TRANSFORMATIONS IN ROLANDO HINOJOSA'S  
KLAIL CITY DEATH TRIP SERIES  

DISSERTATION  

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By  

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This work is dedicated to three women, dear to my heart, who have had and continue having an uncommonly large influence on my life:

Guadalupe Cortez Mejía
Leonor Mejía Perez
Carmen Mejía Gorena

The latter two señoritas, mis tías, son verdaderas y poderosas mujeres del Valle y la primera, del principio and always, una mexicana:
mi Madre

Que Dios las cuide y las bendiga
para siempre
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PREFACE

This dissertation examines Rolando Hinojosa’s *Klail City Death Trip* Series and the transformations it has undergone as well as caused in various literary and academic domains. Chapter One begins by introducing Chicano texts like Hinojosa’s into the North American literary landscape and showing how this inclusion transforms this established literature by breaking up linguistic and historical aesthetic criteria previously used for establishing poetic value, thereby broadening the national literary canon.

Chapter Two continues by examining several Chicano critical texts treating the Series as it unfolds (with the addition of new texts and different language renditions). These critical texts change to accommodate additional post-structuralist issues necessary for a comprehensive analysis of Chicano texts like Hinojosa’s. This criticism, however, consistently fails to incorporate Hinojosa’s renditions, which add narrative information not found in the “original” texts. A reading of the Series is therefore offered that incorporates the “renditions,” renditions which account for the most significant transformations of the Series.

Chapter Three presents the Series’ publication history, showing how it has been transformed as Hinojosa expanded on his serial project. Because the Series has been published in a non-sequential order by minority presses and because it offers different language renditions for “original” serial texts, an explanation is given to guide readers along the extended serial narrative.
Chapter Four of this study then situates Texas Mexican texts like Américo Paredes and Hinojosa’s next to the works of Larry McMurtry and the “Big Texas Three” (Dobie, Bedichek, and Webb) and further shows how the Series transforms the Southwestern literary landscape by responding to early Valley narratives by Cleo Dawson and Paredes. As responses to early Valley historical narratives, the Series expands and brings Valley narratives up to more contemporary settings. When set alongside Southwestern literature, this genealogy of Texas Mexican texts further reveals how minority Southwestern texts have been excluded from this body of regional literature.

In the last chapter, the Series is placed in a college composition setting. Because English language pedagogies have historically worked to assimilate Texas Mexicans through English-only lessons that fail to take students’ bicultural and bilingual backgrounds into consideration, this study proposes applying a post-structuralist composition pedagogy and using Hinojosa’s serial texts as subjects for extra-textual analysis. Teachers and students of composition can then use the Series to begin developing literacy skills in more than one language (biliteracy), thus transforming the English-teaching profession in ways that require considering non-English backgrounds.
Chapter 1

The Engagement of Canons

The European university must yield to the American university. The history of America, from the Incas to the present, must be taught letter perfect, even if that of the Argonauts of Greece is not taught. Our own Greece is preferable to that Greece that is not ours. We have greater need of it. National politicians must replace foreign and exotic politicians. Graft the world onto our republics, but the trunk must be that of our republics. And let the conquered pedant be silent: there is no homeland of which the individual can be more proud than our unhappy American republics.
--José Martí.

The study of [North]' American literature is problematized today by diverging views about which literary texts should be considered part of the North American literary canon. The inscription of value occurring when literary texts become canonized, however, continues to seem almost inevitable, even though the inscription occurs among especially heated debates in universities in the United States. These universities, of course, are changing, as the peoples populating them reflect demographic and cultural changes. The current debate thus includes not only the status and value of previously canonized texts but also the competing values of (un)canonized literary texts the interpretations of these texts by perspectives previously uncharacteristic of the university. Consequently, who writes the literature and who interprets that literature, now as never before, contribute to a fragmented understanding of the univocal values found in canonized literary texts.

The site of national canonization, however, is a limited space, even though the territorial boundaries demarcating this space have expanded to points now
including values not previously included in the traditional study and definition of poetics. The most prevalent school of North American critical theory for much of the mid-twentieth century has been New Criticism. However, with the introduction of deconstruction by the Yale school of criticism and other critical theories like semiotics, poststructural and postmodern schools of criticism have redefined previously held points of poetic value. The close-reading of the New Critics' poetics is now supplemented by psychological, historical, political, cultural, and gender-based analytical criteria, which have broadened as never before our "reading" of literary texts. These new analytical criteria have forced a confrontation between what we previously took for granted about what the canon represented. If the canon is supposed to represent the literature and culture of the United States, we are now confronted on all sides with questions about this troubled representation or sign system. In other words, because of new questions about how—and which—literary texts are read, the national canon of the United States, as a sign system, can no longer be seen as referring to or being linked with once seemingly timeless values of taste and greatness.

But however broadened our "reading" of texts might have become, the space where canonization takes place nevertheless remains limited, competing poetic values succeeding or failing, depending on a wide variety of factors now commonly described in economic and material terms. In his 1986 Presidential Address to the Modern Language Association, J. Hillis Miller noted a seeming truism:

As everyone knows, literary study in the past few years has undergone a sudden, almost universal turn away from theory in the sense of an orientation toward language as such and has made a corresponding turn toward history, culture, society, politics, institutions, class and gender conditions, the social context, the material base in the sense of institutionalization, conditions of production, technology, distribution, and
consumption of “cultural products,” among other products. (283)
The production and consumption of the artifacts we call books now compete in
a “market place” exhibiting value traits signifying how the supply and demand of
literary texts takes place. The so-called laissez-faire “market place” of North
American literature, however, has not been without its bellicose politics, as
evidenced today in the “canon wars.” Alternative literary texts, not previously
canonized, have recently found their separate but not always equal place in
anthologies of North American literature, with some even managing to be
printed in separate and thus alternative anthologies. The displacement of
national boundaries, which alternative anthologies testify to (as in the cases of
Norton’s Anthologies of both Women’s and of African Americans’ literature)
negotiates a separate space for literary texts by women and Blacks without
necessarily yielding space within the boundaries represented in a national
canon. There simply is not a “market” for reconstituted national anthologies, or
so international conglomerate publishers would currently have us believe by
the products they publish. The national anthologies which major publishing
houses produce, for instance, do not yet have many ethnic heterodox groups
represented. I shall argue that this is especially the case with Hispanic writers
because, more than any other heterodox group in the United States, Hispanic
writers, and Chicano writers specifically, disrupt the language and material
bases that are typically represented by the current national canon.

The bellicose politics of the national canon wars can be seen through
stances taken by E. D. Hirsch, Jr. and his notions of “cultural literacy” (Cultural
Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know) and by Allan Bloom’s The
Closing of the American Mind. Both stances, however, have evoked counter-
stances like those found in *Multicultural Literacy: Opening the American Mind*, with its collection of works, which Hirsch presumably would not have included as part of his “American” cultural literacy.

In his recuperative investigation of what happened in Kanawha County, West Virginia during the early 1970’s, *Storm in the Mountains: A Case Study of Censorship, Conflict, and Consciousness* (1988), James Moffett illustrates what conservative elements leading a book revolt can do to intimidate and stop textbook publishers from developing liberated language arts and reading and writing programs that could have cultivated critical thinking skills. The negatively stifling effects this revolt had on textbook publishers, Moffett argues, still exist today.

At a conference of American PEN in Paris, Nicolás Kanellos, an Hispanic publisher (of Arte Público Press), makes a similar point about repressive forces operating on the publishing trade:

The only permissible entry for US Hispanic writers to the commercial publishing world is by writing ethnic autobiographies which show the writer/author confronting the barriers of old country background, language and bigotry in the US to eventually succeed in assimilating and becoming a valuable part of the melting pot. Obviously this reinforces the myth of the State as a free democracy and an open market which responds to the work ethic. (“U.S. Hispanic Literature” 105)

Thus, the restricted and restricting nature of who and what gets published in the United States has far reaching effects on the national identity as it is represented by a national literary canon.

We nevertheless remain in a laissez-faire market place, with even the U.S. federal government contributing, through its National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities, towards determining who participates in a capitalistic market place of literary texts. For example, the existence of Arte Público Press, an
Hispanic publishing house, is supported by the National Endowment for the Arts. In response to attacks in 1990 by conservative elements upon the National Endowment for the Arts, Julián Olivares, editor of The Americas Review, (an Hispanic journal published by Arte Público Press), states:

The National Endowment for the Arts is one of this country's greatest achievements, for it helps to guarantee our cultural patrimony. And this cultural patrimony is not the exclusive domain of one group but also the repository of the contributions of minority groups: Hispanics, African Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans. The legal mandate of the NEA is up for renewal this year. If it is not approved or if there are restrictions, the above groups will suffer the most. Economically disadvantaged and more in need of support, they will be hardest hit. ("Barbarians" 8)

But once again, the negotiated space allowed for this press (of heterodox Hispanic ethnic literatures) to exist is kept in a separate place--a small corner of the greater terrain plotted out by the national canon of North American literature as represented by major anthologies. Arte Público Press is consequently the site from which most North American Hispanic writers and critics must work, as very few other places in the United States have allowed entrance to Hispanic literati.

Any study today of Hispanic American writers and their literary texts thus cannot but begin with an understanding of that place. By beginning with Arte Público Press and then situating Hispanic writers within the wider scheme that is represented by the market place of the national canon (with its supportive capitalistic investment in anthologies), one can begin to understand the rhetorical situation in which Hispanic writers work. Unlike the boundaries now set up for the literature of women and Blacks, the positioning of Hispanic literati within national canonical boundaries presents a unique opportunity for
examining the space wherein the production and consumption of Hispanic literary texts take place. For, as Fredric Jameson states, “isolating the common situation (capitalism, imperialism, colonialism) shared by very different kinds of societies, ...allows their differences to be measured against each other as well as against ourselves” (“Forward” xvi). In his essay, “Minority Discourse and the Pitfalls of Canon Formation,” Cornel West suggests that:

The mere addition of Afro-American texts to the present canon without any explicit and persuasive account of how this addition leads us to see the canon anew reveals the worst of academic pluralist ideology. Serious Afro-American literary canon formation cannot take place without a wholesome reconsideration of the canon already in place (West 197).

Because Hispanic writers have been placed and kept at the margins of the canon which is already in place, studying the rhetorical strategies used by Hispanic writers can reveal the dynamics involved in canon formation. This study attempts to respond to this challenge by focusing specifically on a Mexican American author, Rolando Hinojosa, and his literary texts, collectively entitled “The Klail City Death Trip Series.” Hinojosa’s texts present special questions related to his response to the peculiar rhetorical situation Hispanic literati occupy in the United States, questions my examination attempts to answer. In addition to posing important questions for examination, Hinojosa’s works are themselves responses to the peculiar historical and political situation that he, and others like him, face collectively as Hispanics in an otherwise Anglo-American nation. Finally, Hinojosa’s case is unique among Hispanic American writers and their works because of the particularly wide variety of special transformations his texts have had to undergo as they sought to enter the North American market place.
Exploring this variety of transformations in Hinojosa’s literary texts calls for an examination of both critical and historical contexts. And because it is crucial for an understanding of how Hinojosa’s texts attempt to gain a wider national audience while responding to and attempting to expand both the unique yet limited space that his works have occupied in the United States, his relationship to the presses which have printed and circulated his works must also be examined. Such an examination suggests that once Arte Público Press began publishing his works, curious changes began taking place, changes not evidenced when his works were published by other presses. And once Hinojosa’s texts began appearing and being circulated by Arte Público Press, the changes observed in his works point to other circumstances shaping the production and consumption of Hispanic American literary texts within the broader North American market place. However, the success or failure of being inscribed into a national canon should not necessarily be attributed to Hinojosa and Arte Público Press; instead, conclusions about whether or not their efforts have been successful depend on viewing and hence understanding the larger rhetorical situation, with its attendant market place within which Hispanic literati have had to operate.

As leading Cuban critic of Latin American literature Roberto Fernández Retamar aptly states, “Literary history and criticism are two sides of the same coin: a literary history without critical judgment is unrealizable; similarly, a criticism cut off from history is useless or insufficient (just as both are essentially related to literary theory)” (Caliban 89). Equally important, according to Alfonso Reyes, is a “fully rounded” understanding:

So-called pure—aesthetic and stylistic [today we would say para-formalist or structuralist]—criticism takes nothing other than the specifically literary value of a works’s form and content into consideration. But it could not
lead to a fully rounded judgment or understanding. If we do not take social, historical, biographical or psychological factors into account, we will not arrive at a just evaluation. (In Retamar’s “Theoretical Problems” 97)

These extratextual points are critical in my examination of Hinojosa’s work because the publication history of these texts directly ties into their formal poetic aspects, especially as they’ve been produced and remain in a marginalized space. The poststructural criticism that is called for in my examination of Hinojosa’s works could not have been possible during most of this century when the criticism of the New Critics [about Modernism] prevailed as the major mode of criticism and canon formation. And it is not altogether coincidental that the emergence of ethnic and woman’s literature occurred only in the waning days of New Criticism. For evaluations of literary texts like those published by Arte Público Press and produced by Hinojosa would not have been comprehensible without taking into consideration additional criteria as cited by Reyes through Fernández Retamar. Further, the fact that these texts continue being marginalized indicates that the method of inscription New Critics used in the creation of their canon remains largely intact within the publishing marketplace of the United States. In other words, existence without integration has only furthered the continued marginalization of Hispanic literati and their texts, despite efforts by authors and minority presses to gain some middle ground. But the very fact that these Hispanic texts exist is part of what has forced the confrontation between different literary values in the national canonization process in the United States.

The country’s identity, as constituted through its canon of literary works, is nevertheless still read only through the English language, relegating “other” languages as foreign and “instrumental” for what J. Hillis Miller calls
the country's need to carry on business and diplomacy around the world....This notion is curiously in league ideologically with movements to declare English the official language, to abolish bilingual education, and to impose a common canon of works primarily in English literature or in English translation throughout our schools and colleges, from one end of the nation to the other--to establish the same curriculum in the inner city, in the affluent suburbs, in the rural midlands, and in the South. Both notions of the canon and the instrumental notion of language study presuppose the idea that translation from one language to another involves no essential loss. This belief in turn rests on a deeply American assumption about the relation of the superstructure of meaning to the material base, here the phonic, semantic, and syntactic particularity of a given language, its nitty-gritty or grain. ("Presidential Address" 285)

This superstructure of meaning is thoroughly undermined by its material base, particularly as this base is represented by many Hispanic literary texts. And because the superstructure vis-à-vis the national canon has Anglo-American hegemony through its agents in the major publishing houses of national anthologies and in academic departments of North American [English] literary studies, Hispanic literary works have thus far continued to occupy a marginal space.

Hispanic liminal existence without integration is also a phenomenon that Mexican Americans, as a culturally different population, have had to contend with historically in the United States, again despite efforts by Mexican Americans to the contrary, and historically unlike the situations of women and Blacks. Ideologically, the United States has usually only given value and inscribed those actions which further the assimilation of Anglo-American ideology, and even in the case of works by women and Blacks, the inscription of value does not always consistently occur. "Become like us and we will open our doors to you" has been the guiding conservative principle of North American ideology. Such a view is increasingly unacceptable; however, as J. Hillis Miller
makes clear when he says,

Our students [in the coming decade], with their increasing racial, linguistic, and cultural diversity, are hungry for what the humanities can give them, but they will not be fooled by promises of amnesty and citizenship in the republic of letters if they just adopt traditional values and study the traditional canon, any more than men are going to talk or coerce women into coming back into the fold of the male-dominated canon and ways of literary study (“Presidential Address 1986” 290) [emphasis mine].

Moreover, the ideological space into which “others” are allowed to enter the United States has been liberal only insofar as certain “others” have been allowed into this country through other means (usually the backdoor). But many of these “others,” like Mexican Americans, were already inside long before the doors (demarcating entrance into North American ideological space) were in place to bar these particular “others” from entering. The predicament of this paradox for North American ideology, while almost negligible as in the case of Native Americans, and negligible only through the genocide of these particular “others,” is and has been historically, politically, and ideologically problematic in the United States—and particularly in the North American Southwest.

This problem for Anglo-American ideology, of including culturally different people (Mexican Americans) who can claim historical precedence to a space now found within the boundaries of the United States, has historically not been without its serious conflicts. If we read the Anglo-American ideological history of the United States textually, we will see the prior existence of “others” continually erased. As Carlos Fuentes states, when referring to José Enrique Rodó’s view of North American ideology in 1900, “certain North Americans, ‘if given the opportunity,’ would gladly revise Genesis: In the beginning, there was the USA” (Fuentes in Rodó’s Ariel 24). Rodó in 1900 and Fuentes today acknowledge the need on the one hand to stand against the North American ideological
proclivity of erasing and thus replacing Latin American historical space with their own Anglo-American version of history. On the other hand, they also acknowledge the need for Latin Americans to be agents of their own destiny. Jameson takes a similar view when he makes the connection between literary texts and peoples:

In any case, the new global system demands some new conception of "comparative literature," or of "world literature," as Goethe called it: a need sometimes obscured or blotted out by cultural--including a specifically theoretical--imperialism, in which a common canon of Western modernist and theoretical texts seems slowly to cover the world. Goethe's original concept of "world literature" had nothing to do with eternal invariants and timeless forms, but very specifically with literary and cultural journals read across national boundaries and with the emergence of critical networks by which the intellectuals of one country inform themselves about the specific intellectual problems and debates of another. Nor are such boundaries any longer purely national, in the sense of the atlas or gazetteer, as a whole internal third world within the U.S. testifies (Hispanics will be the largest U.S. minority by the year 2000, something which the increased virulence of the bilingualism debates clearly registers). ("Forward" xi)

Thus, the imposition of an Anglo-American ideological framework upon space (as exemplified, for instance, in anthologies of North American literature) contributes towards precluding any self-autonomy by people of non-Anglo origins. The historically consistent unwillingness of those agents who have traditionally inscribed value upon literary texts in the national canon of the United States to recognize heterodox literary texts and the people and culture they represent can be seen as the refusal to acknowledge alterities found existing within a common space. As Fuentes notes,

The idea of an organic, unitary world of perfect identity--perfect national identity, for example--is impossible. We're going to have to struggle in a world where we must preserve our national identity but in competition with the alterity of the world. Otherwise we'll be left out of instant communications, of technological developments, of developments in science, economic competition; we'll be left out of a million things. We'll be left out of the competition of languages Bakhtin talked about....So here we
are, we're going to go into this world with our identity as Mexicans, as Argentinians, as Peruvians, as Latin Americans in order to face this or else we're going to close ourselves in and we're going to perish. Well, I would rather be a Greek than be an Aztec frankly. I would rather participate in the world, feel the challenge of the world, struggle with the others, struggle with what denies me, struggle with the alien, than close myself in and be amazed to death and die of absolute astonishment like the Aztecs did. (“Travails with Time” 163-164)

Americans in the United States are therefore faced with struggling with “others” or closing themselves off. The national boundaries of this country, as they currently exist, hold within them one thing; however, if one locks within the anthologies, supposedly repositories of this country’s literature, one will not find the material base that these literary anthologies are supposed to represent.

The paradox of this state of representation (or mis- and therefore mal-representation) is all the more apparent in the conservative myth of the North American “melting pot,” where differences are supposed to melt away. But the national identity of North Americans has historically been changing and has now reached a point where the myth of a “melting pot” is becoming apparent, as large segments of this country’s population retain and thus assert their ethnic and cultural differences. The Southwestern United States is one place where large portions of the population have not “melted away” their differences, even though much of the people’s history has been erased from the annals of history.

For, as Simonson and Walker state,

America’s historians have enjoyed thinking of the country as a melting pot into which all ethnic populations thoroughly mixed. This may have been a faulty notion in the first place, and it is certainly no longer true. Here, as elsewhere in the world, ethnic, minority populations (usually defined as “people of color”; and in many places actually the majority population) find ways to succeed within mainstream culture while at the same time proudly preserving their own languages and cultures.

Exemplifying this trend are the growing Latino population in the United States, particularly in New York and the Southwest; the more recently
arrived Southeast Asian population; the identity-seeking revival of Germanic and Nordic traditions among people long since considered fully "melted" Americans; and the admirable re-culturing of the American Indians. ("Introduction")

Indeed, most of the old industrial cities in the North--cities in the Rust Belt--also have large pockets of old immigrant groups who have likewise not melted away, although their rate of assimilation into the Anglo-American's ideology has occurred at a much higher rate than one finds in the Southwestern United States.

The different rates of assimilation for different groups vary according to the degree of struggle each group of immigrants has experienced in the United States. These rates also vary according to the number of generations heterodox peoples have lived in the United States and to the proximity of the countries from which they emigrated. Unlike any other heterodox people now in the United States, Mexican Americans have their country of origin directly contiguous to the United States. Moreover, the areas where Mexican Americans predominantly reside, in the Southwestern United States, were formerly part of Mexico and still retain strong Mexican cultural traditions which forced assimilation has thus far been unable to erase completely (see Limón's "Folk Performance"). The severe historical circumstances surrounding peoples of Mexican origin thus testify to the resilient capability of Mexican Americans to live with alterities and maintain their own cultural identities. But these historical circumstances, as reported within the accepted canons of North American discourse, tell a very different story, which only recently has begun to be rewritten from the perspective of Mexican Americans.
When the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo sealed their fate at the end of the Mexican American War in 1848, Mexican Americans became the first and only heterodox people to become North American citizens through conquest (rather than the annihilation of Native Americans). Their history has been one of a conquered and therefore an oppressed people within an occupied homeland ever since. This irony is one that did not escape those Mexicans who had to begin saluting and paying allegiance to a new flag with its attendant “alien” ideology. Throughout the Southwest, the newly proclaimed “Mexican Americans” found themselves caught in the middle of an ironic double bind, as most of these new Southwestern “citizens” did not hold allegiance to the federal government of Mexico either and had long been trying to gain their own autonomy from an empire to the south. This double bind is nowhere more apparent than in the case of Mexicans living in what, by 1836, became known as the Republic of Texas.

When Texas proclaimed its independence from Mexico, Mexico had only recently emancipated itself from the Spanish colonial empire in 1810, and was trying to consolidate its grasp over its newly freed and vast nation. But no sooner was the yoke of Spanish colonialism cast off than Mexico itself began playing the role of its former colonial master. It is with this background in mind that the position of Mexicans in the Southwest must be understood. The war of independence, which formed the Republic of Texas in 1836 after the battle of San Jacinto, is generally interpreted by North Americans as the casting off of Mexico’s imperial yoke, but the heroes of this war of Texas independence are almost always represented as Anglo-Americans. The list of heroes and martyrs usually found enshrined in most histories of Texas (almost always written by
Anglo-Americans) seldom acknowledge the fact that Mexicans, more than Anglos, had more to gain from their independence from Mexico than did Anglos, who are generally cited in North American historical texts as being the true liberators of Texas.

An example of this contested history can be found in the case of José Antonio Navarro (cited by Rolando Hinojosa in “The Sense of Place”). As a captured prisoner of war responding to an offer of freedom given to him by Mexican President Santa Anna in exchange for renouncing the Republic of Texas, Navarro in 1842 says, “I have sworn to be a good Texan; and that I will not forswear. I will die for that which I firmly believe, for I know it is just and right. One life is a small price for a cause so great. As I fought, so shall I be willing to die. I will never forsake Texas and her cause. I am her son” (18). But Hinojosa reminds us that a Texas historian, James Wilson, once wrote that “Navarro’s name is virtually unknown to Texas school children and, for the most part, unknown to their teachers as well” (18). Besides risking his death by not renouncing the Republic of Texas, Navarro also signed the Texas Declaration of Independence, served in the Congress of the Republic of Texas, cast a delegate vote for annexation into the United States, helped write the first state constitution, won election to the state legislature, and supported secession during the Civil War (18). Yet his actions, like those of many other Texas Mexicans, are seldom if ever cited, much less made known to the general Texas Mexican population, even though Texas Mexicans have always been actively involved in the making of Texas.

The erased historical roles of Mexicans in the making of Texas and other parts of the North American Southwest is a theme that many Mexican American
literati have often addressed within their literary texts. Yet as Edward Simmen pointed out in 1971, “...the Anglo writer, with a few significant exceptions, has never been keenly interested in using the Mexican-American as a realistic subject. Generally, as in the early Spanish-California romance and the later pulp magazine western, the Mexican-American has been portrayed by the Anglo writer in distorted caricature” (Simmen 16). Fernández Retamar, speaking more broadly, states the following about Anglo-America:

The white population of the United States (diverse, but of common European origin) exterminated the aboriginal population and thrust the black population aside, thereby affording itself homogeneity in spite of diversity and offering a coherent model that its Nazi disciples attempted to apply even to other European conglomerates--an unforgivable sin that led some members of the bourgeoisie to stigmatize in Hitler what they applauded as healthy Sunday diversion in westerns and Tarzan films. (Caliban 4)

The growing body of scholarly research on Chicanos by Chicanos and the resurgence of the cultural and political autonomy of Mexican Americans in the Southwest have both contributed to waking the sleeping Chicano giant and archaeologically uncovering and rediscovering genealogies formerly buried under an Anglo-American history. The transformation from an invisible presence to a state of existence without integration for Mexican Americans in the Southwest, then, has only recently taken place. Yet this transformation still leaves Mexican Americans in a highly marginalized space within the United States. The free and open participation of any people within the kind of democratic society that is supposed to exist within the United States cannot become possible unless this same group of people is allowed its own autonomy among other autonomous peoples. The reclaiming of the history of Mexican Americans by Mexican Americans has only recently begun, but many Mexican
American literati, like Rolando Hinojosa, have long had a strong role in this highly political reclamation process.

Mexican Americans have long been writing about themselves and have historically recorded their struggles against the hegemonic forces of the Anglo-American, but they have also used this same space to work against hegemonic forces from south of the border. Folklorists like Américo Paredes have documented the use of *corridos* (folk ballads) to record historical incidents along the Texas Mexican border in which Texas Mexicans fought against the armed aggression and discrimination of Texas Anglos, not only during the early part of this century but also going back as far as 1836. As Paredes states, “The period from 1836 to the late 1930’s embraces the life span of the *corrido* of the Lower Border. These hundred years were a time of profound and violent changes for the old Spanish province of Nuevo Santander” (Pistol 132):

The *corrido* of border conflict assumes its most characteristic form when its subject deals with conflict between Border Mexican and Anglo-Texan, with the Mexican—outnumbered and pistol in hand—defending his “right” against *rinches* [Texas Rangers]. The *corrido* of border conflict follows a general pattern, out of which emerges the Border concept of the hero. It is a concept that is reflected in other *corrido* themes as well, because border conflict dominated Border balladry for almost a century. (Pistol 147-148)

Another example of Mexicans documenting and writing themselves into history is found in San Antonio, Texas, where Ignacio E. Lozano in 1913 began his Spanish language newspaper, *La Prensa*, which was to circulate in San Antonio, all of South Texas, and Northern Mexico for fifty years. The Mexican Revolution of 1910 produced an exile group of Mexicans in Texas and thus an audience of readers for this newspaper. The critic Juan Bruce-Novoa, however, warns us “not to think that *La Prensa* represented the radical revolutionary
norteño. Far from it: its position was the exact opposite” (“La Prensa and the Chicano Community” 152). The “radical revolutionary norteños,” while ultimately not succeeding in their Revolution, did succeed in deposing the long established and deeply entrenched conservative regime of Porfirio Diaz that the newspaper, La Prensa, represented. But as Bruce-Novoa also states, the feeling of exile was something that Texas Mexicans, who made up a large portion of this newspaper’s circulation, could identify with:

This feeling of exile should not surprise us. Texas can be seen as an extension of a larger area known as northern Mexico, and the inhabitants of northern Mexico themselves have often felt, and still do, like exiles in their own country. Mexico City is a distant center of power where national life is defined and carried out; norteños live on the fringe of national space, contributing at best a picturesque stereotype of provincial manners and customs. The Lozano newspaper captured that sense of marginalized Mexicanness, a perspective of the alienated citizen who looks upon the central actors of the national comedy/tragedy with greater interest, but who cannot influence its outcome. This alienated group welcomed La Prensa. (“La Prensa” 152)

The function that newspapers like La Prensa served cannot be underestimated for their attempts to record and disseminate news about issues important to Hispanic peoples within the United States. In fact, their function could not but have been politically and ideologically very different from those operating within the circulation of English-language newspapers. According to Leal, in 1938 La Prensa published a list of 451 titles of Spanish language newspapers existing within the United States. Leal writes that

As is to be expected, the majority have been published in Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, Arizona and California. But since 1808, when the first newspaper written in Spanish, El Misisipi, appeared in New Orleans, Spanish-language newspapers have been published in all regions, and in almost all the large cities, from New York to San Diego, and from San Francisco to Miami. Florida and Louisiana have extensive lists of newspaper publications. (“Function and Use” 157)
This Spanish language newspaper, *La Prensa*, was only one of almost 500 newspapers which Luis Leal has documented to have existed in the United States. Thus, the cultural means for Mexican Americans of both expressing and documenting their experiences within the United States has long been in existence throughout the country. More important for this study, these two modes—the corrido and newspapers like *La Prensa* (as cited above)—both came to influence Rolando Hinojosa as he grew up in the Lower Rio Grande Valley and, later, as he began writing.

The middle ground that Mexican Americans held and continue to hold on the border between Mexico and the United States, and particularly in South Texas, always the most contested area between these two countries, is where Rolando Hinojosa chose to set his literary texts. More specifically, the land, culture, and people of the Lower Rio Grande Valley are the subjects of his “Klail City Death Trip Series.” This area, located along the Rio Grande River, was originally settled in 1749 by José de Escandón and called Nuevo Santander. Paredes describes this area as it then existed as

a green, fertile belt, bounded on the north and south by arid plains, situated along a river which, like the Nile, irrigated and fertilized the lands close to its banks and periodically filled countless little lakes, known as *resacas* and *esteros*. Isolated by natural barriers, the country was still unexplored long after the initial wave of Spanish conquest had spent itself and Spain was struggling with the problems created by her earlier successes” (Pistol 7).

Robert Lee Maril provides a much broader description of this area before the Spanish Mexicans arrived in 1749:

When the Spaniards arrived, both banks of the river were lined with... palm forests. Beyond the palms were short grasslands, an extension of the taller prairies that existed all the way to the Canadian border. The Spaniards named the river *Ríos de las Palmas*, “River of Palms.” From behind these palms the Indians slowly emerged—curious, cautious. These
hunters and gatherers were composed of a variety of different tribal groups called Coahuiltecans, who inhabited the region for several thousands of years before the Spanish explorers came. These Indians built temporary shelters along the banks of the Rio Grande during certain seasons of the year. Their survival depended on various edible plants and game, including snakes, rodents, snails, and insects.

At the mouth of the Rio Grande is the so-called Brownsville Complex, site of shell middens that reveal hints of these indigenous cultures. Artifacts have been discovered which demonstrate that these Indians actively traded with other tribal groups in the interior of Mexico and much further to the south. Certain sites excavated within Hidalgo and Willacy counties suggest that the Indians faced a harsh and desolate existence—water was in short supply, game limited and seasonal....The extreme tip of South Texas and the bordering lands of Tamaulipas still have a climate with a mean temperature in the mid-seventies. Fish then were more plentiful; small game, deer, and seasonal migrations of waterfowl could have provided an adequate source of meat along with the rich abundance of plant life. Sources of fresh water away from the river would have been problematic, however, for the rainfall here averages only twenty-seven inches a year. (Maril 20-21)

Hinojosa can claim to have descended from the original Spanish Mexican settlers of Nuevo Santander. One of the very first communities founded in Nuevo Santander was Reynosa in 1749, and Maril informs us that while the social structure of many of these early Spanish Mexican communities mainly consisted of “a small number of families with relatively modest wealth...., Reynosa’s wealthy Hinojosa family was one of the notable exceptions...” (Maril 24). In part because of this genealogical descent, Hinojosa’s knowledge of the culture and history of what is now called the Lower Rio Grande Valley is unique: his understanding of this area precedes later accounts as documented by Anglo-American chroniclers. Further, because his father, Manuel Guzmán Hinojosa, fought in the Mexican Revolution of 1910, while his mother is of Anglo descent, Hinojosa inherited a strong sense of place that belonged simultaneously to two cultures and two histories. Hinojosa, for instance, tells of
a story describing the Valley and its people, as told by his maternal grandfather, Abraham Newman Smith. It is the month of July, 1887, in the Valley. Listening to Lawyer Wells, who extolls the Valley by saying that all the Valley needs is "a little water and a few good people," Smith responds by saying, "Well, that's all Hell needs, too" ("The Sense of Place" 18-19). This short tale illustrates not only the rough Valley environment, but also the fact that, even between Anglos, the local people were not always appreciated or even understood in the same manner.

Born in Mercedes, Texas in 1929, Hinojosa was educated in schools on both sides of the Rio Grande River where he learned both English and Spanish fluently, becoming fully literate in both languages. In 1969, he received a PhD in Spanish and currently holds an endowed chair in the Department of English at the University of Texas at Austin. His intimate knowledge of both languages and cultures, coupled with knowledge of the historical development of this particular land since its settlement in 1749, provides him with key resources for recreating, through his literary texts, stories which would have otherwise been buried in the past. And while his narratives are mainly set during this century and occur during Hinojosa's lifetime, some of his characters lived long before 1929 and therefore act as oral chroniclers of a much earlier time.

Because of Hinojosa's cultural heritage, he is able to recall when the Lower Rio Grande Valley was not divided by the territorial boundary now separating the United States and Mexico--the Rio Grande River. Prior to 1848, this river was simply a river running through this particular part of the country, and so Mexicans had and still have families on both sides. The land was one, contiguous and undivided, and the Mexican American War, through the Treaty
of Guadalupe Hidalgo, divided the land—but not the people. The space occupied by Texas Mexicans, then, was never really divided in the eyes of the original Spanish Mexican inhabitants, although when the first Anglo-Americans came to occupy this land, the river became a dividing line which they chose not to cross. This “natural” boundary, then, becomes the central artifice around which most of the drama of this land’s historical narratives (both fiction and non-fiction) are set. The character of the people and culture(s) of this area are largely determined by their historical relationship to this river.

This artificial boundary has come to represent one center of a material base which North Americans find great difficulty assimilating into the predominant Anglo-American ideology. While writers like Mark Twain and William Faulkner have used rivers (and particularly the Mississippi) to carry their characters into diverse ideological spaces, thus creating tensions for their characters and in their narratives, Hinojosa’s use of the mighty Rio Grande confronts ideological issues not previously entertained in North American literature; issues concerning the rightful ownership of the land and the proper language spoken by a particular cultural group are intertwined in this disputed territorial boundary. The disputed and divided land as well as the language used to name it form the central thematic subjects which in turn shape the conflicts in Hinojosa’s narratives. For example, in a fictional epigraph to Hinojosa’s Claros Varones de Belken [Fair Gentlemen of Belken County], readers find the following:

The land, in part, was taken away from the old people; in part, we ourselves also lost it and others sold it. That’s all in the past...and, anyway, the land neither dies nor goes off anywhere. Let’s see if my children or theirs, when they have them...let’s see if they keep it or recover some of it.
If they also take away or if we lose or sell our language, then there will be no remission. The day Spanish dies, this will no longer be the Valley. 
--Jesus Buenrostro--1887-1946. (Claros varones 10)

The opposition between Texas Anglos and Texas Mexicans can be extended beyond this immediate linguistic and historical space to competing points of ideology. In the United States, people of Mexican origin are considered foreigners, while Anglos are, ironically enough, assumed to be indigenous. Inevitably, the same refusal to legitimize Mexican American presence occurs at a material level, as we have seen with the erased histories of Mexican Americans in the making of Texas. More concretely, the border between Mexico and Texas in the Lower Rio Grande Valley has been the material site of the most severe conflicts between two competing cultures and ideologies. Since the Anglos established hegemonic control of the area through commercial farming in the 1920's, these conflicts left this part of the country the poorest in the entire nation. Maril states, “As deftly as the new Anglo farmers developed their new farmlands and the new towns to support them, they in effect developed the conditions for long-term poverty” (Maril 41).

But another factor contributing to the Valley’s poverty was the Mexican Revolution, because the Valley’s agricultural elite couldn’t control the “flow of poor Mexican peasants from one side of the river to the other. Poor Mexican peasants in search of work soon outnumbered Mexican Americans as the Mexican Revolution caused many to flee north across the Rio Grande” (Maril 41). Consequently, as Raymund Paredes reminds us, “Nowhere was the enmity between Mexicans and Anglo-Americans more intense than in the border regions of southern Texas. [The Treaty of] Guadalupe Hidalgo had guaranteed Mexican-Americans full rights as citizens, but, in fact, they were frequently
stripped of their property and subjected to severe discrimination" ("The Evolution of Chicano Literature" 37-38).

The dispossession of property and the severe discrimination suffered by border Mexican Americans were caused by events on both sides of the river, but the fate of Mexican Americans was affected by events far beyond the border. The education of Mexican Americans, particularly in Texas, became marked by the same dispossession and severe discrimination that was experienced socially and politically in South Texas communities because decisions over education originated far beyond their actual schools. And the fact that curricular decisions over pedagogies and texts were made by Anglo state and federal education officials ensured highly discriminatory effects on Mexican Americans: "when we were told of the Alamo in school, some of the Mexicans stayed away from school and some never returned" (Montejano 231). Because schools were segregated, the binary opposition between Anglos and Mexicans became more pronounced:

The truth about Anglo superiority and Mexican inferiority was taught to the youngest generation of the farm towns. Newcomers into this world, those who migrated as well as those born into it, were taught the morals and rules of living in a segregated society. In a world already divided into compartments, these lessons about the important differences between Anglo and Mexican came in numerous, diverse, and easy ways. Anglo and Mexican children, for example, understood that separate schooling meant separation of superior and inferior. This meaning was taught to them in countless lessons--the Mexican school was physically inferior, Mexican children were issued textbooks discarded by Anglo children, Mexican teams were not admitted to county athletic leagues, Mexican girls could not enter beauty contests, and so on. (Montejano 230)

The politics inherent in this opposition currently sees itself played out within academic departments of North American universities. Spanish language and literature are studied in "foreign" language departments, while
English departments are the only places currently studying "American" literature. The assumption that "American" literature can only be written in English leaves literary works written in other languages within the United States outside of the only academic department where "American" literary works are studied. For instance, the exclusion of most Mexican American literary works, based on the assumption that "American" literary works have to be originally written in English, consistently and historically has marginalized Chicano literary works, even when many of these works originally appeared entirely in English. The same can be said of departments of Spanish, which have almost consistently been unwilling to read Hispanic literary texts because these texts are considered to be too "American" and in some way not "Spanish" enough. Anthologies of Spanish or Latin American literature, like anthologies of "American" literature, have also excluded and therefore refused to canonize works of Chicano literature. As Ramón Saldívar states,

Works by Mexican American authors are virtually absent from the histories, the anthologies of American literature, and from the syllabi of courses on American literature. Spanish departments in American universities have also participated in this strategy of exclusion. The exclusion is by no means innocent. Its effect has been very similar to that of the exclusion from the American canon of African American art. In that exclusion, as described by Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "logocentrism and ethnocentricism marched together in an attempt to deprive the black human being of even the potential to create art, to imagine a world and to figure it." (Chicano Narrative 204)

Responding to a question about the representation of such social-historical realities in his literary texts, Rolando Hinojosa says:

Well, I am interested in the economic aspect because of the deprivation of education of many worthy American citizens who didn’t receive an education because of racism. I’m sure a lot of it was racism or economic deprivation. And I’m also attacking that society. But I’m also attacking, not only from a Marxist view-point that they see, but as a person who’s
outraged, and should be outraged morally as a writer. One who says, "This is wrong, and it shouldn't be done." And I'm going to show how some of these things have deprived these people. But at the very same time, I'm also showing, which is probably going against the Marxist grain, that despite all of that, some of these people succeed, even without joining the other side. (Dasenbrock Puerto del Sol 232)

As these passages suggest, the education of Mexican Americans typically precluded them from experiencing texts that treat their own culture and economic circumstances. For Mexican American children to matriculate without ever realizing that they have a legitimate culture with a long tradition of artistic accomplishments, as has occurred since at least 1848, creates for Chicano writers like Hinojosa an urgent need to develop literary projects which attempt to remedy this exclusionary educational practice.

Until very recently, Hinojosa's literary project would not have seemed relevant for English studies; however, this view is currently being challenged, both by those in rhetoric-composition (who view all texts, including those produced by students, as worthy of serious study) and by literary theory. Both literary theory and composition share rhetoric as an underlying framework that by itself could not have gained entrance into literary studies until philology in the 19th century and then linguistics in the 20th century began making headway into the study of languages, and then recently, if not finally, into the study of literature, including English literary studies. In particular, literary theories have begun questioning what had too long been taken for granted: namely that our understanding of any literary text is always ideological and that the values inherent in any literary text and in the studies of these literary texts are not universal and natural but social and local. In short, such theories acknowledge that values attached to literary texts and to the languages which make them up
are constructs created through the institutional power of universities and publishing houses or any other means of disseminating and inscribing those values upon written texts.

As literary theorists became self-reflexive about their own assumptions regarding literary excellence, literary texts previously held to be masterpieces came to be reviewed in a new light. In addition, the previously accepted canon of literary masterpieces became the subject of further scrutiny in order to unveil unconsciously held values and connect these values to people, institutions, and genealogies they stood for at the particular time and place the inscription of values took place.

Even as English departments made room for competing theories, they also had to begin acknowledging that rhetoric-composition studies occupy a significant place, particularly because of the value attached by society to the study of non-literary texts, values stemming from what have been accepted as the social and economic benefits of literacy. Because society has come to place a high value on such skills as reading, writing, and persuasion (skills all the more valuable due to their growing scarcity), the study of literary texts has sometimes been viewed as overly valorized in the educational curriculum. Once departments of English undertook the education of a nation's new leaders in rhetorical and written skills, and not necessarily in the acquirement only of an aesthetic taste for English literature, departments of English placed themselves in a bind. Simply put, they could no longer claim that their subject of study restricted itself solely to literary "masterpieces." Ironically, non-literary texts are once again coming to be reviewed and studied as they had originally been in the first departments of English in Scottish universities during the mid-
nineteenth century, when the education of a nation's future leaders in industry and commerce came to be a priority instead of the "high culture" of that declining empire's aristocratic class. In spite of movements in theory and composition, literary studies within English studies remains very firmly entrenched, and while studying older English literary texts arguably becomes less and less relevant in today's fast-changing world (and especially in the United States where wide-sweeping demographic changes are taking place), their value interestingly remains high.

The history of literary and rhetoric-composition studies in the United States has been documented elsewhere (see Graff's Professing Literature and Berlin's Rhetoric and Reality), and its relation to this study is not directly central. Suffice it to say, therefore, that English studies has recently reached an impasse which forces us to reexamine and reevaluate its goals and means. One result of this reexamination is that the time when works such as those of Hinojosa could not have any possible relevance to English studies is rapidly coming to an end. This change is related both to the ways in which the "relevance" of literary texts is beginning to be measured by the values a literary work conveys to and shares with a particular constituency of people, and to the relevance that ethnic literary and non-literary texts have to growing numbers of new ethnic students currently enrolling in universities. In response to changing demographics, composition studies in particular has begun to include new voices and texts as part of the reading assignments. And because many members of marginalized ethnic groups live on the socially dangerous border between literacy and illiteracy, the inclusion of ethnic texts more closely relevant to these students becomes highly desirable and pedagogically sensible.
Because public school issues concerning literacy have gained nationwide attention in the U.S., composition pedagogies which include ethnic literary texts that teach literacy skills to a growing sector of illiterate public school students are beginning to find some acceptance. In recent years, organizations like the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), the Modern Language Association (MLA), and the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) have taken active stands at conventions and in journals on disseminating various pedagogical approaches to literacy and the growing number of ethnic minority students. Yet the number of ethnic minorities, especially Hispanics, participating in these conventions and publishing articles in these professional journals to date remains small. The scarcity of active participation by minority teachers and scholars of English from all levels of education in professional organizations is very telling of the present state of English studies for minorities and of educational issues important to North American minority groups.

If the state of English studies in coming years is to change, it must accommodate minority educational issues more adequately. Since the current apartheid state of English studies in the United States obviously fails to benefit minorities, I propose that examining ethnic heterodox texts, such as those of Rolando Hinojosa, can help increase minority representation while also reshaping the institution of English studies. In this regard, I therefore submit that the texts we study determine who we are as an educational institution. The accommodation of minority texts like Hinojosa’s into English studies will further begin changing the landscape of English studies in the areas of literary and rhetoric-composition studies. To date, we have not seen the kinds of changes
which would indicate that our landscape has significantly been changed to benefit anyone except majority practitioners within the institution of English studies, despite the challenges from literary and composition theories in recent years. In order to remake ourselves, then, we will have to change those things which define us, namely the textual company we keep. This study of Hinojosa’s literary texts offers a special opportunity for integrating concerns important to English studies as a whole, with specific areas of literary and rhetoric-composition studies, and with the constituencies these institutional entities represent in a United States poised to enter the 21st century.

Integrating Rolando Hinojosa’s literary texts within the relevant concerns of English studies with the purpose of changing its terrain can occur through the investigation of a number of relationships conducted by what Alton Becker calls a new kind of philologist (in Geertz’s “Blurred Genres” 32). This philologist examines the intertextual relationships and analyses of texts such as those of Hinojosa by investigating “the relation of its parts to one another; the relation of it to others culturally or historically associated with it; the relation of it to those who in some sense construct it; and the relation of it to realities conceived as lying outside it” (32). Accordingly, this study will examine relationships concerning “coherence,” “inter-textuality,” “intention,” and “reference” in the series of novels by Rolando Hinojosa. As Becker states, the study of inscriptions severed from the study of inscribing, and the study of fixed meanings severed from the study of the social processes that fix them, result in a double narrowness, since “Not only is the extension of text analysis to nonwritten materials blocked, but so is the application of sociological analysis to written ones.... In a multicultured world, a world of multiple epistemologies,
there is a need for a new philologist—a specialist in contextual relations—in all areas of knowledge in which text-building...is a central activity: literature, history, law, music, politics, psychology, trade, even war and peace” (32).

In proposing a theory for the study of Mexican American texts (written, nonwritten, contextual, and subtextual), my examination investigates the complexities inherent in an “ethnic” literature that has received too little attention in the past. A theory for approaching these complexities is necessary for several reasons:

‘to make us see’ connections, homologies, similarities, and isomorphisms among disconnected and disparate realities. It helps us realize often that the local is an instance of the global and that the global can be changed by re-alignments at the regional level. In this sense then, the capacity of theory to generalize and travel among constituencies can have a positive and progressive impact on the constituencies, each of which is enabled to look beyond its immediate area or zone (Radhakrishnan 17).

And according to Paul de Man, a theory, particularly a literary theory [for Mexican American texts], “upsets rooted ideologies by revealing the mechanics of their workings; it goes against a powerful philosophical tradition of which aesthetics is a prominent part; it upsets the established canon of literary works and blurs the borderlines between literary and non-literary discourse” (de Man 11). “Ethnic” literary texts, like Mexican American literary texts, require a theoretical application that exposes the ideological environment into which these texts came to be produced and received, so the issues concerning coherence, inter-textuality, intention, and reference must be foregrounded in any examination. Such an examination seems timely, for it promises to illuminate what Geertz terms a “distinctly democratic temper” that “has come into our view of what we read and what we write.” Geertz continues by stating that

The properties connecting texts with one another, that put them,
ontologically anyway, on the same level, are coming to seem as important in characterizing them as those dividing them; and rather than face an array of natural kinds, fixed types divided by sharp qualitative differences, we more and more see ourselves surrounded by a vast, almost continuous field of variously intended and diversely constructed works we can order only practically, relationally, and as our purposes prompt us. (20-21)

As I’ve suggested, this “democratic temper” coincides with the current interest in a canon which has up to now excluded many heterodox (ethnic) literatures. Thus, the properties connecting texts with one another need to be examined to see where common ground might be found between Mexican American texts and “mainstream” canonized American texts. By seeing how these texts have been produced and by showing how the authors’ concerns for gaining a common ground between their own and more canonical literary texts as well as between the constituencies represented through them, we may better understand the importance of the relationships of coherence, inter-textuality, intention, and reference within Mexican American literary texts.

As past studies have analyzed only individual texts, the contextual relations found in Hinojosa’s series of texts require special investigation for determining their coherence as a series. Since the texts have consciously been designed as part of a continuing series (The Klail City Death Trip Series /La Serie de la Muerte en Klail), however, that series calls out for a study that would reveal the inter-relationships between and among individual texts. One reason such a study has not yet been undertaken is that the novels have not been published sequentially. But a “series” is nonetheless present, despite the problematic order of the publication of the novels and despite the fact that the early novels were written primarily in Spanish.
In fact, as subsequent chapters of this dissertation will demonstrate, the complex publication history of Hinojosa’s works is nothing if not representative of the evolution that most Chicano writers have undergone in their attempts to find an audience and to gain credibility within mainstream literary studies in the United States. The next chapter begins the task of tracing this history by presenting an inter-textual analysis of all the individual works, particularly as they relate to the continuing series.
By using the term [North] to specify the United States, I am following traditional usage in most all of Latin America. Latin Americans consider themselves to be Americans just as much as U.S. citizens do; however, the United States traditionally continues to consider itself to be the only “American” country in the Western Hemisphere. This designation is therefore appropriate because of the confusion that would occur between peoples who do not mutually agree upon what to call themselves--Americans.

See Gerald Graff and William E. Cain’s “Peace Plan for the Canon Wars,” The Nation 6 March 1989: 310-312. It should be noted that questions over which literary texts should be included within the body of Chicano literature have also been raised. See Bruce-Novoa’s “Canonical and Noncanonical Texts.” The America’s Review 14.3 (1986): 119-133.

In Limón’s essay, he informs us that when Mexican Americans are asked in Spanish what term of self-identity they use, they majority of them respond by using the term “mexicano.”

See David Montejano’s Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986. This text, blurring historical and sociological discourses, provides one of the first scholarly and legitimately accepted accounts of [North] American history in this important part of the United States--Texas.

The author, Rolando Hinojosa, in an interview, has confirmed his direct descent from the Hinojosa family that Maril cites.

This essay is found in The Rolando Hinojosa Reader, edited by Jose David Saldivar.

In the United States Winifred Horner, for example, has informed us that in 1896 Oberlin College found teaching Shakespeare unsuitable for their college students (Horner, ed. 3).
Chapter II

Hinojosa's Cultural Codes: The Land, Language, and the Family

Human existence, created as it is in many languages, presents two opposing tendencies. There is a "centrifugal" force dispersing us outward into an ever greater variety of "voices," outward into a seeming chaos that presumably only a God could encompass. And there are various "centripetal" forces preserving us from overwhelming fluidity and variety. The drive to create art works that have some kind of coherence—that is, formal unity—is obviously a "centripetal" force.... (Booth xxii)

--Se trata, por fin, de la gente del Valle; como decía Indalecio Peña: 'Gente del Valle; gente trabajada, mal comida, y bien cojida.'

--It has something to do, in the end, with the Valley folks; as Indalecio Peña used to say, "Valley folks work hard, are ill-fed and well-screwed people." (Claros varones 14-15)

Section 1

Centripetal and Centrifugal Forces in Hinojosa's Series

The study of literary texts has moved from analyzing not only the formal qualities of a text within a specific genre or style, what Bakhtin calls the "centripetal" forces of coherence, but also to analyzing how such texts reflect ideological meanings formed by cultural codes found within texts. These cultural codes also act as centripetal forces creating coherence within a text, which Bakhtin calls a text's "formed ideology" (Booth xx). The formal qualities of any text thus carry within them an ideological meaning inseparable from the form of the text. As texts are guided and determined by generic constraints, so ideological meanings are determined by cultural codes. Both literary texts and their ideological meanings come to be understood by humans through the
“voices” or languages used, whether the text be a literary text, a cultural performance, or a civil institution like a church, a bank, or a tavern. According to Bakhtin,

The artist’s essential task is not simply to make the most effective work possible, as viewed in its kind. It is rather to achieve a view of the world superior to all other views; fiction of the right kind, pursuing the right tasks, is the best instrument of understanding that has ever been devised. It is indeed the only conceptual device we have that can do justice, by achieving a kind of objectivity quite different from that hailed by most western critics, to the essential, irreducible multi-centeredness, or “polyphony,” of human life. (cited in Booth xx)

But “centripetal” forces are always struggling against the “centrifugal” forces of other “voices” and languages which threaten the integrity of any given text, no matter what kind of text it may be. The established cultural codes can be and oftentimes are threatened when coming into contact with other people’s cultural “voices” with their attendant and different codes. Thus a people’s “language” and cultural codes are always in danger of dissolving into incoherence and annihilation unless a people’s culture can maintain the integrity and stability of its languages and cultural codes. As Bakhtin informs us, this stability is always in danger of disintegrating because there will always be a variety of “voices” struggling to be heard. In “Discourse in the Novel,” Bakhtin states that

A unitary language is not something given [dan] but is always in essence posited [zadan]—and at every moment of its linguistic life it is opposed to the realities of heteroglossia. But at the same time it makes its real presence felt as a force for overcoming this heteroglossia, imposing specific limits to it, guaranteeing a certain maximum of mutual understanding and crystallizing into a real although still relative, unity—the unity of the reigning conversational (everyday) and literary language, “correct language.” (270)

He further maintains that
Every concrete utterance of a speaking subject serves as a point where centrifugal as well as centripetal forces are brought to bear. The processes of centralization, of unification and disunification, intersect in the utterance; the utterance not only answers the requirements of its own language as an individualized embodiment of a speech act, but it answers the requirements of the heteroglossia as well; it is in fact an active participant in such speech diversity. And this active participation of every utterance in living heteroglossia determines the linguistic profile and style of the utterance to no less a degree than its inclusion in any normative-centralizing system of a unitary language.

Every utterance participates in the “unitary language” (in its centripetal forces and tendencies) and at the same time partakes of social and historical heteroglossia (the centrifugal, stratifying forces). (272)

Moreover, the maintenance of a people’s language and cultural codes can come to have paramount importance, especially during those times when they have been taken away, lost, or given up in a struggle with competing codes. The production of literary texts is but one way a people can maintain and stabilize their cultural codes, as texts can reinforce and inscribe these codes through the preservation, dissemination, and valorization of literary texts. Thus the study of literary texts now encompasses the study of the sites where texts are produced in order to understand how struggles between centripetal and centrifugal forces have occurred at the sites of production. Consequently, studying literary texts also now encompasses seeing how a people’s cultural codes have been used to maintain the integrity and stability of a people’s culture and language.

Mexican American literary texts reflect clearly demarcated ideological struggles over competing cultural codes that have contributed to the creation of Mexican American cultural artifacts. As chapter one of this study demonstrates, since Spanish Mexicans settled in what is now known as Texas, the centrifugal forces tearing away at the integrity and stability of Texas Mexican culture have
left their mark on the cultural codes available for the composition of twentieth-century Texas Mexican literary texts. This threat over the annihilation of Texas Mexican culture becomes most acutely intense and apparent with the introduction of Anglo American culture during the early part of the 19th century, continues well into the twentieth century, and shows every indication of continuing into the twenty-first century. The struggle between competing cultural codes thus reflects historical and ideological struggles between Texas Mexicans and what have come to be known as Texas Anglos. These struggles have been captured in narrative texts of various generic kinds, including both literary and non-literary texts.

Among Texas literary texts, and arguably more than any other Texas literary texts, those of Rolando Hinojosa reflect the struggle between centrifugal and centripetal forces. The common terrain on which the competitive struggle of one culture (with its codes) to dominate another can be seen in Hinojosa’s texts, the languages he uses to produce these texts, and the land, people, and cultures referred to by both the languages and texts. Because the cultural and ideological struggle for dominance is an on-going one still, Texas literary and cultural texts should have within them the various “voices” and “languages” that constitute and animate this struggle. Texas texts with Texas Anglo and Texas Mexican cultural codes within them that do not reflect this struggle are not only monological, in the sense that Bakhtin uses the word, but also and more importantly, unreflective of the polyphonic and heteroglossic nature of the human interaction that has historically taken place between Anglos and Mexicans in Texas. Hinojosa’s literary texts are clearly polyphonic in much the same way that Bakhtin describes Dostoevsky’s texts:

[he] genuinely surrenders to his characters and allows them to speak in
ways other than his own. Heroes are no longer diminished to the dominating consciousness of the author; secondary characters are no longer encompassed by and diminished to their usefulness to heroes—or to the author. Characters are, in short, respected as full subjects, shown as "consciousnesses" that can never be fully defined or exhausted, rather than as objects fully known, once and for all, in their roles—and then discarded as expendable. (Booth xxii-xxiii)

Most undoubtedly, Hinojosa's *Klail City Death Trip Series* reflects Texas Mexican cultural codes that rhetorically and artistically work toward creating a cohesive centripetal bond between the overlapping narrative structures found in each of the individual serial texts. In addition, his serial texts reflect the centrifugal competing codes of Texas Anglo culture against which Texas Mexican cultural codes have historically struggled to create cultural autonomy and coherence. His efforts to reflect this struggle between competing cultural codes have led him to produce texts in both Spanish and English, as well as texts that incorporate the spontaneous switching of Spanish and English codes within a single text. More importantly, this type of rhetorical and textual approach frees his characters to speak a "voice" reflecting the cultural codes of that particular character. By allowing characters this type of freedom, the author introduces voices that reflect cultural codes, which in turn reflect a specific ideological stance.

Robert Scholes argues in *Textual Power* that cultural codes in literary texts can suggest wider thematic interpretations, allowing readers to refer to phenomena and texts lying outside of literary texts:

Certain post-structuralists—Michel Foucault in particular—have begun studying the ways in which institutions are comparable to genres. Using this kind of approach one may consider "the prison" or "the hospital" as a generic institution, arising at a particular time and moving through history like any other systemic network of possibilities. Individual prisons may thus be seen as texts enabled and constrained by the generic possibilities of penology at a given time, just as a given literary text may be seen as an
utterance based on the historically available possibilities of a literary genre. Concepts like genre and style are useful because they give us access to the invisible forces that shape textual production, just as the concept of “language” gives us access to the forces that shape our speech. In all these cases we have a material thing: this utterance, this particular text, that particular hospital or prison, seen in relation to an immaterial thing: the English language, the picaresque novel, the institutions of penology or medicine.

An individual cultural artifact or text can thus be understood as functioning within its generic possibilities (cultural codes) at a given time, and also according to how it is constrained or enabled by those possibilities. Readers can further analyze a civil institution, like a prison, found within a literary text and compare it to its institutional possibilities lying outside the literary text. Thus, when texts are enabled and constrained by the generic possibilities at a given time, based on the historically available possibilities of that genre, readers can arrive at the “invisible forces that shape textual production” (Scholes 3). In other words, generic possibilities operate with certain codes or invisible forces, which in turn constrain or enable a text in the same manner that centripetal and centrifugal forces operate for Bakhtin to create whatever type of coherence might be found in a text.

For Hinojosa’s texts, as for all literary texts, this concept suggests that competing cultural codes have both enabled and constrained the possibilities of textual production. Texas Mexican cultural codes have been so mixed by historical struggles with Texas Anglos that, for authors like Hinojosa, the languages used in a text must reflect this mixing. The invisible forces shaping a text must therefore be made visible in order to reveal how cultural and historical struggles have marked the text. But in early and recent Chicano literary criticism, making the invisible forces working in a text to create coherence
visible has not always been paramount. This lack of attention to "invisible forces" is especially true of criticism treating the serial texts of Rolando Hinojosa. In fact, previous critical approaches have generally tended to examine his Series only as individual texts. In addition, examinations of Hinojosa's texts have failed to show how his texts operate through the use of cultural codes. Finally, the coherence established when Hinojosa renders his serial texts into English or Spanish has gone unexplained.

Ever since Rolando Hinojosa published his first book-length text, *Estampas del valle y otras obras*, in 1973, his literary texts have received all manner of treatment from various critics of Chicano literature.¹ As his texts over time came to form a serial project, these critical treatments have also varied considerably, from reviews and treatments of single works to treatments of single works set alongside other literary texts (usually Chicano literary texts), to treatments covering the Series as it existed when the critical essays were written. While these critical essays have been written in both English and Spanish (as well as in other languages like French and German), Hinojosa's texts have also received treatment within a slowly growing body of Chicano critical texts. Several interviews of Hinojosa have been published, adding further information about the critical appraisal of his texts.

At this point, however, no published critical treatments cover the Series as it exists since the publication of *Becky and Her Friends* and *Los amigos de Becky*, Hinojosa's most recent serial texts, which represent a single narrative text written in English and Spanish respectively. And because there is another text forthcoming (*The Useless Servants*, 1993), any critical treatment done today will soon need to be amended. Yet given what is known of Hinojosa's
current Series, a more comprehensive understanding is not only possible but desirable. By marking 1973 as the year when Hinojosa’s first book-length (serial) literary text appeared and by examining some of the critical texts published since that time, this study offers not only an understanding of the critical reception his texts have received, but also an insight into how Chicano have approached Chicano literary texts.

Not surprisingly, early criticism applied formalist and culturalist approaches to Chicano texts. But after the 1978 publication of Joseph Sommers’s “From the Critical Premise to the Product: Critical Modes and Their Applications to a Chicano Literary Text,” criticism has moved increasingly toward post-structuralist approaches. This kind of critical move to post-structuralist modes was necessary, I suggest, since Chicano literary texts by their very nature demand intertextual analyses. As critical applications developed into post-structuralist modes, however, Marxist, feminist, and semiotic analyses often took precedence over the texts they were analyzing. As a result, efforts to apply post-structuralist critical theories to Rolando Hinojosa’s literary texts have been characterized by textual errors that undermined their intertextual analyses of Hinojosa’s serial texts.

Another reason for significant textual errors is the centrifugal forces which work to obscure some very important interrelationships that create coherence among the serial texts. Because of the appearance, reappearance (and sometimes the disappearance) of certain characters in Hinojosa’s serial texts, readers must rely on the cohesive interrelationships (cultural codes working as centripetal forces) that have been established between characters, their families, and the land they might have held, lost, or repossessed. The failings of
culturalist and particularly of formalist critical applications lie in the fact that they, by definition, are restricted from making intertextual relationships between Hinojosa's serial texts. For formalist critical approaches, this means that a literary analysis only examines those internal rhetorical devices that work towards creating coherence within a specific text. Culturalist critical approaches to Chicano literary texts are limited by not moving beyond Chicano cultural codes that might reveal relationships between Chicano literary texts and other kinds of cultural texts. As I will demonstrate below, moving beyond Chicano cultural texts is necessary for gaining an understanding of the place of a specific literary text on the literary landscape.

More importantly, an investigation of critical treatments of Chicano literary texts, including Hinojosa's serial texts, reveals the traces of centrifugal forces on the critical texts themselves. The evidence for the existence of these centrifugal traces are the textual errors that consistently appear in critical texts examining Hinojosa's serial texts. One major factor in the creation of textual errors has been a refusal by critics to examine Hinojosa's (English and Spanish) renditions. Rather than mere translations of his serial texts, these renditions change the extended serial narrative by adding or deleting narrative information. There are clearly dialogic interrelationships existing between the "original" serial texts and their renditions, yet critics have consistently been adverse to examining these dialogical interrelationships. Critics thus limit themselves to only one language edition. As Bakhtin noted about critical texts examining this type of novelistic discourse,

Linguistics, stylistics, and the philosophy of language that were born and shaped by the current of centralizing tendencies in the life of language have ignored this dialogized heteroglossia, in which is embodied the centrifugal forces in the life of language. For this reason they could make no provision for the dialogic nature of language, which was a struggle
among socio-linguistic points of view, not an intra-language struggle between individual wills or logical contradictions. Moreover, even intra-language dialogue (dramatic, rhetorical, cognitive or merely casual) has hardly been studied linguistically or stylistically up to the present day. One might even say outright that the dialogic aspect of discourse and all the phenomena connected with it have remained to the present moment beyond the ken of linguistics. (273)

The dialogic relationship among Hinojosa’s serial texts, (including his renditions) and the various critical texts examined here shows the struggles existing between centripetal and centrifugal forces operating to establish the interpretive narrative meanings derived by various critical approaches. The following sections of this chapter examine critical texts analyzing Chicano texts and, more specifically, Hinojosa’s texts as they become part of his serial project.
Section 2

The Early Criticism

In a fairly early critical essay on Chicano literature, “Contemporary Chicano Prose Fiction: A Chronicle of Misery” (1973), Charles Tatum reviews Chicano literature as he understood it at that time, stating that “certain tendencies and characteristics are emerging that can be of value to the literary critic as he [she] begins to define and describe this new wave of artistic expression” (7). Among these tendencies and characteristics, Tatum finds that

A cursory examination of contemporary Chicano prose fiction, for example, reveals that the majority of novels and short stories published by Chicano authors within the last fifteen years deals directly with some aspect of the social reality of the community of Spanish-speaking people who began to emigrate to the United States shortly after the Mexican Revolution of 1910. Most of the writers turn back to the bitter experiences of these Mexican refugees, their arrival in this country, and their adjustment to an alien Anglo culture. While much of the literature resembles the direct Steinbeck style of social realism, it also contains several biographical and autobiographical accounts of discrimination, isolation, and acculturation in a strange society. Considering Chicano fiction as a whole, it offers us a chronicle of a half-century of misery. Its effect is cathartic, providing a release for the accumulated suffering and frustration so that a new consciousness of La Raza might be formed from the experience.

Viewed historically, Chicano prose fiction covers a period that begins early in this century and continues now, in the urban barrios and in the agricultural fields of California and the Southwest. The depression, riots of the thirties and the forties, strikes, and the recent civil rights movement serve as the backdrop against which we see a whole culture in the process of transformation and adaptation to new ways and problems of existence. What is referred to euphemistically as “acculturation” and “assimilation” is refocused for us in these novels and shorts stories as survival based on the abandonment of traditions and language. The varied experiences of several generations are retold, allowing the reader to draw his [her] own conclusions regarding the history of Chicanos in this country. (7)

Tatum ends his essay by stating that “Seen in perspective, recent Chicano prose fiction thus chronicles the arrival in the United States of a Mexican
immigrant population, traces it through several periods of adjustment to an Anglo culture, and finally gives us a cross-section of how the country’s second largest minority views the future of its race” (17).

Tatum’s early description and analysis of Chicano literature may be accurate for the times and the literature that is surveyed in his essay, but it fails to recognize that not all Chicanos in the United States immigrated shortly after the Mexican Revolution of 1910. Nor is all Chicano literature about Chicanos who arrived into the U.S. after 1910. Thus, while his focus on the “acculturation” and “assimilation” portrayed in Chicano literature is, strictly speaking, accurate, it leaves out the very real dispossession of lands previously owned and occupied by Chicanos in the Southwest prior to 1910. While the effect of the literature may have been cathartic and a “release for the accumulated suffering and frustration so that a new consciousness of La Raza might be formed from the experience,” with the literary texts of Rolando Hinojosa a completely different historical and ironic dimension is added to the depiction of Chicano life in the United States. This new dimension is possible because his texts depict the life of Mexican Americans living in Texas prior to the Mexican Revolution of 1910. But by 1973 Hinojosa had yet to publish any of his serial texts, and since Tatum’s analysis only covers prose fiction and not other types of cultural texts, Tatum may have been limited, because the critical work of Américo Paredes (With His Pistol in His Hand: A Border Ballad and Its Hero) had been in print since 1958. And while Hinojosa’s serial texts cover the lives of many who are newly arrived, an important part of his main narrative focus takes us to times prior to the Mexican Revolution of 1910.
In 1977, two critical texts reveal how early Chicano literary criticism operated. In the first of these critical texts, "Current Trends in Chicano Literary Criticism," Carmen Salazar Parr states, "What characterizes Chicano literary criticism is a formalist type of approach, but one which complements sociological and historical analysis. In general, it seems to me, Chicano critics have been polarized into two groups: those who see Chicano literature as reflecting the socio-historical and cultural reality of the Chicano, and those who defend it in terms of its universal, transcendental values" (8). But as Salazar Parr further notes, "...Chicano literary criticism is still very much in the developing stages. What passes for criticism in many cases is, at best, a list of plot summaries and panoramic views. We need more in-depth studies of single works or single aspects of works.... Too often, in an effort to exhaust a theme, the critic will select four, five or more works and yield a superficial analysis" (13).

As an example of this type of analysis, Salazar Parr cites Juan Rodríguez's essay, "Temas y motivos de la literatura chicana," ["Themes and Motives in Chicano Literature"] which covers several Chicano literary texts, including "parts of Estampas del Valle [Sketches of the Valley]" by Rolando Hinojosa.

In the second critical text of 1977, "Myth and Reality in Chicano Literature," Sergio D. Elizondo argues that "One of the most salient features of the literature of the Chicanos is the predominance of realism within it as well as its fundamental mythic quality which enables it to be compared with universal literature" (23). Thus, for both Salazar Parr and Elizondo, critical essays to date tend to analyze Chicano literary texts in terms of their realist qualities and forms of transcendental or mythic qualities. In analyzing Estampas del valle y otras obras [Sketches of the Valley and Other Works], Elizondo suggests Hinojosa sets the most recent standard of costumbrismo [folklore] and hence of
realism in Chicano literature. It seems notable to me that nowadays each one of the outstanding works of Chicano literature possesses at least one striking distinction; Estampas is a faithful interpretation of various forms of literary realism. This is demonstrated by each one of the four parts of the book; the vignette with a local flavor, a clinical case of personal tragedy, the customs of the people and the character study of one character, all are aspects of the same great reality. The work, in all its aspects, contains a strong current of mythical elements originating from Mexican culture and history. The second part of the book, in my opinion, is one most solidly rooted in Chicano myth. (29)

Neither of these critical texts provides a definition of “transcendental qualities” or “mythical elements originating from Mexican culture and history.” This failure is especially problematic in the part of Elizondo's essay making a claim about a mythic quality being found in the second part Hinojosa's Estampas. The part of the novel alludes to an incident occurring in a bar where Baldemar Cordero kills Ernesto Tamez after being provoked by Tamez.

Elizondo states that

For us, the Chicanos, Ernesto's death can be viewed as simply yet another case of passionate crime; but if we carefully study it from the psychiatric perspective, we will observe that Baldemar's motive to kill Ernesto is inevitable if we take into account the state of mind and the system of cultural unconsciousness of homicide. Rationalism apart, let us see the ethical question that moved Baldemar to remedy the damage done to his honor by Ernesto. It seems to me that since time immemorial the Mexican has possessed a series of values and attitudes that have forged his cultural and national character within the content of Indian cultural currents. The ritualism among our Indian predecessors obliged the individual to subject himself to a system of behavior defined by the customs and the religious ritualism based on emotions. (30)

...We will not deny that these acts of passion among our race are traditional because tradition is not only what the Spaniards and the Indians bequeathed to us, nor what happened in Texas from 1836 to the present: Rivera, Alurista, Méndez and particularly Hinojosa have transformed this tradition and have now carried it to a different plane, to the literary plane; and for me this so-called tradition is nothing else but the Chicano myth, the daughter of the combined Spanish and Indian myth with a defined and ordered dialectic. If perhaps we are lacking in empirical studies that methodically show us this myth which we openly observe in our behavior, it
is also a cause stemming from the cultural unconsciousness that every Chicano privately and publicly reveals in that behavior in real life. But here, the above mentioned writers skillfully achieve it. (30)

Thus, for Elizondo, tradition in Chicano literature is somehow transformed into Chicano myth. But we must remember that this claim is made without any “empirical studies that methodically show us systematically the factual structure of the elements which constitute this myth....” Theoretically, one could argue that “the factual structure of the elements which constitute this myth” are the cultural codes or invisible forces which Bakhtin and Scholes respectively see as operating to create coherence within texts. But, as Elizondo indicates, the factual structure of the elements constituting Chicano myth had yet to be formally studied and analyzed.

Neither of these critical works mentions the existence of the second Hinojosa serial text, Klail City y sus alredores (1976). In 1977, the Klail City Death Trip Series did not exist as a series, but the second work in what would later be known as a Series was already in print. The analysis in both critical texts thus operates through a comparison of Estampas to other Chicano texts or through an analysis of thematic and formal considerations like realism and myth, as well as through socio-political and historical considerations. If we recall Tatum’s essay together with these two essays, we can see that socio-political and historical considerations have always been present in analyses of Chicano literary texts, a critical approach that had yet to be systematically applied to mainstream literary texts by most mainstream criticism.

As Hinojosa continued to build onto his serial project, critics began to analyze the texts in his serial project, though they continued to highlight one text at the expense of ignoring the surrounding serial texts. This approach can
especially be seen in the reviews of Charles Tatum. In his 1977 review of *Klail City y sus alredores* (an Hinojosa text which received the prestigious Casa de las Américas Prize for best novel in 1976), Tatum begins by discussing the form and content of *Estampas del valle*...: “Hinojosa intentionally obscures relationships between characters, does not identify his narrator, and blurs characterization in order to create a total impression of the community of Klail City. Only a few characters reappear throughout the pages of the novel and they serve to provide threads of unity among the many sketches” (166). With reference to *Klail City*..., Tatum states that Hinojosa has become more adept in manipulating temporal and spatial fragmentation and the constant refocusing of the narrative on a few central figures who serve as anchors to give the work its cohesiveness. More importantly, Hinojosa has been more successful in the second novel in creating a total ambience in which he allows the reader to participate through techniques such as the multiplication of point of view, convergence of individual destinies, and the use of memory as a narrative device. Structurally, *Klail City*... is more complex than *Estampas*... We marvel that the author has packed into his relatively short novel over one hundred fictional beings and has succeeded in weaving them in and out of his narrative in a way that enhances reader participation and leaves the impression of complete naturalness and spontaneity. (166-167)

Tatum ends his review by further describing the structure of the novel:

The structure of the novel is neither circular nor concentric but intermingled. Characters, spaces, and times touch each other—we touch them—either casually or directly. Memories float in and out of the present, often becoming confused with it for their vividness. The novel is filled with echoes, partial glimpses of characters, snatches of dialogue, whole scenes and parts of scenes, interesting characters and some not so interesting, important events and most not so important....In the end, the composite of the above emerges as total ambience, a hermetically sealed world of Klail City and its surroundings in which we have been asked to enter and to participate, not as readers but as witnesses, listeners, and friends. We, too, overhear conversations, witness scenes, listen attentively to others as they tell us about their lives or those of others we have never met. (168-169)
As Tatum's analysis indicates about both *Estampas*... and *Klail City*..., “Only a few characters reappear throughout the pages of the novel and they serve to provide threads of unity among the many sketches” (166) and “a few central figures...serve as anchors to give the work its cohesiveness” (166). These figures include Esteban Echevarría, Jehú Malacara, Rafa Buenrostro, Manuel Guzmán, Choche Markham, and the Leguizamón family, and a few others. As Tatum argues, it is through these figures that cohesion is established, and they “give the work its continuity but they do not emerge as separate or even more important than the others” (167). Tatum's reading of these texts indicates that the fragmented narrative structure of these two texts is held together by the reappearance of these characters; however, no mention is given of the relationships between these characters or the languages they use to communicate their relationships to each other. The relationships between these figures are often political, and are further established by the land they own, and the families they belong to, as well as by the languages they speak. Yet Tatum's review of these texts reveals very little about such relationships and interrelationships. The “threads of unity” that characters provide in the serial texts require an analysis that further reveals the cultural codes that inform their interrelationships.

In 1986, Tatum published three separate reviews of *Dear Rafe* and *Partners in Crime* in three separate journals: *Puerto del Sol*, *Hispania*, and *World Literature Today*. In the *Puerto del Sol* review, Tatum reviews *Claros varones de Belken*, *Dear Rafe*, and *Partners in Crime*; in the *Hispania* review, *The Rolando Hinojosa Reader*, *Dear Rafe*, and *Partners in Crime* are reviewed; and Tatum reviews *Partners in Crime* in *World Literature Today*. Moreover, in
1987, Tatum reviewed *Claros varones de Belken* in *World Literature Today*. Since these reviews cover essentially the same Hinojosa texts, one might expect the reviews to be very similar. However, there is at least one seeming contradiction among the reviews regarding the dates during which the narratives are supposed to have taken place. In the *Puerto del Sol* review, Tatum states that in *Dear Rafe*, “We are in the early ‘70s...” (130), but in the *Hispania* review, he states the following: “This novel [*Rites and Witnesses*] serves to provide a bridge of information omitted from *Dear Rafe*, that is, Klail City towards the end of the 1950’s and the beginning of the 1960’s...”(561). While about half of *Rites and Witnesses* is set during the Korean War in the early 1950’s, the other half of this novel is set during a time directly preceding *Mi querido Rafa* or *Dear Rafe*, when Jehú is first employed in a bank. The contradiction between the two reviews lies with the fact that what occurs in *Dear Rafe* happens immediately following *Rites and Witnesses*, not ten years later “in the early ‘70s,” as Tatum has indicated. In the same *Puerto del Sol* review, Tatum directly quotes from *Partners in Crime*, where the narrator, Jehú, informs the reader that this narrative occurs in 1972: “…in Nineteen Seventy-two, drugs and their artificial affluence were forcing their way into the economy” (*Partners* 115).

*Partners in Crime* provides direct information that Jehú had previously quit the bank ten years before, when he was 26 years old (*Partners* 156). From this, readers can calculate that *Dear Rafe*’s narrative occurred in 1962, and that Jehú in *Partners* is now about 36 years old. After leaving the bank in 1962, he spends three years in graduate school at the University of Texas at Austin, Texas, and he returns to the Valley and to his job at the bank in 1965. In
Partners in Crime, readers are informed that Rafe is 37 years old and has been with the Belken County Homicide Squad for eleven years (6). Since this is so, it must now be surmised that Rafe was with the homicide squad during the time when the Dear Rafe narrative occurs, which is corroborated in the “Introduction” to Dear Rafe. However, these dates and Rafe’s employment with the Belken County Homicide Squad represent information that is not given in the previously published English-Spanish code-switching edition of Dear Rafe--Mi querido Rafa. The confusion over dates in Tatum’s review in Puerto del Sol and of Rafe’s employment with the homicide squad in one literary text but not in the other clearly shows how Hinojosa’s texts can place critics and reviewers into the compromising position of making textual errors.

Yet other instances of textual errors that Tatum commits are found in his critical book-length text, Chicano Literature. Here, Tatum states that Claros varones was published in 1981 by Justa Publications, when it did not appear until 1986. In this same text, he says that “Hinojosa’s recently published Claros varones de Belken forms the third part--the fourth part of his long narrative poem Korean Love Songs is included--of the series about Klail City” (123). But if readers are to rely on the only published text of Korean Love Songs, the fourth part of Korean Love Songs that Tatum states as being found in Claros varones simply never made it into the eventual publication of Claros varones. Finally, he states that Generaciones, notas, y brechas [Generations, Notes and Impressions] (1980) is a “collection of some of his [Hinojosa’s] miscellaneous works” (121), instead of accurately stating that this text is a poorly translated and poorly printed bilingual edition of Klail City y sus alredores, Hinojosa’s second serial text. As I will show, Tatum is not alone in making such textual errors.
The next critical text to be examined is important because it was the first critical text to self-reflexively challenge the assumptions of criticism treating Chicano literary texts. In 1978, Joseph Sommers published a “revised and expanded” essay, “From the Critical Premise to the Product: Critical Modes and Their Applications to a Chicano Literary Text,” which had originally been published under the title of “Critical Approaches to Chicano Literature” (1977).³ When Ramón Saldívar responded to Sommers’s essay in 1979 with his essay “A Dialectic of Difference: Towards a Theory of the Chicano Novel,” he noted that Sommers’ essay was widely acclaimed because he had “issued a challenge to all literary scholars, but especially to Chicano scholars, to justify the theoretical suppositions of their work” (Saldívar 73). Sommers’s essay was indeed pivotal for Chicano literary criticism because he challenged critics of Chicano literature to move beyond the formalist (“intrinsic”) and culturalist (“extrinsic”) criticism which had predominated in the criticism of Chicano literature up to that time. Sommers’s call for change in critical practices arose because he saw that “some of the recent emphases in European and Anglo-American criticism deriving from structuralism and proceeding on to post-structuralism and semiotics, have not yet surfaced in Chicano criticism...” (55). His essay thus argues for a “historical-dialectical” approach that overcomes the shortcomings that he saw in formalist and culturalist criticism.

According to Sommers, the negative consequences of taking a formalist approach to Chicano literary texts include the following:

For one, the reliance on the printed text, evaluated and interpreted by accepted standards of today’s educated, frequently academic middle class, has carried with it acceptance of the notion of either a dearth or a poverty of literary history. Thus the bulk of this type of criticism tends to be ahistorical, concentrating on contemporary texts and their modernism. By extension this has meant a thrust toward the assimilation of Chicano literature, or
more precisely a select number of Chicano texts, into the standard reading list of the educated reader, primarily in academe. Thus a few contemporary works have been validated, while in general the critics await hopefully the apparition of a Chicano Borges. The role of the critic, if these assumptions are primary, is as Bruce Novoa phrased it, "to lead the reader back to the literary work itself," for literature in effect is seen as a separate, non-referential transcendental reality. (57)

Sommers saw additional negative consequences in a culturalist approach:

One result is to conceive of Chicano literature as ethnic literature, designed for and limited to an ethnic readership, to be isolated academically within ethnic studies programs. Related is the notion that Chicano literature is separable from other literatures which in fact may have comparable structural features (such as the marked presence of the oral tradition or the bilingual mode, or historical trajectories involving the confrontation with class exploitation and institutionalized racism). A further consequence is to reject the struggle to redefine critically the prevailing standardized and exclusivist views of American literature. Finally, whereas formalism tends to ignore the past, focusing on modernism and its virtues, culturalism tends to ignore the present, stressing in nostalgic and idealized tones the predominance of the past. (59)

Sommers further states that

One limitation, then, of culturalist criticism is its failure to show how cultural manifestations are part of a total system of social relations at the base of which are the economic structures in which these relations are encased. A second limitation is the general view of culture as adaptation rather than as a complex of responses to the total set of life conditions which a people faces. The former view, that of adaptation, tends to be a-critical, all-inclusive, and descriptive. The latter view attempts to be critical, to see cultural expression as an area of struggle, and to distinguish between those elements of culture which are adaptive (such as religion) and those (such as satirical humor) which evolve out of the need to analyze reality, to criticize oppressive institutions, to affirm a people's sense of worth, and to posit an orientation to structural change. (68)

Because Sommers sees Chicano literary expression as "intimately bound up with the historical pattern of economic and social oppression which has characterized the Mexican American experience since 1848...," critical approaches that isolate the Chicano literary text from socioeconomic and
historical realities will always fail to analyze Chicano literary texts adequately. Sommers therefore argues for an approach that synthesizes formal, cultural, and historical considerations—a historical-dialectical approach. He argues that this approach

begins by explaining the singular formal qualities of a text which distinguish it from alternate modes of verbal expression. It must also account for the manner in which a given text rejects, modifies and incorporates features of texts which have preceded it. Analysis, then, includes the notion of intertextuality, the response to literary traditions. Further, since the critic sees literature as a cultural product, the particular text is studied in relation to its cultural ambience, which process in turn means understanding societal structures.

And finally, the critic assumes that to consume literary texts, even in their most fantastic and abstract variants, constitutes a form of cognition, for the text comments upon, and refers to, and incorporates human experience. Seeing this experience across time, the critic incorporates reference to the dynamics of the historical process into the context and the content of the work. (59)

Sommers further claims that “this third [historical dialectical] approach incorporates into its methodology the concerns of the sociology of literature, which range from analyzing the material conditions and the intellectual climate of literary production to interpreting the reception and the impact of a given text” (60).

While Sommers’s essay analyzes only one novel, Tomás Rivera’s novel, ...y no se lo tragó la tierra/...And the Earth Did Not Part, it nevertheless lays the foundation for most of the critical theories analyzing Chicano literary texts that followed. The first Chicano critical text to challenge scholars of North American literature about the languages used in U.S. literature, Sommers says that “It may come as a shock to English Department norms and traditions, but specialists in the literature of the United States can and should be expected to know Spanish in order to command a full understanding of their field” (62).
Sommers also raises the issue of language translations for Chicano literary texts, an issue of crucial importance in analyzing the literary texts of Rolando Hinojosa.

Sommers' critical text thus sets the first standard for a post-structuralist critical approach for Chicano literary texts. When responding to Sommers's essay in 1979, Ramón Saldívar (A Dialectic of Difference: Towards a Theory of the Chicano Novel") began a critical process that culminated in an unprecedented book-length poststructuralist critical text on Chicano literature, Chicano Narrative: The Dialectics of Difference (1990). In his earlier essay, Saldívar notes:

Opting for conflict rather than resolution, for difference over similarity, the Chicano novel is thus not so much the expression of this ideology of difference as it is a production of that ideology. To be true to the principles of the text and the world which conditions it, criticism must, as a consequence, take the text's deconstructive pattern as its analytical model. We must remember, moreover, that a true dialectic necessarily involves us in negation. In a relationship between opposed terms, one annihilates the other and lifts it up into a higher sphere of existence: development through opposition and conflict--neither Mexican, nor American, nor yet a naive Mexican-American, but something else. This something else is the difference of contemporary Chicano literature, which allows it to retain its special relation to both its Mexican and American contexts, while also letting it be marked by its relation to its own still unconditioned future. (88)

Saldívar concludes by stating that

The primary value of this "new criticism" and its dialectics of difference is that it allows us to examine the formal and thematic dynamics within the literary text and to account for the nature of its special interaction with both the Mexican and American social and literary history that surrounds it with a clarity which other critical methods do not allow. In short, this prospective literary history situates Chicano criticism where it properly belongs, as part of the history of dialectics in general and of the dialectics of difference in particular. As Joseph Sommers suggested, to the extent that the Chicano novel accurately represents in rhetorical terms the dynamics and economy of social forces, it challenges the reader to become aware of the nature of
the critical act. It is a challenge well worth accepting. (89)

While Joseph Sommers and Ramón Saldívar do not specifically analyze any of Hinojosa’s texts, their precedent-setting criticism moves beyond formalist and culturalist critical approaches and thus begins a new phase of critical investigations that actually began with Américo Paredes’ seminal critical text, *With His Pistol in His Hand* (1958). Because of the emergence of a growing body of Chicano literary texts in the 1960s and 1970s, critics of Chicano literature were placed in the difficult and often compromising position of following either formalist or culturalist critical treatments in order to legitimize their own positions as critics as well as the positions of marginalized Chicano literary texts. Without the synthesis that Sommers’s historical-dialectical approach represents between historical, political, and literary considerations, formalist and culturalist critical approaches by themselves were inadequate for analyzing Chicano literary texts. After all, Chicano literary texts were in part created to reveal and to make a difference in the cultural and literary landscape where Chicanos found themselves situated within the United States.

It was in this changing critical environment that Hinojosa’s texts were received. Thus, even as his serial project grew critics using a formalist approach could not comment upon other texts in his Series, for intertextuality was in a sense off limits to such critics. In addition, culturalist critics also failed to analyze Chicano texts intertextually. For critics of both types, Hinojosa’s texts posed additional problems because of the languages found in his texts. If critics came out of the English profession, they could not treat Hinojosa texts which were written in Spanish or which used code-switching. Similarly, critics from Spanish departments could not treat texts written in English, as these texts were
considered to be outside of their language and literary domain. Only as critics began using post-structuralist approaches did they begin to move beyond their own isolated language and literary disciplines. And while treatments of individual Hinojosa texts finally began to conduct intertextual analyses that went beyond Chicano literature to include literary texts from Latin America, Spain, and sometimes even the United States, rarely would they analyze Hinojosa’s texts as they began forming a collective serial project. The reasons for this failure will be examined in those critical texts that did begin to examine the Series as it unfolded.
Section 3

Serial Readings from The Rolando Hinojosa Reader

While there were very few early exceptions to the tendency to treat Hinojosa's serial texts individually, a special issue of Revista Chicano-Riqueña (Fall-Winter 1984) entitled The Rolando Hinojosa Reader: Essays Historical and Critical (1985), featured three essays analyzing the entire Series to date.\(^4\)

Of the three critics analyzing Hinojosa's texts as a series, Rosaura Sánchez was the most eminent, and remained the most important critic of Chicano literature prior to publication of Ramón Saldívar's Chicano Narrative: The Dialectics of Difference. Her study of the origin, development, and status of Chicano orality, Chicano Discourse (1983), uses a Marxist sociolinguistic theory to analyze Southwestern Chicano discourses, while several critical essays in The Americas Review (formerly Revista Chicano-Requeña) are based on Mikhail Bakhtin's narrative theory of heteroglossia. She later translated Rolando Hinojosa's Generaciones y semblanzas, a bilingual edition of Klail City y sus alredores (1977).

In "From Heterogeneity to Contradiction: Hinojosa's Novel," Sánchez groups the five extant Hinojosa texts--Estampas del Valle, Generaciones y Semblanzas, Korean Love Songs, Mi querido Rafa, and Rites and Witnesses. Her analysis results in the claim that the Series mixes media and genres, that “The novel's literary intertextuality is evident in the variety of stylistic forms and literary techniques which continually intersect in the novel” (78), and in the intertextual references to other literary texts.

This analysis allows Sánchez to make several unprecedented claims about Hinojosa's "novel." Most importantly, she focuses on the absence of
women's voices:

One would have to assume that the Valley is primarily a male world, with women as bed partners and not much else. Here and there the author introduces an exception, like the short monologue by Jehú's mother or Marta's declaration about her brother Balde, both in Estampas. Here and there we find an extended sketch of Viola Barragán, the enterprising widow whose life and assets are totally unrepresentative of women in the Valley. But for the most part the novel does not consider women as an important part of Valley history. (86)

She goes on to consider Hinojosa's representation of "community," arguing that he will "demystify the idyllic notion of community" (96). In spite of such demystification, however, Sánchez criticizes Hinojosa's texts for their failure to deal with the oppression of lower class working people:

If actual labor conditions are missing from these sketches, the complicity of Mexicanos in landgrabbing and murders is well documented, as are instances of Anglo paternalism. The narrator Galindo, for example, takes time to point out the individual efforts of one Tom Purdy, who singlehandedly fixed the living quarters provided to several migrant families. The "good Anglo" sketch thus takes precedence over the brutal exploitation faced by these rural laborers in the Midwest, a situation that has been well documented by Cardenas and Rubalcava and described in part by Tomás Rivera.

The economic and political subordination of Chicanos, however, becomes clear in the last two books. Although there is no discussion of low wages, poor working conditions, or work relations here either, there is a presentation of the economic control of the city by three Anglo families linked through marriage and blood ties. Intimate sketches of business and family life critically portray their political control of all elections in the County through subterfuge, coercion and economic manipulation, and their intricate manipulation of the legal system to gain access to land, business enterprises and millions of dollars without being subject to taxation by the government. (82-83)

Technically, however, Sánchez misses an aspect of the narrative series that all other critics have also missed; that is, in the last interview in Rites and Witnesses, Abei Manzano informs us that Choche Markham, a former Texas Ranger, shoots and kills Ambrosio Mora in the town of Flora. But in a preceding
text, *Klail City y sus alredores* (Generaciones y semblanzas or *Klail City*), we are informed that Belken County Deputy Sheriff Van Meers has killed Ambrosio Mora, only to be tried and acquitted of this killing three years later. In the *Klail City y sus alredores* text (as well as in the other editions and its English rendition), information is given that has Choche Markham testifying at the trial on behalf of Van Meers, but no mention is made of Markham being even remotely involved in the killing of Ambrosio Mora. The contradiction involved with the information found in this Manzano interview represents an oversight that is highly problematic for both the author and the critic, as it throws into question the credibility and reliability of Abel Manzano as a witness (interviewee), of the interviewer (P. Galindo) who acts as the implied narrator, of the author, and finally of the critics who analyze these texts.

Another technical difficulty with the reported killing of Ambrosio Mora in the extended serial narrative is the sketch where narrative information of the killing is first revealed. This sketch appears in all three versions or editions of "*Klail City,*" which includes the edition translated by Rosaura Sánchez, *Generaciones y semblanzas.* What happens in this short narrative is that Rafa encounters the father of Ambrosio Mora, don Aureliano Mora, sitting on a city park bench. This encounter takes place 22 years after the acquittal of Van Meers. The acquittal itself takes place three years after the actual killing, which occurs sometime shortly after World War II, as information reveals that Ambrosio Mora took part in the invasion of France during D-Day. Upon his return from the war and on a Palm Sunday, he is shot down by Deputy Sheriff Van Meers.

After the acquittal of Van Meers, don Aureliano Mora goes to this same city park with a crowbar and destroys a metal plaque that the Ladies' Auxiliary of the
American Legion had erected for the veterans of World War II. This plaque has the names of his two sons, Ambrosio and Amador, the latter having been killed in Okinawa during World War II. After destroying the plaque, don Aureliano Mora turns himself and his crowbar in to don Manuel Guzman, the local Mexican American peace officer. But Guzman returns the crowbar to don Aureliano and takes him home, telling him that nothing will come of the incident, as don Manuel declares that the life of a World War II veteran is worth more than a metal plaque. Again, Rafa narrates this story 22 years later, which should place this incident roughly in the mid-nineteen-sixties. If this timing is accurate, then the narration of this sketch takes place after the events occurring in Mi querido Rafa and Rites and Witnesses. As Rosaura Sánchez informs us, most of the events occurring in both Rites and Witnesses and Mi querido Rafa take place in 1960 (97). If we are to follow the chronological narrative line suggested by this sketch, then a major problem arises, as generally the time frame does not fall within the time frame that is set up within all three versions or editions of Klail City.

Another important omission that has not been mentioned by any of the criticism or in any of the interviews with the author is the fact that several stories or sketches included in the Spanish editions of Klail City y sus alredores are not included in the English rendition, Klail City. The omission of these stories as well as the rearrangement of the stories in the English rendition, Klail City, (another narrative change that has never been discussed) have never been analyzed for the impact that such narrative changes represent for the cohesion and coherence of the extended serial narrative text. It is clear that such changes and contradictions pose serious narrative problems for readers of both
language editions. The reliability of the texts (both the original Spanish versions and the English renditions) and of the author and narrators in providing a consistent frame of reference or context poses narrative problems that critics who rely on intertextuality as a basis to theorize about Hinojosa’s texts should have informed us of in their critical treatments. For Sánchez, showing the intertextuality of Hinojosa’s texts to other literary texts from Spain was apparently more important than showing the intertextuality between Hinojosa’s serial texts. Analyzing the Series, however, did not mean having to treat any of the renditions because only one (The Valley, 1983) had been published by this time.

In “The Elliptic Female Presence as Unifying Force in the Novels of Rolando Hinojosa” (1985), Maria I. Duke dos Santos and Patricia de la Fuente cover the same texts with the exception of Korean Love Songs. Their main claim is that the presence of two female characters, Viola Barragán and Olivia San Esteban, provides an “elliptical” cohesiveness throughout the entire Series. They therefore conclude that “in creating independent, dynamic female characters such as Viola Barragán and Olivia San Esteban, and by using them-particularly in the case of Viola--as elliptic characters with explicit catalytic functions within the narrative, Hinojosa achieves maximum unity and cohesion in a novelistic style which is inherently anecdotal and loosely knit” (75). This claim is of course in direct opposition to what Rosaura Sánchez claims (in “From Heterogeneity to Contradiction”) about the relative absence of women in Hinojosa’s extended “novel” and about women--Chicanas--not being “an important part of Valley history” (86).
As this disparity reveals, critics examining the roles Chicanas play in Hinojosa’s Series have thus taken radically different views. While Viola Barragán and Olivia San Esteban certainly have an important elliptical presence in some of Hinojosa texts (in Sánchez’s terms, more of an absence), for Duke dos Santos and de la Fuente, the function of these two female characters is to provide a bridge creating cohesiveness among the serial texts.

The differences between critical texts stem from the theoretical suppositions which the critics bring to their analyses, which for Sánchez are Marxist post-structuralist, and for the latter two, a feminist post-structuralist approach. Their dual analyses reveal that women’s roles in a literary text can reveal how a culture positively values and reinforces such roles, or how a literary text can “unconsciously” suppress such female roles. Such critical judgments are called into question, however, by the very fact that these works are part of an unfolding series. As the Series has evolved, Hinojosa has in fact placed women more centrally in this texts. And since Hinojosa focuses on the Korean War early on and his two main characters are in a military establishment, women are understandably “absent.” Later in the Series, with the two main characters back from the war, the presence of women becomes more important and more apparent.

By the time readers reach the text that is currently last in the Series, Becky and Her Friends (and Los amigos de Becky), they find that Olivia San Esteban has been killed in an automobile accident involving an Anglo drunk driver. While she is removed from the serial narrative text, however, she is literally replaced by Becky Escobar. In Mi querido Rafa, we find Becky mentioned even as Olivia San Esteban is introduced. In Mi querido Rafa, Olivia San Esteban is
intimately involved with Jehú Malacara, one of the two main characters in the entire Series. But in this same text Jehú is also sexually involved for a short time with two other women, both married—Sammie Jo Perkins and Becky Escobar. The involvements that Jehú has with all three women provide insight into various subplots which work to create the greater narrative progression of this particular novel, a novel that uses the epistolary form and reportage. Duke dos Santos and de la Fuente analyze these subplots in the following manner:

The action of Mi querido Rafa develops on several levels, the most important of which explores the relationships established by the main character, Jehú Malacara. These include economic ties, represented in his job at the Bank with Noddy Perkins; political ties, developed through Jehú’s observations on county politics and the campaign of Ira Escobar; and the personal ties, revealed in his intimate comments to his cousin Rafa and his growing relationship with Olivia San Esteban.

On each of these levels, Jehú is intimately involved with a woman: Sammie Jo, the frivolous daughter of Noddy Perkins, on the business level, Becky Escobar, Ira’s wife on the political level, and Olivia in his personal world. The first two, however, are merely affairs in the life of a single man, and Jehú clearly evaluates them in terms of Olivia’s presence: “la Sammie Jo...as we both know, tiene buena pierna; take my word cuando te digo que no le gana a Oli...” (p. 22). As for Becky, “she doesn’t rank among the best...¿Pero quién se queja? A one shot affair y no espero que repita aunque you never can tell” (p. 40). (“Elliptic Female Presence” 72-73)

While Jehú’s relationships with these three women may represent “merely affairs in the life of a single man,” they are of critical importance to the narrative of this particular serial text. Because Jehú Malacara is involved with all three women, he is able to understand more clearly how the intricate and deceptive political machinations of the Anglo power structure operate. And as Jehú comes to learn how Mexican Americans are used and manipulated by the Anglo power structure (represented by Noddy Perkins), readers will also gain an insight into how Valley Anglos and Mexicans stand in relation to each other
politically and economically. Jehú Malacara represents the first Chicano hero in contemporary Chicano literature because he to some extent is able to undermine the machinations of the Anglo power structure in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. But his ability to undermine the Anglo power structure very much depends on the knowledge he gains through his liaisons with Becky Escobar and Sammie Jo Perkins.

And what Jehú gains is political knowledge: First of all, Noddy Perkins (president of the bank where Jehú works) sets up Valley Mexican Americans by supporting the candidacy of a Mexican American, Ira Escobar (Becky’s husband) for Belken County commissioner, a political move that is unprecedented in the history of Anglo dominated politics. Valley Texas Anglos had previously only supported Anglos, never Mexican Americans. Supporting this candidacy is thus a very significant ploy to divert attention from the real action, which is to remove Hap Bayliss, an Anglo U.S. congressman, and replace him with another Anglo, Roger Terry (renamed Morse Terry in *Dear Rafe*), whom Noddy Perkins can also control. Bayliss had proven an embarrassment because he is discovered having an affair with the husband of Noddy Perkins’ daughter, Sammie Jo. By backing the candidacy of Ira Escobar against Roger Terry, who himself does not know the bigger picture, Noddy Perkins forces attorney Roger Terry to fund his own campaign, which would have normally been funded by the Anglo power structure headed by Noddy Perkins and the bank. Through his power at the bank, Noddy Perkins is also able to take Roger Terry’s clients away from him, further weakening Terry’s ability to fund his campaign for county commissioner. In effect, Noddy Perkins brings Roger Terry to his knees but then turns around and supports Terry’s
write-in campaign for the congressional seat vacated by Bayliss.

Because Jehú Malacara is employed at the bank, he is able to observe how Noddy Perkins manipulates Ira Escobar, Roger Terry, and Hap Bayliss. At the bank, Jehú gains further insight into Noddy’s political machinations by information gained through his friendship with Esther Lucille Bewley, Perkins’s secretary. Moreover, Jehú’s involvement with Olivia San Esteban provides his with information about how the local Mexican American community views and understands political campaigns in the Valley. Generally, the political views of Valley Texas Mexicans are so controlled by the Anglo power structure that they have only very limited and naive insight into how politics works: their attention is completely diverted from what is really at stake—placing an Anglo instead of a Mexican American in the U.S. Congress. Supporting a Texas Mexican for political office is something that the Anglo power structure simply could never allow because of their racist attitudes towards Texas Mexicans. Besides learning about Valley politics, then, Jehú gains a significant insight into how the Anglo power structure maintains its power-base in the business, agricultural, and real estate dealings of the Valley. As Jehú comes to learn, the bank acts as a funnel through which everything must flow. His position at the bank allows him to observe the Valley from a perspective that had rarely been given to a Valley Texas Mexican.

From beginning to end, Jehú’s insights are in part gained through the relationships he has with Olivia San Esteban, Becky Escobar, and Sammie Jo Perkins. But the relationship that is the most important is unquestionably the special relationship he has with Viola Barragán, the woman mainly responsible for obtaining his position at the bank. The heroic role that Jehú can play is
facilitated only through his relationships with these women. Without them, his insight into the political machinations of the white power structure would not have been possible.

Finally, it is very important to note that it is through the insight gained from these women that Jehú Malacara is able to undermine Noddy Perkins and his power structure by bravely intervening on behalf of some Valley Texas Mexicans who are involved in making important land deals. This act in part is revealed in an interview, when Rufino Fischer Gutiérrez (in Mi querido Rafa), from Dellis County, discusses the political campaign that had just occurred in Belken County:

“Cuando acá se supo que un Leguizamón iba a correr pa’ comisionado allá, los mexicanos de este condado vimos eso como maniobra pa’ agarrar más tierra. No andábamos descaminados. Aquí en Dellis County el agua corre, moja y enloda igual que la de ustedes en Belken...Sí, me parece que sería mejor empezar por allí, con la tierra y el agua” (82).

“When we first learned that a Leguizamón from Belken was gunning for a Commissioner’s post, we, the Dellis mexicanos, figured it was just one more nail in a lot-a people’s coffins. And I don’t think we were too far off, do you? As far as we’re concerned, the water we got here in Dellis County runs, wets, and muddies up just like the one you-all’ve got over in Belken...know what I mean?--I think that’s as good a place to start as any: the land and the water.” (Dear Rafe 95)

The election of Ira Escobar is thus tied to a land deal, both of which have to go through the bank. As the interview with Rufino continues, we are informed that before a particular political barbecue given for Ira Escobar, Jehú visits Enriqueta Vidaurre where he meets Rufino F. Gutiérrez. From there, they go to the barbecue together, accompanied by Olivia San Esteban and Rufino’s wife. At this point in the interview, information is given revealing that Rufino and his wife were Olivia’s godparents at her confirmation into the Catholic church. [It should
also be noted that Enriqueta Vidaurre was the grandmother of Conce Guerrero, Rafa Buenrostro’s first wife who died a year after their marriage when they were about 18 years old (Claros varones 37).]

After the barbecue, Rufino and Jehú discuss a land deal that Noddy Perkins had an interest in and which Rufino also had an interest in. The land in question was a piece of Landín land next to lands owned by the Leguizamón clan. Noddy had an interest in the land because he wanted to turn it over to the Leguizamóns to make their land holdings larger. When Rufino discovers through Jehú what Noddy’s ploy is, they refuse to sell their portion of the land, thus effectively stopping Noddy and the Leguizamóns from acquiring lands that would have enlarged their power and their land holdings. Through Jehú’s intervention on behalf of families he is related to, he undermines both the Anglo power structure and the rival Leguizamón clan.

While this land deal is very complicated, it becomes even more complicated by the omission of a word in the interview with Rufino found in Mi querido Rafa, one which is later clarified in its English rendition, Dear Rafe. In Mi querido Rafa, Rufino is quoted as stating the following:

Los Landín hicieron trato con Perkins pero por toda la tierra; entonces nosotros también compramos parte a los Landín y ésa se la vendimos, parte también, a los Peña de este lado del Río y parte a los Zúñiga, parientes de éstos—los Zúñiga, Galindo, son de los Cano del Soliseño. (83)

In Dear Rafe, we have the following English rendition of the same passage just quoted in Spanish. Again, Rufino does the talking:

The Landín family came to terms with Perkins but not for all the land; what happened was that we stepped in and bought some of that land ourselves, and then we turned around and sold some part of that to the Peñas from this side o’ the River, and part to the Zúñigas; the Zees are related to the Peñas, and all three of our families are part of the Cano
families from Soliseño, a family thing, then. (95)

The complication between the two versions of the same narrative passage lies in the fact that the passage at the beginning of the Spanish version begins by stating that “Los Landín hicieron trato con Perkins pero por toda la tierra...” (83). The last part of this passage states that the Landín family made a deal to sell [all] the land to Perkins, but this clearly could not have been the case, because if this was the case, then Rufino and his family would not have been able to buy any of the land, thus blocking Perkins’ sale of the land to the Leguizamón clan. The last part of the Spanish passage should probably read in the following manner: “pero [no] por toda la tierra....,” which is what we find in the English rendition: “The Landín family came to terms with Perkins but [not] for all the land... (95). Why the word “no” is left out of the Spanish edition can only be a matter of speculation, but it is clear that its omission from the Spanish text takes us in a different direction not suggested by the logic of the narrative.

The subversive, heroic role that Jehú takes in this land deal is further revealed by Rufino in this interview taken from Dear Rafe (only partially revealed in Mi querido Rafa):

Who really helped us was Jehu; he’d been invited to a political barbecue for that Ira Escobar guy, and Jehu decided to pay a call on Auntie Enriqueta Vidaurri before he went to the barbecue. [In Dear Rafe, the following footnote is found inserted here; however, this footnote introduces information that is not in Mi querido Rafa: “Mrs. Enriqueta Vidaurri died a month after Jehu left the Bank. She remembered him, as she should have, in her will.”] And it just happened that I had decided to call on Auntie Enriqueta myself; she was ailing some, and she’s family...Jehu and I met there, and he says for me to go to the barbecue with him, and that was it. (96-97)

Two more passages from Mi querido Rafa and Dear Rafe, respectively, are worth including from this interview with Rufino to contextualize further Jehú’s
role in this land deal:

"...Bueno, por boca de Jehú supimos que ese Escobar es Leguizamón-Leyva y allí vimos la jugada de Arnold Perkins; a base de esa información --y sin que Perkins lo supiera-- hicimos los tratos." (83)

"Jehú obró bien con Perkins: conoce algo de tierra, conoce el valor y sabe qué le conviene al banco y qué no. Lo que nos dijo de la parentela de Escobar quizá no se vea bien pero esto es asunto de familia y para mí que Jehú lo vio así. (83)

Where was I? Oh, yeh; Jehu himself told us that that Escobar guy is a Leguizamón-Leyva, and it all became clear as glass, yessir. Arnold Perkins, the land deal, that young fool running for commissioner, everything. So, using that information, then, we got on our horses to work out our own deal. (96)

...Jehu worked well with Perkins; he knows the land, how much it's worth, and he knows what's good for the Bank and what's not. Now, what he told me of the Escobar-Leguizamón-Leyva plans for that land may look bad to some folk, but Jehu is family, and he was giving us a fair shake, that's all. (96)

Again, Jehú's insights into the political and economic dealings of the Anglo power structure and its manipulation of Valley Texas Mexicans could not have happened had he not been employed at the bank. And he would not have been employed at the bank without Viola Barragán's intervention. But while Jehú's position at the bank is in part obtained because of a favor gained through Barragán's intervention, Perkins's original motive for hiring Jehú is not altogether altruistic. What Perkins originally wanted was for Jehú to run for county commissioner, as Perkins eventually gets Ira Escobar to do. Jehú wisely refuses, since he, unlike Ira Escobar, is too wary of Perkins' motives to play into his hands. And while Jehú refuses to run for political office, he nevertheless remains at the bank and becomes its best loan officer, thus placing himself in the position of helping Valley Texas Mexicans like Viola Barragán. Her position as a business entrepreneur is solidified all the more because of Jehú's position
at the bank.

Thus, my reading of the Series suggests that María I. Duke dos Santos and Patricia de la Fuente rightfully pay particular attention to the presence of a “mujer bravía y de mucho ovario” (Mi querido Rafa 27)—Viola Barragán—in Hinojosa’s texts. For them, this character is established “within the context of Hinojosa’s novels...as a precursor of the contemporary Hispanic woman” (67). As this type of precursor, the authors further claim that Viola foreshadows the character of Olivia San Esteban. In addition, these two characters are important because “The image that they both project is that of self-confident women [Chicanas] who know where they are coming from and who use their accumulated experience to recognize their personal goals. Both have overcome traditional sexist restrictions to enter a challenging, once forbidden world” (74-75).

In spite of their appreciation for women’s roles in the Series, however, the critics consistently fail to give Becky Escobar credit for resisting the traditional role of being the silent and dutiful wife when she has an affair with Jehú. One reason for this failure is that Becky, while being of Mexican descent, is completely Anglicized and is not as sympathetic a Chicana character as she might otherwise have been. Thus the attention that could have been given to Becky is diverted away by other cultural codes, which lead readers to focus on her ethnicity rather than on her gender. In this same respect, Esther Lucille Bewley, a Valley Texas Anglo, also steps out of her restrictive traditional role when she admits to liking and protecting Jehú at the bank. Clearly, she is not supposed to have affections for Texas Mexicans, even though she has more in common with them than with most Texas Anglos because of her lower class
background.

The role Enriqueta Vidaurre plays is also an important one, as there is little doubt that she may have been the one to have arranged the meeting between Jehú and Rufino Fischer Gutiérrez when they successfully stop Noddy Perkins and the Leguizamón family from making a land deal that would have given them more power. Her role as mediator is also traditionally uncharacteristic of Texas Mexican women. Nevertheless, Enriqueta Vidaurre’s role in this land deal is truly elliptical, just as Viola Barragán’s role is elliptical, and this is signaled all the more in Dear Rafe (as opposed to Mi querido Rafa), when it is learned that she remembered Jehú in her will. This inheritance clearly signals her appreciation to Jehú for protecting their families.

The critics further state that “Besides being a linking force connecting many of the characters and incidents in these novels, Viola plays a significant role in the general perspective of Belken County because she affects many of its inhabitants with her forceful personality, her wealth, and her good-natured desire to help others” (74). Again, this statement stands in direct opposition to Sánchez’s position that Viola Barragán represents an “enterprising widow whose life and assets are totally unrepresentative of women in the Valley” (86).

This opposition notwithstanding, the claim Duke dos Santos and de la Fuente make about a “linking force” operating through the elliptical presence of Viola Barragán and Olivia San Esteban is similar to claims made by Charles Tatum in reviews of Hinojosa’s texts. Nevertheless, these critics all fail to take account of even more important linking forces, namely the interrelationships between the characters and the land, and the languages they use to identify with each other. These are all important rhetorical devices that create
cohesiveness among Hinojosa’s serial texts. It is clear that such devices operate through centripetal cultural codes that prevent the fragmented serial narrative from centrifugally falling apart at the seams.

For instance, in the following epigraph (one of five) to Claros varones de Belken (Fair Gentlemen of Belken County), cultural codes serve to enable and constrain the text so that readers can arrive at a given ideology and thematic interpretation:

La tierra, en parte, se la quitaron a los viejos; en parte, nosotros mismos también la perdimos y otros más hasta la vendieron. Eso ya pasó...y, como quiera que sea, la tierra ni se muere ni se va a ningún lado. A ver si mis hijos o los de ellos, cuando los tengan...a ver si ellos la mantienen o si recobran parte de ella.

Si también nos quitan o si perdemos o vendemos el idioma, entonces no habrá remisión. El día que muera el español, esto dejará de ser el Valle.

Jesús Buenrostro
1887-1946.

The land, in part, was taken away from the old people; in part, we ourselves also lost it and others sold it. That’s all in the past...and, anyway, the land neither dies nor goes off anywhere. Let’s see if my children or theirs, when they have them...let’s see if they keep it or recover some of it.

If they also take away or if we lose or sell our language, then there will be no remission. The day Spanish dies, this will no longer be the Valley.

Jesús Buenrostro
1887-1946 (Claros varones 10-11)

The epigraph’s form of a recto-verso bilingual English-Spanish text reveals a strong correlation between the land and the Spanish language, both of which act as cultural codes to inform readers of the visible and invisible forces that have come to shape the textual struggle to maintain the autonomy of Texas Mexican culture. Through the use of both the land and the Spanish language, readers learn that the land in the Valley has had a history of struggle, that it has
been taken away, sold, or lost to the descendants of the original Spanish Mexican settlers. What has not been taken away, sold, or lost, however, is the Spanish language, though as Jesús Buenrostro warns, if the language is taken away, lost, or sold, then the land known as the Valley will lose its identity. Known through the language (Spanish) of its people, the identity of the land through the language is so inextricably intertwined that separating them would inevitably mean the permanent loss of both. The land and the Spanish language thus come to represent specific and significant codes through which the reader can interpret the formation of the ideological themes of the text. However, the recto-verso English-Spanish text ironically uses English to convey the “same” meaning as the Spanish text. This move to include English as a medium indicates a necessary compromise that has resulted from the cultural and historical struggle between both languages and peoples.

Still a third cultural code is introduced in the epigraph: the code of the family and the particular interrelationships formed by it. As Hinojosa states in the “Dedication” to his English rendition of Klail City y sus alrededores, Klail City, “A person who has no place to call home, who has no friends or relatives can still do many things on earth. Many things. But, he can’t be a writer; not for long, at any rate” (Klail City 3). In this dedicatory statement we can discern Hinojosa’s emphasis on the land and family, and on how these two elements work to inscribe his identity as a writer. Families are thus identified by the land they own and the language(s) they speak. While the voice that Jesús Buenrostro uses in the epigraph speaks to us in Spanish, it is also provided through an English translation, once again showing this author’s unique rhetorical and textual maneuver to convey the same story through different
language mediums. The person quoted, Jesús Buenrostro, is ironically known as “El quieto” (the silent one), and as is revealed later, he is the father of one of the two main characters in the entire Series, Rafa (Rafe) Buenrostro. While Jesús Buenrostro will make several appearances in the early works of the Series, he will come to be murdered (and thus permanently silenced) in his sleep and on his land by assassins hired by a member of a rivaling Mexican American family, the Leguizamón clan. But through his son Rafa, information about him will continue to surface in a manner that reinforces his family and its relationship to the land.

The rivalry between the Buenrostro and Leguizamón families is based on their competing interests over their ownership and control of the land, and El quieto’s murder clearly reflects this family rivalry over the land. But later, El quieto’s murder is avenged by his brother, Julian, and later on in the serial narrative, El quieto’s son, Rafa (Rafe) and Rafa’s cousin, Jehú (the other main character in the Series), take a significant part in recovering some of the land that had previously been taken away, sold, or lost to Texas Anglos and to the rivaling Leguizamón clan. The violent and murderous exchange of killings between these two rivaling families forms a significant part of the drama in the entire Klail City Death Trip Series, which is always centered on the ownership and control of land. Through the various language and cultural codes, readers should be able to determine the land’s ownership by families representing different competing ideological stances in all of Hinojosa’s texts.

The epigraph also suggests that El quieto knows the history of the land and its language. As a descendant of the original Spanish Mexican settlers, he has had access to the land’s history and has witnessed and understood the
losing, selling, and dispossession of Texas Mexican lands in the Valley during his (fictional) lifetime. Because both the land and the language(s) lend coherence throughout and within the entire Series, these codes serve to signal the ideological place that specific Texas Mexican family members can have within the struggle to gain control of the land. From these codes, the theme of the entire Series can be interpreted as being about the Texas Mexican struggle to recuperate both their land and language through actions taken by particular family members. The theme of "recuperation" (of the land and language through families) in the Series also acts as a master cultural, thematic, and schematic code for referring to the actual historical reality of the Lower Rio Grande Valley, where most of the narrative action takes place. Without question, Valley historical texts serve as a source from which readers can gain a deeper understanding of Hinojosa’s texts. But the enhanced historical understanding that is gained must always be seen as being reciprocal, because historical texts will also always be informed by cultural codes operating within Hinojosa’s (or other) literary texts.

The history and nature of the dispossession of Texas Mexican lands in the Valley that occurred during the early part of the twentieth century has recently been extensively documented by David Montejano in Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986:

A great transformation [in the Lower Rio Grande Valley] began, however, with the introduction of commercial agriculture in the early 1900s. The transformation was not the result of some logic or imperative intrinsic to commercial farming, for Mexican rancheros and some Anglo old-timers proved themselves capable of shifting from livestock to farming while maintaining intact the character of the local order. It was the introduction not of farming but of ready-made farm communities, transplanted societies from the Midwest and the North, that produced the sweeping, dramatic changes in the region. In the midst of a ranch society based on paternalistic work arrangements, there emerged and grew a farm society
based on contract wage labor and business rationality. Everything that held the ranch society together—shared interests, shared world views, conceptions of what was proper and just, rules concerning the use of force, in short, the substance of culture—was pulled apart. This particular experience reflected the effects of what Eric Wolf calls “North Atlantic capitalism,” which everywhere destroyed “unproductive” societies, broke apart old communal ties, and replaced them with new material and social structures, with new social relations, new solidarities, and new metaphors.

In the context of the Texas border, this transformation assumed a sharp racial character with generally tragic consequences for both Mexican and Anglo. It undermined the accommodative “peace structure,” which for two generations had contained the sentiments and politics of race antagonism. Thus, this conflict represented much more than just a rancher-farmer confrontation. It was a conflict between two distinct societies; it was, in the portrayal given by Jovita González in 1930, a “struggle between the New World and the Old” that at the same time was a “race struggle.” (104)

With the introduction of the “ready-made farm communities,” the Valley’s social relations, political alliances, and metaphors were dramatically transformed, signaling a violent rupture of such wide-sweeping proportions that Hinojosa’s serial literary project must be seen as representing a rhetorical attempt to record and mend this rupture in the Valley’s culture. This catastrophic cultural transformation thus forms a significant part of the historical basis for what Jesús Buenrostro refers to in the epigraph above. El quieto’s murder in large part results from the chaos caused mainly by this historic and economic transformation, and this event, more than any other, is what threatens the stability and integrity of Texas Mexican cultural codes.

Historically, other events in the 19th century, including the Texas War of Independence culminating in 1836 with battles at the Alamo (San Antonio) and at San Jacinto (near Houston), and the Mexican American War that began in the Valley (Brownsville) and ended in 1848, laid the political foundation for what would happen in the early 20th century. In the Series (Claro varones), Hinojosa uses an elder character, Esteban Echevarría, to describe the effects of
the transformation that Montejano has documented:

Houses without porches, streets without lamp lights, friends who’ve died away and the youngsters who no longer speak Spanish, who can’t even say, “¿Cómo está?” Hah! The Valley’s no longer, no longer the Valley, folks. The Anglos and their landed property, their banks, their legal contracts. Sure. People who know nothing of the legally binding handshake. Pharmacists with degrees but who don’t even know who’s who. Ranchers who don’t ranch; and shysters wearing ties. What’s the use of reaching eighty-three if everything’s gone up in smoke? Vilches. Dead. The Tueros? They’re dead, too! The Buenrostros are almost gone and the founding families are drying up like leaves on a dying mesquite. By fraud, Rafe, the Valley was lost by fraud, with its good land now just about fenced in with barbed wire; the fields full of houses built by landlords who live among us without knowing who we are. Where are those truckers who used to take people North? “Lollipop?” Leocadio Gavira? “Old Nickel?” Dead, or old and crippled, which is the same thing. What about the marketplace on San Antonio’s Commerce Street? Has it been torn down? And Houston’s open-air market? Dead. Time, too, dead and gone; dead and forgotten. I’m not afraid of death, but I admit I’m not worth it, Rafe. Let them throw me in the big canal! Now! Right now. Heh! And to think that in my day we knew more things than they do today with their radios and their telephones and the movies. Sure. Bad times, too; bad times with the rangers; *upholding the law!* Ha! And the big landholders who brought the rangers in. And the droughts; the pure hell of life. But! But those were my times, my people, my Valley. Yeah. Before there was such a thing as a Belkens County or a Klaw City and the rest of it, there were people, Rafe, people. Fields and small towns and that Río Grande, which was for drinking, not for keeping those on one side away from the others on the other side. No, that came later: with the Anglos and their civil engineers and all those papers in English. Heh! No, I can’t deny it; no point in that. There were wholesale sellouts among our people. Our own people shafted some of our own—for free—just for the fun of it, it seemed like. Bootlickers! Bloodsucking coyotes! What a plague. But the sun rose and the sun set and everybody knew what they were doing. A shameless lot. Cheats, all. Honor? None. Guts? Even less. Virtue? Unknown. Fashioners of sleazy deals. And then, hah, some of our people sold out at election time and kissed up for a serving of barbecue and a couple of beers...Heh! A few, but they were there. Sure they were. The majority, though, wore straw hats laden with sweat of their own brows... People...overworked and taken in for a long time and by everyone...disbelieving yet full of hope: unread and yet with culture deep in their fingernails; Valley people who tilled the land but then lost it little by little; people who, finally, moved up North, never to return. Deserted
neighborhoods and, who knows, maybe that was a blessing after all. Friends and the *patrones* underground, and I, on my way. But I remember, Rafe. Meat hung out to dry on the wire clothes line and goats slaughtered in our backyards, trees loaded with figs, and honey from bees that drank the nectar from the orange blossoms. Sounds from animals that one no longer sees or hears. Dances open to the public and, now, I hear you even have to pay to get in, can you imagine, Rafe? And what about our palm trees? Palm trees that grew as God wanted them to until the Anglos came with those axes o’ theirs and then cut them down as if they were nothing. Incredible. Now, they’re the ones who sell palm trees for planting! Isn’t that great? Who can understand these people? Selling palm trees for planting. Ha! It was they who cut them down. Palm trees that would bend but not break, palm trees that lost their fronds and then would grow new ones until the axes came. And the wars, Rafe. Those in the Valley, your brother’s overseas, and your own, Rafe, and those other wars of theirs in which they always involve us. And this Valley...who can remember it now? I’m a Valley man, I have that honor, as the old song says. And now? Nothing. I’m leaving, Rafe, but you? You’re a young man who lives among the old who live with their old memories. (*Claros varones* 206-208)

This intricate and detailed historical and political knowledge pervades Hinojosa’s serial project, and reflects his understanding of the Valley’s history. In José David Saldívar’s “Rolando Hinojosa’s *Klail City Death Trip*: A Critical Introduction,” an understanding of Hinojosa’s life is provided in a historical overview of his professional career and literary texts. In this 1984 text, Saldívar analyzes additional texts to those available to Rosaura Sánchez or Duke dos Santos and de la Fuente: *Partners in Crime: A Rafe Buenrostro Mystery* and *The Valley*. Nevertheless, in his most recently published volume of criticism, *The Dialectics of Our America: Genealogy, Cultural Critique, and Literary History* (1991), he reproduces much of what we find in his “Critical Introduction,” and expands his analysis to include *Claros varones de Belken/Fair Gentlemen of Belken County* and *Klail City: A Novel*. The analysis of *Claros varones de Belken* found in this recent critical text was earlier reproduced in another critical text he published in 1990—“The Limits of Cultural Studies.” In order to present
the most comprehensive analysis of the Series by J.D. Saldívar, this study shall refer to the critical text that provides the best information, whether it is found in his earlier critical texts or in his most recent critical text, The Dialectics of Our America. And from this most recent critical text, reference shall specifically be made to his chapter, "Chicano Border Narratives as Cultural Critique," where his analysis of Rolando Hinojosa's Series is found.

In his "Critical Introduction," J.D. Saldívar begins with the following statement about Rolando Hinojosa:

No Chicano writer has been more visibly engaged in the cultural activities of Texas, the Southwest, and Our America—to use José Marti's phrase—than Rolando Hinojosa. He has remained actively committed to the literary development of American ethnopoetics during the past fifteen years, thus becoming in the eyes of many the foremost exponent of Chicano literature. Indeed, Hinojosa's novel, Klail City Death Trip, is a sensitive and skillful literary metahistory of the Río Grande Valley, one of the more important dialogical productions of narrative in the Southwest today. It can be safely said that for the general public Rolando Hinojosa represents more an artistic role than an ideological role. But he is, I believe, an important sociopoetic American writer, "looking at the society in general and making telling comments about it as times and the society change in Belken." (44)

In light of this grand introduction, J.D. Saldívar provides a broad biographical sketch of Hinojosa's academic and literary career, showing some of his most significant achievements and how these coincide with his career as a writer. Saldívar further claims that his analysis is only "a précis of Hinojosa's fictional design; my introductory essay does not pretend to be exhaustive, for a 'total' reading of Klail City Death Trip would necessarily involve at least three concentric frameworks corresponding to distinct moments in the interpretive process..." (48):

...1) political history—KCDT is made of events, of which one is the appearance of the individual work; 2) society—KCDT is characterized by class conflict, and the critic here must catalog the "ideologemes" of our
essentially antagonistic collective discourses of social classes; and 3) 
KCDT is to be defined on a material basis, that is to say, as a mode of production. The textual production of KCDT is manifested as the ideology of form.

As it stands, Klail City Death Trip is both integrated and disintegrated. Each narrative participates in composing an integrative work at the same time it works out its own individual detachment from it. (48)

J.D. Saldívar's "précis" continues by discussing Hinojosa's literary texts, one by one, and like previous critics, he also succeeds in making a few curious textual errors that should be mentioned here. On the last page of his "Critical Introduction," the following statement is made: "Rafa Buenrostro, Esteban Echevarría, Jehú Malacara, Albert and Sammy Jo Perkins, Choche Markham, Polín Tapia, Lisandro Gómez Solís, Irene Parra--these are figures whose histories of personal, collective, and social destiny prove unforgettable" (60). In his more recent critical text, a very similar statement is made at the end of his critical treatment of Hinojosa's literary texts: "Rafe Buenrostro, Esteban Echevarría, Jehú Malacara, Choche Markham, Sammy Jo Perkins, Irene Paredes--these are figures whose histories of collective and social destiny prove unforgettable" (82).

Clearly, there are some important differences between both statements that, like the critical texts in which they are found, are almost identical. The first textual error, found in the passage from the first critical text, is in giving Noddy Perkins a new first name--Albert--which is obviously incorrect, as Noddy's first name is actually Arnold, from which he gains the nickname of Noddy. In the passage from the second critical text, Noddy's name is curiously left out. The passage from the first critical text also includes the name of Irene Parra, who quite literally is nonexistent in the Series. The passage from the second critical text correctly provides the name of the character in question, Irene Paredes, not
Irene Parra. Given what is known of the literary texts and what is found in both statements from these critical texts, readers have to wonder at the irony of the statement in which these textual errors are found, that these characters are “unforgettable.”

Another textual error in both critical texts appears in almost identical statements: “Both Texas Anglos and Texas Mexicans are asked by Galindo what they think of Jehú Malacara’s sudden departure from Klail City, for one, it is assumed, does not simply walk away from an important banking job in South Texas in the 1950s” (“Critical Introduction” 57). In the latter critical text, we find the following: “Both Texas-Anglos and Chicanos are asked what they think of Jehú’s mysterious and sudden departure, for one, it is assumed, does not simply walk away from an important banking job in a segregated society in the 1950s” (Dialectics of Our America 79). These two passages, reveal that the critic did indeed revise the second passage, but failed to note that Jehú’s departure from the bank occurs in the 1960s, not in the 1950s, as Saldívar’s passages indicate. But as has been previously indicated in Partners in Crime, Jehú had quit the bank ten years prior to the events occurring in this particular text (see Partners 156). Saldívar himself cites the date when the events, a “matanza,” in Partners occurred—October 1972 (“Critical Introduction” 58).

The last textual error to be cited has to do with the character of Esteban Echevarría. The passages in question are, again, almost identical and come first from “The Limits of Cultural Studies” (259) and then from The Dialectics of Our America (76). The passage from the former critical text shall be quoted, as it is the more extensive of the two: “What Hinojosa thematizes in his chronicle are the oppositions Echevarría expresses in his childhood memory of the
seditionists’ ride through Klail City: Mexicans versus Anglo-Americans, seditionists versus Texas Rangers, and newcomers versus old-timers” (76). Here, Saldívar describes the seditionists’ ride as originating from a childhood memory of Esteban Echevarría, but this description is problematic because it implies that the seditionists rode through Klail City when Echevarría was a child, which clearly was not so.

In *Dear Rafe*, Jehú informs Rafe (and the reader) that Noddy Perkins’s parents “showed up in the Valley just before the times of the Seditious Ones; that puts it around 1915 or so” (19). The rides of seditious Valley Texas Mexicans in 1915 did indeed occur, as has been documented by various Texas historians (see Montejano, pp. 117-125). So if Saldívar’s description is correct, then this would have to mean that Echevarría was a child during this time. But Echevarría could hardly have been a child in 1915, because in an interview found in *Rites and Witnesses*, Abel Manzano says, “I was born in Eight-two, and I think [Esteban] Echevarría was born in Eighteen Seventy-two or thereabouts; it was just a few years after the Americans fought between themselves; in their own war” (109). If Echevarría was born in 1872 “or thereabouts,” then in 1915 he would have easily been in his forties--and hardly a child. His age is corroborated in another passage from *Claros varones*, which again places his age at about 83:

Echevarría se sienta por fin. La camisa color khaki y almidonada, abrochada en puño y cuello, le queda bien gracias a las manos hábiles de Lucía Monroy a quien, a pesar de sus sesenta y pico de años, Esteban aun llama ‘muchacha,’ ‘ahijada,’ ‘sobrina,’ y otras cosas por estilo; Esteban contaba con veintitrés años cuando nació Lucía y, más tarde, sucesivamente, fue su padrino de bautizo, de confirmación, y de casamiento. Lucía es vieja, sí, pero no le llega a la rodilla a Echevarría. (129)

[Echevarría sits down. His shirt, khaki-colored and starched, buttoned-
up at the wrists and collar, fits him well thanks to the deft hands of Lucía Monroy, who, in spite of her sixty-plus years, Esteban still calls “girl,” “godchild,” “niece” and other names along the same lines; Esteban was twenty-three years old when Lucía was born and later, successively, he was her godfather for baptism, confirmation, and matrimony. Lucía is old, of course, but this is relative. (128)]

Saldívar’s statement about a childhood memory is governed by a quotation also originating from Claros varones de Belken, which he introduces in both critical texts: “Esteban Echevarría told me [Rafa] that when he was still young, the Seditionists rode down Klail’s main street; they rode in after dark and camped out at the part that divides Anglo Town from Mexican Town” (34). Since Echevarría lived to be about 83 years old, this statement about being young when “the Seditionists rode down Klail’s main street” is accurate in a sense if the person in question lives to be very old. Echevarría himself in Claros varones is quoted as saying that he is 83 years old shortly before his death: “What’s the use of reaching eighty-three if everything’s gone up in smoke” (206)? And Rafe will reveal that Echevarría made this statement on “a Wednesday and he only had a few days left in his world, the Río Grande Valley in his beloved and reviled Belken County” (208). Since Hinojosa on more than one occasion reveals Echevarría’s age, this places Echevarría’s death at around 1955, “or thereabouts.” Echevarría’s statements throughout the Series always carry great weight, and the historical event, the seditionists’ ride through Klail that he describes to Rafe, is fundamental to Rafe and Jehú’s understanding of the Valley’s past. His statement about the seditionists carries even more weight because it is given from the memory of a mature adult and not from a child, as Saldívar would have his readers believe.
In these same two critical texts, Saldívar makes another assertion about Hinojosa scholars that is questionable. In *The Dialectics of Our America*, he states that “As Hinojosa scholars such as Rosaura Sánchez, Yolanda Broyles, and Héctor Calderón have suggested, Hinojosa subverts the lofty tradition of the Spanish chronicle by focusing not on the power holders in south Texas, but on the powerless, not on the colonizers, but on the colonized men of Belken County” (74). This statement is problematic because Rosaura Sánchez, for one, has stated in “From Heterogeneity to Contradiction: Hinojosa’s Novel” that “The ‘good Anglo’ sketch thus takes precedence over the brutal exploitation faced by these rural laborers in the Midwest, a situation that has been well documented by Cardenas and Rubalcava” (83). She further states that

Although there is no discussion of low wages, poor working conditions, or work relations here either, there is a presentation of the economic control of the city by three Anglo families linked through marriage and blood ties. Intimate sketches of business and family life critically portray their political control of all elections in the County through subterfuge, coercion and economic manipulation, and their intricate manipulation of the legal system to gain access to land, business enterprises and millions of dollars without being subject to taxation by the government. (83)

Not only are statements like these directly contradictory to Saldívar’s claim about Hinojosa scholars, but at least half of one Hinojosa text, *Rites and Witnesses*, as well as most of *Dear Rafe* focus entirely on the power holders and colonizers—The Klai-Blanchard-Cooke Ranch. And historically, the main Valley Texas Mexican characters in Hinojosa’s Series, like Jesús Buenrostro, Esteban Echevarría, and Rufino Fischer Gutiérrez, are themselves power holders and direct descendants of the original Spanish Mexican colonizers of the Río Grande Valley. It should be remembered that the original Native American inhabitants of the Lower Río Grande River Delta (the Valley) have all
but disappeared, as they were completely assimilated or annihilated by the original Spanish Mexican colonizers. Martín Salinas documents the previous existence of the indigenous Native American population in the Valley in his recent work, *Indians of the Rio Grande Delta: Their Role in the History of Southern Texas and Northeastern Mexico.* Moreover, the opposition that exists between what Saldívar and Sánchez state about Hinojosa’s texts is an especially interesting one because the essay where Sánchez makes her claims appears in *The Rolando Hinojosa Reader*, a volume of critical texts that was edited by Saldívar.
Section 4

Other Recent Readings of the Series

In a recently published volume of Chicano criticism, Chicano Satire: A Study in Literary Culture (1991), Guillermo Hernández analyzes the Klail City Death Trip Series, stating that the Series "encompasses seven published volumes to date (85): Estampas, Klail City y sus alredores, Korean Love Songs, Claros varones de Belken, Mi querido Rafa, Rites and Witnesses, and Partners in Crime. Noting that Becky and Her Friends "arrived too late to incorporate it in this discussion of Hinojosa's work," (127) he cites the date of publication as 1989, when the novel was in fact published in 1990, followed by Hinojosa's Spanish rendition, Los amigos de Becky.

In an endnote (#4), Hernández states that "For my present purposes, I quote from the Spanish original editions; the English translations are my own. I have refrained from using Hinojosa's translations because he frequently introduces emendations in the English renditions of his work; these changes made by the author on his texts and translations merit study" (127). This critic's maneuver of translating from the "original" Spanish editions and not using Hinojosa's own renditions is problematic for several reasons, which he himself acknowledges by stating that the author's textual changes or "emendations" merit study. The texts meriting study which had been published by 1989 are The Valley (1983), Klail City (1987), and Dear Rafe (1985), renditions for Estampas del valle..., Klail City y sus alredores, and Mi querido Rafa, respectively. Hinojosa's renditions, which Hernández alludes to but does not cite or discuss, certainly do have emendations that often add, delete, or rearrange narrative information that should ideally help English-only readers
better understand Hinojosa’s serial project.

Along these lines, Don Graham notes that “By the time Hinojosa finishes the Klail City project, he will have simultaneously told us more in fiction about the Valley than any previous author and will have provided more bibliographical conundrums than a half-dozen more conventional writers” (TEXAS 33-134). The bibliographical conundrums that Graham refers to are but the tip of Hinojosa’s literary iceberg, as these conundrums have often caused problems in the long serial project that critics like Hernández often sidestep in order to avoid dealing with the renditions at all. Unraveling these bibliographical conundrums is nevertheless necessary if one is to follow the continuing narrative line of the series, particularly in regard to the two main protagonists, Jehú Malacara and Rafa Buenrostro.

By the logic of Hernández’s own choice of the texts, he would have been forced to rely on Hinojosa’s English rendition of Becky y sus amigos, which was published after the English edition of this same text--Becky and Her Friends. However, it should be noted that Hinojosa actually wrote the Spanish edition first, even though it was published after the English edition (1990), which is to suggest, that in the case of Becky and Her Friends, the original edition is an English rendition and not a Spanish text. Moreover, since Hernández’s analysis relies on numerous quotations from Claros varones de Belken, his own translations of the Spanish text will often be better than Julia Cruz’s English (literal) translation of this text, as it should be remembered that the English rendition of this text was not Hinojosa’s own translation (rendition). But because Hernández chooses to avoid analyzing Hinojosa’s English renditions, his translations of the Spanish texts can stand in opposition to Hinojosa’s
English renditions.

In *Chicano Satire*, Hernández shows Chicano satire rhetorically incorporating elements of the community’s oral discourse: “In the monumental *Klax City Death Trip Series*, two protagonists and hundreds of characters, through satiric discourse, re-create literally the cultural existence of an entire people” (111). But what his analysis fails to address is the degree to which the “original” Spanish editions and the English renditions (or vice-versa) provide problems that take away from as well as resolutions that contribute towards creating cohesiveness between Hinojosa’s serial texts. If the satire is to work, satiric Chicano discourse must be rooted in conventions of language that are tied to (Anglo and Chicano) social conventions that people must understand, “conventions” that coincide with the cultural codes affected by centripetal and centrifugal forces. Hernández at one point addresses these conventions when he describes Ira Escobar’s behavior at a political barbecue given for him:

Escobar’s transgressions of rural Chicano conventions reveal him as a comic figure of foolish proportions. He thus eats tripe tacos while drinking a soda pop (and holding a napkin!) rather than the accustomed beer, indicating his concern to be “moderate” and “clean,” hardly necessary in an informal situation and with food not associated with genteel manners. Furthermore, his failed joke reveals linguistic incompetence and dullness. That he opts to repeat the (old) joke in English exposes his firm intent to participate in the ongoing discourse without realizing that he has breached the Chicano cultural homogeneity at an ethnically mixed gathering. His success in provoking the laughter of the Anglo guests informs Ira’s position as a marginal figure whose faux pas is rebuked immediately by verbal assaults on the part of other Chicanos. But it is Jehú’s interpretation that prevails in the comic portrayal of Ira’s behavior. That is, Ira is depicted as a Chicano who ignores some fundamental conventions of his people, and his failure to participate as an equal in a Chicano ritual renders him as a clumsy peer. Implicit in this condemnation is the awareness of Ira’s self-perception as urbane and sophisticated—in this context an offensive normative principle involving class, race, and ethnicity—a notion that renders his figure an appropriate target for satirical attack. (106)
The passage analyzed here comes from letter eight of *Mi querido Rafa* and is translated by Hernández in the following abbreviated manner:

Allí estaba Ira con un RC Cola en una mano y taco de tripas y servilleta en la otra. Contó un chiste muy viejo y luego lo contó de nuevo, esta vez en inglés y salió mejor: esta vez se rieron unos bolillos.... Como el pobre de Ira carece de sense de humor, luego luego Santana y Segundo de la Cruz se le echaron encima, le tronaron tres o cuatro en un minuto y la risotada se oyó hasta el otro lado del Río. *(MQR 24)* *(Chicano Satire 105)*

[There was Ira with an RC Cola in one hand and a tripe taco and a napkin in the other. He told an old joke, and then he told it again, in English; this time it came out better: a few Anglos laughed.... Since poor Ira lacks a sense of humor, immediately Santana and Segundo Cruz got on his case; they pulled about three or four gags in one minute, and the laughter could be heard all the way to the other side of the Rio Grande.]* (106)

But Rolando Hinojosa's rendition of this same scene, contains the following "emendations":

Talk was about this & that, and old political stories, and there was Ira holding on to an RC Cola with one hand and a beefed-up tortilla on the other. He then told a joke (first in Spn. and then in Eng.) and there was polite laughter here and there. The company was a bit fast for IE, and this leads me to ask: where was he raised? Doesn't he have a sense of humor? He really isn't a bad guy, you know, but what G. Stein once said about Oakland is what you'd say about Ira.

What with the noise and the music and the beer, it wasn't long before some relatives from across the Rio came over and joined the party. Segundo de la Cruz was among the first to arrive and also among the first to ask about you. (He asked what the party was all about and who 'the nervous chubby guy' was. Segu said he hadn't heard of Ira before the primaries; talk about your low profiles.) (30)

As these three versions reveal, the reader's understanding of Ira Escobar's character varies from text to text. Hinojosa's emendations on the one hand have not dramatically changed the reader's view of the action in this scene, as the scene's narrative action remains fundamentally the same as the one found in the Spanish edition. But, on the other hand, the intertextual features that are
introduced, particularly Gertrude Stein's reference to Oakland, give English-
only readers a different understanding of Ira's lack of depth, as with him, as with
Gertrude Stein's Oakland, there is "no there there." And for reasons that are not
clear, Hernández's translation has also changed Segundo de la Cruz's
surname to Segundo Cruz.

Between the two versions of the same narrative text, then, one must
evaluate how English-only readers will understand "Escobar's transgressions of
rural Chicano conventions" that work towards revealing "him as a comic figure
of foolish proportions." From the original Spanish-English edition, Mi querido Rafa, the rural Chicano conventions are changed in Dear Rafe [but not in
Hernández's translation] to conventions that resonate between different literary
texts (Hinojosa's and Gertrude Stein's). Finally, it should be noted that when
Hernández analyzed Hinojosa's serial project, Dear Rafe was already in print,
so his maneuver to avoid examining Hinojosa's renditions has left him without
an opportunity of examining the many emendations that exist between the
different versions of the same serial texts.

Hernández's problematic translations notwithstanding, his analysis
establishes several important points that add to our understanding of the
Series. First, Hernández argues that, among the serial texts that he has chosen
for his analysis, coherence is maintained "according to community standards":

In spite of a seemingly fragmentary narrative, the KCDTS maintains an
internal coherence, and the traditional world re-created suggests that its
tales are part of a larger, inexhaustible repertoire of narrative
interrelationships. That is, as in oral life, events and characters may be
amplified or minimized by the narrator, and each episode is an expression
of a set of shared meanings that determine the significance of the
individual tales. This social coherence provides oral raconteurs with an
endless source of material on which they can draw to suit their narrative
purposes. Thus, theoretically, the totality of a community's events, told by
all of its storytellers, forms an interdependent oral narrative web. The
The listener is required to focus on the characters in the narrative from the perspective of the community's standards rather than—as is customary in the modern novelistic tradition—centering on an individual's private experience that is to be measured according to normative values shared between author and reader. This collective sense helps explain the relative homogeneous nature of traditional cultures; since normative values are continuously encountered, internalized, and expressed, the individual is forced to measure all acts and motivations according to community standards. (90-91)

The community standards, however, are more cohesively effective and better understood in the Series if the Spanish editions are read alongside their English renditions.

The interdependent oral narrative web is further expanded by Hernández to include a valuable intertextual analysis between the names of the two main characters and the Bible:

The respective cognomens of the two central characters in the KCDTS, Jehú Malacara and Rafa Buenrostro (bad face and good countenance) are an indication of a polarity, reflected in their respective attitudes toward life. Jehú is an extrovert who is resourceful, ironic, and controversial, while Rafa, an introvert, has a balanced, endearing, and gracious personality. Jehú's name suggests his biblical counterpart, the combative elected king of Israel. The many biblical allusions and quotations throughout the narrative indicate that Hinojosa borrowed more than names. The resonances of the name Jehú are indeed rich, since the biblical Jehú defeats the corrupt Ahab and destroys the sinful Jezebel, a moral act of great import in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

In contrast, Rafa's name (a nickname for Rafael) suggests both the archangel who leads Tobias and the Italian painter considered an artistic pillar of the Renaissance due to his sense of harmony, movement, and delicacy. Rafa is indeed an exemplary figure possessing some of the qualities most esteemed in the traditional world of Belken: knowledge, loyalty, generosity, gentleness; and his actions convey modern attributes: decisiveness, competence, ambition, and accomplishment. Another pertinent parallel may be made with Rapha, a biblical figure whose name means "he (God) has healed," an allusion that could refer to Rafa's physical and moral wounds: the assassination of his father, the death of his young wife, and his ordeal in Korea. (99-100)
But these are not the only Biblical names that appear in the *Series*; Rafe's two brothers' names are Israel and Aaron, names which further resonate with the Bible.⁹

While Hernández's study is helpful in tracing the use of Biblical names and while he examines some of the familial genealogies, his study does not include enough information about these genealogies to exhaust the intertextual resonances among the serial texts. For instance, in the very first sketch in Hinojosa's first work, *Estampas del valle* (its English rendition is *The Valley*), the genealogy of Jehú Malacara is established. Entitled "Braulio Tapia," this sketch presents a narrator who sees another man, Roque Malacara, approaching the narrator's house to ask for the hand of his daughter, Tere, in marriage. The narrator is reminded of when he came to this same house to ask Braulio Tapia for his daughter Matilde's hand. He further wonders who Braulio met when he came to ask for his own wife's (Sóstenes) hand. Roque Malacara and Tere Malacara née [formerly] Vilches Noriega (her maiden names are given in the title of the next sketch—"Tere Malacara née Vilches Noriega"), then, are the parents of Jehú Malacara. In the succeeding sketch, the name of the anonymous narrator in the first sketch is given--Jehú Vilches. He is the grandfather of Jehú Malacara, and is said to have had many of the same character traits that are found in the young Jehú Malacara. Thus, as several critics have previously pointed out, the first two sketches of Hinojosa's first text establish much of Jehú's genealogy, with Braulio Tapia being Jehú's great-grandfather.⁴⁰

But such critics fail to carry out their intertextual tracings, and they thus do not discuss the fact that Braulio Tapia was raised and educated by Juan
Nepomuceno Celaya and his maternal aunt, Barbarita Farías de Celaya. Going back one more generation gives a greater historical and cultural context. Moreover, it is also significant to note that Tapia fought for Pancho Villa in several skirmishes and two major battles in the Mexican Revolution. One of these battles was the battle of Celaya, Guanajuato where Obregón defeated Villa, “forcing the Centaur into retirement earlier than expected” (The Valley 79-80). And because Braulio Tapia had been raised by “old don Juan Nepomuceno,” Jehú Malacara is symbolically, if not directly, descended not only from a veteran of the Mexican Revolution but also from Juan Nepomuceno Celaya, who lived at Goliad, site of another major battle between Texans and Mexicans during the Texas Revolution.

The name of Tapia’s surrogate father also has symbolic meaning and carries an intertextual resonance that should not be overlooked: one of the most legendary Mexican American heroes in Valley Texas Mexican history is also named Juan Nepomuceno--Juan Nepomuceno Cortina. According to Américo Paredes, Juan Nepomuceno Cortina is reputedly the subject of the first corrido (folk ballad) of border conflict between Anglos and Mexicans. For as Paredes states, “Cortina definitely is the earliest Border corrido hero that we know of, whether his exploits were put into corridos in 1860 or later” (Paredes in Pistol 140). By juxtaposing the name of Cortina with Celaya, the site of what arguably was the most important battle in the Mexican Revolution, Hinojosa creates a progenitor to Jehú Malacara who symbolizes conflicts on both sides of the border. The lineage from Juan Nepomuceno Celaya and Braulio Tapia down to Jehú Malacara thus provides a historical context as well as giving us a key to the motives of the two main characters.
What is more, Juan Nepomuceno Cortina, a real historical figure, reputedly owned a ranch in Cameron County (in the Valley) named El Carmen. The name of this ranch carries further resonance and is significant because it ties Jehú Malacara with the other main protagonist, Rafa Buenrostro who lives on a ranch named El Carmen.

The genealogy of the other main character, Rafa Buenrostro, is revealed in the last sketch of The Valley, “Squires at the Round Table.” There, a discussion between some Mexican American elders reveals that Rafa (Rafe) is the son of Jesús “El quieto” Buenrostro, who is said to have had lands “over by El Carmen” (111), but earlier in the novel information is given, showing that El quieto “held” the Carmen Ranch (80). In a later early work, Claros varones de Belken/Fair Gentlemen of Belken County, Israel, Rafe’s older brother, tells Rafe that Israel, Raí, and Aaron, of all the Buenrostros in the Valley, are the only ones from El Carmen (Claros varones 174). The relationship between the Buenrostros and El Carmen Ranch will come to have intertextual resonance that is important to examine, as interestingly and not coincidentally, a ranch by this same famous name is known to have belonged to another famous and legendary hero of border conflict corridos, Gregorio Cortez.

However, Gregorio Cortez’s ranch by that same name was actually located much further north of the Valley in Karnes County, Texas, which is, significantly, very close to Goliad. Karnes County is also important because it is where one finds the location of a town named Karnes City, a name very similar to one of the main towns in Hinojosa's series, namely Klail City.” The letter “K” is important not only because it is a letter that is not used or found in the Spanish alphabet, but its presence will always signify an Anglo presence, as Karnes is more than
likely a bowdlerized Anglo name for Carmen. (Another significant example of the letter “K” appearing in South Texas is the King Ranch.) Thus, the Carmen Ranch and Rafa’s relationship to it are important to the narrative plot (particularly as it’s developed throughout the series of Hinojosa’s works) because of its name and because of its association to both Cortina and Cortez. As is later revealed, Rafa’s father, El quieto, was brutally murdered on the El Carmen Ranch by the rivaling Leguizamón family, who, like the Anglos, also worked toward illegally and forcefully appropriating (stealing) land from these early Texas Mexican settlers. El quieto’s murder, however, was later avenged by his brother Julian, who raises and takes care of Rafa and his brothers (Israel and Aaron), as well as working to safeguard their lands from further attempts to break them up.

Again, the placement of these two characters in close genealogical proximity to Juan Nepomuceno Cortina and Gregorio Cortez ties them both to a common ranch, El Carmen, and seems quite intentional on the part of the author. Moreover, because Jehú Malacara (Bad face) and Rafa Buenrostro (Good face) are both orphaned early in their lives, this orphaned state signifies a breaking off from any genealogical ties to their past. But this orphaned state also provides the author with the motive as well as with an opportunity to regain and therefore reappropriate, through an extended serial narrative, what had been taken away from them: their land, culture, and ultimately their narratives. These narratives also serve a quite different function because these two characters are genealogically close to the author’s own family: Hinojosa’s grandfather was named Julian and his great-grandfather was named Juan Nepomuceno Hinojosa. Manuel Guzman, another significant character in the
series who takes in three orphans, bears the name of Hinojosa’s father—Manuel Guzman Hinojosa. In addition, Braulio Tapia, Jehú’s great grandfather, was himself raised by someone other than his parents. Thus, the intention of the author, like many of his fictive characters, seems to be to adopt, nurture, and therefore cultivate what had been, through historical conflict, orphaned and erased—a region’s cultural heritage.

The convoluted mixing of these genealogies (the genealogies of Juan Nepomuceno Cortina, Gregorio Cortez, Manuel Guzman Hinojosa, and finally Rafa Buenrostro and Jehú Malacara) creates all sorts of reverberating intertextual relationships which represent the mixed and complicated motives behind the author’s construction of the entire series. Not only has the author incorporated his own family background, which began in the Valley by as early as 1749, but he has also brought into his serial narrative historical and legendary Texas Mexicans who resisted Anglo domination since the middle of the nineteenth century. Hinojosa’s efforts to shore up legend and reality thus serve several functions and create intertextual relationships validating, affirming, and therefore inscribing the existence and identity of Texas Mexicans from the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas. Ultimately, though, the author’s linking of Jehú and Rafa to legendary and historical border conflict heroes and to the El Carmen Ranch serves to identify Hinojosa’s protagonists as resistance figures who in a very real sense clandestinely seek to undermine the Anglo hegemonic group and reappropriate what had formerly been part of their cultural past.

While Hernández does analyze the two main characters and their relationships to families and the land, his analysis does not exhaust the
intertextual relationships that unquestionably exist between Hinojosa’s texts and other kinds of texts. For instance,

There is a fundamental contrast in the lives of the protagonists: Jehú is the uprooted; and Rafa has solid family and community ties. This distinction is critical to understanding the context in which Rafa and Jehú grow up. Within the norms of a traditional society, such as that of Belken County, family and personal identity are closely intertwined, and the status of an individual is determined, to a large extent, by interpersonal loyalties whose source begins at the family nucleus. This affective and social paradigm, therefore, is structured along a series of concentric circles that begin with the nuclear family and move away in decreasing order of importance toward the extended family, friends, and associates, community, and other people with similar characteristics that may include culture, class, gender, age, and regional origin. The normative framework of the KCDTS thus replicates the various loyalties that have helped shape Chicano history.

Rafa Buenrostro, like Jehú, descends from a lineage that founded Beiken County in the eighteenth century, and his family’s experience symbolizes the resiliency demonstrated by a people during a difficult historical period. He is the inheritor of heroic tradition in a difficult historical period. He is the inheritor of heroic tradition in a region where cultural conflicts have been expressed through a corpus of balladry. It is thus not a coincidence that the lands of Rafa’s father are named “El Carmen,” a place “donde se echaron a los rinches” [where they got the Texas Rangers] (A. Paredes, With His Pistol 226), in a clear reference to the corrido of “Gregorio Cortez” and the Texas Rangers. The murder of Rafa’s father, Don Jesús Buenrostro, “El Quieto,” posits an ethical commitment on his family who, according to tradition, must avenge the crime. The response of his next of kin is a mixture of grievance and rage, a reaction that serves as motivation for the brother’s revenge.... (100-101)²

And with reference to Rafa, Hernández adds that “In spite of his misfortunes—the loss of his mother as a child, the assassination of his father, the drowning of his young wife, and the physical and mental afflictions he suffered as a soldier in Korea—Rafa’s conduct demonstrates cultural loyalty toward his community and is personally concerned for the well-being of other Chicanos” (102).

Notwithstanding the limited coverage of the analysis, Hernández is among the very first critics of Chicano literary texts whose coverage of the Series is as
comprehensive as Hinojosa's texts will usually obtain.

Juan Bruce-Novoa, among the most prolific and eminent of essayists of Chicano criticism, has also published one of the most important texts about many early Chicano writers, *Chicano Authors: Inquiry by Interview* (1980), which contains an important interview with Rolando Hinojosa. The first essay in which he treats Hinojosa's literary texts is "Righting the Oral Tradition" (1981), and there he claims that "at least two writers explicitly focus their attention on the oral tradition: Miguel Méndez and Rolando Hinojosa. This essay studies the differing manners in which each writer treats the threat to the oral tradition, and their response to it" (78). Specifically with reference to Hinojosa's texts, he further states that

Rolando Hinojosa's work is not nearly so difficult to read as Méndez's, and always pleasant, but the deceiving simplicity should not lead us to dismiss him lightly. With two prize winning novels, a book of poetry, and portions of another book in circulation, it is obvious that, though he structures his works into brief, self-contained episodes, or into poems, he is slowly, unconventionally, but surely writing a multi-volumed novel. The most striking feature of this expanding opus vis-a-vis our topic here is the oral texture of the writing, and how often the author cedes the word to his characters, providing a forum for the oral tradition while fixing those voices in the permanent space of writing. (82)

With this statement, Bruce-Novoa becomes the first critic of Hinojosa's texts to claim that the Series is a single multi-volumed "novel." Rosaura Sánchez, José David Saldívar, and Ramón Saldívar follow Bruce-Novoa's lead in this respect by also claiming that Hinojosa's serial project represents a continuing and ever-expanding single "novel."

In his comparison of Hinojosa's texts to Méndez's, Bruce-Novoa states that Hinojosa's texts capture the oral tradition better than Méndez does: "Hinojosa...captures the oral tone of everyday speech; you feel as if you are
eavesdropping on a conversation at a bar. And the complicated interwoven structure of multiple plot lines is unobtrusive. Yet Hinojosa also sees the menace to the oral tradition” (82). In response to this threat to the oral tradition, Hinojosa fixes “the oral tradition in print, without losing its oral quality” (85).

Bruce-Novoa goes on to note the different strategies Méndez and Hinojosa use to capture the oral traditions of their respective but different regions:

“Méndez lives and writes in Tucson, Arizona, an area dominated by the Anglo American in all aspects of life; Hinojosa is from South Texas, where the Chicano population is a majority, though certainly economically dominated by the Anglo” (86). But the authors’ different geographical homes do not account for the difference in writing styles, as

Hinojosa...creates an open voice, a reflection of everyday reality, a recording of common speech, whose only mask is that of subtle irony and constant humor, which are themselves typical of the traditional, rural Mexican speech. But then Hinojosa is not as pretentious as Méndez; he doesn’t seek to convert the reader politically or ethnically, just to tell a good story, one faithful to the reality of his home region. If that reality conveys a message, fine and good, but Hinojosa writes clearly and openly; no tricks or traps. (85-86)

While it might be claimed that there are “no tricks and traps” in Hinojosa’s deceivingly simply story-telling, the ever-expanding “multi-volumed” novel, with its attendant English and Spanish renditions, nevertheless forces readers to pay very close attention to antagonistic cultural codes that are continually being mixed to create intertextual narrative complexities among the serial texts.

uses the first two novels (Estampas del valle..., Generaciones y semblanzas), a book of poetry (Korean Love Songs), and “portions of another book in circulation,” as the basis for his analysis, in this later critical text his analysis includes Mi querido Rafa, Rites and Witnesses, and Partners in Crime. By 1985, which marks the year that Partners in Crime was published, The Valley and Dear Rafe, both English renditions, had been published, and Claros varones de Belken would be published in 1986, a year before the publication of this Bruce-Novoa critical text. Like Guillermo Hernández, Bruce-Novoa avoids addressing, much less discussing, the English renditions in his analysis of the Series, and thus prefers dealing only with the “original” Spanish texts. This leads him to state that Partners in Crime is the sixth “book” in the Series. But this statement is not entirely accurate because of the existence of Claros varones de Belken, which in effect makes Partners in Crime the seventh text in the Series.

For Bruce-Novoa, the publication of Partners in Crime marks the addition of a new genre in Hinojosa’s serial project—the detective novel. According to Bruce-Novoa, the incorporation of this new genre in the serial project surprised many people, as the previous serial texts focused on “history, community, ethnicity, and social struggle” (289). But to Bruce-Novoa, the addition of this new genre is completely consistent with Hinojosa’s continuing “generic experimentation”:

Generic experimentation, however, has been the norm with Hinojosa since the beginning—fragmentation of his texts into short pieces, hardly ever forming units larger than a short story; extreme heteroglossia in which different types of texts are shuffled together, from letters to interviews to newspaper notes to legal documents to bar room conversations, and anything in between—so a detective novel could be seen as the incorporation of just one more subgenre. However, in this case, it signifies much more. In the detective novel Hinojosa has finally matched the
surface generic category to the deep structure of his fictional quest. (289-290)

Thus, the matching of a “surface generic category to the deep structure of his fictional quest,” represents for Bruce-Novoa a logical continuation in the serial project that serves to explain how Hinojosa’s texts have been made to cohere with each other:

Interpreted in this way, Hinojosa’s entire production can be read as a long detective novel, the on-going investigation of a life and death struggle between rival groups in south Texas. The history of this long running struggle is one marked by murders and crimes. The texts are made up of a growing file of testimony that slowly builds a case against the real criminals and vindicates the victims who were often maligned and falsely persecuted and/or prosecuted, then simply murdered by hired thugs or the Texas Rangers themselves. The process of investigating and of gathering knowledge strengthens the two protagonists, not only in the eyes of the readers, but in their own and their community’s. They are gradually empowered to take action, even within the very centers of the enemy camp. Who is killing whom in Klail City? On one level Rafa and Jehú are executing the memory of the Leguizamón and the Texas Rangers; on another, Hinojosa is taking shot after shot at anti-Mexican prejudice and the false versions of Texas history that support it. Like the careful, methodical avenging Chicano sheriff in the western film Valdez is Coming, Hinojosa and his protagonists are slowly picking off the Anglo American boss’s gang, which includes many Mexicans as well as Anglos, in an attempt to bring the Man to his senses before he too must be killed. In the process, the invincibility of the Texas Bosses is debunked and their texts of mythification deconstructed. (295)

Bruce-Novoa concludes his critical texts by citing the inconclusiveness or openendedness of Hinojosa’s individual texts within his serial project, a fact that suggests that critical texts will also remain inconclusive and open-ended:

The final chapter is still to be written in Hinojosa’s saga of life in the Rio Grande Valley, and as Partners in Crime demonstrates, figuring out the identity of the criminals is not the same as punishing them. The particular culprit in the last novel escapes, richer than before thanks to the unwitting, but nonetheless welcome help of the efficient detectives of the Belken County Homicide Squad, who, in spite of its sincere efforts to solve the case, become de facto accessories to the crime, giving the title a final ironic
turn. In this way Hinojosa maintains an open structure, leaving room for further development by adding new twists to the general plot and new goals to be achieved by his dynamic duo. In conclusion, while my own investigation has revealed the plot, established the motifs, classified the M(odus) O(perandi), and identified suspects and criminals, like the postmodern detectives of Borges or Vicente Leñero, I am powerless to prevent the next crime..., that is, the next novel, or the next, or the next, so in all humility I am forced to ask the reader’s leave to pursue the case wherever it may lead and to amend my title to a more accurate: Who will kill whom next in Klail City? (296)

The openendedness that critical texts must maintain if they are to analyze the serial texts accurately must nevertheless assume the existence of the heteroglossic and mixed nature of the literary texts. Thus, all the serial texts must be analyzed, including the renditions that Hinojosa has chosen to create and add to his continuing serial project. In this respect, Bruce-Novoa claims what previous critics have failed to acknowledge about the serial texts: that Hinojosa’s serial project is, by its very nature, mestizo:

Critics are prone to explain that the real protagonist is the Texas Valley Mexicano community, but although the historical thread connecting all the works is the story of two Chicano cousins, and despite Hinojosa’s remark that “El número de bolillos [angloamericanos] que se ve en estos escritos es bien poco. Los bolillos están, como quien dice, al margen de estos sucesos” (1979, 1), if a community is to be elevated to the role of main actor in these works, then that actor must be mestizo. That is to say, the supposed marginality of the Anglo inhabitants is consistently belied by the texts, which, over the years, have revealed them to be inextricably bound to those of Mexican descent. Not only do the Anglos control the centers of power, such as the banks, the government, and the legal system, they are key players in events that directly affect the intimate lives of the Mexicano community. If anything, Hinojosa’s books are a tale of the Mexicano part of this community being marginalized from those power centers and slowly repossessing them. This southern Texas community is an amalgam in which the Anglo-Americans are the mercury which has redefined the qualities of the whole, while suffering changes itself in the process. This is what makes the community Chicano—despite the aversion Texas Mexican-Americans have for the term—and not really Mexicano—the term most of them prefer—because, as Hinojosa’s writing clearly shows, Anglos and Mexicans in this part of the country are part and parcel of each other.
Whether they like it or not, the culture shared in the border region is neither Mexican or Anglo American, but an ever shifting, unstable blend of both. While this could be one definition of Chicano culture, Chicanos from other areas of the country would probably object, so perhaps Texas Border Culture would be a more appropriate title for this special manifestation of Chicanismo. (288-289)*

This statement stands in opposition to Saldívar's claim that Hinojosa's texts do not focus on the powerholders or the Anglo colonizers. But Bruce-Novoa goes on to explain that Hinojosa's texts are nevertheless unquestionably ethnic, and that they are texts that indeed "deal with the defining customs within the group as well as the relations with external social forces" (289). And according to Bruce-Novoa, this prior emphasis on the mestizo community is exactly what caused so many predominantly culturalist critics to be "surprised" that Hinojosa would choose to write a detective novel.

The "defining customs within the group as well as the relations with external social forces" are exactly what Hinojosa's serial texts are all about. Partners in Crime, in particular, is no exception in this respect, for this novel represents the international relations that exist between Mexican governmental agencies that abide by different constitutional and legal principles than those of the United States and Texas. Consequently, if an American law enforcement agency, as represented by the Belken County Homicide Squad, must abide by "American" laws when solving murder cases, the law enforcement agencies on the Mexican side of the border do not. Mexican governmental officials do not have to abide by the same legal codes that comparable officials on the U.S. side have to abide by to maintain law and order because, on the Mexican side of the Texas Mexican border, the culture is not comparably mestizo. In this very same respect, authors like Rolando Hinojosa have felt obliged to produce
literary texts that represent this mixing of cultural codes. The publication history of Rolando Hinojosa's serial texts, with its renditions, represents just this type of mixing of cultural codes. Thus, the rhetorical strategies that an author from such a border culture uses must be examined to see how the centripetal and centrifugal forces have acted upon the production of literary texts.

In the next chapter, the publication history of the Series will be examined. Such an examination will show the rhetorical strategies Hinojosa employed as his serial project developed in different cultural and language domains.
1 Hinojosa received the prestigious Quinto Sol Literary Award in 1972 for *Estampas del valle y otras obras*, which means that his first work was in circulation before 1973 when this text was first published.

2 One last thing that should also be noted with reference to Tatum’s reviews is that in both reviews of *Partners in Crime* (in *Puerto del Sol* and in *World Literature Today*), he incorrectly names one of Hinojosa’s characters: in the reviews, Sheriff Wallace “Big Foot” Parkinson is referred to as Peterson.


4 The discrepancy between the date of publication for the journal and the copyright date for the “Reader” is explained by the journal being published later (1985) but actually representing the 1984 Fall-Winter issue of that journal.

5 The translation of this epigraph is not entirely Hinojosa’s, as the Spanish text has been translated by Julia Cruz, though not without the assistance of the author. The translation itself remains a maneuver attributable to the author.

6 Salinas, Martín. *Indians of the Rio Grande Delta: Their Role in the History of Southern Texas and Northeastern Mexico*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990. This work promises to change the direction of all scholarly work done on this region of Southern Texas and Northeastern Mexico.

7 Again, it should be remembered that Julia Cruz translated *Claro varones de Belken* with Hinojosa’s help. This information was provided to me in an interview with the author.

8 In an interview with Hinojosa (August 1992), he informed me that his next project, after *The Useless Servants*, was to compose an English rendition of *Claro varones*, as it is generally accepted that the English translation of this text leaves much to be desired. He further informed me that Arte Público Press plans to publish a two-volume collection of the entire Series, where Hinojosa’s English rendition of *Claro varones* will appear.
We find Jehú in the Bible is in the first book of Kings, Chapter 16.1; in the second book of Kings, chapter 10, and with regard to the second book of Chronicles, chapter 19.2 and 20.34. Jehú, then, was a king of Israel, who became so because he drove a certain group of people, Ba'äl, out of Israel, much in the same way that Jehú will help reestablish Mexican Americans in the Valley.

Ramón Saldívar and Guillermo Hernández, in separate critical texts, have both cited this much of Jehú's genealogy.

Karnes City is the site where President George Bush visits annually to hunt for quail.

Interestingly, the parenthetical citation that Hernández provides in this quotation is not corroborated by Paredes' text, With His Pistol, as the page number, 226, does not have the passage that Hernández has placed under quotation marks, nor is there any reference to the Texas Rangers.

We should note that in both essays, "Righting the Oral Tradition" and in "Who's Killing Whom....," Bruce-Novoa misspells the word Belken as "Belkin." This thus leads me to believe that this error is not one that has been committed by the journals where we find these critical texts published.

The Hinojosa quotation that Bruce-Novoa includes is incorrectly documented. The text referred to is Generaciones y semblanzas, which was published in 1977, not 1979, as Bruce-Novoa indicates in his parenthetical documentation.
Chapter III
The "Series"

An examination of the Series's publication history will reveal how Hinojosa has used competing and opposed centripetal and centrifugal forces between cultural codes to create coherence among his serial texts and to recuperate and inscribe parts of Texas Mexican culture that were at risk of being lost. As the foregoing discussion has suggested, perhaps the author's most significant and unique rhetorical maneuver is his production of the Series in both English and Spanish. This maneuver clearly represents an act of capturing the languages and "voices" that have met, competed, and existed in the Valley's ruptured intersection of cultures. From this intersectional position, the author can rhetorically move out and reach audiences who have been affected by and who continue using the various cultural codes found in the Valley's languages. The publication history of Hinojosa's serial texts thus represents a dual social and political act of inscription and recuperation.

Within the *Klail City Death Trip Series*, the recuperation of the Spanish language occurs primarily through the use of Spanish for the "original" works, though Hinojosa reproduced his serial texts through "renditions" entirely in English or, in some texts, through code-switching between Spanish and English. The entire collection of Hinojosa's literary texts at this time is known as the *Klail City Death Trip Series*, but when his first text, *Estampas del valley y otras obras*, appeared in Spanish in 1973, it was not proclaimed by the author as the first work of a Series. That identification would occur later, specifically
with the publication of his third serial text, *Korean Love Songs*, in 1978. Strictly speaking, a reader must know that the entire collection of serial texts does not represent the actual *Klail City Death Trip Series* because most of the texts represent duplications, bilingual editions with translations, or “renditions” of texts that were primarily published first in Spanish, and now with *Los amigos de Becky*, which is a text that first made its appearance in English. In a sense, there are actually two versions of the same Series: one in Spanish and one in English. But this description is not inclusive of all the texts either, as the Series is made up of texts in both languages.

Initially, the author uses the language that his characters use in specific (fictional) sites within specific narratives. In his first two works, *Estampas del valle y otras obras* and *Klail City y sus alredores* (or *Generaciones y semblanzas*), these sites are mainly in the Valley and are therefore almost always conveyed in Spanish. In *Korean Love Songs*, Hinojosa’s first English text, however, all of the action occurs during the Korean War while his main characters are enlisted in the U.S. Army and serving in Korea and Japan. Since the U.S. Army is an institution of the United States where only English is spoken, the language of the narrative is entirely in English.

With the appearance of this “Korean” text, Hinojosa begins calling his collective texts “The Klail City Death Trip Series,” a direct reference to a text written by Michael Lesy, called the *Wisconsin Death Trip* (1973). This text is about the harsh winters and “uncivilized” life in Wisconsin during the end of the 19th century and the early part of the twentieth. Through a variety of newspaper articles, government documents, and photographs, this highly controversial text photographically documents the many macabre deaths of hundreds during cold
winters. These winters also caused many people to go insane and commit violent acts against others. There are of course many similarities between the harsh and uncivilized life during winters in Wisconsin at the turn of the century and the Korean war where winter during war is even more severe and insane. When the English rendition of Estampas del valle... (1973) appeared in 1983, The Valley took the following subtitle: A re-creation in narrative prose of a portfolio of etchings, engravings, sketches, and silhouettes by various artists in various styles, plus a set of photographs from a family album.

In his next text in the Series, Claros varones de Belken/Fair Gentlemen of Belken County, the setting is once again almost entire in the Valley, with some sketches set at the University of Texas at Austin. Hinojosa at this time was living in Austin, Texas and working at the University of Texas at Austin, where he continues to work. Like his first two texts, this fourth in the Series is entirely in Spanish (in a bilingual edition). This text also introduces P. Galindo as a narrator and friend of Rafe and Jehú. By this time in the extended serial narrative, Jehú and Rafa have returned from their tours of duty in Korea, and are recovering from their experiences there. Esteban Echevarría dies in this text, but not without leaving his narrative legacy to both Jehú and Rafa. This text broadens the reader's view of the Valley, which has evolved to include characters and stories not previously presented.

The next text to be published is Mi querido Rafa (1981), but this text actually represents the sixth serial text chronologically and not the fifth. The fifth serial text is actually Rites and Witnesses which was published in 1982. This English-only text precedes Mi querido Rafa in the Series because its chapters alternate between scenes during the Korean war and scenes in the Valley prior
to the events occurring in *Mi querido Rafa*. The Korean war scenes further reveal the war experiences that the two main characters had while serving there. The scenes set in the Valley detail how Jehú is hired at the bank by Noddy Perkins and the bank’s board members, who intended to run Jehú for county commissioner. These scenes are important for setting the reader up for the political machinations that transpire in *Mi querido Rafa*. One can certainly read this text after reading *Mi querido Rafa* without too many problems, but in terms of the narrative sequence of events, *Rites and Witnesses* should probably be read before *Mi querido Rafa*. Readers of *Rites and Witnesses* vicariously experience the “rites” that the two main characters undergo in Korea and in the Valley, and therefore become “witnesses” to decisions that occur behind the scenes during the bank’s board meetings.

*Mi querido Rafa*, then, is the sixth serial text, and uses the epistolary genre as well as reportage to carry its narrative progression. Thus, the events that have been set up in *Rites and Witnesses* unfold through Jehú’s letters to Rafa, who is in a veteran’s hospital up-state, undergoing additional surgery on wounds received in battles during the Korean war. These letters have been given over to another Valley Texas Mexican interned in the same veteran’s hospital where Rafa is interned. The Valley Texas Mexican is P. Galindo, who in turn allows readers to examine them. The use of the epistolary genre is effective for conveying the narrative progression because it works by placing the reader in the position of being the recipient of the letters.

In *Told in Letters: Epistolary Fiction Before Richardson*, Robert Adams Day states that, in the past, the key advantage to the epistolary novel is that it “allowed subjective narrative” through the departure “from the logical,
retrospective, organized presentation of thought" (6-7). Day summarizes the advantages and improvements of the epistolary method under the following headings:

---Revelation rather than description in depicting character and motive.
---The opportunity to analyze and portray emotion and feeling at length without exceeding the privileges of the "omniscient author."
---The ability to color the whole narrative with subjectivity, personality, and intimacy, since the letter writer will usually be writing to trusted friends and will tell the story in his [her] own characteristic way.
---The ability to present a rounded picture of an event by recording it from several contrasting points of view.... (Day 7)

Day sees two other advantages to the epistolary method:

The first of these is immediacy. The author may give his story vividness and at the same time artistically disrupt an organized relation in which everything is properly subordinated and arranged (the method of autobiographical narrative), in order to present action in the chaotic and unfinished manner in which we ordinarily see it in life.... The second of these advantages...is that the author may let his [her] characters think on paper; he [she] may try to show the actual motions of the mind, its veerings and incoherences, the shape which thoughts take before they are arranged for formal presentation: inchoate ideas, when the mind is tugged this way and that from its intended course by emotions and small happenings, or is wholly carried away on a new track in spite of itself. This method, now removed from the less "realistic" convention of the letter, is called interior monologue or stream-of-consciousness technique.

All of these technical contributions of the letter to fiction tend in the same direction--toward vivifying the static, formal nature of composed, objective, third-person narrative in the past tense and bringing it into closer contact with the reader. The novel, while retaining its form of words on paper, addressed to the single reader, and requiring no additional medium for presenting its artistic effects, attempts to engross the qualities of the spoken drama. (Day 7-8).

The "insider" view that readers gain into the mind of a character whose letters they read thus creates an immediacy difficult to achieve in another genre. The use of this genre in Mi querido Rafa also allows the author to present, in a written medium, the language, English and Spanish code-switching, that Valley
Texas Mexicans normally use when speaking with each other. Unfortunately, however, this element is completely lost in the English rendition because the rhetorical stance or ethos of Jehú, as conveyed through code-switching, clearly identifies him as a mestizo caught between two worlds. While Jehú's mestizaje is evident in the English rendition, it is more clearly articulated through code-switching.

Hinojosa uses reportage in *Mi querido Rafa* (and *Dear Rafe*), a genre also found partially used in *Rites and Witnesses* and entirely in *Becky and Her Friends* (and *Los amigos de Becky*). The reportage genre is presented in the form of interviews with various characters, who are interviewed by P. Galindo. The person doing the interviews in *Rites and Witnesses* is not directly identified, but since P. Galindo conducts the interviews in *Mi querido Rafa*, one can only suppose that he is the same interviewer in *Rites and Witnesses*. But in *Becky and Her Friends* (and in *Los amigos de Becky*), P. Galindo has died, so the interviews are conducted by a younger counterpart. P. Galindo himself, in the "Introduction" to *Mi querido Rafa* (and in *Dear Rafe*), informs his readers that he has cancer and cannot be expected to live for very much longer. His terminally ill state thus places him in the position of having nothing to gain from the information he obtains in the interviews, allowing him a form of credibility and objectivity.

The seventh text in the Series is *Partners in Crime: A Rafe Buenrostro Mystery*. By this point in the narrative, Jehú has once again returned to work at the bank with Noddy Perkins, who welcomes him with open arms after a three-year absence. Now employed as a detective in the Belken County Homicide Squad after becoming a lawyer, Rafe joins the county's law enforcement
agency as a county patrolman, and is later promoted to lieutenant in the 
homicide squad, a branch of the county’s district attorney’s office. (In the 
“Introduction” of the English rendition of Mi querido Rafa, Dear Rafe, but not in 
Mi querido Rafa, P. Galindo informs the reader of Rafe’s position as a detective 
with the county.) There are essentially two murder incidents that are solved in 
this novel, but the main one revolves around the brutal murders of two Mexican 
nationals and the chief prosecutor for the district attorney’s office, Dutch Elder. 
Elder is accidentally caught in the midst of a gangland style killing of the two 
Mexicans when he enters a bar to buy a six-pak of beer. His murder causes the 
Belken County Homicide Squad to launch a full blown investigation, which 
leads them to uncover a drug-running and drug-laundering operation. While 
the murder case and the drug running and laundering cases are solved, the 
man behind all of these crimes, a Mexican national who is also head of the 
Mexican police, goes free.

Two significant items about this novel have not previously been mentioned 
by any of the critics. First, its publication was flawed when it came back from the 
printer with chapters 12 and 13 repeated in this text although the pagination 
remains sequentially set throughout. Because Arte Público Press is a small low 
budget press of minority (Hispanic) texts, it must send its texts to the least 
expensive printer, thus keeping the press’s operating costs to a minimum. In 
addition, the press is often unable to hire copy editors and proofreaders, who 
could ostensibly catch such errors. Thus, when first reading this detective 
novel, a reader will naturally enough wonder if the repetition is yet another 
intention of the postmodern narrative, nuances becoming more and more 
common in contemporary literature. Rather, the flaw is the result of material
conditions characteristic of minority presses.

The next item that has never been discussed with reference to this detective novel is the appearance of thinly disguised names of real people for certain characters. Several of the serial texts include an attorney named Romeo Hinojosa; Romeo is the author's real first name used only by his immediate family. His sister and brother's nickname for Hinojosa is Romey, and he has told me that they are the only ones who ever call him by this name.¹

Several other characters' names in Partners in Crime are thinly disguised names of people involved with Texas literature: In one case, a character's name is very similar to one of the daughters of Tomás Rivera, who, prior to his death, was Hinojosa's closest friend. The second daughter of Tomás Rivera is named Erasma Rivera, whose name, Erasmo Rivera, is similar to the name of a judge in Belken County (Partners 218). The police chief of Klail City is said to be Graham Donaldson (109), while the police chief of Flora is said to be Jim Lee (74). And a Belken County coroner's lab assistant is named Ted Pilkington (137). The names of these three very minor characters thinly disguise the names of three fairly eminent men in Texas letters: Don Graham, Jim Lee, and Tom Pilkington. In 1983, these three men edited The Texas Literary Tradition: Fiction, Folklore, History, a collection based on a conference celebrating the centennial anniversary of The University of Texas. The designation of Donaldson and Lee as police chiefs carries a certain symbolic effect, as does the designation of Pilkington as a labman. By Designating Donaldson and Lee as police chiefs, Hinojosa takes a shot at these men because Anglo law enforcement officials have certainly seldom been sympathetic characters in the Series. Pilkington is given a less negative role, and his inclusion as a lab
assistant identifies his real life counterpart as a researcher (of Texas letters), which he most certainly is. Finally, the last names of two junior members of the homicide squad, Joe Molden and Peter Hauer, if put together as Moldenhauer, represent the name of one of Rolando Hinojosa's colleagues in the English department at the University of Texas at Austin. In earlier serial texts, the names of two Chicano scholars and friends of Hinojosa, José Limón and Luis Leal, are also used for characters' names.

The production of Partners in Crime represents a case where the author as artist recreates events in a region, the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas, before they actually take place in real life. That is, not long after the appearance of this text, which is partially about laundering drug money in local banks along the Texas Mexican border, an actual bank was closed actual it was caught doing what was depicted in this text. Many international complexities are involved when crimes are committed on one side of the border by people from the other side of the border. These complexities require that an author writing about them be intimately familiar with the subtleties inherent in a situation involving two legal systems as well as two national histories. The appearance of drug smuggling in the Lower Rio Grande Valley has created an artificial economy that threatens the stability of the local economic system on both sides of the border. Like the intricate economic system that Texas Anglos use to oppress Texas Mexicans in the Valley, drug smugglers are similarly taking advantage of loopholes along a border that cannot be governed and controlled by any single powerholder. The collaboration that should occur between law enforcement agencies on both sides of the border is undermined moreover by legal systems based on diverging principles. Partners in Crime details the confrontation
between such diverging principles and law enforcement agencies on either side of the Texas Mexican border.

In the final serial text thus far, *Becky and Her Friends*, Hinojosa returns to the use of reportage. A Spanish rendition of this text, *Los amigos de Becky*, was published after the appearance of the English text, although the Spanish text was completed first. Thus the English text is a rendition of the Spanish text, not the other way around, as the publication dates might otherwise indicate. The copyright years found in both texts are the same (1990), even though their actual appearance occurred in different years--the Spanish text appeared in 1991. (The English text will therefore be referred to as a rendition of the Spanish text.)

The interviews in these texts reveal how Becky Escobar comes to be transformed from an anglicized Mexican American into a strong and independent Chicana female who regains her original ethnic identity. The novel begins with a prologue in which Becky calmly declares that Ira, her husband, can no longer live in their home, which comes as an absolute surprise to the dumbstruck Ira, who can only respond by saying “What?” (9). As is later revealed, Becky inherits some money, a trust fund, and land from Lionel Villa, Becky’s uncle. In this novel, Javier Leguizamón dies and also leaves some land to Ira Escobar. These two pieces of land adjoin each other, creating a rather significant acreage. Since Ira and Becky have two children, part of the divorce settlement (handled by Romeo Hinojosa) is that the land will eventually be left to them. Perhaps not coincidentally, the children “take” to Jehú more than they had with their own father, Ira, and Jehú later becomes their step-father after his marriage to Becky. Through this maneuver in the narrative’s
progression—inheritances, Becky’s divorce from Ira, and her subsequent marriage to Jehú Malacara—Rolando Hinojosa is able to create circumstances in which land that had previously been lost and stolen from the original family landholders is recuperated and brought back to the original landholders.

In the same novel, Becky becomes Viola Barragán’s business manager, showing her adroit ability to hand large business transactions. Under Viola’s tutelage, Becky also shows that she can be her own woman and not the stooge that she had previously been shown to be in Mi querido Rafa (and Dear Rafe). One of the persons most surprised by Becky’s transformation is her mother, Elvira Caldwell, who pushed Becky to lose her ethnicity by making her believe that being anglicized was the only way to gain upward social status. Becky’s marriage to Ira was arranged by her mother, as marrying into the Leguizamón clan assured Becky gaining a monied status. Ironically, Becky’s father is an Anglo, but he mexicanized himself early on, making him a sympathetic and respected Anglo character. The divorce very much shocks Elvira, who has big plans for her daughter, but when Becky proves herself to be independent and at the same time wealthy, Elvira can do nothing to oppose her daughter’s divorce. Viola Barragán also plays a big hand in staving off Becky’s mother, as they have a long standing relationship that goes back to their youth. And Becky’s subsequent courtship and marriage to Jehú certainly meets with Viola’s approval. The most important result of this union, however, is that the land stays in the family.

While Becky and Her Friends (Friends) and Los amigos de Becky (Amigos) contain the same action, significant textual and narrative differences are worth noting. Friends contains a prologue and 26 interviews, while Amigos contains
no prologue, but an epilogue instead, and 27 interviews (Esther Lucille Bewley’s interview is the extra one). *Friends* is 160 pages long, while *Amigos* is only 128 pages long. The main reason for the differences in length is the fact that the interviewer’s introductions for each of the interviews in *Friends* have considerably more material about each of the persons being interviewed, while the introductions found before each interview in *Amigos* usually do not average more than one line long. Again, essentially the same people are interviewed, and they essentially reveal the same narrative information in both texts. But in *Amigos*, the order of the interviews is not the same that one finds in *Friends*. These changes in the interviews’ order, plus the minuscule introductions that one finds for each of the interviews in *Amigos*, signal narrative changes that have to be considered when analyzing both serial texts. But most likely, readers are likely to arrive at different interpretations if they read only one of the texts and not the other.

Although most of the characters in this text have previously appeared, significant characters from previous texts have died prior to the events in this serial text, including Esteban Echevarría, Javier Leguizamón, Olivia San Esteban, and P. Galindo. However, these characters are replaced by characters that thematically fill similar functions in the serial texts. Esteban Echevarría, once known for being the oldest person in the Valley, is replaced by Reina Campoy, now reputed to be the oldest person. There are also two other old wise men who are interviewed: Andrés Malacara and Drinks (Saúl) González Sexton. The position these elder characters hold is one of authority and guardianship of the history of the Valley’s families. In a sense, Javier Leguizamón comes to be replaced by Becky’s children, who come to own the
land previously held by the Leguizamón clan. Olivia San Esteban, once Jehú’s fiancé, is replaced by Becky Escobar, who becomes Jehú’s wife. Becky will also replace Olivia by becoming another example of an aggressive and assertive Chicana role model, like Viola Barragán. P. Galindo is replaced by a young interviewer, whose name is never revealed, although we know that he is the nephew of Lucas, aka Dirty (El Chorrereao) Barrón, owner of the infamous Aquí me Quedo cantina (102). The interviewer is also Jehú Malacara’s cousin.

One of the most interesting pieces of new narrative information presented in this serial text, and particularly in the Spanish text, is the fact that several of the Texas Anglos speak Spanish, and they speak it fluently. While P. Galindo had previously informed us (in the Introductions to Dear Rafe and Mi querido Rafa) that readers should not be surprised to see Texas Anglos speaking Spanish, in Los amigos de Becky this linguistic phenomenon is literally and openly presented in several of the interviews. In their interviews, Esther Lucille Bewley, Edith Timmens, and Sammie Jo Perkins all speak and discuss their Spanish speaking abilities. In the English rendition of Becky, the interviewer, who refers to himself as “the listener,” notes that

The listener has some ideas and opinions to express. The Valley is a strange place, to begin with. The speakers that follow—Valleyites to the core—are at home, at ease, both in English and in Spanish. They are all Texas Anglos, and they are all bicultural, to use an old term now used popularly.

There are Valley Anglos who claim they are bilingual, but aren’t. It takes work to speak as a native Spanish-speaker. Then, there are also those Anglos who say they wish they were bicultural and thus bilingual, but they’re neither. This also takes time. And there are those who were born to it; it had nothing to do with work, or wanting to or wishing for it. They were at home, at ease.

As the listener insists, it’s a strange place. (80)
While readers should not “be surprised” by this linguistic phenomenon, the element of surprise is nevertheless there, especially in the Spanish edition of this serial text because Anglo stereotypically do not speak Spanish. The presence of this linguistic phenomenon once again represents the results of the strong intermingling of different cultural codes and signals that Texas Mexicans in the Valley are not the only ones who have been affected by centripetal and centrifugal forces. The struggle between these forces has been thoroughly represented in previous serial texts, and Hinojosa’s singular literary feat has been to convey in print the linguistic phenomenon that has been typical in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. As J.D. Saldívar notes, “If the Klail City Death Trip series is a history of the Río Grande Valley, that is, a fictional text with a deep historical, structural, poetic, and sociolinguistic content, then the author’s use of language should necessarily register the transitory linguistic changes for the Chicano and Texas-Anglo communities. Hinojosa’s project succeeds admirably in representing the Valley’s linguistic evolution by dramatizing the range of verbal contacts and linguistic expansion in south Texas” (Dialectics 78).

Hinojosa begins Becky and Her Friends with a prologue that includes an intertextual reference to the other texts in the Series: “The Valley, though old, is vigorous still. It has seen many rites, has produced many witnesses. In over 200 years of oral and recorded history, many generations have come and gone and taken their place in history in the cemeteries of the world: in this case, Europe, the Orient, wherever Valley men and women have died. Many lives and some miracles, but, as usual, more ordinary lives than miraculous ones” (9). In Los Amigos de Becky, Hinojosa includes no prologue, but he does have an epilogue, entitled “Fin y rendición de cuentas” [“The End and a Settling of
Accunts", in which he repeats some of what is found in the prologue of the English rendition. The epilogue is different from the prologue, however, because the unnamed "listener" takes the opportunity to discuss "changes" philosophically, changes which have taken place in the Valley. Unfortunately, the following philosophical treatment of changes in the Valley is not rendered into English in the prologue found in the English rendition:

Sabido es que ha habido mucho rito, mucho testigo, muchas generaciones ya muertas, nacidas y otras por nacer para que todo esto se venga a caer del día a la noche. Los cambios han sido muchos, unos bruscos--para cierta gente--otros más lentos, pero, al fin y al cabo, cambios. Y de eso se trata la vida y la muerte: de cambios.

Mucha bolillada, sí, hay que volver con ellos como siempre, cambiaron de opinión; otros no, pero aprendieron a callárselas. Hacen y continuan haciendo lo que hacen, pero más solapadamente. Otros verdaderamente han hecho ciertos arreglos, ciertas adaptaciones (¿qué si quieres arroz, Catalina?) y sobrevivieron. Mucha raza pasa y pasó por los mismos trances y con un ejemplo basta: allá, a la edad de veinte años, en los tiempos de las guerras mundiales I y II, un John Jones no le hablaba, no se juntaba con un Juan González. Cosa muy natural, y vice versa, pensaban los dos. A los cuarenta años de edad y con los sueños de los veinte soterrados o en bancarrota u olvidados y echados al traste, se rectifican las líneas de combate. A los cincuenta y más, ya se sientan en el Blue Bar o en el Diamond (las cantinas americanas llevan años de estar cerradas) y hablan y toman cerveza. Eso es algo, tampoco mucho: como no pasaron la juventud junta, la raza y la bolillada tienen que empezar de nuevo. Eso no es más que la verdad, pero también es un cambio.

Ahora bien, no hay por qué valorizar. Los cambios vienen como las brisas del Golfo Mexicano: de diario, a toda hora y, dependiendo ya del clima político o de la estación del año, los cambios y las brisas no dejan de intervenir en los mejores planes de la gente. Cosa y dato de lo más común. Cosa fuera de lo común es el cambio inesperado por la gente, pero no inesperado por quién lo hace. Sorpresón también para el que reciba el cambio en la cara y en los oídos. ¿Qué es lo que oigo? dicen. ¿Cómo puede ser? dicen. Y así, por el estilo. Nada originales las preguntitas, esa es más que la verdad, pero son casi siempre las que primero se nos ocurren.

Pues sí, el que reciba el notición del cambio a veces se queda lelo, en otras ocasiones con la boca abierta o con el aire adentro y con los ojos abultados y con los sesos tratando de acordarse de algo parecido, de
cualquier palabra; luego se sorprenden que los sesos no funcionen o reflexionen como antes; los pulmones--que son automáticos como las puertas eléctricas, se abren y se cierran y siguen mandando sangre a la cabeza como es su deber. Que si no...

Pero qué manera de sorprender a la gente dirá el lector. Pues sí, se admite, pero también se advierte de buena fe que se aguante, porque una vez tomada la decisión, y los puentes quemados y chamuscados a la vez, no hay arquitecto naval que los construya de nuevo. A lo más, serían una copia (buena, digna y ejemplar) pero copia y nada más.

Esto es más bien un prólogo y agradecido a los griegos por el término. También sirve de epílogo. La novela bien empieza de nuevo: al lector se le señala que se ponga trucha, que sea águila, que no le tenga miedo a las balas, pero que se cuide de los agujeros que hacen. (127-128).

The extended quotation above represents precisely the type of added narrative information that one will not find in its English counterpart. Since Hinojosa has already rendered into English the text from which this quotation appears, the challenge of putting together the complete narrative is left for readers who can read both languages. While the English rendition has extended introductions to the interviews not found in the Spanish edition, the Spanish edition has other information not found in the English rendition. A comprehensive understanding of this serial text thus requires that readers examine both texts. Monolingual readers of either English or Spanish will be handicapped by their inability to read in the language they do not have any access to. But even readers of both languages will have to know of the existence of different language narrative counterparts to the serial texts they may be reading. Of all the serial texts which have thus far been produced, Becky and Her Friends and Los amigos de Becky demonstrate best how centripetal and centrifugal forces have left their marks in the texts themselves, the characters presented therein, and the languages these characters use to express themselves. But these texts also show how these forces can still have
an effect on the reader's ability to decode the narratives found in these texts.

In a published interview by Reed Way Dasenbrock, conducted in 1986 (but not published until 1988), Hinojosa is asked how he approaches the demand imposed by writing in both English and Spanish. Hinojosa answers by stating that his first two novels were written in Spanish, as the characters lived in a Spanish-speaking milieu. But he then provides a fuller answer after Dasenbrock comments, "Then you weren't really choosing the language as much as the language was choosing itself" (3):

That's right. That answers it perfectly because I started to write the third work—Korean Love Songs (1979)—in Spanish, and I wasted any number of months. But then I realized, after I started in Spanish, that I wasn't happy with it. Then I said, "Well, I'll translate it into English," which I did, and I still wasn't happy with that. Then I realized that I was talking about the Army, which is an all-American institution, and all the orders were given in English, so I said, "My goodness, what am I doing? I'm wasting my time." English was the only language for that situation.

The fourth work, which was written and completed, but not published, in 1978, carries a Spanish title, Claros varones de Belken. It is going to come out this year and translates as "Fair Gentlemen of Belken County" (1986). I wrote it in Spanish and then I helped the translator translate it into English. And it was right that I write it in Spanish because Claros varones has to do with immediately after the Korean War. The present generation had not been born yet, and the generation that I know very well, my generation, we were in our twenties then, so we still had one leg in the Spanish background, and an emerging leg into the English background, so it worked out well. And I began it in Spanish because the young Korean War veterans return to their Spanish-speaking milieu. But then when I transfer the novel up to Austin, to the university, English begins to creep in. Then, when they go back home, either on vacation or for the longer vacation in summer, then they go back to Spanish. (3)

Hinojosa further agrees with Dasenbrock that his choice of language is determined largely by the choice of the language of his characters. He continues:

And by where they were at the time, and by the different situations. And then with the fifth work, Mi querido Rafa (1981; Dear Rafe in English), an
epistolary work, things begin to get complicated. In it, one of my recurring characters, Jehu Malacara, is working in a bank. When he first writes to his cousin, Rafa (or Rafe), it’s in Spanish. But then I realized as I was writing that once you are in the world of business, then English has to muscle in, at all times. As he wrote his letters in Spanish, because he spent eight hours in the bank where English is spoken at all times, English would very naturally creep into his letters, as it does. And then, as the letters go on and on, I noticed that English becomes quite natural to him. He maintains the Spanish, but the English is always there. And this is also analogous to the whole Texas-Mexican experience: once you leave that Spanish-speaking neighborhood, English is bound to take over. And so by the time I write *Rites and Witnesses* (1982), Jehu is now more than hip deep into the English-language milieu, so it’s completely in English. And the same thing with *Partners in Crime* (1985). Between *Partners in Crime* and *Rites*, I wrote *Dear Rafe*, which was the English version of the *Mi querido Rafa* that started the whole thing. (3-4)

Hinojosa’s response here is interesting for several reasons. First, he states that “*Mi querido Rafa*...started the whole thing.” The “thing” being referred to here is the beginning of a trend in the choice of languages that he will continue using in his serial texts; that is, characters speak or otherwise use those languages that are part of the social “milieu” where they find themselves situated. Secondly, however, from this point on in the Series, the appearance of his “renditions” begins taking place, which in a sense undermines the strategy he has set up, a strategy that has his characters using languages that are part of their “milieu.” But before we begin seeing his “renditions,” in *Mi querido Rafa* we can observe his attempt at more specifically explaining which languages his characters will use in specific situations.

In *Mi querido Rafa*, when the setting is once again exclusively in the Valley, the languages used by his characters are considerably mixed. Thus this text demonstrates his first intentional use of the code-switching indigenous to the Valley. In this text’s “Introduction” (“Malilla Platicada”--[“A Damned Lecturing”])
of Mi querido Rafa and later in the “Introduction” (“A Reasonable Explanation of Things to Come”) of the English rendition (Dear Rafe) of this text, a more specific rationale for the languages found used in his texts is given by P. Galindo, a rationale that is once again governed by the languages the characters will use. In Mi querido Rafa and in Dear Rafe, respectively, the following “caveats” in their “Introductions” can be found:

Caveat final: ¿Sería mucho pedir que no se sorprendieran cuando los Anglos Texanos hablen inglés? Es su idioma natural y casero; se sabe que unos hablan español y cuando así suceda, el español saldrá por delante. Si se hablan ambos idiomas así saldrán también. También es natural que la raza del Valle hable más en español. Ahora, si la raza sale en inglés, así se reportará. (Hay que ser fidedigno, hay que ser etc.) Jehú mismo, en las cartas que escribe a Rafa Buenrostro, nos da la pauta de ese engranaje lingüístico-social del Valle. Tal engranaje, que casi cabe llamárselo levadura, es algo que mucho ha interesado a un amigo de la juventud segunda del esc.: el docto [sic] (también doctor en filosofía) señor profesor José Limón. (8)

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Final caveat: Belken County mexicanos, aside from their northern Mexican Spanish language, speak English, by and large; the Belken County Anglo Texans, aside from their predominant Midwestern American English, also speak Spanish, by and large. Proximity creates psychological bonds and proximity also breeds children, as we’ve been told. The truth, then, über alles. (8)

These two “Introductions” in separate yet similar texts serve to explain the languages used by Texas Anglo and Texas Mexican characters in these two serial texts. As can clearly be seen, the “Introduction” for Mi querido Rafa is considerably longer than the one for Dear Rafe, and the reason for this discrepancy can be found in the actual texts themselves. Dear Rafe is written almost entirely in English, whereas Mi querido Rafa is the best representation of what the narrator calls “ese engranaje lingüístico-social del Valle,” or “that Valley socio-linguistic shifting between English and Spanish” (translation mine).
The shifting between languages, or code-switching, does not exist in Dear Rafe as it does in Mi querido Rafa, and for this reason, the “Introduction” in Mi querido Rafa must more fully explain and introduce the language-shifting that is to follow. P. Galindo’s final “caveat” also warns readers that characters in the Valley speak both languages, and one should therefore not be surprised when one hears Texas Anglos speaking Spanish, as one should also not be surprised when we hear Texas Mexicans speaking English. The narrator further informs us that whatever language a character actually uses, that language shall be found and used in the text, as it is the narrator’s belief that trustworthiness and reliability—or the ethos of a character’s language usage—is highly important to the narration of the text.

In constructing centripetal coherence through manipulation of different cultural codes within and among his serial texts and their renditions, the author has had also to recognize and react to the centrifugal forces acting upon the Valley’s unique historical cultural codes. His efforts to attain this intertextual serial coherence must be taken into account to see not only his attempt to recuperate the Valley’s mixed languages and cultural codes, but also to prevent readers from forming inaccurate conclusions concerning the textual production of his literary texts. Such an examination (of the textual production of his serial texts and renditions) is needed in order to avoid conclusions that can be formed by readers who might see and read just one of his texts and conclude that the writer only writes in one language. This type of conclusion has often plagued Mexican American writers and their literary works, as English and Spanish language and literature departments have tended to believe that Chicano texts are always written in a language that does not fall within their particular literary
or language domain. Avoiding such conclusions will also be helpful if readers are to see how Hinojosa’s efforts have worked to recuperate and inscribe the languages and cultural codes indigenous to the Valley, particularly as texts using these different languages and cultural codes came to be published as part of a single continuing series.

These efforts to create centripetal coherence also represent attempts to create cohesiveness among texts that were at first not part of a continuing series. As he added texts (written in a particular language) to make his serial texts cohere, so he attempted to gain a broader reading audience through the appearance of his own English renditions, as opposed to translations prepared by others. These renditions are quite different from the published translations because the translations tend to be literal transcriptions from one language to another. His English renditions, in contrast, reproduce the same narrative as their Spanish counterparts, but in a manner that lays more emphasis on the cultural codes left intact after the inherent loss of the codes from another language. The emphasis on the remaining cultural codes will serve to convey a comparable meaning, a comparable narrative. These comparable narratives are nonetheless different, as the production of these renditions clearly represents an added dimension to the Series. An examination of the publication history of Hinojosa’s serial texts is therefore required to see how he actually came to produce them. This publication history will show the languages used, the year of publication and hence the sequence of publication, and the order in which they might be read as part of a continuing Series. The different editions in which his serial texts came to be produced will also be noted.
His first two texts, Estampas del valle y otras obras (1973) and Klail City y sus alredores (1976) [the latter text once being published under the title Generaciones y semblanzas (1977),] were written primarily in Spanish, with the former and the latter text appearing with translations by someone other than the author. One of his later texts, Mi querido Rafa (1981), was written in a mixture of Spanish and English through code-switching. Another later text, Claros varones de Belken/Fair Gentlemen of Belken County (1986), was also written entirely in Spanish and appears as a bilingual text. But three other texts, Korean Love Songs (1978), Rites and Witnesses (1982), Partners in Crime: A Rafe Buenrostro Mystery (1985), have been written entirely in English. Further, Estampas del valle, Klail City y sus alredores, and Mi querido Rafa have since been rendered by Hinojosa into English and retitled The Valley (1983), Klail City (1987), and Dear Rafe (1985), respectively. Claros varones de Belken/Fair Gentlemen from Belken County remains the only work that Hinojosa has not rendered into English; however, this work appears as a bilingual text, with Julia Cruz as its English translator. And Becky and Her Friends (1990) represents the first time that Hinojosa published one of his English renditions before publishing its Spanish counterpart, Los amigos de Becky (1990), as all his previous renditions have been published after the Spanish original text.

The forthcoming novel, The Worthless Servants, is set in Korea during the war and is likely to be entirely in English; it also will use the genres of journals and letters. An excerpt from this novel recently appeared in a collection of “new Latino [short] fiction”--The Iguana Dreams (1992). The story there, “The Worthless Servants,” which uses the genre of journal entries, is set entirely in Korea, and is also entirely in English. Also forthcoming is a two-volume
“Collected Works,” gathering all of Hinojosa’s literary texts up to The Worthless Servants. Also to be included in this two-volume collection will be Hinojosa’s English rendition of Claros varones de Belken, which the author has said is his next writing project after completing The Worthless Servants.²

This description of the languages used can be understood differently by examining a chronological list of the primary serial texts by the year they were published, which will more closely show us Hinojosa’s general trend of publishing from Spanish to English (with Los amigos de Becky being the only exception to this trend--so far³):

- **Estampas del valle y otras obras**--1973 (Spanish only, with a translation)****
- **Klail City y sus alredores**--1976 (Spanish only)*****
- **Generaciones y semblanzas**--1977 (with a translation by Rosaura Sánchez)***
- **Korean Love Songs**--1978 (English only)***
- **Mi querido Rafa**--1981 (Spanish and English mixture through code-switching)*
- **Rites and Witnesses**--1982 (English only)*
- **The Valley**--1983 (English rendition)**
- **Dear Rafe**--1985 (English rendition)*
- **Partners in Crime: A Rafe Buenrostro Mystery**--1985 (English only)*
- **Claros varones de Belken/Fair Gentlemen of Belken County**--1986 (with a translation by Julia Cruz)**
- **Klail City**--1987 (English rendition)*
- **Becky and Her Friends**--1990 (English only)*
Los amigos de Becky--1990 (Spanish only)*

The Worthless Servants--forthcoming [probably in 1993 (probably English only)*

Hinojosa's serial texts have been published by at least five presses in the United States and so far by at least three presses from abroad. Seven of the texts listed above were published by Arte Público Press (*), two by Bilingual Press (**), two by Editorial Justa Publications (***)], one by Quinto Sol Publications (****), and one by Casa de las Américas (***** from Havana, Cuba. But these presses do not account for all the editions or publishing houses under which Hinojosa's texts have appeared, as a small press in San Francisco published yet another edition of Klaiq City y sus airesdors--Generaciones, notas, brechas [Generations, Notes, and Impressions (1980)]. He has also had numerous essays and short stories published in various journals, magazines, newspapers, and literary collections since at least 1973 when his texts first began being published.

As I noted in chapter one, when Arte Público Press first began publishing Hinojosa's texts in 1981, a shift in the direction of Hinojosa's language-choice to English can be observed. This shift in direction is also clearly marked by Hinojosa's acceptance of a teaching appointment and then an endowed chair in the English department at the University of Texas at Austin. The publication of The Valley by Bilingual Press in 1983 marks the first English rendition by Hinojosa, but his English renditions were hereafter published only by Arte Público Press. And an early serial text--ostensibly the fourth text in the series, Claros varones--was published years after its textual completion by Bilingual Press in 1986. A change in the location and university affiliation of this press
from Ypsilanti, Michigan to Tempe, Arizona is one reason accounting for the delayed publication of this work. Another more immediate reason why *Claros varones* was published much later than originally intended is that it had earlier been accepted for publication by Justa Publications. According to Hinojosa, however, this press suffered “reversals,” which prevented it from publishing *Claros varones* at a much earlier date. Thus, though it was not published until 1983, *Claros varones* was ready for publication much earlier and represents the fourth in the series and in the narrative line. Bilingual Press has plans to republish Hinojosa’s first two serial texts, which have been out of print since 1977, as Spanish-only texts.

An examination of the publication history of Hinojosa’s serial texts shows that the languages used by Hinojosa in his “Death Trip Series” have generally tended to be Spanish in his early texts and English in his later texts. This general tendency is interesting because of the rhetorical strategy of having characters use those languages which they might typically use in the different cultural situations where they might find themselves within a narrative text. The early texts mainly have characters in Texas Mexican cultural situations where Texas Mexican cultural codes can be used most effectively. As the author begins having his characters enter non-Texas Mexican cultural centers, we begin seeing a concomitant shift in the deployment of Texas Anglo cultural codes. This shift into Anglo-dominated domains is accompanied by the introduction of English renditions of his early serial texts, which further heightens the complexities in the production of his serial texts.

One might want to speculate that the author, as a member of an academic English department, had to produce English texts in that department’s language
domain in order to secure his position. While such speculation is to some extent warranted, it is doubtful that the author would ascribe to such motivation. But the coincidence of finding the production of English texts and English renditions at the same time that he gained a position within an English department should not be entirely overlooked. This is especially important as Hinojosa’s academic background and academic degrees are, ironically, all from Spanish departments. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that his last published text, Los amigos de Becky, is entirely in Spanish and that by 1990 Hinojosa’s position in the English department was unquestionably secure.

Hinojosa’s leading position is currently complicated by the fact that during the last couple of years, he has been the director of the graduate creative writing program at the University of Texas, where he has been criticized for not being as “flashy” a writer-administrator as befits a program with a $15 million endowment from James Michener. In a recent article in an October 1992 issue of Texas Monthly that discusses Michener’s donation, Helen Thompson says

A legacy of the original writing program is Rolando Hinojosa-Smith, a genial professor in his sixties who is well liked by his colleagues. But even with an international reputation as a Chicano writer, he isn’t considered to be part of the mainstream, and he has never been published by a major publishing house. With the advent of the munificent endowment and a passel of administrative complexities, observers speculate that a new director for the center—a flashier writer-administrator from the outside—might be a better drawing card. (92)

This type of statement shows that Chicano writers, even those of the highest stature like Rolando Hinojosa, will have difficulty gaining academic respect.

In “The Form of Texas Mexican Fiction,” Ramón Saldívar writes about the troubles Mexican Americans had within academia in the 1930s and 1940s. He specifically refers to Rolando Hinojosa and Tomás Rivera when he states that
A Texas-Mexican growing up in the 1930s and 1940s could have no illusion of alleviating his [her] alienation from contemporary life: he [she] was alienation personified, a child of two cultures, neither of which recognized him [her] fully as its legitimate issue. Rivera’s admission that, as a newly graduated English major from Southwest Texas State, he could not get a job teaching English because he was Mexican or Hinojosa’s stories about being told by Valley newcomers to go back to his native land are all too common. (139)

The illusions that neither Rivera and Hinojosa could hold about alleviating their alienation from life in Texas continues past the 1940s, as Rivera graduated with both a B.A. and a M. Ed. from Southwest Texas State University in 1958 and 1964, respectively. Although Rivera eventually received his PhD from the University of Oklahoma in 1969, this graduate degree was from the department of Romance Languages—not the English department. Like Rivera, Hinojosa left Texas and gained graduate degrees outside the state, with his PhD coming from the Spanish department at the University of Illinois in 1963. Both returned to Texas to begin their professional academic careers as associate professors in Spanish departments.

Ramón Saldívar further states that “In writing about that curious figure, the marginal man of the Border, the Texas-Mexican, Rivera and Hinojosa had to turn to narrative forms which shunned easy synthesis, and easy unity, which shunned, that is to say, exactly those features of narrative which the arbiters of narrative style from Aristotle in classical Greece to the editors in modern New York have prescribed” (139). In addition, Saldívar compares Rivera and Hinojosa’s literary texts to texts written by Texas Anglos:

The novels of Anglo-Texans, as I have said, have tended to apply “realism” and its perceptual schemata—that is, features like untroubled temporality, unified character, or definitive beginnings, middles, and endings of plots. It is worth recalling, however, that what is “natural” in viewing the world tends to be defined by those who have the authority to define something as natural. Those without authority or legitimacy may or may not agree with
this definition of what constitutes the natural. But without power to define, they really aren't asked if they agree. Until very recently Texas-Mexicans haven't been acknowledged to possess the authority to define what is a “natural” or “realistic” way of depicting Texas life. Texas literature has too often defined the Texas-Mexican without pausing to consider whether this is a definition that the Texas-Mexican could accept as a true one.

It is also the case that all of those notions of unity and coherence associated with realistic plot lines tend to beg the questions they are supposed to answer: can one tell the story of contemporary life in an uncomplicated, natural way? Pursuing continuities of form, Anglo-Texas writers have implicitly answered this question with a definitive “Yes, the traditional literary forms will suffice.” But in doing so, they sometimes have also been blind to the troubling discontinuities revealed by the stories they tell. This is a blindness which neither Rivera nor Hinojosa suffers from.

(140)

Because Texas Mexicans had seldom been asked if Texas literary narratives depict life in Texas in a manner that accounts for the “troubling discontinuities” referred to by Saldívar, the narrative texts of both Rivera and especially those of Hinojosa stand as responses to the blindness inherent in many Texas Anglo literary texts. The next chapter of this study will therefore turn to two Texas literary texts which depict the Valley from diverging ideological positions, for it is such texts that Hinojosa's Series responds to and dialogues with as he continues to build on his project.
This information was given to me by the author during an informal interview.

This information about his next rendition and about the two-volume collection of his works was given to me by the author over an informal lunch meeting. Arte Público Press will be publishing the two-volume collection, and will probably also be publishing the English rendition of Claros varones de Belken. The author also told me during this interview that The Worthless Servants uses the genres of journal entries and letters (presumably both written by Rafe) to build his narrative.

In an interview the author has informed me that Becky and Her Friends was first written in Spanish but was later rendered and first published in English. Since this is the case, the publication of the English version of Becky, while appearing first in English, was actually first written in Spanish. While they both have the same year of publication, 1990, the Spanish edition did not appear until 1991.
Chapter IV

Literary Responses to Valley History

Te prometí contarte algo de la barbacoa y aquí va: Invitaron a medio mundo pero vinieron muchos más. Una buena señora (bolilla, regordete, y algo mío, diría yo) se sentó a mi lado; yo estaba escuchando un cuento algo largo y raído por no decir caduco (¡jucó!) que contaba Mrs. Ben Timmens. Por fin acabó su cuento y casi al instante se lanza la recién llegada: “Well, just how many Mexicans did Noddy invite?” Eramos cinco en el grupo y yo 1) el único raza there; and 2) el más cerca a ella. Trataron de callarla pero ésta seguía dale que dale y los demás no sabían qué hacer con ella hasta que divisó a la Powerhouse y allá se fue. Well now, te puedes imaginar en lo que aquellas mujeres se vieron para disculpar o mejorar o deshacer lo que la amigaza había dicho.

Creo que todos necesitamos presenciar algo así de vez en cuando para que no se nos olvide y para que se nos quite la idea infundada de que todo va muy bien.--from Jehú Malacara’s letter (#4) to Rafa Buenrostro, in Mi querido Rafa.¹

Rhetorician Kenneth Burke once remarked that “Critical and imaginative works are answers to questions posed by the situation in which they arose. They are not merely answers, they are strategic answers, stylized answers” (Philosophy of Literary Form 1). In this chapter, I will move from an analysis of Rolando Hinojosa’s Series to look at the place the Series occupies in the literary landscape of the United States, Texas, and the Valley. Hinojosa’s literary works are, as this analysis will suggest, responses—or, to use Burke’s words, “answers to questions posed by the situation in which they arose.” The background against which the Series stands reveals intertextual relations of extra-textual literary, historical, and cultural realities that have usually been conceived as lying outside the works. We might best get at this background or
literary landscape by examining two novels which Hinojosa’s *The Klail City Death Trip Series* are in dialogue with, *She Came to the Valley: A Novel of the Lower Rio Grande Valley* (1943) by Cleo Dawson and *George Washington Gómez: A Mexicotexan Novel* (1940/1990) by Américo Paredes. While other texts, both literary and non-literary, have certainly influenced Hinojosa, the novels by Dawson and Paredes are most appropriate for this study because they occupy a unique place within the literary and historical landscape of Lower Rio Grande Valley literature. Indeed, the forces shaping Hinojosa’s serial texts can be seen operating in these earlier literary texts, particularly as those forces shape families, the land, and languages.

To be sure, Hinojosa’s serial texts are not just part of Valley literature; his texts also enter into the literary landscapes of Texas, the Southwest, the United States, Latin America, Spain, and parts of Asia, as well as Modern, Postmodern, and literature of the western world in general. The literary traditions found in all these areas have a place for the kinds of literary texts that Hinojosa has produced, so limiting Hinojosa’s serial texts to any one area would be problematic and would not do justice his texts. The wider and more diverse the particular landscape is, in fact, the less problematic Hinojosa’s texts are. However, the opposite is also significantly the case, because the smaller the landscape is, the more Hinojosa’s serial texts stand out; as works of minority discourse, Hinojosa’s serial texts situate themselves in positions that can stand in direct opposition to the dominant group’s discourse. But Hinojosa’s serial texts are not the first Chicano texts to stand in opposition to dominant discourses. As Américo Paredes’s landmark study has shown in *With His Pistol in His Hand: A Border Ballad and Its Hero* (1958), Chicano cultural texts like
borderland *corridos* had previously defied the dominant group's oppression and the many injustices against Mexican Americans.

This is particularly the case within the landscapes of Texas and Southwestern literature, where Chicano narratives like those of Rolando Hinojosa and Américo Paredes are forms of what Barbara Harlow calls "resistance literature." As she suggests, "Essential then to the narratives of resistance is the demand they make on the reader in their historical referencing and the burden of historical knowledge such referencing enjoins" (Resistance Literature 80). Harlow goes on to state that

Historical and political events together with literary periodization are being reworked in these narratives and the formal experimentation which characterizes them, the manipulation of structures of plot, character, and setting, resonate within the social structures of the resistance movements themselves and the collective and popular needs to which they respond. Especially prominent in these works, which combine "fiction" with documentary, are the issues of gender, race, and class and each of the novels...can be seen to locate its social and ideological analysis around one or more of these questions" (86).

...According to Michel Foucault, "we should abandon a whole tradition that allows us to imagine that knowledge can exist only where the power relations are suspended and that knowledge can develop only outside its injunctions, its demands and its interests." The connection between knowledge and power, the awareness of the exploitation of knowledge by the interests of power to create a distorted historical record, is central to resistance narratives. The tradition to which Foucault is referring is a tradition which these narratives seek directly to transform. Within the texts and their analytical representation of the social histories of their characters that tradition is critically examined. The texts themselves, however, are immediate interventions into the historical record, attempting to produce and impart new historical facts and analyses, what Edward Said has referred to as "new objects for a new kind of knowledge." This requires that the historical record and the present agenda be rewritten. (116)

As Harlow states, resistance literatures seek to transform the established historical record in ways that, according to Ramón Saldívar, avoid being "blind
to the troubling discontinuities revealed by the stories they tell," through the dominant group's historical record. Without question, Chicano writers like Hinojosa and Paredes require of their readers a significant amount of historical knowledge without which their texts could hardly be forms of resistance literature. Chicano literary texts are thus a form of cultural production "that developed within a situation similar to that of classical colonialism,"...and "...reflected the communal concern with what [Franz] Fanon described as the invading culture's systematic molding of history to its own image, with its corollary, the degrading distortion of the role played by the dominated peoples" (Bruce-Novoa, "History as Content" 29).

Before examining Dawson and Paredes's novels later in this chapter, however, I wish to discuss the general Texas and Southwestern landscape as described by one of its most prominent writers, Larry McMurtry. Positioning Mexican American literature next to McMurtry's description of Southwestern literature reveals a hierarchy that leaves Chicano literary works at the bottom and most marginalized position within this body of literature. Understanding this relational hierarchy demands that we go back to the early part of this century to see how the hierarchy evolved. Hinojosa's work must be understood as responding not just to other Chicano literary works, such as Paredes's novel, but also to Southwestern literary works in general. Placed next to these inter- and extra-textual contexts, the position that Hinojosa's texts hold within a broader modern historical and literary landscape can be more readily understood.

Speaking from the position of "Dean" of Texas Letters at a Dedication Address for the Southwestern Writers Collection at Southwest Texas State
University, John Graves recently announced that:

It [Southwestern literature] is still growing, this body of expression flavored and textured by the natural framework and history and social circumstances of our part of the world. It is bringing forth new viewpoints on the region’s past and the remnants of that past. It is examining urban life in an urban time. And it is being enhanced by the work of people from ethnic groups whose ways once either went largely unrecorded or were interpreted by Anglo outsiders. When we read the work of writers like—just for instance—Rolando Hinojosa-Smith or Américo Paredes or Larry McMurtry, we are compelled to modify in some degree our view of ourselves and the world around us. We are broadened. Our literature is thus still performing the functions of shaping us as people and furnishing us with resonance.

Sometimes furnishing us with dissonance also, but that is part of the whole. A very big part sometimes, and too often it used to be glossed over.²

Graves’ statement (in 1991) is important because it stands as one of the very rare times an important member of the Texas literary establishment has publicly acknowledged the contributions of ethnic writers to the body of Southwestern and Texas literary works. But his statement is nevertheless qualified by indicating that in the past the “ways” of ethnic groups and their minority texts went “largely unrecorded or interpreted by Anglo outsiders.” When ethnic groups eventually began producing and publishing their own literary texts within this literary landscape, it should not have been surprising that they would inevitably reveal a dissonance that in the past “too often...used to be glossed over.”

Graves’ inclusion of Larry McMurtry in the same breath with Rolando Hinojosa and Américo Paredes is also important, as any analysis of the place Chicano writers have within Southwestern literature requires situating them alongside McMurtry. In 1968, McMurtry disrupted the Texas and Southwestern literary establishment with his infamous essay, “Southwestern Literature?” But
the disruption this essay caused was not "glossed over," as McMurtry was
reviled by many because of his extraordinarily candid criticism of the major
literary icons. This essay caused such a disruption, in fact, that he was
compelled to respond to his critics by writing a second and equally disruptive
essay in 1981: "Ever a Bridegroom: Reflections on the Failure of Texas
Literature." One reason these essays prompted so much controversy is that in
them McMurtry laid the "Big Texas Three"--J. Frank Dobie, Roy Bedichek, and
Walter Prescott Webb--"in a narrow grave" by claiming that "the books of all
three men were given more in the way of praise than they really deserved"
("Bridegroom" 13). About Texas literature, he further claims that "our literature is
not evenly minor--some Texas books are better than others--but none of it is
major" (15).

McMurtry's indictment against the status of the "Big Three" writers and of
Texas and Southwestern literature in general is based on several factors:

It is appropriate--indeed, inevitable--that a critique of Texas letters
begin with the work of the Big Three: Roy Bedichek, W. P. Webb, and J.
Frank Dobie. I wish it weren't inevitable--I had just as soon avoid it. The
world outside never heard of Bedichek, hasn't read Webb, and isn't
particularly interested in Dobie. The world inside doesn't read much and
doesn't read well, but the three men were loved and honored here. Their
merits as men were long ago confused with their merits as writers, and
quite understandably: their merits as men were exceptionally and easily
perceived, and few of the people who loved them had any skill in judging
books. They were paid every homage but the homage of acute attention.
Such criticism as they got probably they got from one another, for during
the years of their prime there was no reviewer in the state with either the
guts or the insight to say them nay. ("Southwestern Literature?" 31-32)

This indictment reflects a peculiarly late modernist position that McMurtry
establishes for himself through his criticism of the traditions of Texas and
Southwestern letters. By placing himself outside these literary traditions, he
inevitably places himself above them. This modernist position sets a historical context from which to view part of the literary landscape surrounding the works of Texas Mexican literature such as those of Paredes and Hinojosa. Such a historical literary context is important to note if one is to understand the literary and social milieu of the texts informing the production of Mexican American texts in Texas and the Southwest. As this study shows, this milieu sets up a relational hierarchy between different kinds of social and literary texts, with modernist urban texts occupying the upper echelon followed by Southwestern or Texas literary texts about the frontier. Chicano literary texts are thus left in the lowest and most marginal tier within this social and literary hierarchy, as McMurtry’s views reveal an exclusion endemic of the literary traditions in question.

About the Big Three, McMurtry further charges that “Both [Bedichek and Dobie] seemed to feel that the literature of earlier centuries possessed a superior vitality, but neither apparently bothered to read enough modern literature to allow them to argue the point intelligently. Dobie in particular was given to reckless fulminations against the modern—some of his disciples have picked up the habit and will hardly trust themselves with anything later than Plato” (“Southwestern Literature?” 37). And about the historian Walter Prescott Webb and his text, The Texas Rangers: A Century of Frontier Defense (1935), McMurtry states that “The flaw in the book is a flaw in attitude. Webb admired the Rangers inordinately, and as a consequence the book mixes homage with history in a manner one can only think sloppy. His facts about the Rangers contradict again and again his characterization of them as ‘quiet, deliberate, gentle’ men” (40). About this text, McMurtry also argues that “In a book of
almost six hundred pages he records virtually no instance in which a Ranger treats either a Mexican or a Negro as anything but a recognized inferior, and he seems to accept the still-common assumption that a Ranger can tell whether a Mexican is honest or dishonest simply by looking at him" (42).

McMurtry goes on to describe the Texas border and the Rangers' historical place in this area. This description is important because it shows not only the intimidating role the Texas Rangers have historically played in the Valley; but also serves as an example of discourse in the sixties which still describes Mexican Americans as Mexicans:

There are places, apparently, where the passage of a century changes very little, and the Texas border is such a place. One gains no popularity there today by suggesting that Mexicans have rights to something other than air, frijoles, and goat's milk. The farm-labor disputes of 1967--disputes in which the Texas Rangers played a suspect role--make this very clear. I know a farm manager, a man but recently migrated from the Valley to the High Plains, who was sincerely shocked by the fact that Mexicans were beginning to want houses to live in. Tents and truck-beds, fifty-cent an hour cash and a free goat every week or two no longer satisfied them. They had come to consider themselves human beings, an attitude which filled the manager with astonishment and vague dismay. When Mexicans become thus aberrated it is time, in Texas, to call in the Rangers. (41-42)

While McMurtry can show how the Rangers were still seen by Anglo outsiders, his language nevertheless reflects the legacy that Walter Prescott Webb in effect created for the Texas Rangers, a language that undoubtedly did not escape Chicano writers like Paredes and Hinojosa. José Limón records Paredes' analysis of Webb as a historian:

Humor, irony, and inversion, however, best serve Paredes in attacking hegemonic Anglo racist discourses about Mexicans in Texas, and here too he borrows from the corrido tradition which often makes fun of Anglos. Paredes quotes the dominant Anglo historical authority on the subject of Mexicans. “Without disparagement” says Webb, “there is a cruel streak in the Mexican nature” (Webb 1935:14) attributable partly to the heritage of the Spanish Inquisition and partly to Mexican Indian “blood,” the latter,
however, “when compared with that of the Plains Indian, was as ditch water” (1931:125-126). Nonetheless, despite his “cruel streak,” the Mexican is an inferior warrior; “the whine of the leaden slugs stirred in him an irresistible impulse to travel with rather than against the music” (1935:14). To all this, Paredes wryly comments:

Professor Webb does not mean to be disparaging. One wonders what his opinion might have been when he was in a less scholarly mood and not looking at the Mexican from the objective point of view of the historian (1971:17).

Later, in his discussion of the shooting between [Gregorio] Cortez and Sheriff Morris, Paredes ironically appropriates and juxtaposes Webb’s observations in a new context. After Morris is shot, his deputy runs, according to Paredes, preferring to “travel with rather than against the music” made by “the whine of leaden slugs” (1971:63).4 (44-45)

Paredes’ lone voice here is unique, and further corroborates McMurtry’s observation about Webb and the Texas Rangers. By showing how the Texas Rangers were still viewed as levelers against “Mexicans” along the borderlands during the 1960s, McMurtry’s statement also shows that the stereotyping that Webb engaged in was not sufficiently ameliorated for Mexican Americans in Texas or the Southwest later in the twentieth century.

In a comparable study of how “Others” are viewed by the White Man, Edward Said (in Orientalism) presents ideas that are useful for analyzing how Mexican Americans have been “created” to elevate and legitimize the status of whites. In turn, Said’s ideas should be compared with those of a Texas Mexican historian, thus showing their ideological similarities:

The other circumstance common to the creation of the White Man and Orientalism is the “field” commanded by each, as well as the sense that such a field entails peculiar modes, even rituals, of behavior, learning, and possession. Only an Occidental could speak of Orientals, for example, just as it was the White Man who could designate and name the coloreds, or nonwhites. Every statement made by Orientalists or White Men (who were usually interchangeable) conveyed a sense of the irreducible distance separating white from colored, or Occidental from Oriental; moreover, behind each statement there resonated the tradition of experience, learning, and education that kept the Oriental-colored to his [her] position
of object studied by the Occidental-white, instead of vice versa. Where one was in a position of power...the Oriental belonged to a system of rule whose principle was simply to make sure that no Oriental was ever allowed to be independent and rule himself [herself]. The premise there was that since the Orientals were ignorant of self-government, they had better be kept that way for their own good. (228)

In a similar critical text describing how Others are viewed by the dominant group, They Called Them Greasers: Anglo Attitudes toward Mexicans in Texas, 1821-1900, the Texas Mexican historian Arnoldo de León has documented that

Collectively, the many attitudes whites held toward Mexicans went hand in hand with attempts toward oppression. They buttressed the idea that Americans were of superior stock and Tejanos were not, rationalized an elevated place for whites and a subservient one for Mexicans, and justified the notion that Mexican work should be for the good of white society. Those attitudes were at the base of the world that Tejanos had to grapple with in efforts to live a normal life and were among the forces defining what roles those coming from Mexico should assume.

Judging from the few studies that touch upon relations between Anglos and Tejanos in more recent times, these entrenched ethnocentric and racist attitudes held their own for decades into the twentieth century. Segregation, blatant discrimination, disparaging names, and public abuse all reflected a state of mind redolent of the nineteenth century. So did the widely held belief that Tejanos were to keep a place subservient to their benefactors. (Greasers 103)

But reinforcing such racist attitudes are forms of discourse that also carry sexist overtones, which traditionally have gone hand in hand with racism against people of color. This type of sexually charged racist discourse operates in many cultures; for instance, in his major study of the Muslim Orient, Edward Said makes several points that can also be extended to the situation of Texas Mexicans in the 20th century:

If that group of ideas [for latent Orientalism] allowed one to separate Orientals from advanced, civilizing powers, and if the “classical” Orient served to justify both the Orientalist and his disregard of modern Orientals, latent Orientalism also encouraged a peculiarly (not to say invidiously) male conception of the world.... The Oriental male was considered in
isolation from the total community in which he lived and which many Orientalists...have viewed with something resembling contempt and fear. Orientalism itself, furthermore, was an exclusively male province; like so many professional guilds during the modern period, it viewed itself and its subject matter with sexist blinders. This is especially evident in the writing of travelers and novelists: women are usually the creatures of a male power-fantasy. They express unlimited sensuality, they are more or less stupid, and above all they are willing.... Moreover the male conception of the world, in its effect upon the practicing Orientalist, tends to be static, frozen, fixed eternally. The very possibility of development, transformation, human movement—in the deepest sense of the word—is denied the Orient and the Oriental.

...What these widely diffused notions [of a “static male Orientalism”] of the Orient depended on was the almost total absence in contemporary Western culture of the Orient as a genuinely felt and experienced force. For a number of evident reasons the Orient was always in the position both of outsider and of incorporated weak partner for the West. To the extent that Western scholars were aware of contemporary Orientals or Oriental movements of thought and culture, these were perceived either as silent shadows to be animated by the Orientalist, brought into reality by him, or as a kind of cultural and intellectual proletariat useful for the Orientalist’s grander interpretative activity, necessary for his performance as superior judge, learned man, powerful cultural will. I mean to say that in discussions of the Orient, the Orient is all absence; yet we must not forget that the Orientalist’s presence is enabled by the Orient’s effective absence. (207-208)

Said’s ideas of a static male Orientalism are useful for understanding how the constituencies represented in discourse(s) about Texas Mexicans are portrayed within Texas and Southwestern literature. Sexually charged racial discourse can also be found operating in modern texts requiring the absence of Others in institutions where they might effectively challenge their marginalization or complete exclusion.

While the challenge from a modernist perspective that McMurtry brings to the Texas and Southwestern literary establishment disrupts their icons, it does so not just by denying the existence of Others in their texts, but also by using sexually charged language. In his essay, “Mass Culture as Woman:
Modernism’s Other,” Andreas Huyssen states that

What especially interests me here is the notion which gained ground during the 19th century that mass culture is somehow associated with woman while real, authentic culture remains the prerogative of men. The tradition of women’s exclusion from the realm of “high art” does not of course originate in the 19th century, but it does take on new connotations in the age of the industrial revolution and cultural modernization. Stuart Hall is perfectly right to point out that the hidden subject of the mass culture debate is precisely “the masses”--their political and cultural aspirations, their struggles and their pacification via cultural institutions. But when the 19th and early 20th centuries conjured up the threat of the masses “rattling at the gate,” to quote Hall, and lamented the concomitant decline of culture and civilization (which mass culture was invariably accused of causing), there was yet another hidden subject. In the age of nascent socialism and the first major women’s movement in Europe, the masses knocking at the gate were also women, knocking at the gate of a male-dominated culture. It is indeed striking to observe how the political, psychological, and aesthetic discourse around the turn of the century consistently and obsessively genders mass culture and the masses as feminine, while high culture, whether traditional or modern, clearly remains the privileged realm of male activities. (47)

Huyssen’s notion of the obsessive gendering of mass culture and the masses as feminine is important when discussing the place Mexican Americans have historically held in the literary traditions of Texas and the Southwest. Mexican Americans in this region have to be considered as members of the masses, while Anglos occupy the (masculine) position above them. As members of the masses, the cultural production of Mexican Americans in the Southwest disrupts the privileged realm that Anglos (mainly males) have established for themselves. This “privileged realm of male activities” is epitomized by the “Western,” where women are virtually absent from almost all important narrative action. In her study of Westerns, West of Everything: The Inner Life of Westerns, Jane Tompkins makes a claim about what this means for males and females:
In fact, what is most interesting about Westerns at this moment in history is their relation to gender, and especially the way they created a model for men who came of age in the twentieth century. The model was not for women but for men: Westerns insist on this point by emphasizing the importance of manhood as an ideal. It is not one ideal among many, it is the ideal, certainly the only one worth dying for. It doesn’t matter whether a man is a sheriff or an outlaw, a rustler or a rancher, a cattleman or a sheepherder, a miner or a gambler. What matters is that he be a man. That is the only side to be on. The most poignant expression of this sentiment, so characteristic of the genre, comes in the late, and in many ways uncharacteristic, film The Wild Bunch. Robert Ryan, leader of a gang of louts hired by the railroad to catch a gang of thieves to which he used to belong, has just heard one of his crew say something derogatory about the gang they’re chasing. And he replies “We’re after men, and I wish to God I was with them.”

That, I think, is the way the audience of a Western feels when things are going right. “I wish to God I was with them.” I feel that way a lot when I watch Westerns, and sometimes I feel exactly the reverse. (17-18)

However, as McMurtry has pointed out in his own disruptive way, the cultural production of Southwestern literary and celluloid artifacts has to be placed below modernism or “high art,” and hence should be considered as backward, feminine, and therefore inferior “products” for mass consumption.

McMurtry, however, is not without his own faults; indeed, his own views and literary texts do little to move beyond such sexist and racial stereotypes, as the following passage reveals:

If I were recasting the statement to fit myself I would first of all change the figure and eliminate the word “hem”. It suggests the feminine, and the frontier was not feminine, it was masculine. The Metropolis which has now engulfed it is feminine, though perhaps it is an error to sexualize the process even that much. The Metropolis swallowed the Frontier like a small snake swallows a large frog: slowly, not without strain, but inexorably. And if something of the Frontier remains alive in the innards of the Metropolis it is because the process of digestion has only just begun. (44)

McMurtry’s sexualization of the landscape through a binary opposition between the masculine frontier (or country) and the feminine city is problematic
because it goes against several conventions he previously has established. In his “Bridegroom” essay, he says that “Texas writers have paid too much attention to nature, not enough to human nature, and they have been too ready to fall back on the bucolic memoir or country idyll rather than attempting novels, poems, and dramas” (14). He also claims that his collection of essays, In a Narrow Grave: Essays on Texas, marked his “formal farewell to writing about the country” (18). But in an earlier essay questioning the status and existence of Southwestern literature, he states that “Of course one has to be careful not to mix terms, to confuse nature with country and country with anything which is not the city. One can love nature without loving the rural way of life, a distinction which both Bedichek and Dobie sometimes lost sight of. For better or worse, the country has been despoiled. Life in the country nowadays usually means life in or near the small town, and the small towns do not enlarge one’s character, they shrink it” (“Southwestern Literature?” 36). So while McMurtry asserts that Bedichek and Dobie lost sight of the distinction between the country and nature, McMurtry also seems to have lost sight of this distinction, as well as of which space is masculine and which feminine.

For instance, in his “Bridegroom” essay, he says “If nature continues to stimulate him [John Graves] it may be because it too is elusive, feminine, never completely knowable” (30). Thus for McMurtry, nature and the city seem to be feminine, while the frontier or the country seem to be masculine. But a problem arises when one attempts distinguishing between nature and the country, as McMurtry has stated in one essay that the city is feminine, while at the same time claiming in another essay that nature is also feminine. If the city is opposed to the country and if the country is often synonymous with nature, then
which is feminine and which is masculine? McMurtry also claims that what
distinguishes his generation of Texas writers from the previous generation as
represented by the Big Three and their disciples is the former generation’s
attention to nature ("Southwestern Literature?" 35-36). Finally, he believes that
for Texas literature to move on, it must entertain urban situations more than
"Country-Western" situations; that is, feminine situations should be more
privileged than masculine ones.

Yet in 1985 McMurtry wrote the commercially successful Pulitzer Prize
winning "Western" novel, Lonesome Dove. His epigraph to this novel reveals a
good deal about his perspective towards the frontier: "All America lies at the end
of the wilderness road, and our past is not a dead past, but still lives in us. Our
forefathers had civilization inside themselves, the wild outside. We live in the
civilization they created, but within us the wilderness still lingers. What they
dreamed, we live, and what they lived, we dream" (T.K. Whipple, Study Out the
Land). This quotation homogenizes America and the people living within it,
asserting that what existed prior to the entrance of the European as a
wilderness no longer exists except within dreams. The absence of this
wilderness is what appeals to the sensibility and dreams of "Americans," which
Southwestern and Texas writers of the dominant group have used as an
important part of their cultural motif. This absence, however, is much like the
absence of a modern Orient necessary for Orientalism to exist as a "field" or
genre.

Turned into a very successful television mini-series, the novel Lonesome
Dove is based on a 1949 movie called The Streets of Laredo, which itself is a
remake of a movie called The Texas Rangers (1936), which in turn had been
based on Walter Prescott Webb’s historical text, *The Texas Rangers: A Century of Frontier Defense* [1935] (J.D. Saldivar, “Chicano Border Narratives” 169-170). What this chronology suggests is that while McMurtry has spent his energies lambasting the Big Three, he nods indirectly to one of them by writing a novel and helping to produce a celluloid mini-series which would continue what his predecessor had begun decades earlier. While McMurtry still does not definitively reveal whether or not he sees the frontier as masculine, it is clear that he has returned to a frontier motif in *Lonesome Dove*, even as he has been arguing against doing so. He thus returns to the masculine frontier, where men dominate and where women and Mexicans are stereotyped or nonexistent, even though, as Huyssen has argued, this form of “Mass cultural production is diametrically opposed to masculine modernism, and ‘high art’” (50).

Huyssen also states that in the dichotomy between mass culture and modernism, early discourses about modernism always identified mass culture as feminine. However, for Huyssen, “the problem is not the desire to differentiate between forms of high art and depraved forms of mass culture and its co-options. The problem is rather the persistent gendering as feminine of that which is devalued” (53). He further argues that

the repudiation of *Trivialliteratur* has always been one of the constitutive features of a modernist aesthetic intent on distancing itself and its products from the trivialities and banalities of everyday life. Contrary to the claims of champions of the autonomy of art, contrary also to the ideologists of textuality, the realities of modern life and the ominous expansion of mass culture throughout the social realm are always already inscribed into the articulation of aesthetic modernism. Mass culture has always been the hidden subtext of the modernist project. (47)

The modernist aesthetic is thus more a “reaction formation rather than a heroic feat steeled in the fires of the modern experience” (53). And what the
modernist aesthetic reacts to are the masses:

“Crowds are somewhat like the sphinx of ancient fable; it is necessary to arrive at a solution of the problems offered by the psychology or to resign ourselves to being devoured by them.” Male fears of an engulfing femininity are here projected onto the metropolitan masses, who did indeed represent a threat to the rational bourgeois order. The haunting specter of a loss of power combines with fear of losing one’s fortified and stable ego boundaries, which represent a *sine qua non* of male psychology in that bourgeois order. We may want to relate Le Bon’s social psychology of the masses back to modernism’s own fears of being sphinxed. Thus the nightmare of being devoured by mass culture through co-option, commodification, and the “wrong” kind of success is the constant fear of the modernist artist, who tries to stake out his territory by fortifying the boundaries between genuine art and inauthentic mass culture. (52-53)

By seeing Larry McMurtry as a modernist positioning himself, as a writer, against the Big Three and their disciples, a group described as having “an aversion to twentieth century literature” and not having read “enough modern literature to argue the point intelligently...,” one can therefore read the Big Three (and their disciples) as the threatened rational bourgeois order (“Southwestern Literature?” 37). The Lower Rio Grande Valley’s farm-labor disputes between Texas Mexicans and Texas Anglo farmers in the 1960s, as indicated by McMurtry, threatened this order.

In his “Postscript, 1987” to his “Bridegroom” essay, McMurtry states that his biggest regret about that essay was its title, since the word he had in mind was “bridesmaid” and not “bridegroom” (40). These terms are significant because the terms place him in a different relationship to the subject of the essay. If he indeed would have preferred using the term bridesmaid, this would position him as an unmarried woman next to the Big Three, standing at the alter with Texas literature, which he states has failed him. And if this literature has failed him, it is because these writers have continued to pay “too much attention to nature,
not enough to human nature” (14).

Another failure of Texas literature for McMurtry is that “...it is disgracefully insular and uninformed. Writing nourished by reading--broad, curious, sustained reading; it flows from a profound alertness, fine tuned by both literature and life. Perhaps we have not yet sloughed off the frontier notion that reading is idle or sissified. At the moment our books are protein-deficient, though the protein is there to be had, in other literatures. Until we have better readers it is most unlikely that we will have better writers” (“Bridegroom” 22-23). If Texas writers and readers still hold to the frontier notion of reading as “idle or sissified,” which he seems to be suggesting, then this would mean that they are too masculine to create what for him are “the echoes, allusions, correspondences, and restatements with which most richly textured books abound” (22). This in turn would seem to imply that what they write about is to be repudiated and devalued, much as Huyssen suggests modernists do when repudiating products of mass culture--Trivialliteratur.

But then what position does McMurtry take if he actually intended using the term bridesmaid instead of bridegroom, especially after writing a novel like Lonesome Dove? The answer to this question might be found when he states that “In Texas, rampant good-old-boy-and-girlism has produced exactly that: a pond of self-satisfied frogs” (“Bridegroom” 23). But as previously noted, he has stated that “The Metropolis swallowed the Frontier like a small snake swallows a large frog: slowly, not without strain, but inexorably. And if something of the Frontier remains alive in the innards of the Metropolis it is because the process of digestion has only just begun” (“Southwestern Literature?” 44). If the large frog in the latter quotation signifies the Big Three, then the small snake
swallowing the large frog(s) signifies McMurtry. And snakes, however small, signify masculinity, although in this case this snake has been designated by McMurtry as the Metropolis, which stands in opposition to the frontier. Since McMurtry has identified himself with the Metropolis, which he calls feminine, and in opposition to the frontier, which he calls masculine, while at the same time describing the Metropolis as a small snake (which is a not so vague reference to a clitoris), McMurtry could be said to be playing an ironic role fitting a description Huyssen calls the “imaginary femininity of male authors”:

...[this] phenomenon has a lot to do with the increasingly marginal position of literature and the arts in a society in which masculinity is identified with action, enterprise, and progress—with the realms of business, industry, science, and law. At the same time, it has also become clear that the imaginary femininity of male authors, which often grounds their oppositional stance vis-a-vis bourgeois society, can easily go hand in hand with the exclusion of real women from the literary enterprise and with the misogyny of bourgeois patriarchy itself. (“Mass Culture” 45)

Huyssen further notes that “One aspect of the difference [between the feminine mass culture and the masculine modernist] that is important to my argument about the gender inscriptions in the mass culture debate is that woman (Madame Bovary) is positioned as reader of inferior literature--subjective, emotional and passive--while man (Flaubert) emerges as writer of genuine, authentic literature--objective, ironic, and in control of his aesthetic means” (46).

Given this description of the gender inscriptions and dichotomy between mass culture and modernism, one can see that McMurtry has similarly placed himself in the same position that Huyssen places Flaubert, while at the same time placing readers and writers of Texas literature in the same position as Madame Bovary, that is, as readers and writers of an inferior literature. For McMurtry, Texas and Southwestern literature is not high art, nor is it modern,
which means that this literature is one best described as a product of an outdated bourgeois society against which modernist writings stand. But as Huyssen has stated, the hidden subtext of the modernist project has always been an attack on mass culture and the masses "rattling at the gate." He further states that "The universalizing ascription of femininity to mass culture always depended on the very real exclusion of women from high culture and its institutions" (62). However, women are not the only group excluded from high culture and its institutions or from traditional and modern literature. In Texas and the Southwest, mass culture and the masses are made up of "Others," among whom one finds Mexican Americans and other Native American ethnic groups, "whose ways once either went largely unrecorded or were interpreted by Anglo outsiders" (Graves 4). This exclusion not only affords the existence of an insular genre of Southwestern and Texas literature, but it also determines the gender inscriptions necessary for generating value judgments that place the modernist aesthetic above products of mass culture and their attendant constituencies.

As Jane Tompkins has documented in her study of literary and celluloid Western narratives,

The absence of Indians in Western movies, by which I mean the lack of their serious presence as individuals, is so shocking once you realize it that, even for someone acquainted with outrage, it's hard to admit. My unbelief at the travesty of native peoples that Western films afford kept me from scrutinizing what was there. I didn't want to see. I stubbornly expected the genre to be better than it was, and when it wasn't, I dropped the subject. Forgetting perpetuates itself. I never cried at anything I saw in a Western, but I cried when I realized this: that after the Indians had been decimated by disease, removal, and conquest, and after they had been caricatured and degraded in Western movies, I had ignored them too. The human beings who populated this continent before the Europeans came and who still live here, whose image the Western traded on—where are they? Not in Western films. (West of Everything 10)
Similarly, Edward Simmen in 1971 stated that "...the Anglo writer, with a few significant exceptions, has never been keenly interested in using the Mexican-American as a realistic subject. Generally, as in the early Spanish-California romance and the later pulp magazine western, the Mexican-American has been portrayed by the Anglo writer in distorted caricature" (Chicano 16). More recently, in 1991 Rolando Hinojosa stated that

The proposal to adopt African-American literature and literature of the Native American and the Asian-American and so on came in the sixties. The opposition on academic grounds was wanting, but the opposition on the basis of racism was something else. There was some of both; there was also some paranoia on both sides. But worse than paranoia, there was arrant racial prejudice and, as always in life, there was irony. Opposition came also from some Americanists who were teaching American literature--American literature in its narrowest sense, of course. ("Forward: Redefining American Literature" xiii-xiv)

Prior to the sixties, literary studies in the United States rarely, if ever, addressed literature by women and ethnic groups, and until the sixties, products of mass culture seldom were studied for their artistic merits. An examination of a much acclaimed list of "The Fifty Best Texas Books," compiled by A. C. Greene in 1981, reveals a list overwhelmingly predominated by Texas Anglo men, with its subject matter also reflecting a privileged male-only, Anglo realm. Notwithstanding this exclusionary list, Chicano literature along with other heterodox literatures began being published and studied with ever increasing frequency during the sixties. Later, postmodernists began bridging the "Great Divide" between modernist writings and products of mass culture. Huysssen notes that as women and other ethnic groups began making their presence felt, often through their political activism, "...the attempt by the American postmodernists of the 1960s to renegotiate the relationship between high art
and mass culture gained its own political momentum in the context of the emerging new social movements of those years—among which feminism has perhaps had the most lasting effect on our culture, as it cuts across class, race, and gender" (60).

According to Huyssen, U. S. postmodernists of the 1960s thus acted as an avantgarde “fueling the fight of the early postmodernists [of the 1020s] against the high-culture doctrines of Anglo-American modernism,” and very much taking the role “to lead the whole of society toward new horizons of culture, and to create an avantgarde art for the masses” (60). Moreover, Huyssen states that “the avantgarde's attack on the autonomy aesthetic, its politically motivated critique of the highness of high art, and its urge to validate other, formerly neglected or ostracized forms of cultural expression created an aesthetic climate in which the political aesthetic of feminism could thrive and develop its critique of patriarchal gazing and penmanship” (61). In the same way, this aesthetic climate of the 1960s allowed a loosely composed Chicano avantgarde to create an aesthetic for the Chicano masses, one which had previously been neglected or ostracized.

The 1960s thus mark a point when several new social movements, the Chicano Movement among them, began to gain the political momentum necessary to produce different forms of cultural resistance (avantgarde) art. The Chicano Movement itself resulted from social and political events that created a “new Chicano political consciousness.” Charles Tatum shows that

During the decade of the 1960s, the resistance against Anglo exploitation and discrimination became more militant and more focused due to the general atmosphere of discontent in this country combined with the cumulative frustration of both urban and rural Chicanos because of decades of treatment as second-class citizens. The Chicano population had become progressively more urbanized forming a large segment of the
blue-collar working class competing for jobs in industry. In addition to experiencing discrimination in this area and in the trade union movement, urbanized Chicanos were also becoming more acutely aware of the inadequacy of the educational system to deal with their particular cultural and linguistic needs and were progressively more disillusioned with their efforts to gain fair treatment in housing. One perceptive social critic summarizes this complex of feelings and circumstances in the following way: "Anguished by the lack of social mobility, frustrated by insensitive economic terms which festered discrimination and racism, and exploited in economic terms, the Chicano community engaged in a total evaluation of its relationship to the dominant society." This evaluation process coincided with the discontent among much of the general population which was reflected in growing opposition to the Vietnam War, the outbreak of mass urban violence and rioting, the growth of the New Left, and the rise of Black Power. (Chicano Literature 9)

Tatum also shows that "Along with the political activities of the various activists and organizations, a number of important cultural and artistic events were also taking place during the decade of the sixties. While no well-defined group of intellectuals or artists had organized into a movement or school with a discernible identity, there was significant activity in various areas of the Chicano world" (10). Among the cultural and artistic developments occurring during this decade, a distinct Chicano literary establishment began taking shape through "the establishment of literary journals and informal associations of writers" (11). Moreover, Tatum states that "It is important to note that Chicano writers played an essential role in the creation and development of the sociopolitical and cultural consciousness that formed the base of the Chicano Movement during the 1960s and 1970s" (11).

As this dissertation has demonstrated, however, long before the sixties Chicanos had been producing literary art throughout the Southwestern United States, although little of it saw publication within mainstream society. The literary genealogy from which contemporary Chicano literature springs is
summarized by Tatum:

The early seeds of Chicano literature took root in the rich soil of the Spanish Southwest in the sixteenth century and tenaciously grew during the next four hundred years. Continuing the long tradition of Hispanic literature, theater, prose, and poetry prospered in both oral and written forms. Then, with the rapid and profound changes that accompanied Mexican independence and the loss of the vast northern territories to the United States in the nineteenth century, Chicano literature began a hundred-year struggle to survive. From about 1850 to the post-Second World War period, works in the different genres appeared in Spanish-language newspapers, were independently published, and were even passed on from generation to generation by word of mouth. Like the Chicano people themselves, the literature has withstood the onslaught of a technologically superior Anglo culture to emerge, in the decade of the 1950s healthy, vital, and ready to burst into full bloom in the next twenty years. Contemporary Chicano writers thus draw on a literary tradition that is several centuries old, and they will mold and shape it to fit the artistic and social needs of the new age. (48-49)

Thus the rich Spanish Southwestern literary tradition that contemporary Chicano writers inherit coexists with what is contemporaneously known as “Southwestern literature.” But this coexistence has not been a tranquil one, as the absence of the Spanish Southwestern literary tradition from the canon of Southwestern literature clearly reflects. The absence of this Hispanic literary tradition historically coincides with the comparable absence of Mexican Americans from the institutions of civil society within the Southwestern United States. It is precisely into this void that an avantgarde Chicano Movement of the 1960s entered. But as Huyssen has indicated, in the United States, the postmodernist avantgarde movements of the 1960s were preceded and indebted to an earlier “historical avantgarde,” which had aimed, unsuccessfully, at freeing art from its aestheticist ghetto and reintegrating art and life. Indeed, the early American postmodernists’ attempts to open up the realm of high art to the imagery of everyday life and American mass culture are in some ways reminiscent of the historical avantgarde’s attempt to work in the interstices of high art and mass culture.
In retrospect, it thus seems quite significant that major artists of the 1920s used precisely the then wide-spread “Americanism” (associated with jazz, sports, cars, technology, movies, and photography) in order to overcome bourgeois aestheticism and its separateness from “life.” (60)

Similarly, in the history of Southwestern literature, one can find the existence of an early Chicano avantgarde that sought to bridge the divide between a bourgeois aestheticism and “life” by opening up “the realm of high art to the imagery of everyday life and American mass culture.”

According to Arnoldo de León, in the 1920s “increased numbers of Tejanos would be absorbed into the process of cultural change from a Mexican to an American identity” (Mexican Americans in Texas 93-94). Arnoldo de León further suggests that

As people do universally, this cohort assimilated the values of the nourishing culture(s): they worked hard, displayed courtesy, respect, and hospitality, and worshiped a Christian being. They also spoke Spanish, esteemed their parents’ homeland, identified with or joined mutualistas, ate Mexican dishes, sang corridos, and dressed in a Mexican style, but these same people also spoke English, admired their country of residence, became members of the upstart OSA [Orden Hijos de América (Order Sons of America)] or LULAC [League of United Latin America Citizens], partook of American foods, listened to mainstream radio hits of the 1920s, and kept abreast of U.S. fashions. (Mexican Americans in Texas 93-94)

While this group of Tejanos represented a small minority of “a Tejano middle class of petty bourgeoisie, veterans, and professionals” within the Texas Mexican community, they nevertheless began an irreversible process of acculturation and “by the 1920s were gaining greater esteem for their states as U.S. citizens” (92).

The Texas Mexican “historical avantgarde” of the first decades of the twentieth century in Texas made its presence felt by molding a form of biculturality that came to fruition in the 1960s. One of the forces behind this
early historical avantgarde is the tejano press--newspapers. Robert R. Treviño has argued that the press “was pivotal not only in socializing immigrants but, more importantly, in shaping the aspirations of the Mexican American community at large and moving it toward greater fulfillment and participation in the American mainstream. During the early twentieth century, the tejano press showed itself to be a viable institutional force that, in its capacity to influence a people’s culture and ideology, promoted social changes as well” ("Prensa y Patria" 472). Treviño explains that “The goal was ‘not to be foreign to either [society], nor to appear totally associated with the [American] one, into which we cannot be fully incorporated, or the [Mexican] one, which in life and work proves disadvantageous to us.’ For proponents of the new zeitgeist, the future of Mexican Americans lay in becoming cultural blends--in the words of [Eduardo] Idar, ‘to become a new kind of race’” (471).

Between 1920 and 1940, this shift away from “mexicanismo” towards a new form of Americanness signified a move away from two forms of Mexicanness that had predominated since the second and third decades of the twentieth century. The first form of Mexicanness is represented by Texas’ largest Spanish-language newspaper during that time, La Prensa (from San Antonio), which was “steeped in elitist notions of a Spanish cultural heritage” ("Prensa y Patria" 457). The second form was reflected in many other tejano newspapers which defined Mexicanness “in exalted Indian terms.” By the 1930s, however, the shift away from both forms was complete. While tejano newspapers “continued to express pride in their Mexican heritage,... they clearly did not exalt their Indian past as they had in the previous decade” (470-471).
In the Valley, Santiago G. Guzmán founded the newspaper, El Defensor, in 1929, and Treviño states that “Guzmán’s allegiance to the United States reflected an aspect of tejano ethnicity that obviously contrasted with the ideas of Ignacio Lozano [publisher of La Prensa] and los ricos. Guzmán symbolized the aspirations of a rising middle class that ‘faced north,’ unlike the exiles of Mexico who longed for the spiritual and material familiarity of their homeland” (464). This tejano middle class movement away from a Mexican allegiance, however, does not signal a move towards becoming completely assimilated or Americanized. A middle ground had to be gained. Tejano newspapers, like El Defensor in the Valley, represent a compromise between ideological positions that had earlier been violently evidenced in the Valley during the 1910s.

In 1915, the Valley experienced what historian-social theorist David Montejano has described as [the] most violent clash between Anglos and Mexicans in the entire Southwest. During this year, numerous raids occurred from one end of the Valley to the other, as well as on the Mexican side of the river. The raids caused Texas governor Oscar B. Colquitt to call out the state militia and the Texas Rangers, adding to the federal forces already in place in the Valley. By 1916, over “40,000 troops, made up of regular army and national guard, were stationed...from one end of the Valley to the other--Brownsville to Rio Grande City” (War Scare 100). What exacerbated this violent and uncontrollable situation was the discovery of a plan for a racial rebellion in the United States--Plan de San Diego. While much has been made and should be made of the Plan de San Diego, the efforts of those behind this plan and the accompanying raids represent a political and ideological move that, by the end of the 1920s, would be eclipsed by a bicultural “zeitgeist.”
Falling between the Valley's military occupation caused by the raids and the later shift to biculture, the Texas Mexican avantgarde rebellion is almost entirely erased. If the intent of the Valley's historical avantgarde was to destroy the economic domination of Anglos, who were transforming the Valley's economy from a ranch society to an agriculturally based farming economy, it is clear that the forces of modernization caused Texas Mexicans to retrench and reconsider their own positions within an evolving economy. If the avantgarde had once thought that the simple elimination of Anglos would secure their positions within the Valley, a return to the old order as represented by an elitist Mexicanness also did not represent a viable solution, as the political transformations occurring in Mexico clearly showed. Mexico was undergoing its own period of massive modernization.

This period of political and economic transformation in the early decades of the twentieth century is exactly the time during which the novels by Cleo Dawson and Américo Paredes are set. However, these novels are unique because they represent perspectives that could not be more diametrically and ideologically opposed. Ironically, both novels were written at around the same time, are generally about the same place, and, as noted, are set during almost the same historical time. That both authors' narratives use the same place or setting is doubly ironic because of the protagonists' ideologically oppositional actions, as developed through the progression of their respective narratives. The protagonist in Dawson's novel is Willy Westall, an arguably rare stereotype of a strong frontier [Anglo] woman, while Paredes' protagonist, George Washington Gómez, is an extremely rare stereotype of an educated tejanomexicano—Texas Mexican. The perspectives that both protagonists
represent show the movements of two different cultures converging and clashing at a historical point along a border between two countries. While Midwesterners and Texas Anglos are descending to the Valley to establish their dominance, Texas Mexicans are moving in an opposite--and oppositional--direction.

The publication of both texts represents this oppositional relationship very clearly. Dawson’s novel was first published in 1943 and was later reprinted in 1972, whereas Paredes began writing his novel in 1936 and finally finished it in 1940. But it is significant to note that his novel was not published until 1990. As Rolando Hinojosa has led readers to believe, Paredes’ novel sat untouched in his desk for almost fifty years, although as a student of Paredes, Leticia Falcón, has reported, Paredes submitted it for publication numerous times, only to have the manuscript rejected and often returned to him unopened and unread by publishers’ reviewers. This early reception of Paredes’s Texas Mexican novel can of course be explained by remembering the views of the dominant Valley group during and since the 1940s and to the historical events alluded to by both novels. Renato Rosaldo has written that

When Paredes wrote “With His Pistol in His Hand,” during the 1950s, anti-Mexican prejudice throughout the Southwest and California was even more evident than today. In south Texas, where this prejudice was particularly virulent, it took courage to challenge the dominant ideology of Anglo-Texas racial superiority. José Limón has described the publication of Paredes’s book as a struggle against Anglo-Texan white supremacy. Even after the manuscript’s publication, Limón says, an ex-Texas Ranger asked the press for Paredes’s address, so that he could “shoot the sonofabitch who wrote that book.” Paredes, it seems, had touched a nerve. Under the circumstances, one marvels that the book’s narrator can speak with a fine blend of scholarly integrity, low-key chuckles, and devastating criticism. (Truth and Culture 150)
In the “Introduction” to George Washington Gómez, Rolando Hinojosa reveals other interesting facts about the author and the circumstances surrounding the writing of this novel:

A picture of feverish activity, then, but *George Washington Gómez, sin prisa pero sin pausa*, without haste but without rest, was being worked on. It is a dated work, but not in the pejorative sense: it is dated authentically, a first draft of a work set against the Great Depression, the onset of World War II in Europe, and set also against the over 100-year-old conflict of cultures in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas, not far from where the Rio Grande empties into the Gulf.

Obviously, the manuscript could have been rewritten for these times; to have done so, however, would have damaged its integrity. Américo Paredes is too honest a writer to force history into some rigid mold or point of view, and so *George Washington Gómez* is published as written, and we are the better for it: the ‘30s are not seen through the prism of nostalgia, that half-sister of debased romanticism, but rather through the eyes of a young writer, true to the times, to his family and himself, and, ultimately, to us, as readers. (5-6)

Dawson’s novel begins its narrative action in 1905 and ends when the U.S. becomes involved in the first World War, while Paredes’ novel begins in 1915 or roughly around the beginning of World War I and ends at the beginning of World War II. Together, both novels provide glimpses of the Lower Rio Grande Valley during the early decades of the 20th century, decades that were to be the most formative years in the modern development of this most unique region of the Southwest and when Valley Tejanos found themselves undergoing a major cataclysmic economic and political transformation. The narratives of both novels thus coincide or overlap during this crucial year of Valley history--1915.

While Dawson and Paredes focus their narratives on this time and region in history, their perspectives about this time and place diverge. Dawson presents not only an Anglo female’s point of view, but also the point of view of
the “ready-made farm communities” referred to earlier by Montejano. On the other hand, Paredes shows the side of the “Other,” namely a Texas Mexican male whose innocent father is killed by a Texas Ranger in 1915, and who then has to grow up in an environment that constantly victimizes him and his family because of their Texas Mexican ethnicity.

The radical conflict existing between Anglos and the Valley’s Texas Mexicans during this time is finally ignored in Dawson’s novel. But while repressed, it comes out in other ways. For instance, the major conflict in Dawson’s novel develops between Anglos “conquering the wilderness” while living under the threat of being raided by marauding Mexican bandits or revolutionaries, purportedly Pancho Villa’s revolutionaries. And according to Dawson’s narrative, these Mexican revolutionaries were incited by German outsiders trying to bring Mexico into a conflict with the U.S. during World War I. As stated earlier, these raids are depicted in Dawson’s novel as occurring during 1915.

Montejano and others have documented these raids, which actually did occur, and the Anglos’ views, as depicted in Dawson’s novel, are also documented by Montejano. As Montejano states about that time, “Hundreds of incidents were recorded, with the peak of the troubles occurring between July and November of 1915. An area ‘only slightly less than that of Connecticut,’ as historian Charles Cumberland described the affected region, was halted in economic development, hundreds of people were killed, thousands were dislocated, and property worth millions of dollars was destroyed” (Montejano 117). All these events really did happen, and all of them can be found in Dawson’s novel. But the causes behind these troubles are never once
acknowledged in the novel as being related to the conflict between Anglos and the native Valley Texas Mexicans. Quoting Walter Prescott Webb, Montejano states that “As the raiding intensified, these border [Anglo] residents began to realize, in Webb’s words, ‘that the disturbances had behind them a purpose, an intelligence greater than that of the bandit leader or of his ignorant followers’” (Montejano 119). Representing the historical and political perspective of the dominant group, Webb in effect states that German instigators, not Valley Texas Mexicans, were responsible for inciting the raids, and the Anglos were themselves innocent victims of troubles stemming from international intrigue.

In Dawson’s novel, the Anglos’ position is presented in the passive, benign terms of “pilgrim’s progress” on the frontier, rather than in terms that are aggressive and conquering. A Biblical epigraph found on the title-page of Dawson’s novel explains this Anglo perspective quite clearly:

> Remember ye not the former things,  
> neither consider the things of old.  
> Behold, I will do a new thing;  
> now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it?  
> I will not make a way in the wilderness,  
> and rivers in the desert.  
> --Isaiah 43: 18-19

The “I” in this biblical epigraph identifies Anglos with the Judeo-Christian godhead and makes them one and the same. The erasure of “former things” and “the things of old,” coupled with the description of the Valley as a “wilderness” and a “desert,” both point to how Anglos justified their presence and saw the place they came to “settle.” They are ploys used by the dominant (hegemonic) Anglo group, which also uses notions of Manifest Destiny and the Bible to establish their presence in the Valley.
In Dawson's novel, Willy Westall's husband Pat reveals the Anglos' point of view towards the land when he says, "One land's just like another. What difference does it make about the language people speak just so you get on the ground floor" (10)? The novel's narrator also expresses the dominant group's view of the land: "Land was the subject of the hour. The West was new and wide, with expansion at its height. Everybody wanted land, silk dresses in the closet, rubber-tired buggies and gaited horses, fashionable Southern schools for daughters, and brokerage businesses for sons. It meant all the things men work and bleed for" (Dawson 11). But if the land was to be a passkey for the Anglos' futures in this novel, the same could not be said of Texas Mexicans, as they are all but excluded from this novel's narrative. What the land meant to Texas Mexicans is never discussed in Dawson's narrative, but it could hardly have meant what it seemed to have meant for Anglos.

Cleo Dawson begins her novel with these remarkable words: "Willy Westall was one of the women of the world who had found her wholeness in the man she married" (Dawson 1). Willy Westall's identification with her husband raises her status by identifying her with the men who conquered the so-called wilderness. Her identity is completed only through her coupling with a man. Her name, Willy Westall, further signals her status as a frontiersman, as all of the West belongs to Willy and to the men with whom she completes herself. When the protagonist and her family eventually arrive in the Valley, she and her husband open a general store that is later burned down around 1915 during one of the raids alluded to above in Montejano's statements about the Valley. At the time of the raid, Willy is pregnant and miscarries after moving a piano from the store's burning warehouse. The resulting miscarriage represents her
vulnerability as a woman; however, it is her strength, a man’s strength, that is significant, for it signals her investment in civilization: while she saves her piano, she does so at the cost of losing the baby.

Their store is burned down, but they quickly rebuild, this time with bricks, and have no trouble reestablishing their business. They easily get loans from the local bank, build a cotton gin, and continue to prosper, particularly after a patron of theirs, Bill Lester, brings Willy a large bag of gold, which finances and therefore secures her future after her husband’s untimely death. After the death of her husband, Willy struggles to keep the store in business on her own, but in the end she and her children are saved by the second man with whom she finds her wholeness, although they do not marry: Bill Lester, the prototype of a Texas cowboy and frontiersman.

Because Willy’s husband had earlier been crippled while working in a cotton gin before they arrived in the Valley, they do not own a large farm. While the Westalls are not large landholders or farmers, they nevertheless thrive through the business obtained from the local farmers, all of whom are Anglo. Because of her husband’s condition, Willy is forced to do all the work in their store, which again allows readers to see her strength. Thus, her husband’s crippled condition sets up the protagonist to undertake a leading role that for women was rare during that time and place. When the husband later dies after trying to stop a runaway horse, Willy is left alone with two children to support. But while alone, she is supported by her local community as well as by her patron, Bill Lester.

Bill Lester and Willy’s husband, a racist opportunist and a drunk, ironically sell arms to Pancho Villa, but their gun-running turns against them when it is
discovered that the Mexican raiders’ arms are the ones that had been sold by Pat Westall and Bill Lester. This realization causes Bill Lester to leave the Valley, but after a long absence, he returns with a large sum of gold taken from Mexican gold mines. We are informed that during this absence he has also managed to convince Pancho Villa, supposedly a close personal friend of his, to stop the raids against the Anglos, raids that were purportedly incited by German spies. In effect, Bill Lester saves the Valley and Willy Westall, leaving her rich and independent. What is not mentioned at the end, but which is nevertheless implied earlier in the narrative, is that Willy is once again pregnant. By the end of the novel, we can also infer from the novel’s progression that her last child will be a boy who will carry on the Westall name. Thus, through her soon-to-be-born son, Willy will be allowed to continue finding her wholeness in yet another Anglo male, so that, from the beginning of the narrative to its end, Willy finds her happiness in an Anglo male.

If Willy’s son is born, he will be born roughly around the same time as George Washington Gómez, who will also be raised without a father. When George is born, his father only lives a short time before being in effect murdered by a Texas Ranger. The fact that his father is murdered by a Texas Ranger is never known by the protagonist until much later in his life, as his father’s dying wish is not to have his son raised hating Anglos. The father of Paredes’ protagonist names his son after the first North American president because it is the father’s wish that his son become a great leader of his people—Americans. Significantly, however, this name George Washington never really “takes” because early on it is mispronounced by his family. He is therefore known throughout most of his life as Guálinto. When registering the boy into the first
grade, the uncle inscribes the name Guálinto, which the uncle claims to be of Indian derivation.

His uncle Feliciano and Guálinto's widowed mother raise him. After the death of his father, the uncle moves the family to Jonesville (a pseudonym for Brownsville, Texas) and is taken in by a local Anglo judge who provides him with a job and a house for his adopted family. The job is at a bar, but he eventually becomes a political henchman for the judge, who hires him to buy the Texas Mexican vote by paying for their poll taxes. After alcohol is outlawed, the bar is sold to Feliciano, who, after obtaining a loan from the bank, converts it into a store—one very much like the store owned and run by Willy Westall in Dawson’s novel. Their business prospers, which allows Guálinto a fairly respectable upbringing even though he still lives in a barrio, a fact that will later come to shame him. When Guálinto is old enough to enter school, he rises up through the academic ranks. In no time at all, he becomes the smartest student in the entire school, despite serious attempts by teachers to thwart his academic progress. In one of the novel’s most compelling and ironic chapters, a Texas Mexican teacher creates the most intolerable learning environment for the boy and nearly causes him to be suspended from school.

Eventually, he graduates from high school, a feat that was rarely accomplished by Texas Mexicans during that time. The road to this achievement, however, is not one without serious difficulties, particularly after the Great Depression breaks the bank, causing his uncle to lose the store and leave the family penniless. Guálinto then has to get a job at another Mexican-owned store to help make ends meet, but his school grades drop off as a consequence and thus ruin his chances of graduating at the very top of his high
high school class. By the end of his senior year, he is indeed very lucky to graduate.

Other incidents occur during Guálinto's senior year that further threaten to prevent him from graduating. For instance, when his senior class arrives to have a dinner only for graduating seniors at an Anglo-owned Mexican restaurant, the four Texas Mexican members of the graduating class are barred from entering the restaurant because they are "Mexicans." While claiming to feel insulted and hurt by this overt act of racial discrimination, the rest of the senior class and their student sponsor, all of them Anglos, nevertheless remain at the restaurant, adding insult to injury. This year is also complicated when one of Guálinto's older sisters becomes pregnant out of wedlock with an Anglo who has also impregnated yet another Texas Mexican girl with whom Guálinto is in love. This other Texas Mexican girl comes from a very well-to-do family, so the Anglo marries her, leaving Guálinto's sister (who is left with an illegitimate child) and their whole family heartbroken and disillusioned. Still another significant incident occurs when Guálinto gets credited for killing a wanted "Mexican" criminal in self-defense while on his way home one dark, rainy night. There is to be a large reward given to Guálinto, a reward that could help the family out of their economic travails. But Feliciano, the uncle, reveals that the criminal Guálinto has killed is in fact a long-lost uncle. The reward therefore has to be refused, as receiving the reward would mean accepting blood-money for having killed his father's own brother. One might suppose that these incidents should be enough to make any Texas Mexican hate Anglos, but that is not how this narrative ends.
In spite of their economic woes, Guálinto's uncle has been saving money for his nephew to attend college. After graduating from high school, Guálinto goes to college, enters law school, and obtains a job working for an important law firm in Washington D.C. Several years pass before he finally returns home to a local hero's welcome. In the meantime, he has married an Anglo woman, has a child on the way, and has received a job working for the U.S. government. His wife is the daughter of a former Texas Ranger, and, ironically, his job is working undercover as a counter-intelligence officer patrolling the U.S.-Mexican border looking for German Nazi spies. When he returns, the welcoming committee that greets him is made up primarily of friends he grew up with, representing the local Texas Mexican political machine. They arrange to receive him at a Mexican restaurant that caters mainly to Texas Mexicans, and at the reception the locals attempt to convince George (no longer going by the name of Guálinto) to become their political leader against the Anglos. George adamantly refuses to do so and walks out, as he will not stoop to their petty political machinations. This leaves the locals completely dumbfounded and insulted, and in a highly emotional scene they condemn him and call him a sell-out.

Before leaving Jonesville, George's uncle Feliciano, now a farmer, asks George if his children will speak Spanish, but George adamantly says no. George also refuses to accept the farm that his uncle plans to leave him in his will, as George does not want to be a farmer, nor does he wish to reside in the Valley. He leaves stating that he has no "masters," thus bringing the novel to a highly ambiguous end.
The differences in focus between Dawson and Paredes’s novels stem from several factors. While both seem to be family oriented, Dawson’s novel focuses on the perspective of an adult Anglo woman, whereas Paredes’s novel mainly focuses on the perspective of a young Tejano male. Their families are different because of their cultural backgrounds, and their successes or failures originate in their ability to adjust to the land and the socio-political circumstances surrounding the ownership of this land. George Washington Gómez is accurately depicted as a man from his generation who during the early decades of this century before World War II gained his success by moving away from his original ethnic (Mexicanized) identity and becoming fully assimilated--Americanized. His rejection of his ethnic identity and homeland ironically signals the socio-political transformation that was also occurring to the entire Lower Rio Grande Valley during this time.

Modernization was by this time in full swing, and like Stephen Dedalus in Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), George Washington Gómez leaves his place of origin and declares his allegiance to a cultural entity different from his own. Even though they both come from regions existing under Anglo domination, the fates of these two “modern” protagonists are quite different. While Joyce can have Dedalus state at the very end that “I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race...,” such is significantly not the ending one finds in Paredes’s novel (Joyce 252-253). Important to note, though, is Joyce’s metaphor of a “smithy” which will forge the “uncreated conscience of my race.” This metaphor can be read to signal the commodification of a soul through the modernization that was also taking place
in Dublin, Ireland. As Huyssen states, "it was the ever increasing pace of commodification and colonization of cultural space which actually propelled modernism forward, or, better, pushed it toward the outer margins of the cultural terrain" (57).

Joyce's ending for Dedalus differs from Paredes's for Gómez, as the colonization in the Valley and in Paredes's novel took on socioeconomic and political proportions that one does not find in Joyce's Dublin, Ireland. Unlike George, Dedalus does not find himself in the position of adopting a different cultural entity, but ironically, Dedalus's words toward the end of this seminal modernist novel could easily fit George:

--Look here, Cranly, he said. You have asked me what I would do and what I would not do. I will tell you what I will do and what I will not do. I will not serve that in which I no longer believe whether it call itself my home, my fatherland or my church: and I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defence the only arms I allow myself to use--silence, exile, and cunning. (246-247)

At the end of Paredes's novel, however, George meets with his uncle Feliciano, who has discovered that his nephew is working as a spy for the federal government. George wants this fact kept secret, even from his own mother, to which Feliciano responds by stating, "Have no fear about that. And you can turn me in if you want to, if it helps keep you in the good graces of your masters" (302). George's response is interesting, as to some extent it matches up with Dedalus's: "I have no 'masters'. I am doing what I do in the service of my country" (302). The difference between George and Dedalus is the freedom that George lacks but which Dedalus gains from separating himself from his "fatherland." One becomes a spy and servant of his adopted country, while the other becomes an artist who is free to create "the uncreated conscience of my
race." Joyce's "uncreated conscience" for his race signals a new age, a modern age that must be kept separate from "former things."

Since Dedalus represents a person who is a member of a "minority" group under Anglo domination, his declaration of independence from his home, fatherland, and church during the early phase of modernism allows him an independence that is not possible for George. Dedalus's separation and consequent departure from the institutions that had previously shaped his existence do not entail his assimilation of Anglo institutions, as it does for George. And in contrast to George, Dawson's protagonist and her novel's narrative also begin by positing that "former things" must be forgotten. But in this case, those former things, in part, represent the Valley's prior historic presence of "others" who had established themselves on the same terrain since at least 1749. Dedalus's departure from former things does not entail erasing the prior existence of a cultural entity as it does for Dawson's narrative. For George Washington Gómez, separation means rejecting his family, land, and language, something neither Dedalus or Dawson's protagonist have to do for their separation from former things to be complete.

Paredes's protagonist thus becomes a person his father and uncle never thought one of their own would become: a man turning his back on his Texas Mexican culture. Born during a time of great social and political changes, George's life goes forth not to create the "uncreated conscience" of his race; rather, he becomes, despite his disclaimer, a servant for a government that had killed his father, discriminated against and oppressed his family during his entire life, and transformed him into a person who is the exact opposite of what his father wished him to be. Instead of becoming a leader of his people, he has
to Dawson's Valley narrative, it nevertheless ends by placing its protagonist in an ideologically similar position to Dawson's novel and what it represents. In these two Valley historical narratives, the process of modernization has left its mark with predictable results.

Seen from a late twentieth century perspective, both novels are early Southwestern texts, but their place within this body of regional literature to date remains obscure. And if placed among modernist literary texts like Joyce's, they remain even more obscure. When Paredes's novel was published in 1990, it received numerous reviews, among them one by a leading Southwestern literary critic, Dan Graham, who states,

George Washington Gómez, as his name suggests, lives a life split between Anglo and Hispanic identity and aspiration. Actually the terms Paredes uses are Anglo and "Mexicotexans." In the ethnic-coded alignments of this novel, Mexicotexans are the good guys and the Anglos are bigoted oppressors. Fair enough, one supposes, for settling grievances--this simple reversal of stereotypes--but not particularly salutary for the purposes of creating compelling fiction. For any reader, I think, must see that the novel is driven by a sense of resentment. (Graham 13)

As can be seen, Graham's review is a negative one, but what is interesting to observe is its stance, which on the one hand refers to Texas Mexicans as Hispanics. On the other hand, Graham's stance is similar to McMurtry's when derogating the "Big Texas Three" and Southwestern literature. Graham goes on to state that the novel is one which has a bill of indictments [that] also includes a thinly disguised pastiche of J. Frank Dobie in the person of K. Hank Harvey, the "Historical Oracle of the State," who gives the commencement address at Gómez's high school. K. Hank is an authority on Mexicans, but he doesn't speak Spanish. His major work is a book called San Jacinto Guncotton which, of course, perpetuates Anglo stereotypes of Texsmexicans. During his address, he tells insulting jokes about Texsmexicans and drones on about Anglotexan heroes for a couple of hours. (13)
couple of hours. (13)

The stereotyping against Anglos that Graham claims Paredes engages in is accurate, but only up to a point, as Graham fails to elaborate with much depth on the stereotyping against Texas Mexicans that typically runs rampant in the body of literature Graham represents, and as written by Anglos. If the stereotyping in Paredes’s novel is “driven by a sense of resentment,” from what sense is the stereotyping driven in Texas Anglo Southwestern literary texts like Zane Grey’s *West of the Pecos*, which Graham mentions as also being an example of “relentless stereotyping,” and one written around the same time period as Paredes’s novel? On this point, Graham remains silent.

Placing Dawson and Paredes’s Valley texts within the broader literary terrain of modernism instead of more locally within Texas and Southwestern literature, allows us to gain a much fuller understanding not only of their texts, but also of texts which have been written and published since the first half of the twentieth century. As historical texts, both novels show the social and political changes occurring in the Valley before World War II, even though their perspectives do not reflect the same ideology. What both novels do provide, however, are examples of rhetorical situations which later Chicano writers (like Hinojosa) can respond to as they go about writing further narratives of the historical confrontation between Anglos and Texas Mexicans.

For example, when Ramón Saldívar examines Hinojosa’s *Korean Love Songs*, he concludes by stating that when Rafe is wounded during the Korean War, his thoughts “turn not to rage over the deaths of his friends or to his own possible death, or to the lack of social justice in South Texas. Instead:

For me, there was the thought of home and friends, and, Strangely enough,
Of an Easter picnic near the river
Where I met a girl named Nellie
Now long dead and, I thought,
Quite forgotten. (KLS 39)

The solution to the confusion of serving one's own oppressor is evidently not the assimilation to another world, but rather the determination to return to the contradictory but familiar one" (Chicano Narrative 146). As Saldívar's assessment of Hinojosa's poetic text shows, "The songs serve to highlight and hold off the dissolving and fragmenting effects of contemporary American life while attempting to represent the conditions necessary for the retention of organic community life. It is a task that Hinojosa continues to chart in symbolic form in his other exemplary works" (147).

In his Series, Hinojosa's rhetorical situation expands beyond the historical situation that one finds for Texas Mexicans in Paredes's novel. But while moving beyond Paredes's historical context, Hinojosa's move does not ignore the fact that Texas Mexicans still find themselves in contradictory circumstances. These circumstances cause certain of his characters, like Ira Escobar, to capitulate to the dominant culture's forces, while other characters, like Becky Escobar, "divorce" themselves from Anglo-dominated situations they had formerly succumbed to. Moreover, many Texas Anglo characters fully understand their place within the Valley's contradictory situation and are depicted as authentically engaging themselves in Texas Mexican culture. Among Texas Anglo characters assimilating to Texas Mexican culture are Esther Lucille Bewley, Mrs. Ben (Edith) Timmens, Catarino Caldwell, and Sammie Jo Perkins. These characters stand in direct contrast to the Texas Anglo characters found in Dawson's novel, a text that fails to engage Texas
Mexican culture in the Valley.

Thus, if placed next to Dawson and Paredes’s novels, Rolando Hinojosa’s Series can be read as continuing and extending their narratives. Historically, Hinojosa’s Series brings the Valley’s twentieth century narrative up to more contemporary settings, and provides more diverse examples of what and how Chicano writers produce literary texts. Because the Series offers such a wide array of discursive fictional texts, Hinojosa’s texts can serve as models that Texans and Southwestern Americans can draw upon to broaden the scope of modern and postmodern Southwestern narratives.

As demonstrated in chapter three, however, what especially distinguishes the majority of Hinojosa’s texts are their rendition into both languages (or a mixture of the two). Because his texts draw upon an established historical and linguistic context, they can be used by students who are learning to compose and analyze their own narratives within this region of the United States. Thus the next chapter concludes this analysis of Hinojosa’s texts by situating them not within the literary landscape of the Southwest or of the canon wars but in composition classrooms. In this setting, I wish to argue, Hinojosa’s texts can be used as subjects for analysis and as objects that students can respond to as they go about writing their own narratives. Because Hinojosa’s Series provides a rich and extensive source to draw upon, they serve as an example of how Mexican American literary works can be utilized in any composition classrooms where rhetorical situations are analyzed.
I did promise over the teleph. to tell you something about the Bar-B-Q, and here goes:
They just flat-out invited everybody. A lovely woman (Anglo Texan; an atom or two on the chunky side, and somewhat myopic, I'd say) sat next to me; I was putting up with a long and fairly frayed story being told as only Mrs. Ben Timmens can tell 'em. God-it-was-long. (Chile & Peru went to war, signed a peace treaty, resumed normal relations, were up in arms again, and she still wasn't through). But, get through she did, & the arriviste piped up: "Well, just how many Mexicans did Noddy invite?" I was sitting the closest to her, and the others there tried to muzzle her, but she wasn't having any. She went on & on, and there was mortification & embarrassment all around until she spotted Powerhouse, yoohooed to her, & there she went.
Sighs of relief, some coughing (and hemming and hawing), anything; anything to make up, soften, a--mel--io--rate the sit--u--a--tion don't you know.
I think it's healthy to see & hear this type of shit once in a while; it's both sobering & reassuring to know that all's not well with the world.


This essay was originally published in 1981 in the Texas Observer and, in this later publication, it includes an epilogue that extends his comments of 1981.


In an unpublished paper presented at the 1991 NACS conference, Falcon reported how Paredes' novel was never read by reviewers of the publishers to whom he sent his manuscript. Those leading us to believe that the novel remained untouched for 50 years are Rolando Hinojosa, Ramón Saldívar, and Leticia Falcon. However, Raymund Paredes (no relation) has said it would be naive to believe the novel's manuscript remained "untouched" during this fifty year period. It seems to be a question of trusting the author, and to many the author's word in this matter is unimpeachable.
It should once again be noted that George’s own father was killed by a Texas Ranger. In an interview with Leticia Falcon, Paredes stated that he once considered making George’s father-in-law the same Ranger that kills his father, but later he changed his mind, as he thought that particular bit of irony would have created too much instability in the narrative.
Chapter V

Composition Pedagogy and Chicano Academic Discourse

All oppositional politics...move under the sign of irony, knowing themselves ineluctably parasitic on their antagonists. Our grudge against the ruling order is not only that it has oppressed us in our social, sexual, or racial identities, but that it has forced us to lavish an extraordinary amount of attention on these things, which are not in the long run all that important. Those of us who happen to be British, yet who object to what has been done historically to other peoples in our name, would far prefer a situation in which we could take being British for granted and think about something more interesting for a change. (Terry Eagleton in “Nationalism: Irony and Commitment” 26)

Throughout the twentieth century, oppositional politics between Texas Anglos and Texas Mexicans has adversely affected the educational situations of both groups. Texas Anglos generally remain literate only in English, and Texas Mexicans, while often bilingual, largely remain dependent on English-only educational principles, which attempt assimilating them without considering their different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. On all school levels, however, educational curricular principles are the pillars on which pedagogies can be created for producing comparable results in the literacy of students, unequal material circumstances (funding) of students and schools notwithstanding. Such curricular principles supposedly embody the academic and philosophical ideals that schools and universities seek to instill in their students. Ideally, then, the education students receive reflects a core curriculum made up of specific ideals as represented by the curricular principles used in constructing particular pedagogical practices. These teaching practices work
towards instilling certain skills, which students can then hypothetically use to become productive members of their society. Arguably, the literacy skills students acquire in school, more than any other skills they may acquire, enhance the productivity and understanding students can have within and about any given society. Schools have thus been created to serve society, but society itself works to provide schools with those community standards it wishes to see nurtured in its students.

Education, however, is seldom ideal, and in the United States the political, social, and economic circumstances determining the kind of educational opportunities students receive have seldom been fair to marginalized minority groups. As the narrative in Paredes’s *George Washington Gómez* illustrates, historically, the educational situation of Mexican Americans in the U.S. has been appalling, especially when compared to the situation of students from the dominant group (see San Miguel’s “Let All of Them Take Heed”). The current debate in U.S. universities involving the “canon wars” or “culture wars” reveals the growing concern with replacing traditional (Eurocentric) curricular principles with multicultural ones. Within English studies, these culture wars are occurring mainly because of the recent influence literary and cultural theories have had over which texts get taught as well as over how they get taught. Except for essays found in very recent scholarly journals and “multicultural readers,” however, the debate has not significantly affected the way composition (academic discourse) is taught at the secondary and college levels.

But with the recent introduction of deconstructive/post-structuralist theories into composition studies, multicultural perspectives can potentially be incorporated to serve the literacy needs of all groups. The changes that a post-
structuralist composition pedagogy promises to bring to the way composition is currently taught can have a wide-sweeping effect on the English-teaching profession. These theories, however, have been developing into self-contained academic fields, separated from constituencies that determined them. Unless these theories can be brought back to the constituencies like bidialectal students who require more open pedagogical approaches for developing their literacy, such theories will not serve the needs of all students.

Corroborating the distance between literary and cultural theories and practice in her metacritical study of the formative development of Chicano literary criticism, Angie Chabran suggests a new focus for Chicano literary criticism:

As we rapidly move into what proves to be a rich and productive phase in the development of Chicano critical discourse, we will be faced with the substantial challenge of defining the parameters and objectives of this discourse in ways that would no doubt seem inconceivable to that early generation of Chicano critics, who boldly inaugurated it with their admirable struggles within the institution of literary criticism. Our success in responding to this challenge will depend largely upon our ability to circumvent those strategies of containment that would sever Chicano critical discourse from its multiple determinants and expressions, and upon our ability to reconceptualize it within the various domains of its influence, directing it toward the values, practices and social realities that engendered it. Though formidable, this slanting of criticism towards questions of pedagogy, education, and social and cultural practice promises much in the way of contributing to a second theoretical revolution, where criticism ceases to be a self-contained field or the privileged discourse of an enlightened and culturally dominant few. (“Chicano Critical Discourse: An Emerging Practice” 81)

The new focus Chabran advocates (on directing criticism towards questions of pedagogy, education, and social and cultural practices) is a rare one, for it points towards the serious need to relate contemporary post-structuralist theoretical approaches to other kinds of academic studies, including
composition pedagogy.

Along similar lines, Guadalupe Valdés asserts that the English-teaching profession must begin understanding "...the nature of societal bilingualism...and [the] existing views about writing and the development of writing for bilingual individuals" (Valdés 86). If composition teachers do not learn composition pedagogies that incorporate the bicultural situations that bilingual students bring to the classroom, these students will continue to be marginalized. Introducing Rolando Hinojosa’s serial texts into composition classrooms can facilitate a better understanding of societal bilingualism and the development of writing for bilingual students. Because most of Hinojosa’s serial texts have been produced in both languages and because they self-reflexively engage bilingual and bicultural situations, his texts can be utilized in composition classrooms where students analyze texts using a post-structural composition pedagogy. This pedagogical approach clearly transforms the way composition has been taught in the past, as it introduces cultural and linguistic considerations usually conceived as lying outside the English teaching profession.

As has been demonstrated in the previous chapters of this study, post-structuralist theoretical approaches to Chicano cultural texts reveal much about new ways of reading these texts. But much of this new knowledge is not being introduced in many college classrooms, including composition classrooms, where Chicanos find themselves situated. If this type of critical discourse is not to remain “a self-contained field or the privileged discourse of an enlightened and culturally dominant few,” all students, minority and non-minority alike, must be given the opportunity to learn those analytical skills for understanding their
cultural situations within as well as outside of academia. The development of Chicano critical applications thus far needs to go at least one step further if it is to serve the needs of developing the academic literacy of minority students like Chicanos within institutions of higher education. Developing a composition pedagogy that uses post-structuralist approaches and Chicano cultural texts thus seems both possible and desirable. By incorporating Hinojosa’s texts in such writing pedagogies, I hope to show the relation of Hinojosa’s serial texts to realities usually conceived as lying outside them and thus to contribute a culturally based “meaning” and a biliteracy that might not otherwise be afforded.

More specifically, if post-structuralist theories are applied to compositionist practices, students, and particularly marginalized Texas Mexicans, should become more cognizant of their places within and outside academia. Through analyzing the cultural codes found within these texts, and by then using such knowledge to explain cultural codes in their own compositions, students should ideally gain an understanding of the rhetorical situations that authors like Hinojosa have had to occupy. In short, I wish to suggest that Hinojosa’s texts offer students and teachers special cultural and language materials that can be used in composition classrooms. By situating these cultural texts within broader discursive (language and literary) domains, students can gain access to knowledge about how their own texts stand in relation to processes that fix meaning(s) upon them.

Without question, social and academic processes more often than not have negatively “fixed” the meanings of Chicano cultural materials in academic situations, as the publication history of Hinojosa and Paredes’s novels shows. For Mexican Americans in Texas, these social and academic processes have
historically and consistently worked towards restricting the [English] literacy skills of Tejanos. In the past, pedagogies for developing analytical skills indeed existed, pedagogies that could have been used to broaden Tejanos’ awareness of their situation within schools. But they were not implemented, much less exploited to serve the academic needs of Texas Mexicans, especially the need towards developing sufficient literacy skills for academic success.

More recently, however, Chicano literary criticism has ironically evolved in such a way that it too may be in danger of becoming a form of academic discourse which threatens to remain “a self-contained field or the privileged discourse of an enlightened and culturally dominant few.” That is, now that Chicano critics have advanced to the point of incorporating post-structuralist approaches in interpreting Chicano texts, they too are placing themselves beyond the reach of their Chicano constituencies. By doing so, Chicano cultural and literary critics are [severing] an academic practice, as an academic practice, from “its multiple determinants and expressions,” and are placing unnecessary restrictions upon the critics’ [of Chicano texts] ability to reconceptualize their cultural applications within the various domains of its influence, “directing it toward the values, practices and social realities that engendered it” (81). Thus these two realms—the historical situation of the education for Chicanos in Texas and the development of Chicano literary and (multi)cultural criticism--must be understood to see what pedagogical correctives might be used for opening up and developing the academic literacy of Chicanos in higher education.

In his educational history of Texas Mexicans, “Let All of Them Take Heed”:

Mexican Americans and the Campaign for Educational Equality in Texas, 1910-
1981, Chicano scholar Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr., has poignantly documented how throughout most of the twentieth century Texas Mexicans have actively and consistently fought to incorporate English language pedagogies that could serve the unique needs of Texas Mexican school children. Significantly, the battles for gaining educational equality for Texas Mexicans have always assumed the incorporation of English language pedagogies for these students. These English language pedagogies were to be “based on the every day experiences of the children [of Mexican descent], [with] his [and her] interests and needs being constantly in mind...” (San Miguel 41).

In this landmark study of Mexican Americans fighting for educational equality in Texas, San Miguel quotes Elma A. Neal, a local school district curriculum specialist in San Antonio, who in 1925 developed a three-unit series of language lessons for Texas Mexicans. These lessons advanced the following purposes:

1) “The lessons are developed with the idea of keeping very close to the natural activities and interests of the normal child.”

2) “In all instances,...natural situations for the teaching of English are created, the encyclopedic selection of facts, for the sake of teaching English, avoided.”

3) “Our immediate purpose is to furnish the non-English speaking child [a euphemism for a Texas Mexican student] with a vocabulary he [or she] may use in expressing his [or her] needs in the community in which he [or she] lives.” (42)

As can be seen in this three-unit series of language lessons, the pedagogical ideas inherent to this plan relate the lessons to the students’ community environment, as well as to their “natural” activities, interests, and situations. The second part of this language unit series, which avoids the “encyclopedic
selection of facts, for the sake of teaching English," ironically appears to be going against notions exceedingly similar to E.D. Hirsch's cultural literacy and his infamous list of the most important facts ("5,000 essential names, phrases, dates, and concepts") students should know if they are to be culturally literate in the United States. What is more significant about this lesson series, however, is its emphasis on the natural activities, interests, and situations of Texas Mexicans and their community. By actually using community-based activities, interests, and situations as part of an English language program, this pedagogical scheme clearly aims at incorporating Texas Mexican cultural contexts for developing language (literacy) skills.

Elma A. Neal's three-unit series of language lessons for Texas Mexicans in 1925 has much in common with Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia. As Bakhtin states, "Every utterance participates in the 'unitary language' (in its centripetal forces and tendencies) and at the same time partakes of social and historical heteroglossia (the centrifugal, stratifying forces)" ("Discourse in the Novel" 272). As Neal argues and Bakhtin implies, learning English (a "unitary language") will always involve social and historical heteroglossia, or what Neal refers to as community-based situations. For Texas Mexicans, who are non-English speaking or who live in non-English speaking environments, learning English entails situating their learning experiences among their community's cultural contexts.

As San Miguel documents, many early Texas Mexican educators throughout Texas during most of this century echoed Elma Neal's early pedagogical approach and her concern for the education Texas Mexican children from non-English speaking backgrounds. The three-unit series of
language lessons outlined above arguably could have gone a long way toward positively developing the literacy skills of Texas Mexicans. But such was not to be, as several factors which worked at restricting the educational attainment of Texas Mexicans came into play. These factors include but are not restricted to the racial discrimination suffered by Texas Mexicans in public schools and universities, which was augmented by schools using alienating English-only pedagogical practices. All things relating to Mexican culture were stigmatized, despite early pedagogical innovations which sought to be inclusive of such cultural materials and contexts.

As San Miguel and others have informed us, since at least 1925 such early pedagogical innovations were virtually all but ignored:

Although much excitement was expressed over these curricular innovations and experimental instructional methodologies, only a handful of districts modified their courses or retrained their teachers. Those few schools which did experiment with new methodologies failed to overcome this obstacle to academic performance. While the efforts were sincere, the historical neglect of all things Mexican, including the Spanish language, continued. In their overzealous attempts to promote the speaking of English, many school officials blunted whatever motivation or incentive Texas Mexican children had to learn that language. (45)

As a result of this neglect, the early part of this century saw many innovative curricular changes disappear, as two educational developments ensued that left Texas Mexican students marginalized:

state school officials supported and developed an English-only instructional program to rapidly assimilate language minority children into the established cultural norm.... The purpose of these actions was to Americanize the Mexican student population--that is, to imbue the non-English child with the habits, customs, and ideals for which America stood and particularly to teach her or him the English language.

The assimilationist curricular practices were in contrast to the exclusionary ones promoted by local school administrators. The exclusionist behavior of public school officials can be most readily seen in their establishment of segregated facilities, in their support of inequalities
in the provision of public schools, and in their discriminatory and unequal treatment of Texas Mexican school children.

These policies and practices were at cross-purposes with each other, since one set of them tried to maintain differences existing between Anglos and Mexicans at the social level while the other tried to eliminate differences at the cultural level. The consequences of such actions were primarily to discourage Texas Mexicans from learning the language and customs educators were trying to teach them and to encourage poor school performance among them. (58; emphasis mine)

The extended quotation above alludes to the 1920s and '30s, and one could certainly suppose that, in the sixty or so years that have transpired since, the educational opportunities and pedagogies for educating Texas Mexicans have dramatically improved. Supposing this, however, would be a mistake, as recent lawsuits filed in Texas by the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (M.A.L.D.E.F.) have prompted controversial court decisions, voter referendums, and heated battles at the public school and college levels over the racially biased distribution of state funding. The antagonistic temper of these court battles so far indicates that Texas is still unwilling to educate Texas Mexicans fairly. Language pedagogies continue to remain predominantly English-only, and the state of segregation and the egregiously under-funded school districts and universities where Texas Mexicans find themselves enrolled indicate that Texas educational programs have a very short-sighted view of the roles Texas Mexicans will have in the State's future. Ironically, lawsuits very similar to the ones currently pending in Texas were filed by Texas Mexicans in the 1930s, but these utterly failed to achieve the educational reforms that could have avoided the current educational predicament of Texas Mexicans.

The situation for Texas Mexicans today remains much as it has been throughout most of this century, but not because Texas Mexicans have failed to
attempt instituting solutions to their deplorable educational conditions. Rather, they stem from the dominant group's unwillingness to accept responsibility for adequately educating Texas Mexicans. If Texas is to educate all its students, Texas Anglos and Texas Mexicans alike, giving them the writing (literacy) skills necessary for college academic success, the historical and political situation unique to all Texans must be examined. This analysis calls for answers to several important questions: Why have certain pedagogical approaches been used instead of others in Texas and the United States? What have the consequences been, for Texas Mexicans, when particular language pedagogies were used? While a historical survey of the pedagogies used in Texas is beyond the scope of this study, the results of practicing certain pedagogies over others can nonetheless be examined and used as evidence for judging the effectiveness that these pedagogical approaches have had, or might have had, in the past.

At this point, the process-oriented method of teaching composition has, in many schools, replaced the product-oriented method. The shift in methods this transition represents resulted from an understanding among compositionists that final (completed) products (of prose writing) should not be made the only focus when composing academic essays. Instead, the focus should also include the process writers go through when composing. But the use of finished products of writing for imitation has not disappeared, as most composition classes often still use “readers” of some type to complement “rhetorics” and handbooks. In the past, these “readers” rarely contained selections from culturally heterodox groups. However, current rhetorics, handbooks, and readers currently reflect some of the changes taking place as curricular
principles are being debated because of the culture wars.

Reading thus continues to complement writing primarily because of factors stemming from the emphasis English studies departments have chosen to give to the interpretation of literary texts. As Robert Scholes states in his post-structuralist approach to studying texts,

The proper consumption of literature we call “interpretation,” and the teaching of this skill, like the displaying of it in academic papers, articles, and books, is our greatest glory. The production of literature is regarded as beyond us, to the point where even those writers who are hired by academies to teach creative writing are felt to dwindle into academics themselves, and we suspect that their work may only be creative writing, too. How are the works of the faculty of the Iowa Writing Workshop studied in the classrooms of the Iowa English department?

The consumption of non-literature can be taught. It is called “reading,” and most college and university English departments are content to hope that it has been dealt with in secondary school—a hope that seems less and less well founded as we go on. But actual non-literature is perceived as grounded in the realities of existence, where it is produced in response to personal or socio-economic imperatives and therefore justifies itself functionally. By its very usefulness, its non-literariness, it eludes our grasp. It can be read but not interpreted, because it supposedly lacks those secret-hidden-deeper meanings so dear to our pedagogic hearts. Nor can it be produced when cut off from the exigencies of its real situations. What can be produced within the academy is an unreal version of it, “pseudo-non-literature,” which is indeed produced in an appalling volume. We call the production of this stuff “composition.” (Textual Power 5-6)

Scholes further states that “The greatest value is placed upon the things in the top categories, and the least upon the things at the bottom. In many English departments, we can find sexual and economic structures mapped upon this value system, with higher paid, predominantly male faculty members at the top and lower paid, predominantly female colleagues at the bottom” (6). The categories Scholes refers to are laid out in a diagram, with the interpretation of literature at the top and the production of pseudo-non-literature, or composition,
at the bottom-most tier. With this kind of hierarchy working, Scholes recommends deconstructing the binary opposition between literature and composition: “The literary/composition opposition must not only be deconstructed in critical writing, it must be broken down in our institutional practice as well. We can begin, however, by rethinking the mental structure of smaller binary oppositions that support the great one. From this kind of rethinking a new practice can emerge” (7). Scholes concludes by stating the matter in the following manner: “To put it as directly, and perhaps as brutally, as possible, we must stop ‘teaching literature’ and start ‘studying texts’” (16).

The binary opposition between literature and composition that has traditionally existed within English studies has excluded minority texts. And with reference to Chicanos, English departments have, until recently, begun hiring minorities even within composition, for as Scholes indicates, the binary opposition within English departments has also left a gender specific stratification, with minorities virtually nonexistent. Relegating composition to the status of pseudo-non-literature represents an impractical “response to personal or socio-economic imperatives” that “non-literature” enjoys but which English studies devalues because it “lacks those secret-hidden-deeper meanings” so dear to the “pedagogic hearts” of literary critics. Responding to “personal and socio-economic imperatives,” though, can be what “studying texts” like Hinojosa’s can offer students who are engaged in learning to understand rhetorical situations where diverse cultural circumstances (codes) are involved.

Offering another (post-structuralist) view of how literature has been previously taught within English studies departments, Sharon Crowley states that

... traditional historians of culture, like traditional literary critics, assumed
that written texts contained some determinable coherent meaning, which had been put there in accordance with an author’s discernible intention (that is, the author’s intention could be discerned when the text was read by someone else). They further assumed that “expert” readers of the same text would find similar meanings in it. This assumption in turn guaranteed the critics’ certainty that meaning was somehow “objective,” that it was embodied in the text in such a way that any sensitive reader could ferret it out. *(Teacher’s Introduction 20)*

In contrast, Crowley presents a deconstructive perspective that emphasizes writing instead of the author’s intended meaning, and questions the “traditional assumption that literary discourse is somehow special,” as compared to other forms of written discourse (21). She further assumes this deconstructive perspective when discussing a writing pedagogy that places the author in the center of the writing process. As she states,

...I must argue that to center a writing pedagogy on authors, rather than on readers and the common language of the community, is to insert an attitude into the composing act that misunderstands its focus. I would argue further that traditional composition pedagogy begins from the notion of authorship, not only because of its immersion in the metaphysics of presence, but also because the teachers who design such courses are writers whose work commands a good deal of authority, while their students are only readers, at least within the confines of the writing classroom. (35)

Crowley adds that “A deconstructive analysis begins by assuming that writing is communal, that, as Michael Ryan puts it, ‘writing can belong to anyone; it puts an end to the ownership or self-identical property that speech signaled’” (36).

While acknowledging that a deconstructive pedagogy is an oxymoron (45), Crowley nevertheless offers up a set of strategies for teaching from this perspective. First of all, a deconstructive approach would “reject the traditional model of authority that obtains in most American classrooms, where the teacher is both receptacle and translator of received knowledge” (45-46). In addition, “a deconstructive pedagogy would adopt the positions that knowledge is a highly
contextualized activity which is constructed within groups, subject to alteration when contexts for knowing are altered; and that so-called ‘received’ knowledge is just that--received. That is, the knowledge which is preferred and privileged at any given moment is so, simply because influential members of the concerned community have subscribed to it” (46).

Secondly, the notion that writing is a process should be reinforced. The process of writing is “differentiation and not repetition of the same” (46). Thirdly, this pedagogy should “devise ways to engage students as active readers--that is rewriters--of the teachers’ writing--her course” (47). Moreover, “Any readings that were undertaken in connection with such a class, literary or not, would also be seen as texts to be rewritten, to be incorporated into students’ writing processes” (47). Finally, she says that

In a writing class governed by deconstructive attitudes,...teachers would sensitize their students to the institutional realities in which they write, and they would treat the institutional situation as a “real-world” one where students are expected to learn a special brand of writing--academic discourse. And, since knowledge itself is always in flux, and since preferred knowledge is always inscribed by a culture in its institutions, students and teachers would examine the institutional ideology that governs their work: why “academic discourse” is preferred in school to whatever discourse(s) the students bring to school with them; why students might want to learn it (or not); why teachers are invested with institutional authority; why they are expected to give grades; how this constraint both interferes with, and encourages, the writing process. (47)

Like Elma A. Neal’s three-unit lesson series in 1925, Crowley’s deconstructive writing pedagogy includes a slant toward studying texts that focuses on the “common language of the community.” She further claims that students must understand that knowledge is a highly contextualized activity constructed within groups and subject to change when contexts change. Students should also be taught that groups holding the power to inscribe make
that knowledge “preferred and privileged.” Texts are therefore studied to be “rewritten,” so they can be incorporated into students’ own writing processes. In composition classes, then, academic discourse is taught as a “real-world” institutional and rhetorical situation that students must understand if they are to succeed in academia.

In this type of writing pedagogy, studying texts like Hinojosa’s means deconstructing them to show how knowledge is inscribed through the use of different cultural codes. When read as serial texts (with renditions), these texts can be analyzed according to the generic possibilities that make these works possible, just as the language(s) can be read as providing constraints which must be analyzed according to how language communities inscribe knowledge for these texts. When students “rewrite” Hinojosa’s texts, they can produce “academic discourse” by analyzing the intertextual references that can be found in other types of academic discourse (literary and historical texts). Because his texts are forms of “resistance literature” requiring a significant amount of historical knowledge, students should be able to gain an understanding of the contexts that form the texts they study as well as the contexts for the discourse they produce. With this type of pedagogical approach, teachers can decenter themselves from composition classrooms and allow their students to become researchers engaged in a composition process that recomposes historical and literary texts.

In Facts, Artifacts and Counterfacts: Theory and Method for a Reading and Writing Course, David Bartholomae and Anthony Petrosky present a different pedagogical method focusing upon basic writing students “studying texts”--literary and pseudo-non-literary texts. They conclude their description of their
pedagogy by stating

that our students begin with a hesitant and tenuous relationship to the
materials we put before them, to the terms and imaginative structures that
can make those materials available, and to the institutional context within
which they are required to speak and to write. The course we’ve defined
above demonstrates our belief that students can learn to transform
materials, structures and situations that seem fixed or inevitable, and that
in doing so they can move from the margins of the university to establish a
place for themselves on the inside. At the end, however, these
relationships may remain hesitant and tenuous—partly because our
students will remain students, partly because they will continue to make
more mistakes than their “mainstream” counterparts (although not so
dramatically as before), but also because they have learned (and perhaps
in a way their “mainstream” counterparts cannot) that successful readers
and writers actively seek out the margins and aggressively poise
themselves in a hesitant and tenuous relationship to the language and
methods of the university. (41)

The irony of having marginalized basic writing students realize that their
academic success requires placing themselves at the margins to “aggressively
poise themselves in a hesitant and tenuous relationship to the language and
methods of the university” cannot be overemphasized. Because minority
students often come into the university from the margins of society, placing
themselves at the margins of the university could not be more ironic. This is
especially the case for minority students, since entrance into mainstream
society involves negotiating oneself through a university education. But the
marginal stance for minority students can be further heightened because of the
“fixed” nature of restrictive inscription that minority cultural texts have historically
undergone.

Bartholomae and Petrosky further explain their method by stating that

We intend, in other words, to reclaim reading and writing from those
(including our students) who would choose to limit these activities to the
retrieval and transmission of information. We don’t have students shuttling
information from texts to teachers and back again, but shuttling,
themselves, between languages--theirs and ours--between their understanding of what they have read and their understanding of what they must say to us about what they have read. (Our language is the language of written academic discourse, including the peculiar spoken version that passes as “talk” in disciplined classroom discussion. Their language, when they speak or write for us, cannot simply be characterized as the language of the streets or the language of home or the language of the neighborhood. It is something in the margin, belonging neither here nor there and preventing their participation as speakers with place, privilege or authority.) We want students to learn to compose a response to their reading (and, in doing so, to learn to compose a reading) within the conventions of the highly conventional language of the university and, if our course is a polemic, it is so because we believe that the language of the university can be shown to value “counterfactuality,” “individuation,” “potentiality,” and “freedom.” (4-5)

The task placed before students in Bartholomae and Petrosky’s pedagogy is one which allows students to practice distinguishing and manipulating different cultural codes as found in the language of the university and the languages of their streets, homes, and neighborhoods. Learning to negotiate between different cultural codes in order to produce academic discourse is important if such students are to achieve academic success. But when students come from situations where the cultural codes differ as dramatically as they do for students coming from bilingual cultural environments, different problems have to be acknowledged.

With reference to composition pedagogies, then, one has to chart the development of composition since the time (during the last two decades) when composition was taught using the product approach as opposed to using a process approach. The paradigm shift this change signifies is one that coincides with teaching literature with the New Critical mode, when the text was seen as autonomous, as opposed to teaching literature as a process that uncovers different cultural codes operating within a text. When the “current-
traditional" mode is taught, students are given texts to emulate or imitate as well as a predetermined format (the five paragraph theme) with predetermined modes (i.e., description, process, comparison/contrast, definition, and classification). The process-oriented method of teaching and learning to write college essays (academic discourse), however, involves the incorporation of analysis, argumentation, and persuasion in a process of writing where invention (prewriting) techniques, drafting, and revision (with peer editing) are used. Texts with this method are seen as collaboratively constructed and subject to revision according to the rhetorical situation between writer, subject, and audience. This method sees texts much as post-structuralist critics (of culture and literature) do; that is, by examining the relationships between a text’s rhetorical situation, students can gain an understanding of their contextual place within a “real-world” situation.

The shift in paradigms has significance for the resulting literacy skills produced in students using different versions of these respective paradigms. The more emphasis is given to a text’s autonomy, the more the text is closed off from interpretations resulting from a student’s potential critical thinking skills. An interpretation arrived at by analyzing the competing cultural codes of a text (and its surrounding texts), while making that interpretation more tenuous, also reveals more of the process through which writers have produced texts.

The more an author and an audience can agree about the acceptability of a claim and the evidence for supporting claims, the more one will find that both author and audience share, or agree to share, certain cultural codes found operating in the textual communication between them. Conversely, if few or no cultural codes are shared (in a given rhetorical situation), then the chances that
claims can be proved and accepted for agreement are significantly reduced. And if texts (both cultural and literary) can be shown to use cultural codes that can be shared and accepted between an author and an audience, a common ground can at least be gained for communicating, if not persuading an audience to accept the author's posited claims, however tenuously.

Fixed interpretations resulting from seeing texts as self-contained (autonomous) express an underlying relationship of power between the author and an audience in a given rhetorical situation. In this situation, a text's meaning is governed more by the author's ability to fix certain cultural codes within a text than by the audience's negotiating competing cultural codes among the author, the text, and the audience. Different audiences rely upon different sets of cultural codes, obtained through various cultural experiences, which in turn come to form different interpretations for the same text. A writing pedagogy that is blind to the cultural codes different audiences (like Texas Mexicans) bring to the reading of a culturally mixed text results in teaching students that an audience's cultural background is irrelevant to the rhetorical situation.

But again, diverging and competing cultural experiences will inform an audience's interpretation, depending on which cultural codes win out in a competitive transaction that is always present. Those cultural codes carrying the most acceptance in a given transaction determine the most acceptable meaning(s) for a text. When the competition between cultural codes is dynamic, multiple and acceptable meanings will and can result; however, the less competitive the dynamic between cultural codes that are always struggling for dominance, the more fixed certain interpretations will be for any given text.
What determines the dominance of one set of cultural codes over another lies in history and in the nature of the historical struggle between competing codes.

Finding texts that Texas Mexicans can use to further their understanding of the codes working in their cultural contexts has until recently been non-existent within college composition classes. Now that composition pedagogies have been developed that incorporate post-structural theories, teachers of composition can also turn to Texas Mexican cultural texts (like Hinojosa's serial texts) to serve liberatory curricular principles. Hinojosa's serial texts [and especially their renditions] are especially serviceable in this context, as they can be used by students to negotiate their places within academia. Since writing academic discourse is one sure way toward gaining academic success, Hinojosa's serial texts can be used to serve this important academic function. However, before his serial texts can successfully be incorporated within a college composition pedagogy, the English-teaching profession must change its assumptions about the texts it studies and the language backgrounds of its students. This is particularly the case given the changing demographics currently found in the United States.

In her groundbreaking essay, "Bilingual Minorities and Language Issues in Writing: Toward Professionwide Responses to a New Challenge," Guadalupe Valdés puts forth a challenge to the English-teaching profession:

For English composition professionals, working effectively with diverse students will require extensive knowledge about this new minority population. Very specifically, teaching non-English-background students must be based on a deep understanding of the nature of societal bilingualism and on an examination of existing views about writing and the development of writing for bilingual individuals. It will demand a critical evaluation of the profession’s own capacity to work with nonnative English-speaking students, and it will necessitate asking hard questions about the consequences of using approaches that were designed for native
speakers with developing bilingual writers. (86; emphasis mine)

For meeting the "diversity and multiculturalism," Valdés's challenge is directed towards the English-teaching profession, specifically CCCC (Conference on College Composition and Communication) and NCTE (National Council of Teachers of English), which Valdés describes as having segments "That specialize in the writing of nonmainstream students," but which "are not generally known for their expertise on matters related to the teaching of English to students from non-English-speaking backgrounds" (88).

More specifically, she states the obvious by showing that "the largest group of English composition professionals focuses on the native English-speaking population, and most of this group's attention is directed at 'mainstream' students, that is, at students who are native speakers of nonstigmatized or standard varieties of English" (88-89). This latter group forms the predominant compartment found within the English-teaching profession. She describes the two smaller compartments within this larger compartment in the English composition profession as being for "basic writers" and "speakers of nonstandard varieties." Because "much attention is also given to basic writers and to students who are speakers of nonstandard varieties of English," "...students who are primarily nondialectal speakers of Black English, Appalachian English, and the like would be placed in the compartment dealing with speakers of nonstandard varieties" (89).

Given this conceptualization of the English-teaching profession, as it is currently composed, Valdés finds that the English-teaching profession is not yet prepared to teach bidialectal students, who are generally placed outside compartments "dealing with speakers of nonstandard varieties." She thus
argues that “bidialectal students who can already speak and write mainstream English in addition to their own variety of English would be placed outside of this compartment [for speakers of nonstandard varieties]. Some would still be in the basic writer section, but others would be placed in regular mainstream English classes. Within this larger compartment, it is possible for even bidialectal students to experience problems” (89). According to her conceptualization of the English-teaching profession, she also finds ESL students placed outside these compartments within a separate compartment. However, once these students leave ESL, they enroll

...in classes with native speakers. Whether placed in the basic skills or nonmainstream English compartments, these new speakers of English are expected to compete with individuals who come into English composition courses with native-speaking strengths and abide by the standards set for them. Generally, very little systematic accommodation is made to the essential nature of the difference between these students and their native-speaking peers. (89)

She further states that “bilingualism is a widespread natural phenomenon that has come about in different places for different reasons and that factors such as movement of peoples, military conquest, and the expansion of religious practices have resulted in the acquisition of a second language (L2) by certain groups of people” (90-91). This description of bilingualism coincides with the historical presence of Texas Mexicans in the Southwestern United States. As this study has shown, the acquisition of a second language (English) by Texas Mexicans was caused by the violent convergence of Texas Anglo and Texas Mexican cultural and political forces, which in turn left Texas Mexicans marginalized in their own land. While Texas Anglos vigorously sought to "assimilate" Texas Mexicans through English-only pedagogies in schools, these methods have failed to take into account Texas Mexican cultural contexts, with
their attendant language and cultural codes. And as Valdés’s research shows, in the United States studies have focused mainly on “bilingualism” as opposed to “biliteracy” (91), and she further finds that few studies “sought to describe language maintenance among bilinguals by focusing on their ability to read and write the ethnic language” (91).

Since no studies have “sought to describe language maintenance among bilinguals” (91), studies that are “based on a deep understanding of the nature of societal bilingualism and on an examination of existing views about writing and the development of writing for bilingual individuals” (86), this present study of Rolando Hinojosa’s serial texts can offer a starting point for a theoretical application that analyzes the “existing views about writing and the development of writing for bilingual individuals.” The community-based cultural contexts that Elma A. Neal’s series of language lessons sought to incorporate for Texas Mexicans early this century needs to be revived and reintegrated into language arts and writing pedagogies for bidialectal, bicultural Texas Mexicans.

Because few studies have focused on biliteracy and because the English-teaching profession views the teaching of composition predominantly from the perspective of serving mainstream students, Valdés claims

...[T]his position is inadequate in that it fails to take into consideration the complexities of bilingualism per se and in particular the special characteristics of American minority bilingualism. In my view, the existing compartmentalization, which is in evidence whenever issues of diversity and multiculturalism are discussed, results in a view of the nature of writing and the teaching of composition that can be potentially harmful to a large segment of the population of this country. (89)

Introducing cultural texts [like Rolando Hinojosa’s *Klail City Death Trip Series*] that engage the cultural codes of Spanish and English in the Southwestern United States thus could not be more propitious than it is today. If the English-
teaching profession is to serve these literacy needs proficiently, especially for bicultural bilinguals like Texas Mexicans, Rolando Hinojosa’s unique serial texts can go a long way towards accomplishing the implementation of multicultural curricular principles that could further the biliteracy of all people.

Since Hinojosa’s texts will require extra-textual referencing necessary for gaining an understanding of cultural contexts which can further students’ understandings of their rhetorical situations within academia and a multicultural world, his texts can help answer Valdés’s challenge for developing biliteracy and can be utilized effectively when post-structuralist composition pedagogies are incorporated into composition classes. The English language need not be used as a tool of oppositional politics, where different groups are “ineluctably parasitic on their antagonists.” Instead, through students’ extra-textual analyses of Hinojosa’s serial texts in composition classes, they can use this language as a medium which functions as a tool for bridging narratives between people using diverse cultural codes, narratives that need not be used as adversarial tools in the future, as they have been in the past. Hinojosa’s *Klail City Death Trip Series* need not be known any more as a “death trip.” Instead, the Series can be known as a trip through life where people have been transformed and have thus grown to live and understand each other through their shared languages and common culture.
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