BETWEEN *GUERRAS* AND *CARNALES*: CHICANA FEMINIST WRITERS AND THEIR SEARCH FOR A ROOM OF THEIR OWN*

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In this paper I will analyse a number of literary texts that reflect the way in which Chicana feminist writers have responded to their problematic relationship with both the Chicano community and the white women's movement. In particular, I will focus on a number of texts written during the years of the Chicano Movement (from the 1960s to the mid-1970s). These texts tend to argue either for a transformation of Chicanismo that implies the acceptance of Chicanas' rights or for the breaking-off of relationships with white women's movements unless they renounce their racism. In the concluding section, I will refer to the texts written in the Post-Movement years (from the mid-1970s onwards) and to the strategies used in them to portray Chicana feminists' identity problems in more recent decades.

Key words: *Chicana literature, feminism, nationalism.*

En este artículo analizaré un conjunto de textos literarios que reflejan el modo en que las escritoras chicanas feministas han respondido a la problemática relación que mantienen con la comunidad chicana y el movimiento feminista blanco. En concreto, me centraré sobre varios textos escritos durante los años del Movimiento Chicano (de la década de los sesenta a la mitad de la década de los setenta). Estos textos suelen decantarse por una de estas posturas: o bien exigen una transformación del Movimiento Chicano para que acepte los derechos de las chicanas, o bien propugnan un cese en las relaciones con el movimiento feminista blanco a menos que éste renuncie al racismo. En la última sección

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haré referencia a varios textos escritos en los años del Post-Movimiento Chicano (de la mitad de la década de los setenta en adelante) y a las estrategias que se usan en ellos para representar los problemas de identidad de las feministas chicanas en las últimas décadas.

Palabras clave: *Literatura chicana, feminismo, nacionalismo*

1. THE 1950S, 1960S AND EARLY 1970S. DEVELOPING A CHICANA FEMINIST CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE YEARS OF THE CHICANO MOVEMENT

In the 1950s and 1960s the United States saw the birth and growth of many groups that actively fought for the recognition of human rights, and, in particular, in defence of minority groups. One of them was the Chicano Movement, also known as simply "The Movement," "El Movimiento," "La Causa" or "Chicanismo." A great number of Chicanas who were involved in the Chicano Movement saw themselves primarily as "cultural nationalists," but they gradually began to realize some of the contradictions of Chicanismo. According to Alma M. García, these Chicana activists started to evolve as "Chicana feminists" from the nationalist base from which they departed: "A Chicana feminist movement, like that of African-American women, originated within the context of a nationalist movement" (1997: 4). In this way, their discourse acquired new nuances as it abandoned an exclusive focalization over "racial oppression" and took a greater interest in "gender oppression." In any case, Alma M. García thinks that the Chicana movement implied a fight against both racial and gender discrimination: "a Chicana feminist movement represented a struggle that was both nationalistic and feminist" (1997: 4), so, in her opinion, one should always take into account those two ideologies and the influence that they played upon Chicana feminists.

However, the situation of Chicana feminists within The Movement was very complex. These women opposed the image of the "Ideal Chicana" that the nationalist Chicanos had drawn for them. For

these men (the "carnales" in the title), cultural survival depended upon the survival of traditional gender roles, that is, those roles that kept women in subordinated positions, in the domestic sphere, and forced them to accept all kinds of social injustice with resignation. On the contrary, Chicana feminists were conscious of a long history of reform movements in which both Mexican and Chicana women had taken an active role. The image of the "Ideal Chicana" was for them but a fictitious story that they wished to deconstruct.

The fact that they dared oppose the Chicano Movement had its negative consequences for them. Thus, they had to endure harsh criticism, as many males within The Movement saw Chicana feminism as a threat for their particular project. These women were accused of being "white feminists," "lesbians," "gabachas," "agringadas" or "women's libber." Similarly, some Chicanas within The Movement, the "loyalists," were also against feminist vindications, since they thought that those demands collided with some of the basic tenets of Chicano culture, such as the precepts of Catholicism, among other things.

In *Chicana Feminist Thought. The Basic Historical Writings*, Alma M. García (1997) compiled a great number of documents that give us a thorough view of the problems that Chicana feminists have been concerned with since the days of the Chicano Movement. Here are some of the main issues around which Chicana feminists developed their critique of the Chicano Movement:

- Within The Movement, the control of leadership was in the hands of men, while women were excluded from that leadership.
- In The Movement there was a clear contradiction: men were discriminating against women in much the same way in which the system was oppressing Chicanos.
- The Movement saw itself as a revolutionary group, but as far as gender issues were concerned, it was absolutely conservative.
- According to The Movement, women's liberation could wait until the "revolution" had taken place.

- Chicana feminists thought that The Movement should not give priority to some issues in detriment of other questions, since all the factors that caused the discrimination of Chicanos/as complemented one another, especially those factors that were related to gender and economy.
- Chicana feminists rejected the idea that they were to be held responsible for causing splits within The Movement because of their ideological opposition. Actually, they thought that it was men themselves that were creating divisions by accusing Chicana feminists of being disloyal.

In the context of society at large, Chicanas were likewise discriminated against on the basis not only of their ethnicity, as The Movement claimed, but also on the basis of their gender. They were therefore facing a number of problems that The Movement refused to tackle because they were issues that exclusively affected the female members of La Raza. Among these we could mention the following:

- Women were fully responsible for family life.
- Due to their poorer command of the English language (after all, they were "locked" in the domestic sphere and had fewer occasions to learn English), they had more obstacles than Chicano men when it came to dealing with certain institutions, such as the welfare system and the legal system.
- Their health problems were also specific: the percentage of deaths after child-bearing was very high; sometimes they were chosen as guinea pigs for birth-control experiments without their consent, and on certain occasions they were sterilised without their knowledge.
- At the workplace they received lower wages than Chicano men, and were also restricted to fewer employment opportunities.
- Their access to education was also further limited than in the case of Chicano men.

As time went on, Chicana feminists also began to realize the way in which, just as it had happened to other women of colour, their lives were determined by a great number of forms of oppression, besides race and gender, as for example social classes, religion, or language. Meanwhile, white feminism, which was mainly formed by women who belonged to the middle and upper-middle classes, had a Protestant upbringing, were English-speaking and of Anglo-Saxon origin (thus the "güeras" or "the blond ones" in the title), was turning a deaf ear to Chicanas' problems:

> As women who participated in the larger society, Chicanas, like women of other Third World groups in the United States, shared with Anglo women the need to define their position in a society built on a male system of values. Certain social imperatives—the elimination of rape, the need for day-care centers, the lack of employment opportunities, and, to some extent, the abortion issue—put them squarely into the struggle of Anglo women. As Chicanas, however, they faced alienation in the larger society. Through participation in white women's groups, Chicanas learned that certain items on their agenda (such as the struggle against racism and the crusade for bilingual and bicultural education) were not among the priorities of white women. Chicanas also found racism, tokenism, and ignorance in white women's groups. (Sánchez 1985: 5)

Chicanas, therefore, were facing a double set of restrictions, both as members of the Chicano community and as women. But because they seemed to be having difficulties to see their specific problems attended to, some of them began to form their own autonomous women's groups, even at the risk of being judged disloyal by both their "carnales" and "las güeras." At the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s, these Chicana feminists started to let themselves be heard outside the confines of The Movement. They did so thanks to their early publications, among which we can highlight *Regeneración* (first issued in 1970 and edited by Francisca Flores), the newspaper *Hijas de Cuauhtémoc* or the journal *Encuentro Femenil*, among

others. Likewise, they began to organize workshops and conferences, after which they published the respective Proceedings.

The contradictory position of Chicana feminists—"apart from, yet necessarily within, each of their social milieus" (Sánchez 1985: 6)—informed not only their journals, newspapers, and critical writings, but also, and most interestingly for us, their literary writings. In the 1960s and 1970s, in particular, a number of poems criticised the blindness of Chicanas' male counterparts in The Movement. Here we will analyse a couple of texts written in 1971, that is, still within the time span associated with The Chicano Movement (from the 1960s until 1975). As it will be seen, both are characterised by the language of "la Revolución," but the aim of both its writers is to make the Revolution a struggle that incorporates not only the demands of the male leaders, but also the needs of its female members. In this sense, both texts expand the number of problems The Movement should be concerned with; therefore, they make the "Revolución" a more complex and richer issue. The fact that they also call for the integration of Chicanas as full citizens, not as mere "daughters," "wives," and "mothers," implies a redefinition of the Chicana identity, which should not be determined by a Chicana's dependency on a man, as well as of the Chicano identity, which should not be based on the subjugation of Chicanas.

The first poem I wish to analyse is "La Nueva Chicana," written by Ana Montes and first published in 1971. The text begins by bringing together tradition and innovation. Both elements are essential for the success of the Revolution, as, according to the poetic persona, they both "do their part." The "old woman" who goes to pray, the "young mother," the "old man sitting on the porch," and the "young husband" who goes to work are all members of the traditional Chicano community; the "young / Chicana", on the other hand, symbolizes the new order of things.

The characters that stand for traditional values actually represent a very conservative view of Chicano culture. Old women are associated with religion and therefore they are in charge of the survival of traditional moral values, while old men, "sitting on the porch," are not encumbered with such a difficult role. Young women, for their part,

are responsible for the reproduction of "la raza," as they are only taken into account inasmuch they are "mothers"; their husbands, on the other hand, are the family bread-winners. In short, gender roles are rigid and immutable in this picture of the traditional Chicano community.

In this context, the appearance of the figure of the new Chicana represents a short of disruptive presence. The poetic persona sees the need to reassure her audience by stating that this young woman may be "new" in the sense that she behaves in ways so far unheard of for a Chicana girl, but she is tightly connected with tradition as well. The persona defines both her physical appearance and her behaviour. As far as her body is concerned, two aspects are highlighted. First, the fact that she is "still the soft brown-eyed / beauty you knew." Second, the circumstance that she is "bareheaded" and "unshawled." The colour of this woman's eyes tells the audience that she is no "agringada," no blue-eyed "güera." Her physical traits, therefore, show her Mexican ancestry and, because of this, she is a "beauty." As all women in a traditional and patriarchal context, she is first described in terms of her physique, and her "value" comes from her being agreeable to the beauty standards of her community. Nevertheless, she transcends those strict physical standards by means of clothes: as I have already stated, she is "bareheaded" and "unshawled," that is, she has discarded the traditional "velos" (veils) and "rebozos" (shawls) worn by traditional Mexican women. These pieces of clothing may be traditional and in that sense relevant for Chicana women, but they are also representative of a repressive culture. That is why, despite their importance, the new Chicana has "cast off" that symbolic "shawl of the past to show her face" and, we might add, to make herself heard by the male members of The Movement.

Actually, when we analyse the behaviour of this new Chicana, we see that by wearing no veils and no shawls she has made a number of breakthroughs. She has adopted a more active role in her community (she is now "on the go"), and she is very articulate, "no longer the silent one." She has achieved the strength of a religious leader who can go "spreading the word." Like a political leader, she utters mottoes such as "VIVA LA RAZA," and, in this sense, she fights for the same goals that men are trying to attain. This fact, again, reassures the audience: despite all her newness, the new Chicana is *still* "the soft

brown-eyed / beauty" who pleases men on a physical level, and who should arouse no suspicions intellectually speaking, since her aim is not to cause splits in The Movement, but to contribute her strength to the Revolution.

The language of the poem shows a mixture of two cultures thanks to the use of code-switching. The Spanish title of the poem introduces the Mexican heritage of Chicano culture, as do a few other capitalized phrases that summarize the most important issues: "LA NUEVA CHICANA" and "VIVA LA RAZA" tell, in short, that the new Chicana also works for the success of the Revolution. On the other hand, most of the lines are written in English, which testifies to the fact that Chicano culture is immersed, for good or bad, in an Anglo community. Just so, the mixture of mottoes of the Chicano Movement ("VIVA LA RAZA") and demands of the Anglo feminist movement (women should take active roles in the public sphere, their voices should be heard) shows that the new Chicana is both a racial and a cultural hybrid that comprises two worlds in one body. Marta Esther Sánchez has referred to the half-bred prototype these new Chicanas modelled themselves after in these terms:

> Although the women's movement inspired them to search for new definitions of feminine identity, an awareness of their own cultural heritage encouraged them to affirm the traditions bequeathed to them by their female predecessors. (Sánchez 1985: 6)

The second poem I want to comment on is entitled "Empieza la Revolución Verdadera." It was published in 1971 and was written by Anna NietoGomez. In many ways, this is a text that perfectly represents the main features of "Movement poetry," or the poetry written during the years of the Chicano Movement. To start with, the "Revolución" is the central topic. That is why we find terms such as "la raza," "el movimiento," and "revolución." The latter is used only twice, but it appears in positions of special relevance: first in the title, and secondly in the final line. The fact that the three of them are Spanish terms also highlights their importance, since virtually all the other words in the poem are in English. Besides, the poem is made up of a limited number of words that are insistently repeated. Among

them we find "struggle," the English version of "revolución," which appears four times, and a number of phrases such as "They make us," "seek the knowledge," "Then we shall see," etc. The title itself is repeated in the final line in exactly the same terms. Moreover, Movement poetry typically resorts to imperatives uttered by the poetic persona, who addresses the members of the Chicano community in order to give them commands that may help them attain their objectives. Here in this text, for example, we find imperatives such as "seek the knowledge of all women," "seek the knowledge of all men," "Now bring them together," among others.

The purpose of most of the literary texts produced in the years of The Movement was of a didactic nature: writers wanted to explain the purposes of Chicanismo to their audiences, to help the Chicano community know their rights and their cultural heritage or to increase their self-esteem. For that reason, their language was bound to be simple and the main ideas had to be reiterated so that they could be grasped by everybody. This is also NietoGomez's aim when she uses a colloquial idiom and when she recurs, once and again, to the same few words and expressions. However, in her case, as we will see, her message is not exactly the same as that of the official leaders of the Revolution, nor will her commands reproduce those of the sanctioned discourse.

As a matter of fact, she refuses to represent the Chicano community as a group that is devoid of internal conflicts and fissures, which is what the official discourse had chosen to do. In fact, she depicts a minority group ("Our men are few / Our women are few") that faces not only the problem of its marginalization in the context of society, but also that of intestine fights between men and women due to the existence of "[r]igid boundaries of roles" which "do not move" and which contribute to their further decimation: "They make us separate / They make us fewer." Gender roles, then, are accused of bringing dissension between men and women, and, what is worse, of making the "struggle" even longer, its goals more difficult to attain: "The struggle is longer / The struggle demands more."

The poetic persona knows the solution to this conflict and conveys it in the final two stanzas; the same message is expressed in

each of them, but the phrasing is slightly different so that the main idea can be perfectly understood by the audience or reading public: first, "seek the knowledge of all women / seek the knowledge of all men / Now bring them together / Make them a union / Then we shall see the strength of la raza / then we shall see the success of el movimiento"; secondly, "First / Humanity and freedom between men and women / Only then / Empieza la revolución verdadera." The idea is therefore to put an end to internal splits between men and women, and this will be achieved the moment the official discourse stops curtailing women's actions with norms of the type, "Thou shall not do," "Thou dare not do." Real democracy within The Movement will imply greater strength for "la Raza," and, eventually, the attainment of its goals. That will be the beginning of the "revolución verdadera," the "real revolution."

In short, for Anna NietoGomez the Chicano Revolution must face gender discrimination before it sets off to deal with racial discrimination, since the former brings dissention into The Movement, and with divisions among its members, no movement can possibly reach its goals. NietoGomez's proposals are thus far from resembling those of other nationalists who have stated that feminist demands should be paid attention to only after racial issues have been successfully dealt with. For instance, in his poem "Letter to a Feminist Friend" (Ashcroft *et al.* 1995: 252-253), the Malawian poet Feliz MnThali addresses a female comrade to remind her of all the injustices Western civilization has inflicted upon them: "You and I were slaves together / uprooted and humiliated together / Rapes and lynchings – the lash of the overseer / and the lust of the slave-owner." Next, he goes on to warn her against the dangers of listening to white feminism: "AND NOW / the women of Europe and America / after drinking and carousing / on my sweat / rise up to castigate / and castrate / their menfolk / from the cushions of a world / I have built!" Finally, he concludes by advising her to postpone all her feminist demands until the time when nationalist demands have been achieved: "When Africa / at Home and across the seas / is truly free / there will be time for me / and time for you / to share the cooking / and change the nappies – / Till then, / first things first!" For this poet, it is obvious that the nationalist movement is the "thing" that comes first. By contrast, for Anna NietoGomez, in whose poem we also find the term "first" in the

concluding stanza, it is feminism that should be foremost. Given the conservative ideas of the Chicano Movement as far as gender issues were concerned, it is evident that a change of priorities of the kind suggested by NietoGomez in her poem would certainly imply a "revolución verdadera."

A different attitude seems to be defended in the next poem with which I would like to conclude this section, "Mujer," by Leticia Hernández (1971). I will not extensively comment on it, since it is written in Spanish and my primary interest here is the analysis of texts written in English. But I nevertheless call the readers' attention to it for two reasons. First, because, like the other poems I have commented on, it also deals with the racial and gender oppression Chicanas have endured: "Mujer que has sufrido a las manos del / gabacho, y peor, a las manos de tu hombre." Secondly, because, unlike the other texts, to a certain extent it seems to advice Chicanas to disentangle themselves from the Chicano Movement and to care for their own problems. They have never abandoned their men, despite male mistreatment of Chicanas ("Mujer, valiente y luchadora que nunca has / dejado el lado de tu hombre"), and they themselves have maintained the patriarchal status quo ("Mujer Chicana has perdurado las injusticias / de / los hombres). Now it is high time they woke up and acted differently. To start with, they should concern themselves, first and foremost, with their own liberation: "¡Despierta! / Despierta mujer, y lucha por tu libertad."

2. THE 1970S. FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF A CHICANA FEMINIST CONSCIOUSNESS

As Alma M. García points out (1997), in the 1970s Chicana feminists realized that their particular struggle for women's rights would still have to go on facing the opposition of the male members of The Movement and of "the Loyalists," as well as the resistance of white feminism to accept its own biases against women of colour. Their disillusionment with the sexism of the Chicano Movement continued, as did their realization that they had to redefine the role of Chicanas within it. They also kept fighting for equal opportunities and social justice and they started to revise a number of by-laws and

platforms of political organizations such as La Raza Unida Party, in order to denounce their lack of concern with feminist demands.

As far as their relationship with white feminism is concerned, Chicana feminists went on showing an ambivalent attitude towards it, since they recognized both the similarities that existed between white feminists and Chicana feminists, as well as the differences that set them apart. Among the former we find their common goal of achieving equal rights and equal opportunities for men and women; besides, it was in this period that many Chicanas realized the need to question strict ethnic / race categories. As regards the differences, we find a larger list:

- Many Chicanas thought that their true identity was with the Chicano Movement or "la familia"; for them, racism was stronger than sexism.
- White feminists focused too narrowly on men as their enemies.
- Chicanas endured a double or triple oppression if class differences were considered.
- Some of the goals promoted by the white women's movement, such as access to executive positions, made no sense for Chicanas, who predominantly belonged to the working class.

But, apart from these conflicts with both the Chicano and the white feminist movements, Chicana feminists of the 1970s also discovered that they themselves were not a homogenous group. Because of this, they had to learn how to further negotiate their "new" identity in view of the disparities that threatened their struggle. These are some of the internal issues they had to contend with:

- The issue of abortion was one of the most controversial problems. Nevertheless, some of the major conferences passed resolutions which included support for its legalization, and they also called for low-cost clinics, which were community controlled and which had bilingual staff.
- Some Chicana feminists thought that Chicanas had to

participate in electoral politics at the local and state levels, while others warned that this participation might deprive the movement of its oppositional political force.
- Chicana feminist lesbians began to surface in the last years of the 1970s, but in this decade they still had to face much hostility. It was not until the mid-1980s that their concerns began to be addressed by Chicana feminist organizations.
- Other differences among them included issues related to social class differences, political orientation, their views on the white women's feminist movement, their relationship with other women of colour, their affinity with Third World women (specifically Latin American women), and their role as feminists within the Chicano Movement.

Literarily speaking, this period meant a continuation with the issues and stylistic techniques used in the previous decades. It will not be until the mid-1980s and the 1990s that new topics are pursued and different literary styles adopted. The texts selected to illustrate the concerns of Chicana feminists in the 1970s are, for that reason, a sort of "extension" of the texts we have already commented on. The four examples I would like to analyse are a revision of the canonical text "I Am Joaquín" (written in 1967 by Chicano poet Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzalez) by Bernice Rincón (1975); "Para Un Revolucionario," also published in 1975 and written by Lorna Dee Cervantes; "Notes from a Chicana ´COED`," by Bernice Zamora (1977), and, finally, "The Brown Women," by Anita Sarah Duarte (1975).

Bernice Rincón introduces her article "Chicanas on the Move" (1975) with a brief poem which revisits some of the concluding lines of Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzalez's poem "I Am Joaquín" (1967). This text, which is one of the most important poems of Chicano Movement poetry, addresses a Chicano audience that supposedly comprises both men and women. Yet, due to the fact that certain adjectives are used in Spanish and this language does differentiate between the feminine and the masculine gender, the impression it causes on the female reading public is that, as it happens with the Chicano Movement, the

poet also fails to recognize Chicanas' particular concerns. That is why Rincón changes the gender of the adjectives, thus amplifying the meaning of the poetical source. If Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzalez had written a poem that called for equality between Anglo men and Chicanos, Bernice Rincón writes hers to push for equality between Chicanos and Chicanas. In other words, her own version is an attempt to transform Chicanismo into a truly comprehensive movement:

La Raza!
Mexicana
Española
Latina
Hispana
Chicana
or whatever I call myself,
I look the same
I feel the same
I cry and sing the same…

The second poem I would like to analyse is "Para Un Revolucionario," by Lorna Dee Cervantes (1975). As in the case of Movement poetry, in this poem we find references to key words in the discourse of the Chicano Movement, such as "raza," "revolución," "carnales," "freedom," and "liberación." The main topic of the poem is likewise that of the "Revolución." Thus, Cervantes's poetic persona presents herself as a fighter for the goals of the Movement, and that is why, when she addresses the "You" of the poem, her Chicano lover / husband, she tells him that she shares her love for "freedom" with him, and states, "for I too am raza." However, as other Chicana feminists, she has also discovered a number of contradictions in a man (and, by extension, a movement) that proclaims himself / itself revolutionary, yet adopts the most conservative positions in terms of gender roles.

As a matter of fact, her male partner has a number of prerogatives that are inaccessible for her. First, he has the right to speak of sublime topics: "You speak of art," "You speak of your love of mountains, / Freedom," "You speak of a new way, / A new life." On the contrary, she is the one who rapturously listens to him: "When you

speak like this / I could listen forever." Secondly, he has the right to become the spokesperson for the Revolution, a topic hinted at in the words "Freedom" and "a new way, / A New Life," among others. Meanwhile, she is just a body, "breasts and hair" that receive his liberating words as if they were a "soft powder raining." Thirdly, he has the right to increase his knowledge, since he has books about important issues: "Your books are of the souls of men." She has none of that; instead, she has "dishes," a "stove," and "beans." Fourthly, he is in the company of his friends, his "carnales," his "brothers" in The Movement. Even the "hijos" they presumably have had together are referred to as "tus hijos" (*your* children). Unlike him, the poetic persona is on her own, for even if she is looking after the children, she is understood by no one and has no partner by her side. Finally, the man and the woman occupy different domestic spaces. Thus, he spends his time in "la sala" (the living room), probably talking about politics, Chicano rights, and other "important" topics. Quite the opposite, she is stuck in the kitchen, and her ears are exposed to "the wail" of children and "the clatter of dishes," that is, to mere noises that imply no challenge for her mind.

Just as it had happened in "Empieza la Revolución Verdadera," here the poetic persona denounces the lack of communication between the male and the female members of The Movement. In Cervantes's poem, the poetic persona adds another problem: the only kind of contact which is possible between men and women is of a sexual nature: "it seems I can only touch you / With my body. / You lie with me / And my body es la hamaca / That spans the void between us." Once again, for The Movement the woman seems to be valuable only insofar as she is a body that satisfies the demands that the male members make.

Given these facts, it is only logical that the poem should conclude in a pessimistic tone. In particular, it finishes with a couple of stanzas in which the poetic persona warns her male partner about the looming future, that is, the failure of the Chicano Movement to achieve its goals due to its inability to take into account feminist demands:

Hermano raza,
I am afraid that you will lie with me
And awaken too late
To find that you have fallen

And my hands will be left groping
For you and your dream
In the midst of *la revolución*

In other words, the poetic persona is saying that if women are considered by The Movement as mere bodies and sexual partners, every body will lose: men will find they have "fallen," as the original sinners in Paradise; women will be "left groping," as if they were blind and could not properly walk; the Revolution, in short, will be but a vacuous word.

The third poem I wish to analyse is "Notes from a Chicana ´COED`," by Bernice Zamora (1977). The speaker or poetic persona of Zamora's poem is a Chicana who addresses her Chicano lover, who is married and has five children. Both of them are "academic Chicanos" who have been educated in coeducational institutions. This would seem to indicate that there is no gender discrimination in their relationship, but, in fact, the poem tells a different story. One of the addressee's best-loved utterances is quoted on a number of occasions by his Chicano mistress: "It's the gringo who oppresses you, Babe." By means of this sentence, he clearly tries to convince her that she has to worry about racial oppression and forget about other forms of discrimination. Besides, the way in which he calls her "Babe" indicates that he adopts a paternalistic attitude towards her which, in its turn, speaks of gender inequality.

The text offers a number of markers of that inequality. First, the fact that the Chicano lover is the recipient of a GI Bill and a Ford Fellowship; in other words, he enjoys economic comforts and several privileges. By contrast, his Chicano mistress endures economic hardships. She has worked in "beet fields / as a child" and as "a waitress / eight hours at night to / get through high school"; also, she has been "a / seamstress, typist, and field clerk / to get through college"; finally, "in graduate school" she "held two jobs, seven days / a week."

Nevertheless, each day she still keeps asking herself the same distressing question: "Can I feed my children today?" Secondly, the Chicano lover enjoys sentimental stability, since he has a "proper" wife who has borne him five children. The persona has none of that: she is his mistress, and, therefore, unlawful; besides, for that very reason she is bound to be invisible. Finally, he has the right to give her orders (for example: "you're quick to point out / that I must write / about social reality"), and he presumes to know the truth (for instance, when he categorically says: "The gringo is our oppressor!"). For her part, she accepts his commands. Thus, even though she would rather write about birds and butterflies to escape her real life, she writes about social reality, which is what he asks her to do.

But, despite her apparent acceptance of this gender inequality, the Chicana mistress has realized all her lover's contradictions, his hypocritical behaviour and discourse, and has decided to put him in his place by means of a very intelligent manoeuvre: after all, she writes a poem about "social reality," just as her lover urged her to do, but not the reality of *racial* oppression, but of *gender* discrimination within The Movement itself. Thus, she exposes his economic privileges; the irony of his making love to her in "alleys" (hidden places), and then boasting of his sacrifices for her: "Then you tell me how you / bear the brunt of the / gringo's oppression for me, / and how you would go / to prison for me"; the irony, too, of his making so much of the racial issue, and then having "three *gabacha guisas*" or Anglo "chicks"; finally, the hypocrisy inherent in his warning her against the white women's movement right after he has asked her to write his thesis: "then you ask me to / write your thesis, / you're quick to shout, / ´Don't give that Women's Lib trip, mujer, / that only divides us, / and we have to work / together for the *movimiento* / the *gabacho* is oppressing us!` "

In Zamora's poem, therefore, once again we encounter a woman who is divided between her loyalty to The Movement and her belief in many of the white women's demands. As Marta Esther Sánchez says:

> the woman has to decide whether to engage in a struggle against the gringo, her racial oppressor, or against the Chicano, her sexual oppressor. As he puts it, her choice is between "women's lib" and the *movimiento*

> (ll. 60-65). If she chooses the former, she asserts her womanhood but presumably betrays the movement in the eyes of her Chicano addressee. If she chooses the movement, she embraces the Chicano's racial struggle, but she incurs the liability of sexual inequalities imposed on Chicanas by Chicano men. Zamora's speaker exposes the contradictions of the Chicano's simplistic slogan. The real struggle is too complex, she argues, to be reduced to an opposition between herself and the gringo. (Sánchez 1985: 233)

Because the real struggle is much more complex than the lover's slogan indicates, the poetic persona cannot possibly choose one side and reject the other. She stresses her affiliation with Chicano culture when she remembers her lover that she too was brought up in a "barrio," which means that throughout her life she has undergone many difficulties and is not easily deluded. For that reason, she is unable to see her lover as her saviour, despite his claim that he bears "the brunt of the gringo's oppression" for her. Besides, she has learnt that her situation resembles that of other Chicanas who endure gender oppression as well. Thus, contrary to all expectations, rather than feeling jealous for the wife, the poetic persona identifies with her problems, and, by extension, with the troubles of other Chicana women whose voice is likewise annulled. Actually, she does take her lover's wife for a partner with whom she shares a "common identity" (Sánchez 1985: 234). In fact, both are poets who write about birds and butterflies; both smell the fragrance of perfume on his collar; both are oppressed by him; in short, both are frustrated.

To conclude, we should emphasize the fact that her lover has asked her to denounce the *gringo´*s oppression, but that she ends up unveiling the *Chicano*'s oppression as well. Similarly, she presents herself as an apparently submissive Chicana who obeys her lover's commands, but eventually she shows her strength by exposing the hypocrisy of her lover without forgetting that the *gabacho* also tries to limit the topics she writes about, and, in a more general sense, the way in which she leads her own life. As the final stanza puts it: "Still, because of the *gabacho*, / I must write poems about / *pájaros*, *mariposas*, and the fragrance / of oppressing perfume I smell somewhere."

The last poem I have chosen for this section is "The Brown Women," by Anita Sarah Duarte (1975). As opposed to Zamora's poem, which mainly focuses on how Chicanos have discriminated against Chicanas, Duarte's text puts the emphasis on how white men and women have oppressed Chicanos/as and does not even refer to gender discrimination within the Chicano Movement. Duarte's is a different option, then: for her, racism clearly comes first.

In my view, Duarte's text can be divided into three different sections. In the first one, from line 1 to line 10, the speaker, who presents herself as the spokesperson for all women of colour, expresses her agreement with the slogan of the white women's movement, "sisters unite—unite and / together we / Shall all survive," since it is only right that women should enjoy equality. However, in the second section (lines 11-78), which is the largest, the ready acceptance of that slogan is carefully qualified, as we will see. In the third and final section (lines 79-103), the slogan of the white women's movement is reiterated, as is the speaker's belief in its accuracy, but its meaning is no longer the same.

In the second section the speaker summarizes the history of discrimination that both Chicanos and Chicanas have endured and refers to all the efforts they have made to overcome oppression, a fight that has brought them little profit, since the liberation of Brown people is yet to be achieved. Thus, she refers to the fact that the Brown fathers have worked very hard, they have "sweated like hell, For that equality to be ours." "Brown brothers, husbands and / sweethearts" have fought in wars under the promise that they would be given full citizenship, but "the ground […] would never be theirs," and they were actually sent off to die in wars that only benefited the "white folks," who had the money to avoid conscription. The Brown mothers, for their part, have suffered in silence for all the injustices perpetrated against their families: "They stood back and cried, silently / they cried." Finally, the Brown women have been denied the right to go to school, laughed at because they ate different food, made fun of because they spoke differently, discriminated against because they were poor and did not live in proper houses.

The speaker, though, points out a difference between Brown mothers and their daughters, present-day Chicanas. While Brown

mothers have traditionally shown a conciliatory attitude towards white people and have forgiven their racism ("Poor them [white people], they do those things / Because they really don't understand"), the Chicana women of today are much more belligerent: by no means are they ready to overlook white women's oppression:

> Today the Brown women declare,
> "No, we are not alike, you the white women
> Have never felt the pain that we have
> Endured and suffered. You the white women
> Have never been discriminated as we have,
> You the white women have never been
> denied
> What we the Brown have known that we
> Should never seek.

So, when the speaker reaches the concluding section and she once again chants the slogan "Yes, Unite, Sisters, Unite!" the term "sisters" can no longer be understood as it is by white feminists (or, rather, I would like to think, as it was in the 1970s). The speaker has clearly stated that there can be no sisterhood between white women and brown women until racial discrimination has been totally banished from the white women's movement:

> We make no bones about it,
> Do not, we do not nor shall we ever accept
> Racism to be a friend to you,
> To be your sister.
> It is too much of an expense

In the final lines, then, the speaker, encouraged by present-day Chicanas' determination not to fall to their knees again, concludes with great confidence and enthusiasm, chanting three slogans: "Viva La Brown Woman / Viva La Chicana / Viva Todo (*sic*) mi Raza." All in all, the poem can be said to be mainly addressed at white women, and to be a sort of warning in which the speaker transmits young Chicanas' resolution not to join the white women's movement unless its principles are radically changed. When in the last line she says "Viva Todo mi Raza," it becomes definitely clear that she raises no objection

to the sexist attitudes of the Chicano Movement; she is only concerned with the racist principles of the white women's movement. In this, she fully agrees with Velia García's opinion that "there is no qualitative difference between the social experience of the Chicana and the Chicano" (1977: 1), whereas that is not the case of white women and white men:

> In American society, white men have a distinct advantage and have used that advantage to limit the shape and lives of women with the same apparent lack of conscience with which they oppress racial minorities. It makes sense for white women to struggle against the controlling influence of white men just as it makes sense for Chicanos and Chicanas to struggle together against the forces of racism and economic exploitation that deny them the basic human right to self-determination. (García 1977: 1)

3. BEYOND MOVEMENT CHICANA FEMINIST WRITERS

By way of recollection, we could say that during the years of the Chicano Movement Chicana feminists maintained a problematic connection with both the Chicano community and the white women's movement. After developing their consciousness and awakening to this conflict that split them into two, they began to write texts that, generally speaking, followed the formal features of Chicano Movement literature. Thus, in these early years the genres of poetry and theatre were preferred to others such as the short story or the novel. In the case of poetry, Movement texts were characterized for their emphasis on the topic of the Revolution, as far as their content was concerned, and, formally speaking, for the use of a simple and repetitive discourse that was full of slogans (for example, "Viva la Raza!"), words such as "carnales," "raza," "liberación," among others, and imperatives that told the audience how they should behave and what they should do. The general purpose of these texts was to serve as a didactic medium for spreading the news of the Chicano Movement.

Within this formal and thematic frame, Chicana feminist writers

chose to inscribe their own dilemma, that of their divided loyalties between Chicanismo and the white women's movement. Some writers focused on the sexism and the machismo within The Movement. Among these we may mention Lorna Dee Cervantes's "Para Un Revolucionario" (1975) and Bernice Zamora's "Notes from a Chicana ´COED`" (1977). Both of them acknowledge the existence of racism in society at large, but they are of the opinion that if their male counterparts in The Movement do not accept women as equals, Chicanismo will completely fail in achieving its goals, and the Revolution will come to nothing. Actually, their poems are rather pessimistic as regards the possibilities of transforming The Movement into a fully egalitarian project and both portray a picture where failure is foreseen.

Other texts of a slightly earlier period are more optimistic as to the evolution of Chicanismo into an egalitarian utopia. Thus, Ana Montes in "La Nueva Chicana" (1971) and Anna NietoGomez in "Empieza la Revolución Verdadera" (1971) record the birth of a "new Chicana" who manages to combine part of her Chicano cultural background with some of the rights the white women's movements were also defending at that time. They argue for an integration of these new Chicanas into The Movement, and seem confident enough that such integration is not only necessary and desirable, but perfectly attainable.

So far, all the writers we have referred to insist on the need to transform Chicanismo. But we have also seen the case of Leticia Hernández, who in her poem "Mujer" (1971) seemed to invite Chicanas to disentangle themselves from The Movement and to worry about their own liberation, thus forgetting the plight of their male counterparts, who have contributed to their victimization. On the contrary, in "The Brown Women" (1975), Anita Sarah Duarte argued for exactly the opposite way-out—that of cutting all ties with the white women's movement unless it renounces its racism, and closely adhering to the Chicano Movement, which is never found fault with.

After the mid-1970s, in the so-called "Post-Movement Years," Chicana feminists have kept working on the Chicana identity and their efforts have given rise to "a new consciousness." The idea of the "Revolution" has been largely abandoned, even though this has not

necessarily implied giving up the struggle for equality. Yet, the similarities they have seen between their case and the situation of other women of colour, and the consideration of differences among Chicana feminists themselves, has resulted in a thorough questioning of the Chicana identity. Just as Chicano Literature has explored other literary genres and abandoned the combative discourse of the Chicano Movement years for a more subtle one, Chicana feminist writers have began to enter new territories. They have also tackled the problem of their divided loyalties, but they have done so in ways which are not as conspicuous as those of their predecessors in The Movement years.

In particular, they revisit historical figures, such as Doña Marina, as in Lucha Corpi's "Marina Mother" (1980), and Amerindian myths, as in Naomi Quiñonez's "La Diosa in Every Woman" (1996). The goal of these revisionist projects is to draw inspiration from strong Mexican and Chicana figures so as to offer present-day Chicanas empowering models that may help them overcome their long history of victimization. Cherríe Moraga, in "En busca de la fuerza femenina" (1991), is also engaged in using the technique of revisionist myth-making for achieving similar goals. Furthermore, like other Chicana feminist writers, Moraga is intent on redefining both the Chicana and the Chicano identity. She makes the issue of machismo and sexism within the Chicano community a major problem that should be urgently tackled. Eventually, her aim is to offer definitions of Chicanismo that are compatible with homosexuality and with a number of moral values that have not been traditionally associated with Chicano culture. Gloria Anzaldúa, as can be seen in "La Conciencia de la Mestiza: Towards a New Consciousness" (1990), among other texts, is likewise interested in the issues of homosexuality and the Chicana identity. Like Moraga's, her treatment of the latter is much more complex than the approaches made by Movement Chicana writers, since for Post-Movement writers the Chicana identity implies a number of concentric circles of discrimination that their predecessors had not been fully aware of or had lacked the courage to face. However, unlike Moraga, Anzaldúa moves a step forward in that she does not "stoop" to giving priority to either racism or sexism as the evil to eradicate first; instead, she is embarked on a larger project—that of creating a brand new culture, a hybrid culture, in which all binary opposites are transcended. Her prestige among Latina feminists (and

first-world feminists!) will certainly influence the theorizing on the issue of the Chicana identity in the twenty-first century.

While theorists keep working on the new Chicana consciousness at the philosophical level, a number of literary characters who move within the realistic frame, and whose model can be argued to be closer to "real" present-day Chicanas, go on searching for their own places in society. For them, this quest still implies a confrontation with both their Chicano community and the values generally associated with white feminism. An example of this can be seen in Sandra Cisneros's "Mericans." This short story's main character, Michaela/Michel, is still at a loss as to whether she should find her place inside the Church, which metaphorically represents a traditional Chicana identity, or in the plaza, the outside world presided over either by her brothers, who impersonate machismo, or by an American lady who stands for a subtle, but nevertheless vicious, form of racism.

Ideally, in the years to come the Chicano community would develop a more egalitarian culture, while white feminism would keep rooting out its racist and class biases. While these utopian goals are achieved, Chicana feminist writers will keep offering their personal amalgamations of the Chicano culture and white feminism, and their journey in search of a better world will continue giving vitality to their texts, just as it has happened since the 1960s.

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