

MARÍA ELENA DE VALDÉS

Guadalupana Syncretism and Postcolonial Literature in Mexico

Postcolonialism is not only an area of contemporary research, it is also a much contested aspect of the larger concern of cultural study. It is therefore of some importance to locate one's own position within the debate. There are two fundamental premises in my work: 1) that language is primarily a way of living, and 2) that all discourse is full of values and value judgements whether they are explicit or implicitly stated. Consequently, postcolonialism in my work is the emergence of a discourse that shifts a people from dependency to self-determination.

Historically the colonial empires of the European states have responded to different situations around the world with the same basic common denominator of exploitation of the other as inferior to their purported "superior" imperial power. Whether one is concerned with the French in Algeria, the British in India or the Spanish in Latin America, the apologists of empire used the diverse ideological codes of their culture to legitimize the political and military actions they undertook.

In the particular case of the Spanish empire in Latin America the same strategy of legitimization was used throughout which ultimately justified the rampant enslavement of people in order to save their immortal soul, but the situation to which they responded changed markedly from one part of the Americas to the other. In the specific context of New Spain/Mexico the most significant characteristic was the resilience and adaptability of the pre-conquest culture of the Aztecs and the Toltec foundations confronted by the power of the Spanish empire. A contributing factor in Mexico was the catastrophic elimination of four fifths of the population in less than a century. This drastic change in the demographic situation made it possible for the emergence of a new population of mixed blood whose culture and language was syncretic. Postcolonialism in Mexico, therefore, is a much longer process of emancipation than that of other parts of the colonial world, one that begins in the seventeenth century and matures in the twentieth century.

In this study I want to examine how Mexican syncretism in general and the Guadalupana (Our Lady of Guadalupe/Tonantzin) in particular function as social symbols in the development of postcolonial literature in Mexico and Chicano literature in the United States. The power of the Guadalupana as a social symbol

is unparalleled in Mexican culture because her presence transcends belief or ideology; she is more powerful than flag or national anthem, for these can be parodied. The Guadalupeana can be appropriated but she cannot be parodied. The singular unifying fact about Mexican symbols and emblems is that some are sacred to the national identity and others are merely familiar. The syncretic symbols are sacred because they represent the diversity of this complex nation. Although the Mexican revolution of 1910 has been put forth as a political symbol of unity, and countless military leaders and politicians have sought to elevate this now ritual event into the national psyche they have failed to make it into a syncretic myth. Postcolonial literature has not accepted political appropriations of the inner contradiction that is Mexico. Literary creation in Mexico was trapped in a colonial mind warp until it could overcome the initial racial division. Some basic data about Mexico should assist us in approaching the concept of colonial and postcolonial literature.

Mexico gained its independence from Spain in 1821, but political separation did not end the colonial mentality of the dominant Creole class. It was not until the Mexican Revolution of 1910 had spent its fury that a postcolonial literature began to emerge. The clearly marked boundary between Mexican colonial and postcolonial literature is the syncretic appropriation of pre-Hispanic symbols in the latter.

The rise of Aztec power in the fourteenth century brought the city state of Tenochtitlan into a position of dominance over the twenty-eight city states of the Nahuatl speaking people of the Valley of Mexico. A distinguishing characteristic of the Aztecs was a pronounced tendency to syncretism. In Aztec culture this was a symbolic fusion of fundamentally different cultural sources and belief systems into a new form that maintained clear evidence of the disparate sources (cf. León-Portilla, Séjourné, Soustelle). For example, at the time of the Spanish conquest in 1521 the Aztec god of war Huitzilopochtli was made into the twin of Tlaloc, the Toltec god of rain. This traditional tendency to spiritual syncretism continued after the conquest, but now as a means of survival rather than assimilation of a conquered people.

The wounds of the conquest had cut deeply and were long lasting. Military and political domination was followed by enslavement and the decimation of the native population from 25.3 million inhabitants in the Valley of Mexico in 1519 to one million in 1605 (Moreno Toscano 350). The survivors of this wholesale sacrifice had to learn to live through a profound displacement of an ancient cosmology by another derived from the Mediterranean world. But the ancient Mexican gods and the attendant world view was eclipsed not destroyed by the Spanish soldiers, administrators and priests. What the Spaniards never fully understood was the extent of Mexican syncretism. Amongst the survivors there was a spiritual resistance to Spanish culture in spite of the fact that the Mexican languages were progressively eliminated and that the institutions of church and state dominated all aspects of life in New Spain. The oral traditions within

village life's observance of Spanish dictates quietly infused the old into the new. Because of the linguistic displacement which went hand in hand with the apocalyptic decimation of the population, the first evidence of Mexican syncretism was in the plastic arts to be followed centuries later in postcolonial literature.

When the reconstruction of Tenochtitlan began in 1525 it was on the foundations of the Aztec buildings that the Spaniards built their colonial Mexico City. What the Spanish architects did not realize was that workers were inserting carvings from the Aztec temples into the new buildings. For example, Tlaltecuhli in Aztec cosmology was the lord of the earth and the devourer of the dead. In Aztec architecture this god was not visible; usual practice was to place Tlaltecuhli face down against the earth (Pierce 255). The Mexican native craftsmen were very pleased with the opportunity to continue a small part of their civilization hidden within the new.

Without question, one of the earliest visible manifestations of Mexican syncretism was the painting of a dark-skinned Mexican girl surrounded by the rays of the sun, with a twelve point crown on her head, dressed in a cloak of stars and standing on a crescent moon with her hands held together as if in supplication, and her eyes cast down. It was reported that in December 1531, ten years after the conquest, the young woman depicted in the painting appeared to a native Mexican on the hill of Tepeyac, just outside the ceremonial centre of Tenochtitlan/Mexico City, at the place where there had been a shrine to the mother goddess Tonantzin. She asked Juan Diego to take the roses that were blooming on the hill to Archbishop Zumárraga with the message that she wanted a church built in her honor on the site. Although the earliest existing document that records the apparition of Tepeyac dates from 1648, more than a century after the reported date of 1531, there are numerous reports by churchmen of the Tepeyac cult. From 1555 when the first shrine was built on the hill until 1572 when the Jesuit order arrived in force, the cult of "Santa María Tonantzin" had to overcome the staunch opposition of the Franciscans who condemned it as idolatry. After 1572 the cult spread like wild fire beyond the valley of Mexico. After this date all new viceroys had to make an obligatory visit to the shrine if they had any expectation of winning the support of the population (Lafaye 242-48).

The name Guadalupe is Spanish. The Virgin of Guadalupe in Spain is from Cáceres in Extremadura; it is the place where a shepherd found a statue of the Virgin Mary that had been hidden during the Moorish domination of this part of the peninsula. The town and the cult to the image grew in the twelfth century and from 1340 it became a centre of pilgrimage (Lafaye 217-24). It was this shrine that Hernán Cortés visited after the conquest of Mexico to give thanks. The Tepeyac image in the painting is Mexican, she is a young Mexican woman who the population immediately recognized as Tonantzin, the Earth Goddess who offered protection to the Aztec people. If her name is Spanish and she represents Tonantzin, her dress is clearly Judeo-Christian, taken from the book of

Revelation 12:1: "And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars."

At the centre of the Guadalupeana veneration is the image of a young woman painted on a coarse *ayate* textile which was identified as the poncho-like outer garment of Juan Diego on which the image was imprinted; it is now above the main altar of the Basilica of Guadalupe in Mexico City. The image, purportedly from 1531, was painstakingly copied by the Mexican artist Baltasar Echave Orrio (Hecht 347) and it is his copy which is the basis of innumerable altars to the Virgin of Guadalupe throughout all of Mexico, the rest of Spanish America, Europe, and quite notably in one of the side altars of Notre Dame de Paris.¹ The Spaniards chose to link the apparition to the Virgin of Guadalupe from Extremadura but in the recorded dialogue between Juan Diego and the archbishop, through the intervention of an interpreter, the name of Guadalupe is never mentioned. The Juan Diego narrative reported that the young woman had spoken to the Indian in Nahuatl, not in Spanish. The Spaniards saw the Virgin of Guadalupe represented in the image; the Mexicans saw Tonantzin. The contradiction was noted in 1556 when the Franciscan priest Bustamante, newly arrived from Spain, denounced the cult of the Guadalupeana as idolatry which was Christian only in name since there were clear links between the venerated image and the Goddess Tonantzin (Lafaye 238). The contradiction was a serious point of contention between the Spanish and Creole clergy. However, after 1572 the contradiction was set aside by the Jesuits who became enthusiastic supporters of the veneration of Guadalupe-Tonantzin. The image of the young woman, Christian virgin, mother of God, or Aztec Goddess, became a symbol of Mexican nationalism. Octavio Paz draws upon social psychology to explain the syncretic power of the Guadalupeana cult:

1 The hundreds of artists who have painted or sculpted the Guadalupeana over the centuries have only made elaborations in the framing context; the image itself has shown no variations. There is an unarticulated injunction that demands that the representation of the Guadalupeana must not vary. For a commentary on this phenomenon, see Johanna Hecht. A curious side issue to the study of cultural syncretism is the phenomenon of the many documented cases of fabricated syncretism. One of the most noteworthy in Mexican colonial history is the case of fray Servando Teresa de Mier, a passionate advocate of Mexican independence from Spain who gave a sermon in 1794 in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe affirming that the Apostle St. Thomas and Quetzalcóatl were one and the same. This declaration was put forward as further proof of Mexico's divine right to independence. The clumsy and comical fabrication of instant syncretism for political purposes cost Servando Teresa de Mier dearly through repeated imprisonment and exile, but it has nothing to do with our topic in this paper. For further commentary, see Alfonso Reyes, "Fray Servando Teresa de Mier" 3: 433-42, especially 436-37; and also Octavio Paz 1974, 180ff. For further commentary on the politically motivated fabrication of syncretism, see Francisco de la Maza 178 ff. On the other hand, an example of current research on syncretism is the work of Enzo Segre.

It is no secret to anyone that Mexican Catholicism is centred about the cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe. In the first place, she is an Indian Virgin; in the second place, the scene of her appearance to the Indian Juan Diego was a hill that formerly contained a sanctuary dedicated to Tonantzin, "Our Mother," the Aztec goddess of fertility. We know that the Conquest coincided with the apogee of the cult of two masculine divinities: Quetzalcóatl, the self-sacrificing god, and Huitzilopochtli, the young warrior-god. The defeat of these gods — which is what the Conquest meant to the Indian world, because it was the end of a cosmic cycle and the inauguration of a new divine kingdom — caused the faithful to return to the ancient feminine deities. This phenomenon of a return to the maternal womb, so well known to the psychologist, is without doubt one of the determining causes of the swift popularity of the cult of the Virgin. The Indian goddesses were goddesses of fecundity, linked to the cosmic rhythms, the vegetative processes and agrarian rites. The Catholic Virgin is also the Mother, but her principal attribute is not to watch over the fertility of the earth but to provide refuge for the unfortunate. (1985, 84-85)

From the seventeenth-century viceroys to the Creole troops of the war of independence of 1810 to the revolutionaries of Emiliano Zapata in 1910, Guadalupe-Tonantzin has been invoked by all who have sought to govern the Mexican people. "Today, her image adorns house fronts and interiors, churches and home altars, bull rings and gambling dens, taxis and buses, restaurants and houses of ill repute" (Wolf 34). The salient point is that a postcolonial Mexican consciousness that had begun to emerge in the seventeenth century around the cult of the Guadalupeana galvanized during the eighteenth century into a set of social beliefs that eventually led to the recognition of Mexican culture as a *mestizo* culture in post-revolution Mexico. The U.S. anthropologist Eric R. Wolf understood the social power of this master syncretic social symbol:

In this perspective, the Mexican War of Independence marks the final realization of the apocalyptic promise. The banner of Guadalupe leads the insurgents; and their cause is referred to as "her law." In this ultimate extension of the symbol, the promise of life held out by the supernatural mother has become the promise of an independent Mexico, liberated from the irrational authority of the Spanish father-oppressors and restored to the Chosen Nation whose election had been manifest in the apparition of the Virgin on Tepeyac." (38)

In 1910 still another war was fought under the Guadalupeana banner; the Mexican Revolution marked the end of cultural colonialism and the shame of slavery. The revolutionary army of Zapata not only carried the image of the Guadalupeana into battle, but it was the rallying battle cry. The Guadalupe-Tonantzin symbol thus links together family, politics, and religion. It brings the colonial past into sharp relief with the pre-Hispanic inheritance. By the nineteenth thirties and forties the cult reflects the most striking social relationship of Mexican life at all levels, and embodies the emotions of a miscegenetic nation coming out of an identity crisis. It provides a cultural idiom through which the

tenor and emotions of these social and ethnic relationships can be expressed. "It is, ultimately, a way of talking about Mexico: a 'collective representation' of Mexican society" (Wolf 38). Rosario Castellanos, the leading woman writer of Mexico since Sor Juana, has summed up the psychological phenomena of contemporary Mexico that bifurcates the cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe and Roman Catholicism.²

More than forty years ago Octavio Paz published what was to be the single most important book in the development of a postcolonial cultural identity in Mexico. *El laberinto de la soledad* (1950) (*The Labyrinth of Solitude* [1961]) is a philosophical re-examination of Mexican history and the symbols by which Mexicans live. Mexican culture is, in Paz's estimation, condemned to continuous oscillation between the Spanish and the pre-Hispanic legacy. This is an internal alterity where the mother is always the violated native woman and the father is the abusive Spanish macho. The situation is not unlike that of the children of the mixed race that came out of the plantation south in the United States. There is, however, one basic difference: in the United States it was regional, in Mexico it was the foundation of an entire mixed race nation. Paz's poems from 1948 to 1957 were published with the title *La estación violenta* (*The Violent Season*), and are the earliest extended expression of syncretism in Mexican literature. The book opens with a series of poems, written in self-imposed exile, the first of several Paz took, and are dated Naples 1948, Venice 1948, Avignon 1950, Paris 1950, Geneva 1952, but it concludes with two poems written in Mexico City in 1955 and 1957. The two are "El cántaro roto" ("The broken vessel"), a long poem of 137 verses and "Piedra de sol" ("Sun Stone"), an even longer poem of 584 verses. Both poems, but especially "Piedra de sol" mark a turning point in Mexican literature. This was the culmination of a Mexican cultural crisis that was now overtly building up a postcolonial consciousness through syncretic images. Two stanzas of "Piedra de sol" are the specific appropriations of the syncretic:

life and death
make a pact within you, lady of night,
tower of clarity, queen of dawn,
lunar virgin, mother of the mother of waters

body of the world, house of death,
I fall endlessly since birth,
I fall inside without touching bottom,
gather me in your eyes, gather
my scattered dust and reconcile my ashes
bind my disjointed bones, blow over
my being, bury me in your earth,
and in your silence of peace to thought
that rages against itself:
your hand lady of seeds that are days. (31)

Tonantzin, the Earth Goddess, the giver of earthly fertility and the Virgin of Guadalupe's painted image whose eyes are purported to contain the image of the humble Juan Diego, the Archbishop and the translator, are merged into a single life force, the giver of life and the house of death.

The invocation by the lyric voice of the Guadalupeana, gives way to a direct identification of the enunciating voice with the sun stone itself:

I want to go on, to go further, and cannot:
as each moment was dropping into another
I dreamt the dreams of dreamless stones,
and there at the end of the years like stones
I heard my blood, singing in its prison
and the sea sang with a murmur of light,
one by one the walls gave way,
all of the doors were broken down,
and the sun came bursting through my forehead,
it tore apart my closed lids,
cut loose my being from its cover
and pulled me out of myself to wake me
from this inanimate sleep and its centuries of stone
and the sun's magic of mirrors revived. (33)

The sun stone is of course the huge round sculpture called the Aztec calendar. It measures 3.58 meters in diameter and weighs 24,000 kilos. It had been situated in the main plaza of Tenochtitlan and was torn down in 1521 during the siege of the city by the Spaniards and their native allies. It was rediscovered in the eighteenth century in the main plaza between the cathedral and the municipal palace. It was unearthed and placed on one of the walls of the cathedral where it remained until 1885 when Porfirio Díaz, president of Mexico, ordered it removed and taken to the museum of anthropology. By placing this fundamental symbol of the ancient Sun God and the religious cosmology on the tower of the Christian cathedral, the Spanish viceroy was inadvertently contributing to the syncretic evolution of modern Mexico. The sun stone ranks today alongside the

2 "The Virgin of Guadalupe seems to have only positive attributes. She is, in spite of her apparent fragility, the sustainer of life, the one who protects against all dangers, the one who gives solace to the sorrowful, the one who presides over celebrations, the one who legitimizes joy, the one who saves the body from illness and the spirit from the devil's ensnarements. How can one not love her, revere her, convert her into the nucleus of our most intimate affective life? This is precisely what Mexicans do and they have reached the point of separating religious belief from the Virgin of Guadalupe to protect themselves in case these beliefs enter in conflict with other ideas or go through a crisis or, under certain circumstances, have to be kept hidden. The best example is that of Mexican atheists who do not have the slightest problem of conscience in making their yearly pilgrimage to her shrine" (22; translation is mine).

Virgin of Guadalupe as a symbol of Mexico. In the poem, Paz dramatizes the unearthing of the sun stone as the emergence of a new age of Mexican identity.

The Guadalupeana as a symbol of modern Mexico is fundamentally syncretic, for the only way to represent a reality of opposites is to link them dialectically in endless opposition and creation. In "El día de las madres" ("Mother's Day"), the novella by Carlos Fuentes in *Agua quemada* (Burnt Water, 1980), the old revolutionary general Vicente Vergara discusses the Virgin of Guadalupe with his grandson Plutarco:

... but you also say that the Virgin unites all us Mexicans, how can you explain that? — The Virgin of Guadalupe is a revolutionary Virgin; she appeared on Hidalgo's banners during the War of Independence, and on Zapata's in the Revolution, she's the best bitchin' Virgin ever. (1980, 31)

To present-day Mexicans there is no contradiction in an atheist, anti-clerical former revolutionary paying homage to the Virgin of Guadalupe; as the old man would say, the Virgin of Guadalupe has nothing to do with religion, she is Mexico.

Mexican postcolonial literature gains its momentum through the continued appropriation of pre-Hispanic texts and symbols which are used to express contemporary reality. Carlos Fuentes used the ancient Aztec calendar of divination in his structuring of *La muerte de Artemio Cruz* (*The Death of Artemio Cruz*, 1962), Juan Rulfo created the metaphorical narrative of burning water in *Pedro Páramo* (1955) and, more recently, José Emilio Pacheco used the Nahuatl poems known as the *Cantares mexicanos* to express the Guernica-like outrage at the army's massacre of the university students and their supporters in Tlatelolco in 1968. The poem is included in the book *No me preguntes cómo pasa el tiempo* (*Don't Ask Me How Time Passes*) published in Mexico City in 1969.

Reading of *Cantares mexicanos*: Manuscript of Tlatelolco
October 2, 1968

When all were congregated
men with weapons of war
closed all exits, entrances and passages.
Then a roar was heard
then cries were raised.
Husbands sought their wives
they carried their small children in their arms.
With perfidy they were killed
Without knowing it they died.
And the smell of blood stained the air.
And fathers and mothers cried their lament.
They were mourned.

The dead were mourned.
And the Mexicans were afraid.
Fear and shame came over them.
And all this came to pass among us
This lamentable and sad fate
brought anguish into our midst
Broken lances on the roads lie,
houses are without roof.
Their walls have turned red
Worms spring up in the streets and on the city squares.
We beat on the adobe walls
and our heritage is a net of holes.

Although there were and there continue to be written, many works of literature about the tragic events of October 2, 1968, the poem by Pacheco has become the symbol of the massacre.³ It has had the power to evoke the deepest sense of treachery: the Mexican army has been cast in the same mold as the Spanish soldiers of Cortés.

Postcolonial literature in Mexico emerged after more than a century of independence. Unlike any other country in Latin America, with the possible exception of Peru, Mexico had to overcome a nightmare of European degradation of everything that was native to the new world. The most basic structures of family and community life were destroyed. Well-intentioned and not well-intentioned religious orders took the most promising of the young, trained them in European ways and, generally, made them unfit for life amongst their own people. In addition, any critic looking at the survival of Mexico must take the decimation of the population into consideration. Only one out of every twenty-five persons survived the worst years of the conquest, 1520 to 1560. The overwhelming loss of population and the insatiable greed of the Europeans combined to create a caste system of strict hierarchical power with the viceroy and the archbishop at the top and native Mexicans at the bottom. But there was still another factor in the new social equation. The only part of the colonial population that grew was the *mestizo* sector, most were illegitimate children of Spanish fathers and Mexican mothers. The Spanish administration did not permit Spanish women to go to Mexico (Moreno Toscano 321; Gonzalbo Aizpuru 43). The legacy of this colonial policy was the demon of spiritual slavery that had to be exorcized on a sociopolitical level before it could be dealt with at the spiritual

3 Among the many Mexican texts that responded to the tragedy of Tlatelolco one of the most courageous and powerful denunciations was that of Elena Poniatowska. See her *La noche de Tlatelolco: Testimonios de historia oral* (1971) (*Massacre in Mexico* [1975]) which stresses the criminality of the president, his ministers and the army.

level. The Mexican revolution, 1910-1918, was the social upheaval that made the advent of postcolonial art and literature possible.

Mexican culture had short-lived moments before the revolution but they were mere aberrations in the system that could well be tolerated. The most spectacular example is that of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz; she was born Juana Ramírez de Asbaje in the village of San Miguel Nepantla in 1648, the illegitimate daughter of Isabel Ramírez and Pedro Manuel de Asbaje, a Basque. She received the protection of the vicereine, the Marquesa de Mancera, and became a nun in 1669 in order to escape her social status as an illegitimate child and to pursue her scholarly interests. She flourished in the convent and by the sixteen eighties was published in Spain and was acknowledged as the leading intellectual in the difficult years of the reign of Carlos II and the decadence of the end of the Habsburg line in Spain. Her most productive years were from 1680 to 1688 when she was under the protection of Doña María Luisa Manrique de Lara, Condesa de Paredes, Vicereine of New Spain, and herself an erudite woman of letters. Sor Juana's decline began shortly after the return of this vicereine to Spain. In 1690 she was attacked as being guilty of the sin of pride. Her library was sold in 1694, she died in 1695 at the age of 46. The fact that a woman had broken the restrictions of social class and gender on the basis of her intelligence at a time when women were not allowed to attend any form of education beyond primary instruction is remarkable. What was not surprising was that she was not fully appreciated as an outstanding thinker of colonial Mexico until she was made part of the postcolonial reassessment of the past. As part of colonial thought the work of Sor Juana could only be assessed in comparison to the past and her contemporaries in Spain. In Mexico there was a very limited context to give her work meaning for this was still a deeply wounded population divided into unreconcilable classes with the powerful Creole minority ignoring the disenfranchised *mestizo* and Indian majority.⁴ It was a culture in the making, no longer Spanish, but not yet Mexican.

The postcolonial concept of Mexico created by twentieth-century Mexican writers and artists began with the rediscovery of the value of pre-Hispanic art

and this reassessment was followed by the appropriation of pre-Hispanic forms and symbolism during the nineteen thirties and forties by Diego Rivera, Orozco, Siqueiros and the other great muralists. The models for this redescription of the past were the syncretic symbols such as Guadalupe-Tonantzin and the sun stone. In the next decade the revision of colonial art and literature began. Octavio Paz published his study of Sor Juana in 1982, three hundred years after her rise to intellectual preeminence.⁵ The book is part biography, part cultural history and, in the fullest sense of the word, a reclamation of the Mexican dark ages, seven-teenth and eighteenth centuries, as the foundation of the modern nation. Sor Juana is presented by Paz as a genius who was allowed to flourish for a few short years in the midst of a society that repressed all intellectual and creative expression by women. She was the kind of cultural contradiction that would be characteristic of postcolonial Mexico.

In the decade of the 1990s there has been another appropriation of the Guadalupe-Tonantzin symbol in an unexpected quarter. She has been enlisted in a Chicana feminist's writing: Sandra Cisneros fights on two fronts at once — against the Mexican-Chicano machismo on one side and against Anglo racism on the other. On reflection, it is perhaps more fitting to have the Virgin/Goddess enlisted against patriarchy than in a war of independence or of social justice as was done before.

Sandra Cisneros published *Woman Hollering Creek* in 1991 and in it she includes the remarkable piece "Little Miracles, kept Promises." Her Chicana lyric narrator speaks:

Virgencita de Guadalupe. For a long time I wouldn't let you in my house. I couldn't see you without seeing my ma each time my father came home drunk and yelling, blaming everything that ever went wrong in his life on her. I couldn't look at your folded hands without seeing my *abuela*.... Couldn't look at you without blaming you for all the pain my mother and her mother and all our mothers' mothers have put up with in the name of God. Couldn't let you in my house. I wanted you bare-breasted, snakes in your hands. I wanted you leaping and somersaulting the backs of bulls. I wanted you swallowing raw

5 Paz's book was the labour of years and it plunged him into the full scale reexamination of the Mexican colonial period that is very much in evidence in his subsequent writing. See, for example, "Will for Form." The political wave of protest against Spain's empire in Latin America swept through the continent in the first decade of the nineteenth century and political leaders sought to create symbols of national independence that would serve the cause. Fray Servando Teresa de Mier argued that Quetzalcoatl was in fact St. Thomas the Apostle, others used the symbolism of the Guadalupeana, and some also tried to remake Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz into an example of Mexican genius as distinct from a Spanish colonial writer of note. These gestures were all quite futile if understandable in the context of the fight for independence. Mexico was not to be a creole empire for powerful demographic reasons; it was to become a *mestizo* republic imbued with cultural syncretism that could not be manufactured because it was politically expedient (see Paz, "Orfandad y legitimidad").

4 Octavio Paz is today a controversial authority to cite because of his outspoken political views, but since I do not suffer from historical amnesia, I insist that his work is among the most significant in the second half of this century, and this is especially the case within the development of Mexico's postcolonialism. Many contemporary critics have taken exception to a number of observations Paz makes in *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, as well they should, the essay was written forty years ago and Paz then had a tendency to blur the lines between description and prescription, especially with regard to the status of women. See his chapter "Sons of Malinche" and for a sharp critique, see Arnaldo Nesti. The argument I am making in this paper is neither a revision and much less an endorsement of Paz's views; I am stating that from 1950 to at least 1985 Paz has been one of the major voices in Mexico defining and to some extent setting the course of Mexican postcolonialism.

hearts and rattling volcanic ash. I wasn't going to be my mother or my grandma. All that self-sacrifice, all that silent suffering. Hell no. Not here. Not me.... I don't know how it all fell in place. How I finally understood who you are. No longer Mary the mild, but our mother Tonantzin. Your church at Tepeyac built on the site of her temple. Sacred ground no matter whose goddess claims it. That you could have the power to rally a people when a country was born, and again during civil war, and during a farmworkers' strike in California.... Mighty Guadalupe Coatloxopeuh Tonantzin ... know that I thank you. (127-29)

Sandra Cisneros is a member of a new generation of Chicana writers who have broken the silence and the tradition of domination.⁶ They have realized that theirs is a double colonization from within and without their own culture. They are not Mexicans, nor can they ever be Angloamerican women, but they will no longer accept the place accorded them within the patriarchal Chicano culture. By appropriating the Guadalupe, Cisneros has followed a well honoured tradition of appropriation of the mother-earth symbolism of Guadalupe-Tonantzin. In every appropriation the cause has been freedom from oppression. Sandra Cisneros writes literature in English in the United States and is, consequently, a part of the most recent postcolonial development — the one within.

The rapid growth of Chicano art and literature in the last twenty-five years has been the creative response of a new generation responding to the challenge of marginalization left in the wake of the civil rights movement of the nineteen sixties.⁷ This has been especially the case in the South West. "Our literature is

an intrinsic part of our movement" was an accurate assessment of Chicano literature in 1979 (Villarreal 167).

Once an idealized Mexico of the post World War II generation had been supplanted in the Chicano communities with a new perception of Mexico as a highly diversified nation that was only then coming to grips with its *mestizo* identity some fifty years after the end of the Mexican revolution (1910-1918), the way was clear for a Chicano appropriation of Mexican syncretism. The issues for the Chicano were racial, linguistic, religious and, fundamentally, socio-cultural: the only place a Chicano felt at home in the United States or Mexico was within the parameters of his or her own community. Alurista's "La casa de mi padre" ("My father's house") exemplifies this home/heaven concept.

The Chicano was primarily *mestizo*, bilingual, with a conservative and very basic Roman Catholicism and a sociocultural dependence on the security of the barrio: "All brown all around, we are safe. But watch us drive into a neighbourhood of another color and our knees go shakity-shake and our car windows get rolled up tight and our eyes look straight" (29) is how Esperanza, Cisneros's narrator in *The House on Mango Street*, puts it. The Chicano communities were quite different from those of other Spanish-speaking minorities in the United States like the Cubans of South Florida or the Puerto Ricans of New York City because the Chicano communities were deeply rooted in the land, their people had been there before the *gringos*. The Chicano extended family protected but also isolated: "Is that what they teach you at the university? *Miss High-and-Mighty*. *Miss Thinks-She's-Too-Good-for-Us*. Acting like a *bolilla*, a white girl" (Cisneros 1991, 128). This was a suffocating protection not unlike that of rural Quebec.

The syncretic symbols the Chicano has appropriated from Mexico are primarily symbols of identity and of these, the most important are the Virgin of Guadalupe and the eagle devouring the snake, which is another variation of the earth-air symbol of Quetzalcóatl and is, of course, the centrepiece of the Mexican flag. The figure of Guadalupe-Tonantzin was the dominant symbol of New Spain in the seventeenth century because it was only in such rare phenomena that the irreconcilable heritage of hate and destruction between the old and the new could be fused. In the fullest historical sense of the word, Guadalupe-Tonantzin was and is a syncretic creation of a conquered people's struggle for survival. Mexican

identity and the violent reaction of the Chicano community forcing them to retreat with respect to their use of the Guadalupe image. The work of the radical Chicana writers is primarily in English and therefore not directed in any meaningful way to their counterparts in Mexico. As a group fighting against racial, ethnic and gender marginalizing forces in the culture of the U.S.A., they represent the sharpest break heretofore expressed with current Mexican artistic directions. There are, of course, a much larger number of Chicanas who still find their identity closely entwined with Mexican culture. See Carmen M. del Río, and Silvia Spitta.

6 Chicana writers have focused on the persona of the Malinche, the Mexican companion of Cortés as a woman betrayed and forever trapped in racial conflict. However, Chicano theatre and art has always reserved the image of the Guadalupe as the most fundamental image of identity. See Jorge A. Huerta's commentary on the *teatro campesino* of Luis Valdez and his presentation of *The Four Apparitions of the Virgin of Guadalupe to Juan Diego* (111).

7 Juan Gómez-Quiñones puts it succinctly: "The struggle to understand the Mexican-American experience increasingly focused on questions of alienation, ethnicity, identity, class, gender, and chauvinism" (103). Another political historian Carlos Muñoz focuses on the issues of cultural identity in his study of the Chicano movement, but perhaps the most accurate and probing inquiry into Chicano culture is the recent book by Ignacio García. He writes about Chicano literature as a natural development coming out of the political quest for civil rights; in the nineteen sixties young Chicanos were writing the full gamut of literature in their cultural orbit: poems, plays, novels, and short stories. They wrote about *la raza*, the *movimiento*, *el barrio* and about all things considered anti-Mexican: the *migra*, the border patrol and the Texas rangers. The push toward social justice could not move forward without viable symbols of cultural identity, the resurgence of Chicano symbolism spilled over into creativity. There is an interesting development among some of the more radical Chicana writers and artists who have appropriated the symbolism of the Virgin of Guadalupe. It is now common to find parodic appropriations of the figure of the Virgin in mini-skirt and high heels in the manner of Duchamp's Mona Lisa with beard. In the Chicano community this development marks a violent rejection of Mexico as a cultural source and, more specifically, of the symbols of Mexican society. Norma Alarcón reiterates the details of this Chicana break with Mexican

postcolonial literature, as the most elaborate manifestation of this survival, had to become an extended syncretic elaboration as it did in the works of Octavio Paz, Carlos Fuentes, Juan Rulfo, José Emilio Pacheco, and Rosario Castellanos. At present Mexican letters have assumed the syncretic foundations and have begun to move in other directions such as the restructuring of effective power in a political system that has known only absolute authority at the top and full scale bribery in approaching the seat of power. The syncretic symbol of healing the wounds of the past has now been appropriated by the Chicanas in the United States.

University of Toronto

Works Cited

- Alarcón, Norma. "Traductora, Traditora: A Paradigmatic Figure of Chicana Feminism." *Cultural Critique* 13 (1989): 57-87.
- Alurista. "La casa de mi padre" ("My father's house"). *Floriscano en Aztlán*. Los Angeles: Chicano Cultural Centre, UCLA, 1971. 27.
- Castellanos, Rosario. "Otra vez Sor Juana" ("Again Sor Juana"). *Juicios sumarios I. Ensayos sobre literatura*. 1966. México: Fondo de cultura económica, 1984. 22-26.
- Cisneros, Sandra. *The House on Mango Street*. Houston: Arte Público Press, 1986 (1984).
- . "Little Miracles, Kept Promises." *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories*. New York: Random House, 1991. 116-29.
- Fuentes, Carlos. *La muerte de Artemio Cruz*. México: Fondo de cultura económica, 1962.
- . *The Death of Artemio Cruz*. Trans. Sam Hileman. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1964.
- . "Mother's Day." *Burnt Water*. Trans. Margaret Sayers Peden. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1980. 24-57.
- . "El día de las madres." *Agua quemada: cuarteto narrativo*. México: Fondo de cultura económica, 1981. 11-42.
- García, Ignacio M. *United We Win: The Rise and Fall of La Raza Unida Party*. Tucson: U of Arizona P, 1989.
- Gómez-Quirón, Juan. *Chicano Politics: Reality and Promise, 1940-1990*. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 1990.
- Gonzalbo Aizpuru, Pilar. *Las mujeres en la Nueva España. Educación y vida cotidiana*. México: El Colegio de México, 1987.
- Hecht, Johanna. "Virgin of Guadalupe." O'Neill 347-49.
- Huerta, Jorge A. "From the Temple to the Arena: Teatro Chicano Today." *The Identification and Analysis of Chicano Literature*. Ed. Francisco Jiménez. New York: Bilingual Press/Editorial Bilingüe, 1979. 90-116.
- Lafaye, Jacques. *Quetzalcóatl and Guadalupe. The Formation of Mexican National Consciousness 1531-1813*. Trans. Benjamin Keen. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1976.
- León-Portilla, Miguel. *La filosofía náhuatl estudiada en sus fuentes*. México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1983.
- Maza, Francisco de la. *El guadalupismo mexicano*. México: Fondo de cultura económica, 1953.
- Moreno Toscano, Alejandra. "El siglo de la conquista." *Historia general de México*. Coord. Daniel Cosío Villegas. 3rd ed. Vol. 1. México: El Colegio de México, 1987. 2 vols. 289-369.
- Muñoz, Carlos, Jr. *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicano Movement*. London: Verso, 1989.
- Nesti, Arnaldo. "Las intuiciones de Octavio Paz: La salvación del laberinto." *Semana de la Jornada* 2 July 1989: 34-40.
- O'Neill, John P., ed. *Mexico: Splendors of Thirty Centuries*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1990.
- Pacheco, José Emilio. "Lectura de los 'Cantares mexicanos': Manuscrito de Tlatelolco." *No me preguntes cómo pasa el tiempo. Poemas 1964-1968*. 1969. 3a ed. México: Era, 1984. 18-19.

- . "Reading of *Cantares mexicanos*. Manuscript of Tlatelolco." Trans. M.J. Valdés. *World-Making*. By Mario J. Valdés. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1992. 51-52.
- Paz, Octavio. *La estación violenta*. México: Fondo de cultura económica, 1958.
- . *El laberinto de la soledad*. 1950. 4a ed. México: Fondo de cultura económica, 1964.
- . *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz o Las trampas de la fe*. México: Fondo de cultura económica, 1982.
- . *The Labyrinth of Solitude, the Other Mexico, and Other Essays*. Trans. Lysander Kemp, Yara Milos, and Rachel Phillips Belash. New York: Grove, 1985.
- . "Piedra de sol" ("Sunstone") [1957]. *The Collected Poems of Octavio Paz, 1957-1987*. Ed. and trans. Eliot Weinberger. New York: New Directions Books, 1987. 2-35.
- . *Sor Juana: or, The Traps of Faith*. Trans. Margaret Sayers Peden. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1988.
- . "Will for Form." O'Neill 3-38.
- Pierce, Donna. "The Mission: Evangelical Utopianism in the New World (1523-1600)." O'Neill 243-67.
- Poniatowska, Elena. *La noche de Tlatelolco. Testimonios de historia oral*. México: Era, 1971.
- . *Massacre in Mexico*. Trans. Helen R. Lane. New York: Viking, 1975.
- Reyes, Alfonso. "Fray Servando Teresa de Mier." *Obras completas*. 23 vols. México: Fondo de cultura económica, 1955-89.
- Río, Carmen M. del. "Chicana Poets: Re-Visions from the Margin." *Ausencia y presencia de la mujer en las letras hispánicas*. Ed. María Elena de Valdés. Special issue of *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos* 15.3 (1990): 431-45.
- Rulfo, Juan. *Pedro Páramo*. México: Fondo de cultura económica, 1955.
- . *Pedro Páramo*. Trans. Lysander Kemp. New York: Grove, 1959.
- Segre, Enzo. *Las máscaras de lo sagrado*. México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1990.
- Séjourné, Laurette. *Burning Water: Thought and Religion in Ancient Mexico*. Trans. Irene Nicholson. New York: Vanguard, 1956.
- Soustelle, Jacques. *La vie quotidienne des Aztèques à la veille de la conquête espagnole*. Paris: Hachette, 1955.
- . *L'Univers des Aztèques*. Paris: Hermann, 1979.
- Spitta, Silvia. "Gloria Anzaldúa: The New Mestiza Rides/Writes." *Gender, Self and Society*. Ed. R. von Bardeleben. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1993. 75-85.
- Villarreal, José Antonio. "Chicano Literature: Art and Politics from the Perspective of the Artist." *The Identification and Analysis of Chicano Literature*. Ed. Francisco Jiménez. New York: Bilingual Press/Editorial Bilingüe, 1979. 161-68.
- Wolf, Eric R. "The Virgin of Guadalupe: A Mexican National Symbol." *Journal of American Folklore* 71 (1958): 34-39.

ROMÁN DE LA CAMPA

On Latin Americanism and the Postcolonial Turn

Neoliberalism finds in the market the only possibility of totalization and trusts that a just society will be the by-product of market swings. Neopopulism, devoid of a people or a nation, sees public opinion constructed by surveys as a globalization whose *Diktats* are not only beyond appeal, but invariably correct. (Beatriz Sarlo, *Escenas de la vida posmoderna*; my translation)

I.

It is not often observed that the current status of Latin American literary studies closely corresponds to the arrival of new theoretical paradigms in humanistic research. Today, after thirty years or so, the widening scope of Latin Americanism claims the attention of a growing body of English-writing critics and scholars, including a considerable number of diasporic Latin Americans. More than a field of studies, or the literary articulation of a hybrid culture, Latin American literature and criticism is perhaps best understood as a transnational discursive community with a significant market for research and sales in the industrial capitals of the world. Current critical debates about gender representations, theoretical shifts, modes of periodization and new comparative frameworks — indeed all the paradigms brought to bear on canonical literatures within the Euro-American academy — now incorporate Latin American literature with particular intensity. U.S. research universities continue to invest in Latin American Studies, often in concert with a developing interest in related areas such as Hispanic and Latino Studies, and with a greater emphasis on literature and culture. New anthologies of multicultural and global literature generally feature Latin American samples. Indeed, if there is a postmodern canon, Borges and García Márquez are thought to constitute its very center.

Recent theoretical insights have brought into question national and regional boundaries as well as ethnic and linguistic points of origination, but the "coming