamá.
That girl in the brown beret,
The one teaching the children,
She's my hermana.
Over there fasting with the migrants,
Es mi tía.
These are the women who worry,
Pray, Iron
And cook chile y tortillas.
The lady with the forgiving eyes
And the gentle smile,
Listen to her shout.
She knows what hardship is all about
All about.
The establishment calls her
A radical militant.
The newspapers read she is
A dangerous subversive
They label her name to condemn her.
By the F.B. I. she's called
A big problem.
In Aztlán we call her
La Nueva Chicana. (Sánchez 1977, 33)

The development of Chicana poetry parallels the formation of Chicana identity where she moves from refusing the boundaries that have defined and restricted her to celebrating the liberation of her spirit. Through Chicana poetry we can witness a journey that abounds with political and personal awareness.

As was true with many of the essays and narratives, the poetry reflected many of the same assertions against machismo, racism, and class exploitation. What emerges

in Chicana writings is the pain, strength, and struggle of her existence. Bernice Zamora, for example, wrote a poem in 1977 entitled "Notes from a Chicana 'Coed'" in which she stands up to the macho rejection of her feminism. The following is an excerpt:

To cry that the gabacho
is our oppressor is to shout
in abstraction, carnal.
He no more oppresses us
than you do now as you tell me
"It's the gringo who oppresses you, Babe."

Zamora also wrote poems reflecting unequal treatment of men and women. In a poem entitled "Pueblo, 1950" from *Restless Serpents*, Zamora remarks on the different moralities applied according to gender:

I remember you, Fred Montoya.
You were the first vato to ever kiss me.
I was twelve years old.
My mother said shame on you,
my teacher said shame on you, and
I said shame on me, and nobody
said a word to you

Zamora's poems are based on struggle, but they also "efface those rules of conventional society that establish artificial divisions among social groups" (M. Sánchez 1979, 146).

In a poem "On living in Aztlán" she writes,

We come and we go
But within limits,
Fixed by a law
Which is not ours . . .

While Chicanas challenged the aspects of their tradition that have oppressed them, they were also connected to their past. They expressed this in their poetry and often in the Spanish language. As an example, María Herrera Sobek wrote "Abuelas Revolucionarias" and "Mantillas." Chicana poets wrote about love and land, history and family. They affirmed parts of their identity and searched for others. According to poetry and literary critic Tey Diana Rebolledo, what is best about Chicana poets is "their concern and relationship to life around them and their integral connection with their surroundings" (1984a, 99). Rebolledo writes, "These poets may write about alienation, but in their poetry they build bridges, create legends and find unity" (99).

Some of the most notable poetry of the period was contained in the following anthologies: *Restless Serpents* (1976) by Bernice Zamora; *Bloodroot* (1977) by Alma

Villanueva; and *Emplumada* (1981) by Lorna de Cervantes. Many regional poets were visible in New Mexico, northern and southern California, Texas, and the Midwest. Among the many included Silvia González, Inés Hernández Tovar, Olivia Castellano, Judy Lucero, Erlinda González, Ximena, Evangelina Vigil, Pat Mora, Angela de Hoyos, Denise Chávez, Margarita Cota-Cárdenas, Lucha Corpi, and Sandra Cisneros. Many of these poets published chapbooks or simply circulated their poetry among themselves. Two of the most important outlets for Chicana poetry were special volumes of *De Colores* published by Pajarito Publications out of Albuquerque and *Revista Chicano Riqueña*.

These are two of the major publications during a somewhat prolific period of Chicano and Chicana writings. The use of writing as a way to define our histories and realities was an integral aspect of the Chicano movement. Short stories and narrative literature help mark this period of Chicana writings.

During this period, poetry and literature emerged, as did literacy analysis. The analysis acknowledged that trained literary analysts were subject to dominant ideological criteria and ways of assessing poetry and literature. The writers called for a perspective that took into account the culture and experience of Chicanas. In 1979, Marta E. Sánchez wrote:

One of the fundamental dangers facing Chicano critics is that most of us have been educated to respect the dominant intellectual and cultural values of mainstream criticism. We hence tend at times to mechanically apply traditional criteria to Chicano literature, and consequently we not only perpetuate but also authenticate those values, which we should examine critically for their cultural, psychological, and social implications. (1979, 141)

Indeed, Chicana critics argued that meeting the so-called standards of the University "would be destructive to our literature" (Zamora 1977a, 16). Despite the fact that Chicana critics recognized that not adhering to the so-called standards would affect their ability to publish in mainstream outlets, they still insisted on developing a form of critic appropriate to the Chicano and the Chicana. Again quoting from Marta E. Sánchez,

Indeed, we might benefit by thinking of minority literatures here in the United States as areas of study where categories in literary scholarship and research are yet to be defined. We can think of ourselves as critics who at present are undertaking to formulate theoretical and applicable criteria leading toward such a definition.

The opportunity remains therefore to approach Chicano literature as a field challenging us to think in fresh terms . . . as an effort to locate and construct formal as well as ideological categories that may prove productive in studying Chicano narrative and poetry. (1979, 141)

The Chicana critic, according to Bernice Zamora, is faced with challenges because of the depth of Chicana poetry and narrative:

Truth, because it is so painful, can only be taken in small portions we are told. But unveiling the truth for the Chicana critic is not so difficult as enduring the pain of how to present that truth to an already suffering people. The responsibility of Chicana critics to present it unveiled becomes more acute because of the compassion, the love, and carnalismo that abounds among Chicanos. So it is the truth of our literature that Chicana critics are left to deal with, and the truth and the pain of Chicano literature will have to be dealt with by methods that defy category. (1977a, 19)

Chicana poetry, literature, and literary criticism continued to defy categories and definitions. The result was an explosion of writings during the 1980s, to which we will turn momentarily.

The Struggle to Be Heard

To declare themselves was one thing. To be heard was another. That struggle undoubtedly continues and is tied to a past in which we had to create elaborate mechanisms to channel our voices. As an example, despite the move of many Chicanas into academic and literary circles (though unquestionably fewer than their share of parity), Chicanas have had to make concerted efforts to establish ourselves in Chicano and women's studies. An examination of both sets of efforts illuminates features of our struggles to be heard.

The National Association for Chicano Studies, formed in 1972, is the most important organization that brings together Chicano scholars "in order to encourage a type of research which it felt could play a key part in the political actualization of the total Chicano community" (from the Preamble). Yet, as was typical of most Chicano organizations at the time, the role of women was limited, often to the dance partners after the conference. By the early 1980s, few women remained in the organization, having opted not to fill these roles. There were, however, faculty women who had been long-standing members of NACS, such as Ada Sosa Riddel. The early 1980s marks

the entry of a critical core of Chicana graduate students who were ready to be active members of NACS—as scholars. Their entry, however, was not automatic but required conscious, organized efforts to create space for Chicanas. The most notable example was the panel at the 1982 National Conference organized by *Mujeres en Marcha* from the University of California, Berkeley.

After a great deal of lobbying throughout the tenth annual conference, *Mujeres en Marcha* led a discussion during the final session of the last day of the conference in a packed room. The discussion raised three themes:

1. For a number of years, Chicanas have heard claims that a concern with issues specifically affecting Chicanas is merely a distraction/diversion from the liberation of Chicano people as a whole. What are the issues that arise when women are asked to separate their exploitation as women from the other forms of oppression that we experience?
2. Chicanas are confronted daily by the limitation of being a woman in this patriarchal society; the attempt to assert these issues around "sexism" are often met with resistance and scorn. What are some of the major difficulties in relations amongst ourselves? How are the relationships between women and men affected? How are the relationships of women to women and men to men affected? How do we overcome the constraints of sexism?
3. It is not uncommon that our interests as feminists are challenged on the basis that we are simply falling prey to the interests of white middle-class women. We challenge the notion that there is no room for a Chicana movement within our own community. We, as women of color, have a unique set of concerns that are separate from white women and from men of color. (*Mujeres en Marcha* 1983)

Interestingly, some of the same issues discussed were prevalent during the seventies, in particular the notion that Chicanas were divisive and duped by "white women." What seemed to be of particular significance to this panel is that the Chicanas pulled together a group of women and men to talk directly about some tough issues. Many of the men were honest in saying that they did not like the way women raised issues and that confrontation was "too narrow." Women responded by saying: "We're talking about opening up a dialogue without stepping on anybody's toes first, but I never once in my life heard a male say, 'I'm sorry for stepping on your toes.'"

The men stepped on the toes first. Men are saying if there is a confrontation it is hard to communicate, but there has already been a confrontation" (Mujeres en Marcha 1983, 21). The most lively part of the discussion was centered around the question of what happens to us when we assert our objections to being "relegated to a status of inferiority and submission" (1). Chicana resistance was defined as inappropriate, as Teresa Córdova pointed out:

When we defend ourselves against the dominance, we are additionally faced with a rationale that rejects our protests. We are faced with a discourse of dominance. It is a rationale, an ideology, that portrays dedicated, assertive women as inappropriately pushy or hostile. That is, it is an ideology which accepts women only as agreeably passive. La mujer does not need to be pushy or hostile, to be seen so by those who feel most threatened by her. Rather, women are embodied with a strength that can and should be utilized in the struggle against the very forces that oppress her. (Mujeres en Marcha 1983, 19)

Some of the discussion centered around whether Chicanas should be shaking up the status quo and causing conflict or whether they should refrain and thus avoid causing the defensiveness and discomfort from men. Again quoting from Córdova:

The hegemonic discourse requires them [Chicanas] to be agreeably passive and they are considered out of place if they overstep this boundary. Many women asserted that if they were to achieve their dignity as scholars in a male-dominated world, then it would be necessary to refrain from being agreeably passive and instead assert their presence as thinking individuals. Because this is so challenging to assumptions long held about how the Chicana should behave, such assertion results in conflict. (Mujeres en Marcha 1983, 19)

While many of the men in the National Association of Chicano Studies were resistant to these issues, those who were present were at least making an effort to engage in dialogue with the women. The following statement indicates that at least some men realized that there was something fundamentally wrong with the way that they thought about women, and that this fact challenges them to how they think about themselves and one another:

It seems to me that a lot of Chicano men in academia will deal with the whole question of

sexism from the perspective of wanting a list that they can check off and say, "Well, I'm not doing this and therefore I'm taking the correct political line." And part of that is tied into the problem of how we think in certain ways and with a certain logic. That's the way we deal with other men and that's the way we deal with other women. That pattern of thinking itself has to be examined. We can't reduce the question of sexism to something you can quantify, or some kind of model or some kind of simple policy statement. We have to begin to look at where we as men are coming from and what we are feeling and thinking inside of ourselves in regards not only to women but to men also. I see a great deal of resistance to that. I find that most men want to see sexism as a policy decision only and that it is not tied into one's spirit and soul. In terms of men, we have to go back to step one and we have to look at ourselves and try to understand ourselves, and see what is going on inside ourselves and in our relations to people. We have to look at our patterns of thinking and see if we are trying to impose those patterns on someone else. (Mujeres en Marcha 1983, 23)

The final statements of the panel acknowledge efforts to come to terms with some of these issues and that change doesn't happen overnight. Yet members of Mujeres en Marcha insist that these "good intentions" are not used to avoid confronting the issue of sexism. In the words of Córdova:

It is not necessary that one intends to act in a way that has hegemonic consequences. More often than not, the intention is not there. However, intention or not, the consequences remain. The point is, the pernicious assumptions and stereotypical understandings about Chicana women are deeply rooted. These assumptions and understandings have been perpetuated and sustained through history. . . . It is easy to operate on these assumptions and act accordingly. It is these assumptions, however, which comprise the systematic body of knowledge that serves to oppress us. . . . The point that we are making is that many of these underlying assumption have served as the basis for a hierarchical structure that places men on top, women on the bottom. We challenge this on the basis that it is hierarchical and therefore requires that someone be on the bottom. (Mujeres en Marcha 1983, 30-31)

Ironically, while women in NACS were insisting on the distinction between their feminism and that of white women, women of color were faced with the racism and class discrimination at the annual conference of the National Women's Studies Association and within the association generally. In 1982 Chela Sandoval wrote a report on behalf of the Women of Color who attended the 1981 NWSA conference. The group called themselves the National Third World Women's Alliance and the report was entitled "Feminism and Racism: A Report on the 1981 National Women's Studies Association Conference" (see Sandoval 1990).

The theme of the conference was "Women Respond to Racism." Immediately, Sandoval asks, "which women?" and notes that one of the essential problems of the women in the association is the assumption of homogeneity. While NWSA and the women's movement in general had been fraught with contradictions and limitations for women of color, many had hoped that this conference would make possible a dialogue to deal with the many differences. But as Sandoval points out, the conference structure itself was hegemonic imposing a structure that did not allow for collective discussion. And while white women had several consciousness raising groups to choose from, Third World women had one group set aside for them. This one group became the organizing mechanism for the Third World women to form a conference within a conference. It was here that women of color further articulated their anger and frustration with attempting to work with white women in the association.

On the fourth day of the conference, the Third World women initiated a coalition meeting with an equal number of white women—nearly two hundred women altogether. The enthusiastic meeting resulted in the following resolution:

This has been a racist conference in its structure, organization, and individual interaction despite its theme. Be it resolved that . . . next year's conference be organized around the same theme, with the leadership of Third World women, in cooperation with NWSA organizers, and that the location of the next conference be changed from another rural area, Humboldt, California, to a place more accessible to Third World women, such as Los Angeles. (Sandoval 1990, 69)

According to Sandoval, "The coalition's resolutions were met with a great deal of irritation" and that for many, "the issue of racism was worn to the bone."

By the last assembly meeting most delegates were ready to move onto, as they called it,

"more pressing issues." The continued "haranguing" by the Third World delegates was seen as "idiosyncratic," "selfish," and as "unnecessarily divisive to the movement." The resolution was not passed. In spite of the one successful coalition, by the end of the conference the division between Third World and white women had become intensified and cemented with antagonism. It was an ironic ending to a movement conference on racism. (Sandoval 1990, 70)

These same problems continued to plague the National Women's Studies Association as exemplified by the mass walkout of women of color at the 1990 conference. This 1981 conference, however, was significant for what has become a women of color alliance among Chicana, Puerto Rican, Latina, Asian, Native American, and African American women. The publication of *This Bridge Called My Back* (edited by Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherrie Morraga) in the same year signaled this alliance. We will return to a discussion of *This Bridge Called My Back* and the women of color alliance.

The struggles of Chicanas to be heard was waged both within Chicano studies and women studies circles. The result of confronting sexism, racism, and also classism resulted in the above-mentioned women of color alliances. It also resulted in the formation of a Chicana studies organization, *Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social*, and in an emphasis on the intersection of class, race, and gender, as exemplified by the NACS publication *Chicana Voices: Intersections of Class, Race, and Gender*.

In June 1982 Ada Sosa Riddell convened several women from northern California, including members of *Mujeres en Marcha*, to meet in Davis to discuss the formation of a Chicana academic organization. The majority of the women in the group were academics but considered themselves very much connected to community and concerned with social change. Thus, they settled on the name *Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambios Social* (MALCS). In the ensuing months the group formulated the following preamble with both an English and a Spanish version:

We are the daughters of Chicano working class families involved in higher education. We were raised in labor camps and urban barrios, where sharing our resources was the basis of survival. Our values, our strength, derive from where we came. Our history is the story of working people—their struggles, commitments, strengths, and the problems they faced. We document, analyze, and interpret the Chi-

cano/Mexicano experience in the United States. We are particularly concerned with the conditions women face at work, in and out of the home. We continue our mothers' struggle for social and economic justice.

The scarcity of Chicanas in institutions of higher education requires that we join together to identify our common problems, to support each other and to define collective solutions. Our purpose is to fight the race, class and gender oppression we have experienced in the universities. Further we reject the separation of academic scholarship and community involvement. Our research strives to bridge the gap between intellectual work and active commitment to our communities. We draw upon a tradition of political struggle. We see ourselves developing strategies for social change—a change emanating from our communities. We declare our commitment to seek social, economic, and political change through our work and collective action. We welcome Chicanas who share these goals and invite them to join us. (Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social 1984)

Through the persistence and resourcefulness of Sosa Riddell the group sponsored a working paper series and what has now become an annual event, the MALCS Summer Institute, where women gather for workshops and information. A Chicana research institute has been established at the University of California, Davis, and soon MALCS will release the first volume of its journal.

Many Chicanas worked in coalition with women of color, formed their own organization, and continued to work with their male counterparts in the National Association for Chicano Studies. The year after the "Unsettled Issue" panel, Chicanas informally met at the annual conference held in Ypsilanti, Michigan, to form the Chicana Caucus. One of their demands was that the 1984 conference, to be held in Austin, Texas, have *Voces de la Mujer* as its theme. The local site committee agreed and the stage was set for the twelfth annual conference of NACS to be devoted to Chicana voices. The number of Chicanas who spoke at or attended the conference was substantially higher than ever and marked the beginning of an irreversible presence of women in NACS.

The conference, however, was not without very tense politics between the men and the women, the result of which was a redefinition of those relations. Women were also able to hold their own in the attempted take over of the editorial committee despite the implications that quality of the proceedings was jeopardized. The Chicana caucus placements on the editorial committee ensured the

publication of the proceedings of this conference entitled *Chicana Voices: Intersections of Class, Race, and Gender*. The first section of the volume contains the statements that were given at the plenary session on Chicana feminism. Chris Sierra spoke on the qualities of the university that reinforce inequality; Norma Cantú debunked the Adelita image; Cynthia Orozco discussed the previous role of Chicanas in Chicano studies, how gender explains the Chicana experience, and how feminism can play a role for change; and Alma García stated that Chicana studies should be brought "into the frame" of Chicano studies. The final paper in the first section is the tribute paid by the association to two labor activists: Emma Tenayuca and Manuela Solís Sager (Córdova et al. 1986). Additional articles from this collection will be among those discussed in the following section.

History and Social Science of the 1980s

In describing what has been the treatment of Mexicanos/as in California history, Antonia Castañeda says in reference to the impact of ideology on history: "Accordingly, California historians applied Anglo, middle-class norms of woman's proper behavior to Mexican women's comportment and judged them according to their own perceptions of Mexican culture and women's positions within that culture" (1990a, 8).

In another article, Castañeda makes the point even more emphatically:

In studying North American imperial expansion, Chicano and other scholars have concluded that pejorative, racist stereotypes of Mexicanos, in particular, were an integral part of an ideology that helped justify the Mexican-American War as well as subsequent repression in the conquered territory (213). While the contemporary and historical literature purports to present accurate descriptions of Mexican women's experience and condition, it actually constructs stereotypic images which serve ideological purposes. . . . While these prejudices are evident in most accounts of Mexicanas, and while all the descriptions purport to present transhistorical or timeless images, the descriptions do, in fact, vary considerably across time in terms of the particular aspects of these stereotypes which are emphasized. These variations correlate with the changing need of the capitalist and imperialist system, its shifting relations to Mexicano culture and economy in California and the evolving ideology of the nature of women. (Castañeda 1990b, 215)

These kinds of biases—the authors of which are often influential members of history departments—and the common exclusion of Mexicana/Chicana experiences in historical documents have been obstacles for Chicana historians. Yet their drive to set the historical records straight and to document historical roots has resulted in the emergence of a cadre of Chicana historians. With their political roots in the Chicano movement, these women are and will continue to produce scholarship that incorporates the significance of race, class, and gender. Antonia Castañeda, Deena González, Emma Pérez, and Vicki Ruiz are among the most notable Chicana historians. Though not an historian, Adelaida Del Castillo was one of the first Chicanas to facilitate historical collections.

Del Castillo wrote one of the first essays challenging the myth of La Malinche and replacing it with historical documentation that takes into account Quetzalcoatl, the Aztec religion and empire, and Marina Tenepal's personal life. Del Castillo, along with Magdalena Mora, edited the important volume *Mexican Women in the United States: Struggles Past and Present*. The volume was especially notable for the accounts of Mexicanas/Chicanas in the U. S. workplace, in particular the garment industry. Not only were the conditions described but so were the various forms of resistance, including the FARA strike in the early 1970s and La Costura in Los Angeles (1922-39).

The collection also contained profiles of women active in resistance both historically and more recently. The book had a historical materialist emphasis, and Magdalena Mora was herself active in organizing undocumented female workers as exemplified by her work with the Toltec Foods strike in Richmond, California, in 1975. Her death in 1981, at the age of 29, and before she completed her Ph.D. in history at UCLA, was a loss to organizing efforts in the undocumented community and to the community of Chicana historians.

Del Castillo later edited another volume, *Between Borders: Essays on Mexicana/Chicana History* (1990). This volume was an outgrowth of a conference that was held in 1982, "Mexicana/Chicana Women's History International Symposium." Antonia Castañeda published the article "The Political Economy of Nineteenth-Century Stereotypes of Californianas," in which she views the stereotyping of Mexicanas in California as serving an ideological function to justify domination by the U. S. over Mexicanos. Ideological constructions varied. For example, Mexicanas were defined both as women of easy virtue and inferiority while another stereotype was cast of the landowning Californianas to justify the union of Anglos to these women.

Irrespective of the view, the end result was the same. Mexicana or Californiana, both represen-

tations rendered women in California ignorant, vacuous and powerless. In both cases, her Catholicism and culture made her priest-ridden, male dominated, superstitious and passive. Undemocratic Spanish and Mexican governance made her ignorant. If Mexicana, however, her immorality and racial impurity established her lack of value and exacerbated her ignorance. As part of the conquered Mexican nation, the War confirmed her powerlessness. If Californiana, on the other hand, her racial purity, morality and economic worth elevated her status, making her worthy of marrying an Anglo while dispossessing her of her racial, historical, cultural and class roots. With marriage and a husband's possession of her property, elite Californianas forfeited their economic power. Finally, the Californiana's presence was abstracted to an era long past, her person romanticized. In either case, Mexicana or Californiana, the conquest was complete. (Castañeda 1990b, 227)

Castañeda further notes that other than these stereotypical accounts of Mexican women in California during the 1940s there is virtually no mention of the Mexicana.

In the literature, Mexican women's historical existence is defined out of all but a few short years of the nineteenth century. Her presence is confined to the 1840's and left to the assumptions, perceptions and interest of Anglo-American entrepreneurs and filibusters who wrote about California in a period of American continental imperialism that resulted in the Mexican-American War. (Castañeda 1990b, 228)

Castañeda wrote about Spanish-Mexican women in California in the period prior to the U. S.-Mexico War, and Deena González wrote about Spanish-Mexican women in New Mexico in the period immediately following the war. In "The Widowed Women of Santa Fe: Assessments on the Lives of an Unmarried Population, 1850-80," González examines the lives of unmarried women at a time when the territory was being settled by unmarried Anglo men. Through her resourceful historical scholarship, she portrays women, though unattached to a male partner, as very attached to their families, not particularly interested in the outsiders, and able to find ways to enhance their sense of control over their environment.

The majority [of unmarried women] did not marry the immigrants; women displayed minimal

interest in easing men's transition to life in a new society. Instead, they sought stability in their own worlds; they sought to impose order on a world increasingly changed by easterners and their ways. For more and more of these women, the act of writing a will offered a measure of control over their circumstances. Spanish-Mexican women had followed the custom for generations; worldly possessions, however, meager, required proper care. The custom took on added significance in the postwar period. Its assumption of stability contrasted sharply with an enveloping sense of disorder; it promised children a continuity, a certainty, that their parents lacked. (D. González 1988, 44)

Long historical roots and a strong extended family facilitated the resistance of the unmarried Spanish-Mexican woman, whose numbers soared in the post-war period. Yet as González points out, the post-war period was only a precursor to the disruption that northern New Mexico communities would face.

Emma Pérez researches the early twentieth century. She focuses on revolutionary Mexican ideology and the contradictions of that ideology with respect to Mexicanas. She wrote, for example, "A La Mujer: A Critique of The Partido Liberal Mexicano's Gender Ideology on Women," in which she describes the central importance that women played in the PLM, a revolutionary group that opposed Porfirio Díaz, yet critiques the limits of the ideology. Women, for example, were still seen as needing to be the nurturers for men, and feminism was seen as a threat to women's emancipation. Pérez suggests that accounts focusing on the critique of capitalism and of race, ignoring the role of gender ideology, fail to assess the way that ideology, especially family ideology, limits the roles of women to wives, mothers, and nurturers.

The labor activism of Chicanas continues to be a popular theme. Vicki Ruiz writes on organizing efforts among cannery workers and shows the ways that women's networks are used as a mechanism for social change. The 1939-45 union organizing that began with a walkout in August 1939 is the topic of her article, "A Promise Fulfilled: Mexican Cannery Workers in Southern California" (1990). She also wrote a longer treatment of cannery workers, *Cannery Women Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950*. Noting that "most Mexican women have been wage earners at some point in their lives" (1987b, xviii), Ruiz traces the experiences of cannery workers:

Since the late 1800s, Mexican women living in California have flocked to food processing

plants, attracted to the industry because of seasonal schedules and extended family networks. The chapters that follow delineate the experiences of a generation of Mexican women cannery operatives who, from 1939-1959, took control of their work lives as member of the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers of American. (1987b, xviii)

She concludes by placing this history of UCAPAWA as an example of a long history of labor activism—a history of the "struggle of proud, courageous men and women joining together whenever possible to counter economic and ethnic oppression" (1990, 123).

Several of the above-mentioned articles appear in Del Castillo's most recent edited volume (1990). The themes in *Between Borders: Essays on Mexicana/Chicana History* "are basic to feminist studies":

The relationship between female prescriptive norms and actual behavior; the influence of tradition and innovation in women's lives; the disjuncture between the theory and practice of the left as concerns the liberation of women; urbanization and labor force participation as a catalyst for cultural change; the patriarchal oppression of women; women's choices and sources of strength; and women as agents of social change. These topics take on a new significance when placed within the context of the historical past of Mexican women.

The title and table of contents tell us at least two things about Chicana history. One, history reinforces what the Chicano/a movement espoused, namely, that historical and cultural connections between the borders are integral to the Chicana experience. Two, male and non-Chicana females are continuing to add to the list of historical accounts on the Chicana experience. While many of these are excellent accounts, the history of Chicanas is still plagued with an inadequate number of Chicana historians.

Social Science in the 1980s

The Chicana family was one of the early topics tackled by Chicana sociologists (Baca Zinn 1975, 1980, 1982a, 1982b, 1983; Ybarra 1982, 1983). In contrast to the many social science treatments of the Mexican family as pathological, these Chicana writers brought forward the positive aspects of the Chicana family as a source of support and refuge from a hostile environment. Their research also showed family relations that were more equitable when the women worked outside the home. Later other Chicanas were more critical of the family, not

ing that household division of labor was unequal among both working class and professional households (Pesquera and Durán 1984) and that gender inequality in the household was connected to gender inequality in the workplace (Zavella 1987).

In her book on cannery workers in the Santa Clara Valley, Pat Zavella describes the patterns of occupational segregation of Mexicanas in seasonal cannery work, the formation of job-related networks, and their emergence from job segregation. She integrates the segregation in the workplace with a family ideology of inequality. Together, their experience in work and family reinforce the subordination of the Chicana.

Margarita Melville edited a volume on Mexicanas and work entitled *Mexicanas at Work in the United States*. In her opening essay, Melville states the importance of these research reports in undermining "accepted myths and misconceptions" about Mexicanas. Each of these essays, some of which are discussed below, offer much needed and well-documented research on the work experiences of Mexicanas in the United States. The research presented by Lea Ybarra, for example, challenges a cultural explanation for the work limitations of Chicanas and instead emphasizes the socio-economic variables.

Denise Segura has also studied participation of Chicanas in the workplace and concluded that there is systematic concentration of Chicanas in the "secondary labor market" and gender-specific jobs in the "primary labor market." Within job categories, Chicana workers made less than their Chicano male counterparts or white workers. The labor segmentation of Chicanas creates a "triple oppression" that is reinforced by gender role socialization, racial discrimination by employers, the education processes, and the institutional constraints of labor market structuring.

Another sociologist, Marta López-Garza, is looking at Mexican and Central American women in Los Angeles and assessing the major variables that affect labor force participation. She has also initiated a study of the activities of Mexican and Central American women in Los Angeles' informal sector. This is a continuation of work that she has done on reconceptualizing women's economic activities through her work at the informal labor sector in Mexico (1986).

In addition to work that assesses Chicana labor force participation, Chicana social scientists are studying the work experiences of Mexicanas on the U. S./Mexico border. Rosalía Solórzano Torres, for example, notes that most studies on the immigration experience leave out the experience of women and in fact make assumptions about the immigration experience that completely ignore their existence. In her own study of "Female Mexican Immigrants in San Diego County," she

observes that nearly two-thirds of the women she studied worked in the maquila sector prior to their immigration to San Diego County (1987).

Solórzano Torres also writes about Mexican maids in El Paso and describes the "stressful ordeal" of the informal arrangements surrounding their employment (1988). Vicki Ruiz writes in more detail about the Mexican domestic workers in El Paso. She concludes, "Though frequently victimized, Mexicana domestics are not victims, but women who meet each day with integrity and endurance" (1987a, 74). Mary Romero also studied rural urban migration and the role of domestic work in that transition (1987). Julia Curry Rodríguez has looked at the labor migration process in an article entitled "Labor Migration and Familial Responsibilities: Experiences of Mexican Women," in which she observes the extensive networking among the women (1988).

Many of the Chicana feminists of the 1970s moved into health and mental health to organize and work in community-based agencies and clinics. This is an important arena where research of Chicanas has been directly connected to policy and direct services. Juana Mora (1990), for example, has done extensive research on alcohol use patterns of Chicanas at the same time that she sits on the California State Alcohol Advisory Board, the Los Angeles County Commission on Alcoholism, and the national Latino Council on Alcohol and Tobacco. Elena Flores, who recently completed a dissertation on "Sexual Attitudes and Behavior among Mexican Adolescent Females" (1992), has also developed comprehensive perinatal programs for low-income Latina women and adolescents at Tubercio Vásquez Health Center in Union City, California. Her clinical work reinforces her research, which has implications for culturally specific intervention and prevention programs for Latina adolescents regarding pregnancy, AIDS, and STD. Gloria Romero, along with Lourdes Arguelles, is conducting research on AIDS, Latinas, and implications for public policy.

A reoccurring theme in Chicana writings is the ways in which Chicanas have been active agents in either their work or home environment or both. Mary Pardo has studied women in East Los Angeles and writes about their activism at the grass-roots level (1990). In her study of "Mothers of East Los Angeles" (MELA), she describes how Mexican-American women used "'traditional' networks and resources based on family and culture into political assets to defend the quality of urban life" (Pardo 1990, 1). Pardo points out that the ways in which women of MELA have transformed their gender-related organizing experiences into political influences is similar to the activism of women in Latin America.

Increasingly, conditions in Los Angeles resemble third world communities where inadequate housing, polluted

and hazardous environments, low wages, the presence of unwanted institutions and development projects, and disappearing neighborhoods are eroding the quality of urban life. These conditions, points out Pardo, are setting the stage for new conflicts in which “quality of life issues” will be contested. Women such as the “Mothers of East Los Angeles” will be working at the grass-roots level to take on issues that have now moved to center stage in the midst of urban restructuring. She concludes:

The work “Mothers of East Los Angeles” do to mobilize the community demonstrates that people’s political involvement cannot be predicted by their cultural characteristics. These women have defined stereotypes of apathy and used ethnic, gender, and class identity as an impetus, a strength, a vehicle for political activism. They have expanded their—and our—understanding of the complexities of a political system, and they have reaffirmed the possibility of “doing something.” (Pardo 1990, 6)

The Personal as Profound

The “possibility of doing something” motivates Chicana writers. As Gloria Anzaldúa wrote in the foreword to the Second Edition of *This Bridge Called My Back*: “We are beginning to realize that we are not wholly at the mercy of circumstance, nor are our lives completely out of our hands. that if we posture as victims we will be victims, that hopelessness, suicide, that self-attacks stop us on our tracks. We are slowly moving past the resistance within, leaving behind the defeated images.”

Anzaldúa also sees that Chicanas are not alone, and thus she reaches out for the connections particularly with other women of color. She and Cherríe Moraga edited this very special volume of “writings by radical women of color” and, in doing so, speak forcibly for “an uncompromised definition of feminism by women of color in the U. S.” (xxiii). They see six major areas of concern for this women of color alliance:

1. How visibility/invisibility as women of color forms our radicalism;
2. The ways in which Third World women derive a feminist political theory specifically from our racial/cultural background and experience;
3. The destructive and demoralizing effects of racism in the women’s movement;
4. The cultural, class, and sexuality differences that divide women of color;
5. Third World women’s writing as a tool for self-preservation and revolution; and

6. The ways and means of a Third World feminist future. (xxiv)

The power of *Bridge* is in its alliances among radical women of color. It is a book about the relationships between women, and it is especially a book of predominantly lesbian voices—voices that speak of lesbianism as an act of resistance: “For a woman to be a lesbian in a male-supremacist, capitalist, misogynistic, racist, homophobic, imperialist culture, such as that of North America, is an act of resistance. (A resistance that should be championed throughout the world by all the forces struggling for liberation from the same slave master.)” (128). Cherríe Moraga makes the connection between the oppression she feels as a lesbian and that of her mother:

When I finally lifted the lid to my lesbianism, a profound connection with my mother reawakened in me. It wasn’t until I acknowledged and confronted my own lesbianism in the flesh, that my heartfelt identification with and empathy for my mother’s oppression—due to being poor, uneducated, and Chicana—was realized. My lesbianism is the avenue through which I have learned the most about silence and oppression, and it continues to be the most tactile reminder to me that we are not free human beings.

Bridge represents an important coming out for lesbian women of color—an escape from the silence. For Moraga, it was also a coming out as a Chicana. The process that she describes in finding herself through her identification with other Chicanas and Latinas is a kind of “coming home” where “for once, I didn’t have to choose between being a lesbian and being a Chicana; between being a feminist and having a family” (xviii). Moraga followed through in this soul searching which she shared with us in *Loving in the War Years* published in 1983. In the same year, she joined with other Latinas, Alma Gómez and Mariana Romo-Carmona, to edit a volume entitled *Cuentos: Stories by Latinas*. We will return to a discussion of later works by Gloria Anzaldúa.

Women of color writers exposed their souls to us in *This Bridge Called My Back* through their narratives and poetry. The collection also contained an essay from a Chicana literary critic in which she makes the connection between the myths of our culture and the curse of their legacy.

Norma Alarcón makes the connection between the myths of Malinche and contemporary Chicana identity in the essay, “Chicana’s Feminist Literature: A Re-vision through Malintzin/or Malintzin: Putting Flesh Back on the Object.” Her “excruciating life in bondage” is of “no account” but the created myth has “turned her into a

handy reference point not only for controlling, interpreting or visualizing women, but also to wage a domestic battle of stifling proportions." In this "family quarrel," the myth of La Malinche not only "pervades" male thought ("... mother-whore, bearer of illegitimate children, responsible for the foreign Spanish invasion . . .") but that of female thought as well:

As it seeps into our own consciousness in the cradle through their eyes as well as our mothers', who are entrusted with the transmission of culture, we may come to believe that indeed our very sexuality condemns us to enslavement. An enslavement which is subsequently manifested in self-hatred. All we see is hatred of women. We must hate her too since love seems only possible through extreme virtue whose definition is at best slippery. (Alarcón 1983, 183)

In her analysis, Alarcón illuminates the presence of the myth in several Chicana poems including those of Alma Villanueva, Lorna Dee Cervantes, Rina Rocha, and Judy Lucero and asserts, "The pervasiveness of the myth is unfathomable, often permeating and suffusing our very being without conscious awareness" (184).

The myth views women as "sexually passive" and "hence at all times open to potential use by men whether it be seduction or rape" (184). Women as "pawable," therefore, do not have choice in their actions. Refusing sexual exploitation is rejection of the myth's legacy. This refusal, Alarcón argues, was difficult in her cultural context for the slave Malintzin whose "allegiance" to Cortés was "obedience" to a master. For the contemporary Chicana, this obedience is defined as "devotion" and rejection of this devotion, i.e., servitude, makes her a traitor.

Thus, Alarcón illuminates for us why the early Chicana feminists were called "vendidas" and the non-feminist Chicanas the "loyalists." Yet Alarcón also notes the prevalence of this theme in Chicana poetry and literature and the need to "demythify," thus raising several "sexual political themes":

1. To choose among extant patriarchies is not a choice at all;
2. woman's abandonment and orphanhood and psychic/emotional starvation occur even in the midst of tangible family;
3. woman is a slave, emotionally as well as economically;
4. women are seen not just by one patriarchy but by all as rapeable and sexually exploitable;

5. blind devotion is not a feasible human choice (this is further clarified by the telling absence of poems by women to the Virgin of Guadalupe, while poems by men to her are plentiful);
6. when there is love/devotion it is at best deeply ambivalent as exemplified by Rina Rocha in "To the penetrator":

I hate the love
I feel for you. (187)

For Alarcón, therefore, the Chicana must participate in "creating our own defined identity and reality as women." Feminism is thus a rejection of historical and mythical distortions of our reality. And though we may be charged with betrayal for our feminism, "the worst kind of betrayal lies in making us believe that the Indian woman in US is the betrayer" (Anzaldúa 1987). Chicanas insist on their female consciousness and their visions of existence in this world.

Even as we concern ourselves with Third World women's economic exploitation, we have to concern ourselves with psychosexual exploitation and pawnability at the hands of one's brother, father, employer, master, political systems and sometimes, sadly so, powerless mothers. As world politics continues the histrionics of dominance and control attempting to figure out just who indeed will be the better macho in the world map, macho politics' last priority is the quality of our lives as women or the lives of our children. (Alarcón 1983, 189)

The betrayal that the Chicana commits is the betrayal of a system that oppresses her while pretending to protect her. The Chicana, through her writings, has rejected that system. Chicana writings, above all else, are defiance against definitions imposed on her—definitions that oppress her. Chicana writings are stands against patriarchy and injustice. They are, at the same time, self-discovery and redefinitions of Chicanas. The many unique emergent identities are evident in the Chicana writings.

The amount of poetry, literature, narratives, and plays by Chicanas exploded during the 1980s—making it difficult to discuss or even list them all. However, in addition to the bibliography at the end of this overview, there are other published bibliographies of Chicana writings. Norma Alarcón (1989) provides a thorough listing of Chicana writings in "Chicana Writers and Critics in a Social Context: Towards a Contemporary Bibliography." Lillian Castillo-Speed has also compiled a listing of Chicana

studies sources in "Chicana Studies: A Selected List of Materials since 1980" (1990).

This is the decade that marked the publication of Gina Valdes' *There Are No Madmen Here* (1981); Pat Mora's *Borders* (1986); Denise Chávez's *Last of the Menu Girls* (1987); Ana Castillo's *Women Are Not Roses* (1984), *The Mixquiahuala Letters* (1986), *My Father Was a Toltec* (1988), and *Sapogonia* (1989); Sandra Cisneros' *House on Mango Street* (1985), *My Wicked Wicked Ways* (1987), and *Woman Hollering Creek* (1991); Margarita Cota-Cárdenas' *Puppet* (1985); Alma Villanueva's *The Ultraviolet Sky* (1988); Helena María Viramontes' *The Moth and Other Stories* (1985); Evangelina Vigil's *Thirty an' Seen a Lot* (1982); Lucha Corpi's *Delia's Song* (1989); Angelina de Hoyos' *Woman, Woman* (1985); Mary Helen Ponce's *Taking Control* (1987); Erlinda Gonzales Berry's *Paletitas de guayaba*; Cherríe Moraga's *Giving Up the Ghost* (1986); Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* (1987), and Alicia Gaspar de Alba, María Herrera-Sobek, and Demetria Martínez's *Three Times a Woman* (1989). Poetry by Cordelia Candelaria, Olivia Castellano, Carmen Tafolla, Carmen Abrego, Naomi Quiñónez, Inez Hernández and many many others add to the list of prominent Chicana writings. Arte Público Press has been especially significant in publishing the works of Chicanas. Bilingual Press is also an important outlet for Chicana writings. *Revista Mujeres* and *Third Woman* are Chicana/Latina journals that publish, not only Chicana writings, but a wealth of other Latina writers.

Just as it is impossible in this paper to describe every Chicana writing, it is equally difficult to capture each of their unique identities. There are, however, some general statements that can be made. The Chicana identity is often interspersed with a Mexicana identity, and the emergence is a result of the interplay between the two. Many of the writings reflect this bicultural/bilingual aspect. The mixing of the two languages, in fact, is a stylistic feature of Chicana writings. Other writers are more or less one or the other. Writers such as Lucha Corpi reflect a closer connection to Mexico; she is heavily influenced by Mexican and Latin American literary figures, and she writes primarily in Spanish. Gloria Anzaldúa writes in *Borderlands* about growing up on the U. S./Mexico border and how that translates into a mestiza consciousness. This consciousness evolves from straddling borders that are political, cultural, psychological, spiritual, and sexual.

As reflected in earlier discussions about La Malinche, Chicanas write stories and especially poems about legendary symbols of their culture including La Malinche, La Llorana, and La Virgen de Guadalupe. They also write about historical figures such as Sor Juana de La Cruz, and they feel very connected to Mexican painter Frida Khalo. Clara Lomas has written about the "Mexican Precursors

of Chicana Feminist Writing" (1989) including Sara Estela Ramírez, Jovita Idar, and many more.

Chicana literary works reflect a connection to family especially abuelitas and mothers. Some of the writings are about the struggles of those relationships and others are an expression of the connectedness with them. Indeed, the connectedness with other women and the love and appreciation for other women is very prevalent in Chicana writings. Lesbian writers are very open in expressing their intimate and physical love with their lovers. In fact, sexuality is an important theme, again as a struggling with issues affecting that sexuality and as the expression of it. Catholicism, traditionalism, and male abuse are some of the reasons that Chicanas redefine their own sexualities. Rape, as a metaphor, has also been utilized by Chicana writers to symbolize their relegated status and the many violations against them (Herrera-Sobek 1988). A special volume of *Third Woman* was devoted to the sexuality of Latinas (vol. 4 1989) and Carla Trujillo edited a volume published by Third Woman Press entitled *Chicana Lesbians: The Girls Our Mothers Warned Us About*. In addition to their love for each other, Chicanas also share the journey of developing their love for themselves.

What is most striking about Chicana writers is the incredible amount of pain they have known and the honesty with which they express it. In this regard, Chicana writings are similar to those of other women of color who write "on the degradations and horrors that Racism inflicts" (Anzaldúa 1990b, xvii). Gloria Anzaldúa, again showing leadership in bringing together women of color, edited a volume entitled *Making Face, Making Soul: Haciendo Caras*. In this collection of poems, narratives and essays, women of color expose with deep honesty "how we 'work through' internalized violence, how we attempt to decolonize ourselves and to find ways to survive personally, culturally and racially" (xvii).

These writers expose the truth of their pain to such a degree that it is no longer possible to ignore the significance of the impact of oppression on the individual. As Anzaldúa says in her introduction: "We who are oppressed by Racism internalize its deadly pollen along with the air we breathe. Make no mistake about it, the fruits of this weed are dysfunctional lifestyles which mutilate our physical bodies, stunt our blood from our bodies, our souls" (1990b, xix).

Expressing this pain through writing is more than an expression of victimization, it is also the beginning of healing and the path to making it better. "The anthology is meant to engage the reader's total person. . . . The intellect needs the guts and adrenaline that horrific suffering and anger, evoked by some of the pieces, catapult us into. Only when all the charged feelings are unearthed can we get down to 'the work,' la tarea, nue-

stro trabajo—changing culture and all its oppressive interlocking machinations” (1990b, xviii). The writings of Chicanas and women of color remind us that not only is the personal political, but when experiences are expressed so deeply, the personal is profound. It is these experiences that can then form the basis of new theories and new methodologies which more accurately reflect what happens in the so-called margins. The new theories challenge the dominant culture’s interpretation of the experiences of women of color and set the stage for a total reconsideration of all dominant theory, including dominant feminist theory.

Cultural Studies and Chicana Feminist Theory

The very articulation of the Chicana reality through her own voice is immediately, by its very nature, a voice of resistance and the foundation for oppositional consciousness. To speak is to oppose. To give voice to emotions is to expose the sham of complicity. The act of deconstructing and reconstructing Chicana images is a subversive move against years of ideological mistreatment.

What Chicanas speak is a function of their experiences. To speak about those experiences is to find themselves in opposition with those that would define them otherwise. The result, as evident in the writings described, is an identity of opposition. Chicanas write in opposition to the symbolic representations of the Chicano movement that did not include them. Chicanas write in opposition to a hegemonic feminist discourse that places gender as a variable separate from that of race and class. Chicanas write in opposition to academics, whether mainstream or postmodern, who have never fully recognized them as subjects, as active agents.

Resistance against the dominant culture is implied in the use of the term *Chicano*. Self-representation was a key demand in the movement, and the statement “Yo Soy Chicano” was a proclamation of pride and independence. The choices for symbolic representation, however, ignored the multiple dynamic identities of Chicanos and was especially exclusive of self-representations by Chicanas (Chabram and Fregoso 1990). Despite the early efforts by Chicanas to be recognized, the representation of the Chicano movement placed the male subject at the center and thus repressed Chicana oppositional forms (Alarcón 1990; Quintana 1990). Chicana self-declarations and redefinitions are all the more significant as cultural expressions in opposition to the representations of the Chicano movement. Norma Alarcón, for example, notes that seizing the definitions of the native woman is an important step toward seizing the “I” of even the feminist “we.” Influenced by French feminists, Alarcón notes: “It is

worthwhile to remember that the historical founding moment of the construction of mestiza(o) subjectivity entails the rejection and denial of the dark Indian Mother as Indian which have compelled women to often collude in silence against themselves, and to actually deny the Indian position even as that position is visually stylized and represented in the making of the fatherland” (1990, 252).

The ideological constructions of the native dark woman, says Alarcón, are even more alarming when one notes that the majority of maquiladora workers are dark women. Chicana writers redefine these ideological portrayals, and in doing so not only reconstruct what “I” and “we” mean, but also what “you” and “they” mean. Alarcón suggests that “traversing the processes may well enable us to locate points of differences and identities in the present to forge the needed solidarities against repression and oppression” (1990, 255).

Dominant discourses generally fail to allow for difference. White feminist theory, which tends to exclude the experiences of women of color, functions as a dominant discourse. Chela Sandoval, following the lead of Gayatri Spivak, calls this “hegemonic feminism” and juxtaposes it with “U. S. Third World feminism.” Third world feminists object to hegemonic feminism’s focus solely on the variable of gender, excluding the fundamental categories of race, class, and culture. “Ain’t I a woman” is a question women of color have asked since Sojourner Truth first posed it to suffragettes. Aida Hurtado notes that racial conflict in the suffragette movement occurred because of the privileged relationship of white women to white men, a factor that continues to influence race relations between the two groups of women (1989).

For Chicanas, the situation in relation to white feminists is similar to that of Chicanos, in that their oppositional forms are repressed within each of the movements. The result is yet another component of the oppositional consciousness of the Chicana, serving as the basis for alliances with other women of color. The oppositional consciousness of Third World feminism, argues Sandoval, offers a “design for oppositional political activity.”

U. S. third world feminism arose out of the matrix of the very discourses denying, permitting, and producing difference. Out of the imperatives born of necessity arose a mobility of identity that generated the activities of a new citizen-subject, and which reveals yet another model for the self-conscious production of political opposition . . . in mapping this new design, a model is revealed by which social actors can chart the point through which differing oppositional ideologies can meet, in spite of their varying trajectories. This knowledge becomes

important when one begins to wonder, along with late twentieth-century cultural critics such as Fredric Jameson, how organized oppositional activity and consciousness can be made possible under the co-opting nature of the so-called 'post-modern' cultural condition. (1991, 2)

Chicana writers have always written in opposition to mainstream theories and now write in opposition to post-modern theorists who claim to know that there is subjectivity beyond the center. For example: "Contemporary ethnographers continue to ignore Chicanos as theoretical speaking subjects in their deconstructive work. This occurs despite the fact that deconstructive ethnographers are willing to admit that it is no longer possible to write as though 'others' did not exist" (Chabram 1990, 238). The very essence of Chicana writings is to establish Chicanas as subjects and to replace all previous representations with self-representations.

The identity of opposition is formed in interaction. The act of redefining the experiences of Chicanas through the voices of Chicanas is an expression of resistance against all other definitions. When Chicanas confront hegemonic representations, they question the symbolic bases of power relationships. The expressions from the margins is a fundamental challenge to the orderings of power. This requires a challenge to sociosexual power as well, and therefore a stand against the perpetrator/victim dynamic that prevents the realization of collective work for the common good (Pérez 1991).

As a lesbian feminist, Emma Pérez postulates that "sexuality and our symbolic reading of sexuality is the core of the problem," which prevents a successful movement for freedom and justice (160). Drawing upon male psychoanalytic theory (notably Freud, Lacan, and Foucault) to describe male behavior and French feminist critics of those theories (especially, Cixous, Duras, Irigaray), Pérez brings in the elements of race, class, and culture to deconstruct patriarchal ideology within colonization. Pérez reevaluates the Oedipal complex, the point when men realize their sociosexual power, and describes what she calls the "Oedipal-Conquest-Complex." Where as Octavio Paz attempted in the *Labyrinth of Solitude* to explain what he considers the inferiority complex of Mexicans, Pérez maintains instead that he "reveals more about his own castration complex."

Paz exhibits his own internalized racial inferiority. He holds far less power than that of his symbolic white father, *el conquistador*. On the other hand, his hatred of women, *las chingadas*, and all that is female, symbolically begins with this Oedipal-conquest-triangle. Here, the sexual, political, social, and psycho-

logical violence against *la india*—the core of the Chicana is born. This core has been plundered from us through conquest and colonization. (Pérez 1991, 168)

Pérez makes connections between this "Oedipal-Conquest-Complex" and the collusion that takes place between the white colonizer father and the Chicano against the Chicana. "For example, Chicanos who absorb the white-colonizer-European father's ways hierarchically impose those laws on Chicanas. Those Chicanos become a caricature of the white-colonizer father. One has only to look at any institution where Chicanos have been integrated to see how much many of them emulate the white father and exclude women, especially women of color" (Pérez 1991, 169).

This "conquest triangle" is only one part of the puzzle to understand why Chicanas "uphold the law of the white-colonizer European father, knowing the extent of damage and pain for Chicanas and Chicanos" (169). Pérez finds the answer in the perpetrator/victim dynamic that for women begins with "the molestation memory," the point when "girls realize that they do not have sociosexual power in relation to men" (162). The result is an "addiction" to patriarchy in which one fears "violating the father's orders" and in which an "entire social structure" betrays her if she refuses to succumb to patriarchal mandates.

This relationship is symbolized in the Luis Valdez' theatre production *Corridos*, which, Pérez asserts, reveals his male centrist anxieties and "eroticizes women's victimization." The story is about "Delgadina," a young woman who has refused the advances of her father, is placed in a tower without food or water and eventually dies. Despite her pleas to her mother, sister, and brother, "Each one fears violating the father's order, his sexual laws, so they each ostracize Delgadina" (171).

The song tells us about a young woman's death when she challenges the sexual law of the father. She cannot, however, break from the law, happy and free to join with women who believe her, or a community who will allow her to be. There is no such community. Instead, a male-centralist society with male-identified women cannot even hear her language, her pain. They just know they cannot defy the father. (Pérez 1991, 172)

The incestuous language and behavior was already operating by the time the father commands Delgadina to allow his "penetration." According to Pérez, that "penetration" was not necessary to create "a memory of

molestation" that enters her psyche and leaves the pain of inappropriate behavior that goes unchallenged—by anyone. "Like Delgadina, women live in this cycle of addiction/dependency to the patriarchy that has ruled women since the precise historical moment that they become aware that women's bodies are sexually desired and/or overpowered by the penis" (172).

This "memory of molestation" may result in repudiation of the molester but often "victims continue to repudiate and embrace the perpetrator in a persistent pattern through relationships until that addictive/dependent cycle is broken" (173). The answer, argues Pérez, is to "resist the perpetrator" in order to abandon "phallogocentric law and order." Letting go of capitalist patriarchal notions of sexual law and order is necessary in order to create a collective in the common good. "Social sexual relations between men and women condoned by the patriarchy are inherently unhealthy and destructive most of the time" (173).

Pérez is concerned with fundamental social change and believes that it is impossible without fundamental challenge to the social sexual ideology of patriarchy. Chicanas defy this patriarchy when they can find "a specific moment of consciousness when they can separate from the law of the father into their own *sitio y lengua*." The writings of women of color, according to Emma Pérez, "emerge from un sitio y una lengua (a space and language) that rejects colonial ideology and the by-products of colonialism and capitalist patriarchy—sexism, racism homophobia, etc." (161). Chicana writings are writings of resistance, reaffirmation, self-representation—a break from the cycle of perpetrator/victim. Chicana writings are also the process of recovery from that cycle.

The Challenges of Oppositional Consciousness

As Sandoval writes: "Any social order which is hierarchically organized into relations of domination and subordination creates particular subject positions within which the subordinated can legitimately function. These subject positions, once self-consciously recognized by their inhabitants, can become transformed into more effective sites of resistance to the current ordering of power relations." (Sandoval 1991, 11)

The self-conscious recognition that Chela Sandoval refers to is similar to the "historical moment" that Pérez describes when a Chicana can separate from the law of the father, i.e., from domination through authority, and find her own "sitio y lengua." Chicana writings, in their very essence, are representations of resistance. As Chicanas join in alliance with women of color, they are looking to extend their resistance to forge effective opposition to all forms of domination. Pérez refers to a

"collective good" and Alarcón to "solidarities against repression and oppression."

Self-identified Chicanas remain committed to a legacy from the Chicano movement:

We live in an era in which Chicanos are increasingly the most impoverished group in the United States. In the Southwest, Chicanos will soon be the largest minority population, yet we also remain the most marginalized group in all the sectors of US society. Given this historical profile and given the upsurge of conservative ideology, there is an urgency and a necessity for retaining the utopian and political dimensions of our intellectual practice. This progressive humanism is the legacy which we have inherited from the Chicano movement and which we seek to reactivate. (Chabram and Fregoso 1990, 210)

This upsurge of conservative ideology, however, makes the resistance not only more difficult but more important. Idealist notions of a more humanitarian society are the dreams that fuel opposition to hierarchical subjugation. If we take seriously the opposition expressed by Chicanas against classist, racist, sexist, and homophobic conditions, then we will join them in the oppositional political activity for the collective good.



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